AGGIES COMMIT

to Learning for a Lifetime

A Quality Enhancement Plan

Prepared for the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

As a Component of Reaffirmation for
TExAS A&M UNIVERSITY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Texas A&M University, a land-grant, sea-grant, and space-grant research institution, is the sixth-largest institution in the U.S., with more than 50,000 students in ten academic colleges and two branch campuses in Galveston, Texas and Doha, Qatar. We prepare students to assume roles in responsible leadership and service to society both now and in the future.

Given our rapidly changing world, students will need to learn continually throughout their lifetime, integrating new ideas and information with what they already know. We have developed our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) with the theme Aggies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime. It asks our students to make a commitment to purposefully engage in high-impact learning experiences and thoughtfully reflect on their learning experiences in order to develop the habits and skills for integrative and lifelong learning. It calls for our institution to create a culture with opportunities and support for student engagement and reflection.

QEP DEVELOPMENT This QEP grew from our Academic Master Plan and is positioned as the central component of Aggies Commit, a university-wide focus on intentionality in learning. Extensive discussions and broad input from our university community led to the focus on integrative and lifelong learning achieved by intentional engagement in high-impact learning experiences and to the flexible, college/branch campus-based implementation process.

IMPLEMENTATION AND RESOURCES Texas A&M has committed significant resources to this QEP. The QEP Administrative Team led by the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs will oversee and coordinate the college/branch campus-based implementation process with explicit guidelines for planning, annual review, and funding allocation. Academic support units will provide professional development for faculty, advisors, and others responsible for implementation.

UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT We will weave the goals of the QEP into the culture of our institution. QEP goals will be reinforced through annual events such as new student and new faculty orientations and Academic Convocation. To generate energy for the QEP, we will publicly post proposals, instructive examples of high-impact learning experiences, and assessments. A tangible symbol of achievement will be awarded to students who fulfill their commitments as part of the QEP.

ASSESSMENT We will evaluate progress toward our student learning goal primarily by collecting student reflections on learning and assessing them using two VALUE rubrics: Integrative Learning and Foundations for Lifelong Learning. We will evaluate progress toward our institutional goal primarily with an inventory of high-impact learning experiences and students who participate in them. QEP implementation will be an adaptive process driven by feedback from assessment. Implementation Years 1 and 2 will serve as a pilot test of the college/branch campus-based implementation plans, support and IT infrastructure, and assessment processes, and these will be modified as appropriate for Implementation Years 3 – 5.

OUR QEP GOALS

**Student Learning Goal**

asks our students to make a commitment to purposefully engage in high-impact learning experiences and thoughtfully reflect on their learning experiences in order to develop the habits and skills for integrative and lifelong learning.

**Institutional Goal**

is to create a culture with opportunities and support for student engagement and reflection.
QEP DEVELOPMENT

Our QEP reflects our university priorities and context. The process that culminated in the selection of the QEP theme was both multi-faceted and widely consultative, and is closely connected with two significant university initiatives: the Academic Master Plan and Aggies Commit. This section describes these initiatives and then details the process we followed to move from these initiatives to a plan that will operationalize the vision set forth in Aggies Commit.

ACADEMIC MASTER PLAN

In 2008 members of the Texas A&M community engaged in a large-scale coordinated effort called the Academic Master Plan. The Academic Master Plan included the Teaching-Learning Roadmap, the primary goal of which was to formally identify learning outcomes for degree candidates at both undergraduate and graduate levels. To accomplish this, the Teaching-Learning Roadmap Committee reviewed previous reports that included student learning outcomes and synthesized these lists into a set of learning outcomes for review by the university community in an on-line survey, a university-wide forum, and departmental faculty meetings. A statistical analysis of “consensus clusters” in the data resulted in three sets of student learning outcomes. See the Final Report of the Teaching-Learning Roadmap Committee at this link:


These three sets of learning outcomes were formally approved by the Faculty Senate and President Loftin in January 2010, and they define the learning we expect of our graduates, across the university.
Once the university’s student learning outcomes were in place, an academic leadership team from the Provost’s office initiated a plan to address intentionality in student learning. The focus on intentionality is based on research funded by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and the Teagle Foundation as well as on a movement by universities nationwide to encourage students to be strategic and thoughtful about their learning (Kean, Mitchell, & Wilson, 2008). “The ability to know differently requires a different approach to learning, through educational experiences that are more intentional, reflective, and connected, experiences that result in the capacity of learners to make informed judgments” (Youatt & Wilcox, 2008). Intentional learners pursue meaningful experiences and reflect on what they learn. Purposefulness and reflection result in deeper learning and the ability to apply theory in a practical context.

The Provost’s academic leadership team worked in consultation with students, faculty and staff to develop Aggies Commit (Appendix A). The team envisioned a process of integrating intentionality into the culture of the university by asking every student to commit to one element central to Texas A&M – choosing among the student learning outcomes, the university’s core values, and high-impact educational practices. As stated by Provost Karan Watson, this process would “ensure current students, as well as faculty and staff, are experienced in making and sticking with commitments that are relevant to their character and growth as learned people who service both professional and societal needs with marked excellence.” The academic leadership team created a document to describe Aggies Commit and circulated it among the university’s leadership. Aggies Commit was discussed with the leadership of the colleges and branch campuses in August 2010, and presented to the Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Committee in January 2011. A meeting with student leadership in April 2011 solidified support, and Aggies Commit became the umbrella for our QEP.
DEVELOPING OUR QEP

The Provost convened a QEP Committee that was chaired by two faculty members from the College Station campus and included representatives from each of the colleges, the University Libraries, and Student Affairs; representatives from each of the two branch campuses in Galveston, Texas and Doha, Qatar; four undergraduate students; and two graduate students (see Appendix B). Provost Watson charged the committee to develop a QEP that (a) was derived from Aggies Commit, (b) would positively change our university learning culture, and (c) would have both a clear focus and flexible implementation.

Because this QEP charge emphasizes a broad culture change, the QEP Committee gathered input from as many university constituents as possible. Current faculty and staff and both current and former students from all campuses were invited to visit a web page and express their opinions. Specifically, individuals were asked to provide input on the critical issues and challenges related to student learning at Texas A&M and to identify the student learning outcomes that were most relevant to these critical challenges. In addition to the online survey, committee members engaged their colleagues in conversation, seeking feedback and encouraging their input. (See Appendix C for a summary of the responses received.)

Developing critical thinking and problem solving skills, developing relational skills, and promoting engagement were most often identified as key challenges related to student learning.

Critical thinking skills, effective communication, personal and social responsibility, and preparation to engage in lifelong learning were most often identified as key challenges related to student learning.
After assessing the responses and after much deliberation, the QEP Committee selected *Aggies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime* as the focus of our QEP for four reasons.

First, the *Aggies Commit* initiative calls for a university-wide focus on intentionality and commitment. Our QEP intersects *Aggies Commit* by encouraging students to intentionally select and commit to curricular and co-curricular experiences that foster learning for a lifetime.

Second, *Aggies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime* addresses the core issues underpinning the identified critical issues and challenges related to student learning at Texas A&M. It necessarily expects the learning outcomes most frequently identified by the university community but demands deeper intentionality and integration.

Third, the survey demonstrated that institutional units vary considerably in what they perceive to be the most important learning outcomes and in what they identify as the most significant barriers to achieving those outcomes. *Aggies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime* balances flexibility with focus as it provides academic units the latitude to prioritize student learning outcomes and high-impact learning experiences as they see fit, while assessing student learning artifacts from various units according to a focused, common standard. For example, the College of Liberal Arts may focus their efforts on developing critical thinking skills through first-year seminars and experiences and evaluate the impact on learning for a lifetime. The Division of Student Affairs may focus on high-impact learning experiences such as the Student Leader Learning Outcomes project, a learning community where student leaders reflect on their leadership experiences in connection with their learning, document their leadership skills and intentional growth over time aligned with the university's student learning outcomes, and articulate the contribution to learning for a lifetime.

Fourth, the student representatives on the QEP Committee emphasized the importance of wanting their learning at Texas A&M to be visibly connected to “what comes next.” Indeed, this comment is consistent with the research on intentionality. *Aggies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime* asks students to intentionally engage in learning at Texas A&M, so that the habits and skills they gain at Texas A&M translate into a lifetime of learning and success after graduation.
In our QEP, “learning for a lifetime” means two things: first, that knowledge, skills and attitudes developed now will make a continuous impact throughout their life and, second, that educated and productive people keep on learning throughout life. Our rapidly-changing world needs people who can learn and keep learning, adapt to change, and create new opportunities for themselves and others. Our QEP calls for students to commit to developing the habits and skills needed to be the productive citizens that our world needs. Equally important, it calls for our institution to create a culture that fosters such development. We summarize and explain these goals as follows:

**Student learning goal:** to improve student learning by developing the habits and skills for integrative and lifelong learning

Learning for a lifetime requires habits of curiosity, initiative, and independence, and it requires the ability to reflect, integrate knowledge from more than one domain, and transfer knowledge into new contexts. These habits and abilities are reflected in two of AAC&U’s VALUE rubrics: Integrative Learning and Foundations for Lifelong Learning (see Appendix D). Integrative learning includes the abilities that a student builds across the curricular and co-curricular programs, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new and complex situations. Lifelong learning focuses on the habits and skills needed for purposeful continuous learning. We use the terms integrative learning and lifelong learning and the associated VALUE rubrics to operationalize what we mean by “Learning for a Lifetime.” We will support the development of students’ habits and skills for integrative learning and lifelong learning by facilitating their purposeful engagement in high-impact learning experiences and thoughtful reflections on their learning.

**Institutional goal:** to create a culture that makes intentional and thoughtful engagement in high-impact learning experiences the norm for our students.

Our institutional goal focuses on increasing opportunities and enhancing support for students to engage intentionally and thoughtfully in high-impact learning experiences, as described by AAC&U’s LEAP project. We will increase the types and number of high-impact learning experiences available to students in courses and co-curricular programs, increase the percentage of students participating in these experiences, and enhance coaching and advising to help students plan and reflect on their participation.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Our QEP brings together five key components: commitment, high-impact educational practices, integrative learning, lifelong learning, and AAC&U’s VALUE rubrics. In this section, we review the literature that informs our efforts.

COMMITMENT

Commitment, as we are using it here, is best described by the literature on engagement and intentionality. Engagement positively impacts student learning and development (McCart, Pancer, Rose-Kansor & Busseri, 2004). Conversely, research shows that students who are not engaged are more likely to leave before graduation, make poor decisions for their health and well-being, and feel isolated and alone (Tinto, 2000). These pressures slow student development of lifelong learning skills. For effective acquisition and incubation of lifelong learning skills, students must commit to and be highly engaged in an active university community.

There is movement by universities nationwide to encourage students to be strategic and thoughtful about their learning (Kean, Mitchell, & Wilson, 2008). Intentional learners are “self-aware, self-directed, and aware of multiple perspectives” (Allen, 2006). Intentionality means that learners are thoughtful about their choices and experiences in higher education, creating a greater opportunity for deep learning as well as for applying theory to context. “The ability to know differently requires a different approach to learning, through educational experiences that are more intentional, reflective, and connected, experiences that result in the capacity of learners to make informed judgments” (Youatt & Wilcox, 2008).

HIGH-IMPACT EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

In an effort to engage students, many universities employ high-impact educational practices. Kuh (2008) has characterized them as “cornerstone to capstone” activities that “educational research suggests increase rates of student retention and student engagement” (p. 9). Kuh (2008) states that high-impact educational practices provide “deep approaches to learning that are important because students who use these approaches tend to earn higher grades and retain, integrate, and transfer information at higher rates” (p. 14). Deep learning approaches are characterized by experiences that challenge students to integrate ideas and diverse perspectives; analyze, synthesize, and discuss ideas with faculty and peers outside of class; apply theories; and assess the value of information in relationship to one’s own views while considering the perspective of others (Brownell & Swanson, 2009).
These high-impact educational practices are marked by several common characteristics: 1) they typically demand devotion of substantial and sustained efforts to purposeful tasks which deepen students’ commitment; 2) they put students in circumstances that demand extended interactions with faculty and peers about substantive matters; 3) they increase the likelihood that students experience diversity through interactions with people who are different than themselves; 4) they typically require frequent feedback to student performance; 5) they help students see how what they learn works in different settings; and 6) they can often be life changing experiences (NSSE, 2007; Kuh, 2008).

The experiences and opportunities offered by high-impact educational practices produce the kinds of skills and abilities needed by citizens of the world (Kuh, 2008). Gonyea, Kinzie, Kuh, and Laird (2008) recommend “all students in higher education participate in at least two high-impact practices” (p. 26). High-impact educational practices utilize student-directed learning experiences that challenge, stimulate and engage students. These experiences foster the development of lifelong learners prepared for success in a globally-connected world (Edwards, 2011). The development of knowledge, skills and a desire to discover, through the use of high-impact educational practices, will establish a foundation necessary to learn for a lifetime. Kuh (2008) observes that while active-learning practices (such as those characterized as high-impact educational practices) have been shown to benefit students, “on almost all campuses, utilization of active learning practices is unsystematic, to the detriment of student learning.” The intent of Aggies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime is to make our use of high-impact educational practices, or the high-impact learning experiences of the students, more systematic.
INTEGRATIVE LEARNING

Integrative learning is a set of skills and abilities that students develop over time to make conceptual links among different perspectives, formal education, and life experiences. Fostering this mental habit in students is one of the greatest challenges in higher education (Huber & Hutchings, 2004). Creating an environment for integrative learning is an intentional cultural change for the university community where all faculty, staff and students are deliberately engaged in common integrative work and experiences (Miller 2005; Huber, Hutchings, Gale, Miller & Breen, 2007). While integrative learning can be designed in many different ways, Huber, Hutchings, Gale, Miller and Breen (2007) offers that “many familiar pedagogies can serve the goal of integrative learning” (p. 48). Any class that challenges students to think beyond their classrooms, their disciplines, their histories, or their personal identifications can be fertile ground for integrative moments. In addition to the traditional classroom environment, “experiential strategies, like service learning, study abroad, or internships, invite students to make connections between coursework and community, theory and practice” (Huber et al. 2007, p. 48).

Any class that challenges students to think beyond their classrooms, their disciplines, their histories, or their personal identifications can be fertile ground for integrative moments. Universities need to develop curricular and co-curricular structures with connection-making as the primary objective for the whole range of students’ experiences and activities. Hutchings (2005, p. 13) states, “...integrative learning brings with it a pedagogical imperative. The teaching that goes on in all courses is the essential habitat for integrative learning. And such teaching is a responsibility we all share” inside and outside the formal classroom.

LIFELONG LEARNING

Aspin and Chapman (2000) point out that multiple interpretations and historical emphasis on lifelong learning have at times made the term both redundant and vague. The twofold meaning of “learning for a lifetime” that we have adopted for our QEP is supported by two of Bagnall’s (1990) four purposes of lifelong learning: “the preparation of individuals for the management of their adult lives” (White, 1982, p. 132) and “the distribution of education throughout an individual’s lifespan” (Kulich, 1982). The Commission of the European Communities identified lifelong learning as an “all purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence” (2000, p. 3) Thus, lifelong learning is foundational for a student’s post-graduation world and is equally defined by that student’s engagement with learning as a graduate. As Knapper and Cropley (2000, p. 3) argue, “Higher education merits special study (in the field of lifelong learning) because of its particular importance in helping to develop a system of lifelong education, and thus provides the necessary organizational framework for lifelong learning.” Higher education then is both the conception and incubation of lifelong learning, giving students not only the tools to learn, but the tools to later assess and apply that learning.
VALUE RUBRICS

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) spearheaded the VALUE [Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education] project and worked closely with experts to define core elements of learning for a set of essential outcomes (AAC&U 2007). “The rubrics exhibit content validity because they have been broadly articulated and accepted by the faculty and academic professionals in each of the areas of learning” (Rhodes, 2011). The process of developing the rubrics, testing and retesting them with student work from over 100 campuses of various sizes and types, “provided multiple opportunities to discover whether the rubrics indeed reflected the core elements of learning that academics expected to see. This iterative process refined the rubrics, sharpened the language and the concepts, and engaged experts and non-experts in confirming that the content was representative of the learning sought” (Rhodes, 2011, p. 10). The fifteen student learning outcomes considered crucial for success that are tested by the VALUE rubrics reflect common expectations by both higher education faculty and employers (Rhodes, 2010a, 2010b).

Rhodes (2010b) found the following:

The VALUE project demonstrated that nationally there are broadly shared expectations for learning among faculty regardless of where they teach; that there are multiple key elements or facets to learning in every outcome area; and that student work needs to be the focus of any assessment of student learning because it represents what our institutions actually engage with as important work, and it is where students will try to demonstrate their best learning. The VALUE rubrics were found to be useful with a broad range of assignments, fields of study, years of attendance, modes of representing student work and type of institution. (p. 18)

The VALUE rubrics were designed so that colleges, programs, and individual faculty may translate them into the conceptual and academic constructions of their particular area or discipline in order to be used effectively to assess student work (Rhodes, 2009).
IMPLEMENTATION AND RESOURCES

The actions and resources outlined in this section are designed to move us toward the dual goals of **Aggies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime** – the student learning goal of developing the habits and skills for integrative learning and lifelong learning and the institutional goal of providing opportunities and support for high-impact learning experiences that strengthen these habits and skills and creating a culture that encourages students to intentionally commit and thoughtfully engage in these opportunities.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**ADMINISTRATIVE**

The Vice Provost for Academic Affairs will serve as the QEP Director and will chair the QEP Administrative Team, with members from both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs units, appointed by the Provost. In a large and complex institution like ours, it is critical to allow flexibility in the QEP implementation so that individual colleges and branch campuses can design their efforts to best serve their students. The Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and the QEP Administrative Team will oversee and coordinate the college/branch campus-based implementation process. They will set guidelines and call for proposals that individual colleges
and other units submit for their implementation activities, award funding to colleges based on their proposals, specify annual report requirements and review criteria, and establish a process to provide feedback and make adjustments. This system is already in place as part of the Academic Master Plan's reallocation process and will be revised as appropriate based on 2011-2012 experience and the requirements of the finalized QEP.

The Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and QEP Director will be assisted in the QEP implementation process by a number of existing support units. The Office of Institutional Assessment (OIA), which reports to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, will organize the QEP assessments and will support assessment efforts in the colleges and branch campuses, with assistance of the Office of Institutional Studies and Planning (OISP) in data collection. The Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) will provide faculty development support in collaboration with related units; Undergraduate Studies and Employee & Organizational Development (EOD) will provide staff development for advisors and other academic staff; the Division of Student Affairs will provide student leadership development; and Instructional Technology Services (ITS) will provide IT support. Each college and branch campus will designate a QEP Administrator who will lead the QEP implementation efforts of the college or branch campus and coordinate with the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and the QEP Administrative Team.

A QEP Advisory Committee will be formed with broad representation of academic and supporting units and expertise in QEP related issues, and will include representatives of faculty, staff and students (undergraduate, graduate and professional). It will provide advice to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and the QEP Administrative Team on the progress of QEP implementation and necessary updates to the process. It will assist in the review of the college/branch campus proposals and reports upon the request of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

High impact practices, such as undergraduate research, provides experiences that increase undergraduate student learning and success, not only while students are at Texas A&M, but long after graduation.
FISCAL

Our QEP is well-funded. Through the Academic Master Plan’s reallocation process, significant funding is allocated to individual colleges to support Aggies Commit ($1,370,000), high-impact learning experiences ($3,340,000), interdisciplinary experiences ($1,000,000) and advising ($1,710,000). Most of these allocations are directly related to QEP efforts. Academic support units also receive direct funding, totaling $810,000 per year, for providing support specifically for Aggies Commit and high-impact learning experiences. Allocation of these funds is based on proposals from the colleges and other units and their progress toward proposed goals in the prior year. Each college’s QEP implementation plan will be the central element of its reallocation proposal. The branch campuses at Galveston and Qatar are not directly involved in the reallocation process because they have budget processes different from the College Station campus. Texas A&M University at Galveston receives separate state allocations and Texas A&M University at Qatar receives allocations from the Qatar Foundation. However, the academic support units on the main campus will support the QEP.
implementation processes at the main campus and both branch campuses.

DIGITAL

The success of our QEP depends upon digital infrastructure at the university or college/branch campus level to facilitate students’ documentation of their commitments and experiences and to guide their reflections. This infrastructure will enable university-level assessment of student learning outcomes as well as academic and co-curricular unit-level monitoring and support of student commitments and progress.

Texas A&M University has selected Blackboard Learn as our next Learning Management System with its expected campus-wide implementation in Fall 2012. Faculty can use Blackboard Learn “courses” to organize and implement high-impact learning experiences and to facilitate and assess student commitments and reflections. Similarly, co-curricular staff and faculty can use Blackboard Learn “communities” to do the same for co-curricular high-impact learning experiences. A Blackboard Learn “ePortfolio tool” is available to both courses and communities and students can make multiple ePortfolios. An ePortfolio system using this tool will be designed for students to plan, track, document, and reflect on their commitments and learning. This ePortfolio system may have components such as the following:

- My philosophy and goals
- My courses (degree plan)
- My commitments
- My activities/experiences and achievements
- My reflections
- My résumé
- Additional (customizable) tabs

The ePortfolio system will include guidance that will teach students how to chart their course during their years at Texas A&M: how to set goals and make commitments, how to develop their degree plan, how to learn from their organizations and experiences, how to reflect on and integrate what they are learning from all aspects of their education, and how to self-assess and plan for further learning. This system will help put ownership of the educational experience in the hands of the student and thus support the intentionality aspect of Aggies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime.

The Blackboard Learn “communities” can also be used by academic advisors to organize and track students within specific academic programs. The combination of the communities and the ePortfolio system will serve as an effective tool to help advisors, faculty, and Student Affairs staff coach students in intentional and thoughtful planning, implementing, and reflecting on their commitments to high-impact learning experiences.
In addition to standard components of the ePortfolio system and prompts for students of our university, each college/branch campus or academic unit can add customized components and prompts to help students achieve discipline-specific learning outcomes.

Texas A&M University is also exploring the acquisition of the Blackboard Outcomes module that fosters the identification and collection of student work for assessment purposes. Student learning outcomes at multiple levels (QEP, university, program, and course levels) can be identified and mapped (showing alignment from course-level to program- and university-level learning outcomes). Individual activities such as assignments, artifacts, and reflections in both “courses” and “communities” can be “tagged” for one or more of the learning outcomes and associated with higher-level learning outcomes based on the mapping. Tagged student work will be automatically retrieved and archived in Blackboard Outcomes. Successful implementation of such a system would not only enable effective assessment for the QEP, but also help foster an evidence-based culture for enhancement of student leaning at various levels of academic and co-curricular units.

**COLLEGE/BRANCH CAMPUS-BASED IMPLEMENTATION**

Each college or branch campus will develop an implementation plan for college/branch campus-level efforts toward achieving the student learning goal and the institutional goal of Aggies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime. Proposals for the plans will describe the processes at the college/branch campus level for achieving the QEP goal of providing opportunities and support for students to intentionally and thoughtfully engage in high-impact learning experiences that strengthen the habits and skills needed for integrative learning and lifelong learning, with a detailed assessment plan. Each college/branch campus proposal will:

- identify one or more of the university’s student learning outcomes (undergraduate and graduate) and articulate the connection of these outcomes to developing the habits and skills for integrative learning and/or lifelong learning;
- strengthen existing and/or develop new high-impact learning experiences to help students achieve the selected outcomes and those for QEP;
- elicit individual student commitment to the learning outcomes and associated high-impact learning experiences;
- provide advice and mentoring to help students plan for achievement of outcome(s), reflect on experiences leading to outcome achievement, and document achievement;
- assess achievement of selected learning outcome(s) and improvements of the learning environment at the college/branch campus level;
- produce student artifacts for assessment of the student learning outcomes for the QEP using the integrative and lifelong learning VALUE rubrics; and
- identify meaningful partnership opportunities with co-curricular units (e.g. Student Affairs, Study Abroad, Career Center, etc.).
Student Affairs and other support units will also develop their proposals with assessment plans and their progress will be reviewed based on their annual reports.

The implementation for Year 1 (2012-2013) will serve as a pilot effort to test the college/branch campus-based implementation plans, support and IT infrastructure, and assessment processes. The QEP implementation, both at the university level as well as by the colleges, branch campuses and other units, will be adjusted and further tested in Implementation Year 2 (2013 – 2014) and finalized for Implementation Years 3-5. Continued finer adjustments based on on-going formative assessments can be incorporated through Years 3-5 in order to improve the process and better achieve the QEP goals.

LEARNING ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY

In keeping with our focus on intentional learning, to support success of our QEP we will provide professional development opportunities for all involved with the QEP.

ANNUAL RETREATS

We will hold annual retreats for administrators, faculty, staff and students responsible for QEP implementation. These retreats will be a vehicle for communication and coordination, and will provide time to showcase good practices and tackle common challenges. Through these retreats, the participants will develop presentations or organized sessions for the Annual Texas A&M Assessment Conferences to showcase our QEP work and seek feedback from other institutions.

FACULTY/STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Academic support units, including the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), Instructional Technology Services (ITS), Office of Institutional Assessment (OIA), and other related units, will develop and provide professional development opportunities (workshops, learning communities, and consultation) for faculty and staff. Web-based resources will be developed and made available through the university’s Faculty Teaching and Learning Portal. Topics for these professional development opportunities and resources are likely to include: development and implementation of high-impact learning experiences for specific learning outcomes and for large numbers of students, development and implementation of a solid assessment plan, curriculum redesign, and application of pedagogies that support integrative and lifelong learning.

Special efforts will be made to encourage collaboration between faculty and Student Affairs staff to integrate curricular and co-curricular activities to promote integrative learning. Staff members, academic advisors, student organization advisors and staff in student counseling, career center counselors, and others play an important role in coaching students in their commitment, planning, documentation, and reflection.

Systematic training to prepare these staff for effective advising will be organized by the Office of Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies and the Division of Student Affairs. Effective use of the ePortfolio system as a means of increasing intentional learning will be an important piece of the training.
MARKETING STRATEGIES

Essential to the success of the QEP efforts is that the university community knows and commits to engage in the process. As such, awareness and engagement in the QEP has been part of the development process and an explicit part of the actions for the program. As previously indicated, awareness of Texas A&M’s QEP began with soliciting recommendations from internal and external constituents. A QEP website (http://provost.tamu.edu/initiatives/quality-enhancement-plan) was developed by the Provost’s office to communicate the purpose of a QEP as defined by SACS, inform and update the university community about the establishment of a QEP Committee, its charge and membership, and to provide an opportunity for the collection of input and feedback on possible QEP topics.

Aggies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime was chosen as the QEP topic based on input from our constituents, and the marketing strategy will focus on communicating the main tenets of the topic: 1) Students will commit to developing the habits and skills of integrative and lifelong learning, and 2) the university will commit to creating a culture that makes intentional and thoughtful engagement in high-impact learning experiences the norm for our students.

The QEP Administrative Team and QEP Advisory Committee will work with Texas A&M’s Marketing and Communications Office to develop a university-wide campaign that will include tailored messages to faculty, staff, students, and external constituents. A design team will create tailored marketing pieces for distribution.

Recognizing the important role social media, websites, and other forms of electronic communication play in marketing messages, these media will be utilized to inform the university community about the QEP. A website dedicated to the QEP efforts will be maintained through the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. This website will provide university community members with more information on the selected topics and monitor the progress towards the proposed outcomes. To encourage cooperation and generate enthusiasm for the QEP efforts, we will publicly post proposals, progress reports, examples of high-impact learning experiences, and assessments. On a monthly, rotating basis, the website will highlight particularly good or instructive examples. The website will also feature a “student’s voice” video, showing students’ reflections on their commitment, high-impact learning experiences, and learning. The University’s active iTunesU site will be an asset in these publicizing efforts.

In addition, a number of other marketing strategies may be employed to communicate appropriate messages including t-shirts, posters, sandwich boards, Texas A&M bus advertisements, screen savers in computer labs, banners in high traffic student areas, advertisements and
features in the Battalion (student newspaper), electronic sign boards in university buildings, and widely distributed promotional items. Tailored messages crafted by the President, Provost, Vice President for Student Affairs and other administrators and leaders of student governments will be sent using various university communication methods including mention in the President’s emails, TAMUtimes, Distribution A listserv, and Texas A&M bulkmail. Branch campuses will employ similar marketing strategies appropriate to their own campuses.

CREATING A CULTURE

In addition to the awareness campaign, the university will look for ways to weave the goals of the QEP into the culture of the institution. This can be accomplished by ensuring that messages containing elements of the QEP goals and topics are being reinforced through university events such as Freshman Convocation, New Student Conferences, New Graduate Student Orientation, New Teaching Assistant Training, New Faculty Orientation, and Academic Convocation. Future recruitment and marketing pieces will contain elements of Aggies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime. These target audiences include:

- students (undergraduate, graduate and professional)
- faculty and graduate students in teaching roles
- staff (especially academic advisors)
- administration
- members of the Board of Regents (governing body)
- former students and community constituents

We will define and tailor a clear message to each target audience. The key elements of the message to be conveyed include:

- What SACS, QEP and Aggies Commit are.
- A clear description of what various individuals are being asked to do.
- Demonstrations and examples of the benefits of the QEP. This includes what individuals will get from the experience as well as how the university will benefit.

Texas A&M is renown for its student involvement, boasting some 800 student organizations. The first of its kind—and in its 30th year—student-run The Big Event is a way for the students to say ‘thank you’ to the local community. Students spend a Saturday performing a variety of day jobs for local residents.
A SYMBOL OF ACHIEVEMENT

Dating back to the beginning of the university, students have taken pride in earning physical symbols of achievement including brass and cords worn on the uniforms of the Corps of Cadets, pledge pins, and the cherished Aggie Ring. The student members of the QEP Committee recommend a similar token of achievement be awarded to students who engage and achieve their commitments as part of the QEP. While we have not finalized what this token might be, one possibility is a two-part lapel pin. One part of the pin would be given to new students during their first year to introduce the Aggies Commit concept and prompt them to record their commitments in their electronic portfolio. The second part of the pin would be earned after the completion of these commitments. Students would be encouraged to wear these pins at graduation as formal recognition that they have achieved something beyond minimum graduation requirements.
ASSESSMENT

Assessment will be conducted for both the student learning goal and the institutional goal of the QEP. The process for the QEP assessment, as well as the support for it, from collection and analysis to interpretation and reporting of the data, will be established by the QEP Administrative Team. The QEP Advisory Committee and the academic supporting units, particularly the Office of Institutional Assessment, will play an important role in facilitating the assessment of the QEP. They will assist the QEP Administrative Team in establishing the guidelines for effective QEP assessment as well as assist individual colleges and branch campuses in the design and continuing improvement of additional assessment with respect to college/branch campus-specific student learning outcomes.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The assessment for the student learning goal of developing the habits and skills for integrative learning and lifelong learning will be conducted using the Integrative Learning and Lifelong Learning VALUE rubrics, respectively, and will be based on student reflections on their experiences and learning. Individual colleges will facilitate student reflections on their learning with common prompts that are designed to elicit evidence of student learning against the items of the VALUE rubrics for Integrative Learning and Lifelong Learning. The students will also be asked to self-report which high-impact learning experiences they participated in and their perceptions on how making a commitment impacted their learning experience.

The VALUE rubrics use a five-level scale, from below Benchmark level (0) to Benchmark level (1), Milestone levels (2 and 3), and Capstone level (4). Our targets are to (1) achieve an average score of at least 2 for sophomores, 2.5 (mid-point of the Milestone levels) for seniors, 3.0 for Master’s students, and 3.5 for doctoral students and (2) improve the percent of students who reach Milestone level 3 and Capstone level (level 4) for both Integrative Learning and Lifelong Learning VALUE rubrics over the five year period for QEP implementation.

A cross-section of sophomores, seniors, Master’s students, and doctoral students will be sampled each year, and their reflections and artifacts will be used for the assessment of student learning outcomes. The Office of Institutional Assessment will organize selected faculty and staff members to score student reflections using the VALUE rubrics for Integrative Learning and Lifelong Learning, conduct data analysis, and produce reports.

Data on the demographic variables and high-impact learning experiences of these students (see next section) will be used to explore the effects of specific high-impact learning experiences on the development of the habits and skills for integrative learning and lifelong learning for specific groups of students. Additional analyses will be conducted to explore the relationships between high-impact learning experiences, the habits and skills for integrative learning and lifelong learning, and graduation rates (and performance in certification exams when appropriate) for seniors and retention rate for sophomores of different demographic groups.
QEP GOALS

STUDENT LEARNING GOAL
• Improve student learning by developing the habits and skills for integrative and lifelong learning

INSTITUTIONAL GOAL
• Create culture that makes intentional, thoughtful engagement in high-impact learning experiences (HILE) the norm for our students

OUTCOMES

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME
• Develop and improve habits and skills for integrative and lifelong learning

INSTITUTIONAL OUTCOME
• Increase availability, diversity and support of HILE
• Increase student participation in HILE
• Increase number of faculty and staff trained to facilitate HILE

ASSESSMENT

STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT
• Use Integrative Learning and Lifelong Learning VALUE rubrics based on students’ reflections on experiences and learning
• Include cross-section of sophomores, seniors, Master’s, and doctoral students sampled each year

INSTITUTIONAL OUTCOME
Use quantitative data on
• number and diversity of HILE (number of types & availability of each type)
• number of students participating
• number of HILE-trained faculty/staff

BASELINE

STUDENT LEARNING BASELINE
• Based on evaluation of students’ reflections in Academic Year 2012-2013, using the Integrative Learning and Lifelong Learning VALUE rubrics.

INSTITUTIONAL BASELINE
• Based on inventory of number and diversity of HILE
• Based on number of students participating, and the number of faculty and staff trained to facilitate HILE, in Academic Year 2010-2011

TARGET

STUDENT LEARNING TARGET
• Achieve an average score of at least 2.0 for sophomores, 2.5 for seniors, 3.0 for Master’s, and 3.5 for doctoral students
• Increase percentage of students reaching levels 3 and 4 for both Integrative Learning and Lifelong Learning VALUE rubrics over 5 year period

INSTITUTIONAL TARGET
• Increase the number of HILE by 50% from baseline
• Increase the diversity of HILE
• Provide training for at least 500 faculty and staff in facilitating HILE
• Facilitate student commitment to participate in at least two HILE during their study
ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL OUTCOMES

We will collect quantitative data for assessing the institutional goal of enhancing a culture that provides opportunities and support for students to engage intentionally and thoughtfully in high-impact learning experiences that strengthen the habits and skills needed for integrative and lifelong learning. Initially, we will develop an inventory of available opportunities for high-impact learning experiences and will include the level and demographics pattern of student participation at the university and college/branch campus levels. With this initial inventory as a benchmark, enhancements resulting from the QEP implementation can be tracked and used to guide further improvement of the process. We will collect data on the number of opportunities available for different high-impact learning experiences, the number of students participating, and the demographics of participants. We will use results at both university and college/branch campus levels to provide feedback for continuing improvement of the QEP implementation.

Our targets are to (1) increase the availability of high-impact learning experiences by 50% from the baseline, (2) increase the diversity (number of types and the availability of each type) of the high-impact learning experiences, (3) provide training for at least 500 faculty and staff in facilitating high-impact learning experiences, and (4) facilitate student commitment to participate in at least two high-impact learning experiences during their study, over the five-year period for QEP implementation.

In order to track available opportunities for high-impact learning experiences, we will develop a process to designate high-impact learning experiences. The QEP Advisory Committee will work with the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and the Graduate Council (reporting committees of the Faculty Senate) and with the Division of Student Affairs to develop criteria and a process for developing and designating courses and co-curricular programs with significant high-impact learning experiences, based on the qualities of high-impact learning experiences as delineated by Kuh (2008). They may consider the formation of a standing committee that can review, designate, and recertify courses and co-curricular programs with specific high-impact learning experiences that are proposed by individual academic and co-curricular units. Information on designated curricular and co-curricular high-impact learning experiences will be made available to faculty, staff and students to facilitate the planning, advising and mentoring of intentional commitments and thoughtful engagement of students in these experiences.
ADDITIONAL COLLEGE/BRANCH CAMPUS-LEVEL ASSESSMENT

In addition to the assessment for the student learning goal and institutional goal of the QEP, individual colleges and branch campuses will conduct assessment for their selected university student learning outcomes and report the results annually, as required for the reallocation activities of the colleges. These assessments will be used along with the college/branch campus-specific results of the QEP assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of activities of individual colleges. The college/branch campus-level assessment will be based on a well-developed assessment plan as part of the college/branch campus proposal approved by the QEP Administrative Team. The assessment plan will specify the selected university student learning outcomes (for undergraduate, graduate and professional students), associated high-impact learning experiences and goals for enhancement, and the process and specific measures for assessing the achievement of these student learning outcomes and improvements in the learning environment. The Office of Institutional Assessment and the Center for Teaching Excellence will provide assistance to the colleges and branch campuses in developing their assessments. Colleges and branch campuses are encouraged to use validated instruments, such as the VALUE rubrics, to assess student learning with respect to college/branch campus- selected student learning outcomes, as well as quantitative data to demonstrate improvement in availability and participation in high-impact learning experiences. Similarly, the Division of Student Affairs will conduct assessment for their selected university student learning outcomes for students engaged in its co-curricular programs with high-impact learning experiences, and report the results annually.

EVALUATION AND REFINEMENT

The QEP assessments will not only serve as a summative process to evaluate the achievements of our QEP implementation but will also, and perhaps more importantly, provide evidence and insights for a formative process of continuous improvement of student learning and a culture of commitment to learning for a lifetime.

The QEP Administrative Team will, with the help of the QEP Advisory Committee, prepare annual reports that outline the current status of QEP implementation and achievements in the student learning goals and institutional goals for the university as well as the colleges and branch campuses. Annual reports of colleges and branch campuses will document the status of their planned activities and achievements in their selected student learning outcomes. Through analysis of the process and achievements, as well as the changing needs of the society, the university and individual colleges and branch campuses will propose and implement well-justified adjustments to the QEP activities in order to achieve the overarching goals of our QEP.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>QEP planning committee activities to determine focus and direction for QEP&lt;br&gt;Survey of Texas A&amp;M constituents on QEP&lt;br&gt;Initial call for college proposals for Aggies Commit and high-impact learning experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>QEP planning committee activities to develop QEP document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Draft QEP document circulated for feedback from Texas A&amp;M constituents&lt;br&gt;Submission of final QEP document to SACS&lt;br&gt;QEP Advisory Committee established&lt;br&gt;SACS Onsite Reaffirmation Team visit&lt;br&gt;Implementation plan finalized following site visit&lt;br&gt;Request for college/branch campus proposals for 2012-2013 (Year 1)&lt;br&gt;First campus-wide QEP planning retreat&lt;br&gt;Faculty, staff and student leaders development programs&lt;br&gt;Development of common prompts for student reflections&lt;br&gt;Development of a process to designate high-impact learning experiences&lt;br&gt;Preliminary benchmark assessment (opportunities and level of participation in high-impact learning experiences) conducted</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>QEP website launched&lt;br&gt;Approval of college/branch campus proposals for 2012-2013 (Year 1)&lt;br&gt;Approval of the process to designate high-impact learning experiences&lt;br&gt;Units prepare for implementation of proposals&lt;br&gt;Faculty, staff and student leader development programs</td>
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# IMPLEMENTATION YEAR 1, ACADEMIC YEAR 2012-2013

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of college/branch campus proposals for 2012-2013 (Year 1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review of process and adjustments</td>
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<td>Faculty, staff and student leaders development programs</td>
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<tbody>
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<td>Request for college/branch campus proposals for 2013-2014 (Year 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus-wide QEP planning retreat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submission of college/branch campus annual reports for 2012-2013 (Year 1)</td>
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<table>
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<th>Summer 2013</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completion of assessment for 2012-2013 (Year 1)</td>
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<td>Approval of college/branch campus proposals for 2013-2014 (Year 2)</td>
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<td>experiences and feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjustment of the process to designate high-impact learning experiences</td>
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<td>based on experiences and feedback</td>
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<td>Submission of college/branch campus annual reports for 2013-2014 (Year 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Summer 2014</strong></td>
<td>Completion of assessment for 2013-2014 (Year 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approval of college/branch campus proposals for 2014-2015 (Year 3)</td>
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<td>Review of process and adjustments</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>Spring 2015</strong></td>
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<td>Faculty, staff and student leaders development programs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Campus-wide QEP planning retreat</td>
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<td><strong>Summer 2015</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approval of college/branch campus proposals for 2015-2016 (Year 4)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Faculty, staff and student leaders development programs</td>
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<td>Development of SACS QEP Impact Report</td>
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<td>Faculty, staff and student leaders development programs</td>
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<td>Campus-wide QEP planning retreat</td>
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<td>Submission of college/branch campus reports for 2012-2017 (last 5 years)</td>
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<td>Development of SACS QEP Impact Report</td>
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<td>Completion of assessment for 2012-2017 (last 5 years)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submission of SACS QEP Impact Report</td>
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REFERENCES CITED


Rhodes, T. (2010). Since we seem to agree, why are the outcomes so difficult to achieve? New Directions for Teaching & Learning, 2010(121), 13-21.


APPENDIX A

AGGIES COMMIT

At Texas A&M University, we commit to providing you with a well-rounded, quality undergraduate experience that prepares you for whatever lies ahead. In turn, we ask that you pursue your undergraduate education seriously and intentionally through commitment.

Your focused commitment might be to the Corps of Cadets or globalization. It might be to a living-learning community or to research. It might be to athletics or honors or service learning or an internship. Possibilities abound.

Throughout your time at Texas A&M, your commitment will be guided by the goals or outcomes identified in TAMU planning documents, past and present, listed below. All of these outcomes in turn have been identified as crucial for college students state- and nationwide in the 21st century.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (BACHELOR’S)

- Master the depth of knowledge required for a degree
- Demonstrate critical thinking
- Communicate effectively
- Practice personal and social responsibility
- Demonstrate social, cultural, and global competence
- Prepare to engage in lifelong learning
- Work collaboratively

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (MASTER’S)

- Master degree program requirements
- Apply subject matter knowledge in a range of contexts to solve problems and make decisions
- Use a variety of sources and evaluate multiple points of view
- Communicate effectively
- Use appropriate technologies to communicate, collaborate, conduct research, and solve problems
- Develop clear research plans and conduct valid, data-supported, theoretically consistent, and institutionally appropriate research
- Choose ethical courses of action in research and practice

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (DOCTORAL)

- Master degree program requirements
- Apply a variety of strategies and tools, use a variety of sources, and evaluate multiple points of view
- Communicate effectively
- Develop clear research plans, conduct valid, data-supported, theoretically consistent, and institutionally appropriate research and effectively disseminate the results of the research in appropriate venues to a range of audiences.
- Use appropriate technologies to communicate, collaborate, conduct research, and solve problems.
- Teach and explain the subject matter in their discipline
- Choose ethical courses of action in research and practice

AGGIE CORE VALUES

EXCELLENCE
INTEGRITY
LEADERSHIP
LOYALTY
RESPECT
SELFLESS SERVICE

Action 2015: Education First

- Graduate more students annually
- Prepare students for competitive and rapidly changing workforce
- Provide education for future civic engagement in a diverse world
- Ensure high-impact educational experiences for every student

HIGH-IMPACT EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

- First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning/Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses and Projects

LEAP OUTCOMES (AAC&U)

- Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world
- Intellectual and practical skills
- Personal and social responsibility
- Integrative and applied learning
APPENDIX B

QEP COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Luciana Barroso, Dwight Look College of Engineering, Co-Chair

Joseph Bassett, undergraduate student

Kim Dooley, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences

Howard Eilers, College of Architecture

Jim Hermann, College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences

Cynthia Hernandez, Division of Student Affairs

Ann Kenimer, Office of the Dean of Faculties

Todd Kent, Texas A&M University at Qatar

Andrew Klein, Faculty Senate

Elisa McNeill, College of Education

Brad Morrill, undergraduate student

Julie Newman, College of Geosciences

Glenn Phillips, graduate student

Lorraine Phillips, Office of Institutional Assessment, Ex Officio

Leslie Reynolds, University Libraries

Genyne Royal, graduate student

Janie Schielack, College of Science

Bill Seitz, Texas A&M University at Galveston

William Simmons, undergraduate student

Nancy Simpson, Mays Business School

Mike Stephenson, College of Liberal Arts

Crystal Usher, undergraduate student

Srinivas Vadali, Dwight Look College of Engineering

X. Ben Wu, Office of the Dean of Faculties & Center for Teaching Excellence, and College of Agriculture & Life Sciences, Co-Chair
APPENDIX C

Summary of Input of the University Community — Critical issues/challenges related to student learning and most relevant student learning outcomes

In the process of developing the theme of the QEP, the QEP Committee developed a rank list of critical issues and challenges related to student learning at Texas A&M and the student learning outcomes that were most relevant to these critical challenges, based on extensive discussion and consultation with colleagues in their respective units in May and June of 2011.

In June 2011, faculty, staff, and students from the university (including the branch campuses) community as well as former students were asked for their input. In addition to university-wide announcements through President’s Weekly Messages, the university distribution list, and the university electronic newsletter, e-mails were sent to faculty, staff and students inviting them to a web page where they could express their opinions. Texas A&M Association of Former Students also distributed the invitation through the Aggie Network, a large number of representatives of the former students. In addition to the items developed by the QEP committee, respondents were provided an opportunity to submit additional open-ended comments to the committee for their consideration. For approximately six weeks, committee members attended various meetings and distributed information in various forms to encourage individuals from their own units to complete the web-based survey. Over 780 responses were received.

On the following page are the contents of the web page for seeking input from the university community, as well as a summary of the feedback from the university community.
We Seek Your Input to the Development of Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) of Texas A&M University

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) committee is in the process of developing the topic for the QEP centered on some aspect(s) of Aggies Commit (more information on the QEP web page). This involves identifying critical issues/challenges related to student learning at Texas A&M University as well as learning outcomes most relevant to the critical issues. The QEP committee sincerely invites your input:

**Question 1**

The QEP committee has identified the following critical issues/challenges related to student learning at Texas A&M University:

A. Developing critical thinking and problem solving skills  
B. Developing relational skills (communication, team work, leadership, etc.)  
C. Engagement (relevance; discovery and creativity; teacher-student interaction)  
D. Early and sustained mentoring/intervention (expectations and long-term goals)  
E. Self-assessment & reflection  
F. Faculty and student buy-in to support deep learning

Which of these, or others, would you identify as the top 1-3 critical issues related to student learning at Texas A&M University, and why?

**Question 2**

In the discussion of the QEP committee, several learning outcomes listed in Aggies Commit (see full description of the learning outcomes in the Teaching and Learning Roadmap Committee Report) have been identified as most relevant to the critical issues:

A. Prepare to engage in lifelong learning  
B. Personal and social responsibility  
C. Integrative and applied learning  
D. Critical thinking skills  
E. Communicate effectively  
F. Work collaboratively  
G. Intellectual and practical skills

Which of these, or others, would you identify as the top 1-3 student learning outcomes that are most relevant to the critical issues/challenges related to student learning that you identified, and why?

[Identification of one’s unit affiliation in the university]  
[Identification of one’s role: faculty, staff, graduate student, undergraduate student, or former student]  
[Contact information for QEP Committee co-chairs]

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### Critical issues/challenges related to student learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical issue/challenge</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Developing critical thinking and problem solving skills</td>
<td>574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Developing relational skills</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Engagement</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Early and sustained mentoring/intervention</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Self-assessment and reflection</td>
<td>203</td>
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<tr>
<td>F. Faculty and student buy-in to support deep learning</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Others</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Most Relevant Student Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcome</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Prepare to engage in lifelong learning</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Personal and social responsibility</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Integrative and applied learning</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Critical thinking skills</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Communicate effectively</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Work collaboratively</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Intellectual and practical skills</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) Rubrics for Integrative Learning and Foundations for Lifelong Learning

FOUNDATIONS AND SKILLS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING VALUE RUBRIC

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can be shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

DEFINITION

Lifelong learning is “all purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence.” An endeavor of higher education is to prepare students to be this type of learner by developing specific dispositions and skills described in this rubric while in school. (From The European Commission. 2000. Commission staff working paper: A memorandum on lifelong learning. Retrieved September 3, 2003, www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/lifelong-oth-enl-t02.pdf.)
FRAMING LANGUAGE

This rubric is designed to assess the skills and dispositions involved in lifelong learning, which are curiosity, transfer, independence, initiative, and reflection. Assignments that encourage students to reflect on how they incorporated their lifelong learning skills into their work samples or collections of work by applying above skills and dispositions will provide the means for assessing those criteria. Work samples or collections of work tell what is known or can be done by students, while reflections tell what students think or feel or perceive. Reflection provides the evaluator with a much better understanding of who students are because through reflection students share how they feel about or make sense of their learning experiences. Reflection allows analysis and interpretation of the work samples or collections of work for the reader. Reflection also allows exploration of alternatives, the consideration of future plans, and provides evidence related to students’ growth and development. Perhaps the best fit for this rubric are those assignments that prompt the integration of experience beyond the classroom.

FOUNDATIONS AND SKILLS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING VALUE RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Capstone</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
<th>Benchmark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>Explores a topic in depth, yielding a rich awareness and/or little-known information indicating intense interest in the subject.</td>
<td>Explores a topic in depth, yielding insight and/or information indicating interest in the subject.</td>
<td>Explores a topic with some evidence of depth, providing occasional insight and/or information indicating mild interest in the subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Completes required work, generates, and pursues opportunities to expand knowledge, skills, and abilities.</td>
<td>Completes required work, identifies and pursues opportunities to expand knowledge, skills, and abilities.</td>
<td>Completes required work and identifies opportunities to expand knowledge, skills, and abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Educational interests and pursuits exist and flourish outside classroom requirements. Knowledge and/or experiences are pursued independently.</td>
<td>Beyond classroom requirements, pursues substantial, additional knowledge and/or actively pursues independent educational experiences.</td>
<td>Beyond classroom requirements, pursues additional knowledge and/or shows interest in pursuing independent educational experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>Makes explicit references to previous learning and applies in an innovative (new and creative) way that knowledge and those skills to demonstrate comprehension and performance in novel situations.</td>
<td>Makes references to previous learning and shows evidence of applying that knowledge and those skills to demonstrate comprehension and performance in novel situations.</td>
<td>Makes references to previous learning and attempts to apply that knowledge and those skills to demonstrate comprehension and performance in novel situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Reviews prior learning (past experiences inside and outside of the classroom) in depth to reveal significantly changed perspectives about educational and life experiences, which provide foundation for expanded knowledge, growth, and maturity over time.</td>
<td>Reviews prior learning (past experiences inside and outside of the classroom) in depth, revealing fully clarified meanings or indicating broader perspectives about educational or life events.</td>
<td>Reviews prior learning (past experiences inside and outside of the classroom) with some depth, revealing slightly clarified meanings or indicating a somewhat broader perspectives about educational or life events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTegrATive LEARNING VALUE RUBRIC

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can be shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

DEFINITION

Integrative learning is an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus.

FRAMING LANGUAGE

Fostering students’ abilities to integrate learning—across courses, over time, and between campus and community life—is one of the most important goals and challenges for higher education. Initially, students connect previous learning to new classroom learning. Later, significant knowledge within individual disciplines serves as the foundation, but integrative learning goes beyond academic boundaries. Indeed, integrative experiences often occur as learners address real-world problems, unscripted and sufficiently broad, to require multiple areas of knowledge and multiple modes of inquiry, offering multiple solutions and benefiting from multiple perspectives. Integrative learning also involves internal changes in the learner. These internal changes, which indicate growth as a confident, lifelong learner, include the ability to adapt one’s intellectual skills, to contribute in a wide variety of situations, and to understand and develop individual purpose, values and ethics. Developing students’ capacities for integrative learning is central to personal success, social responsibility, and civic engagement in today’s global society. Students face a rapidly changing and increasingly connected world where integrative learning becomes not just a benefit...but a necessity.
# INTEGRATIVE LEARNING VALUE RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connections to Experience</th>
<th>Capstone 4</th>
<th>Milestones 3</th>
<th>Benchmark 2</th>
<th>Benchmark 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge</td>
<td>Meaningfully synthesizes connections among experiences outside of the formal classroom (including life experiences and academic experiences such as internships and travel abroad) to deepen understanding of fields of study and to broaden own points of view.</td>
<td>Effectively selects and develops examples of life experiences, drawn from a variety of contexts (e.g., family life, artistic participation, civic involvement, work experience), to illuminate concepts/theories/frameworks of fields of study.</td>
<td>Compares life experiences and academic knowledge to infer differences, as well as similarities, and acknowledge perspectives other than own.</td>
<td>Identifies connections between life experiences and those academic texts and ideas perceived as similar and related to own interests.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Connections to Discipline | Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives | Independently creates wholes out of multiple parts (synthesizes) or draws conclusions by combining examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective. | Independently connects examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective. | When prompted, connects examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective. | When prompted, presents examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective. |

| Transfer | Adapts and applies skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in one situation to new situations | Adapts and applies skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in one situation to new situations to solve difficult problems or explore complex issues in original ways. | Uses skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in one situation in a new situation to contribute to understanding of problems or issues. | Uses, in a basic way, skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in one situation in a new situation. |

| Integrated Communication | Fulfills the assignment(s) by choosing a format, language or graph (or other visual representation) in ways that enhance meaning, making clear the interdependence of language and meaning, thought and expression. | Fulfills the assignment(s) by choosing a format, language or graph (or other visual representation) to explicitly connect content and form, demonstrating awareness of purpose and audience. | Fulfills the assignment(s) by choosing a format, language or graph (or other visual representation) that connects in a basic way what is being communicated (content) with how it is said (form). | Fulfills the assignment(s) (i.e. to produce an essay, a poster, a video, a PowerPoint presentation, etc.) in an appropriate form. |

| Reflection and Self Assessment | Demonstrates a developing sense of self as a learner, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts (may be evident in self-assessment, reflective, or creative work) | Envisions a future self (and possibly makes plans that build on past experiences) that have occurred across multiple and diverse contexts. | Evaluates changes in own learning over time, recognizing complex contextual factors (e.g., works with ambiguity and risk, deals with frustration, considers ethical frameworks). | Articulates strengths and challenges (within specific performances or events) to increase effectiveness in different contexts (through increased self awareness). | Describes own performances with general descriptors of success and failure. |
Because integrative learning is about making connections, this learning may not be as evident in traditional academic artifacts such as research papers and academic projects unless the student, for example, is prompted to draw implications for practice. These connections often surface, however, in reflective work, self assessment, or creative endeavors of all kinds. Integrative assignments foster learning between courses or by connecting courses to experientially-based work. Work samples or collections of work that include such artifacts give evidence of integrative learning. Faculty are encouraged to look for evidence that the student connects the learning gained in classroom study to learning gained in real life situations that are related to other learning experiences, extra-curricular activities, or work. Through integrative learning, students pull together their entire experience inside and outside of the formal classroom; thus, artificial barriers between formal study and informal or tacit learning become permeable. Integrative learning, whatever the context or source, builds upon connecting both theory and practice toward a deepened understanding.

Assignments to foster such connections and understanding could include, for example, composition papers that focus on topics from biology, economics, or history; mathematics assignments that apply mathematical tools to important issues and require written analysis to explain the implications and limitations of the mathematical treatment, or art history presentations that demonstrate aesthetic connections between selected paintings and novels. In this regard, some majors (e.g., interdisciplinary majors or problem-based field studies) seem to inherently evoke characteristics of integrative learning and result in work samples or collections of work that significantly demonstrate this outcome. However, fields of study that require accumulation of extensive and high-consensus content knowledge (such as accounting, engineering, or chemistry) also involve the kinds of complex and integrative constructions (e.g., ethical dilemmas and social consciousness) that seem to be highlighted so extensively in self reflection in arts and humanities, but they may be embedded in individual performances and less evident. The key in the development of such work samples or collections of work will be in designing structures that include artifacts and reflective writing or feedback that support students’ examination of their learning and give evidence that, as graduates, they will extend their integrative abilities into the challenges of personal, professional, and civic life.

GLOSSARY The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

- **Academic knowledge**: Disciplinary learning; learning from academic study, texts, etc.
- **Content**: The information conveyed in the work samples or collections of work.
- **Contexts**: Actual or simulated situations in which a student demonstrates learning outcomes. New and challenging contexts encourage students to stretch beyond their current frames of reference.
- **Co-curriculum**: A parallel component of the academic curriculum that is in addition to formal classroom (student government, community service, residence hall activities, student organizations, etc.).
- **Experience**: Learning that takes place in a setting outside of the formal classroom, such as workplace, service learning site, internship site or another.
- **Form**: The external frameworks in which information and evidence are presented, ranging from choices for particular work sample or collection of works (such as a research paper, PowerPoint, video recording, etc.) to choices in make-up of the eportfolio.
- **Performance**: A dynamic and sustained act that brings together knowing and doing (creating a painting, solving an experimental design problem, developing a public relations strategy for a business, etc.); performance makes learning observable.
- **Reflection**: A meta-cognitive act of examining a performance in order to explore its significance and consequences.
- **Self Assessment**: Describing, interpreting, and judging a performance based on stated or implied expectations followed by planning for further learning.