EVIDENCE&ARGUMENT

*"When I am getting ready to reason
with a man, I spend one-third of my
time thinking about myself and what
I am going to say and two-thirds
about him and what he is
going to say."*

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

On-Site Visit | April 6–9, 2015

WKU

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Message from the President

I am pleased to present WKU's new Quality Enhancement Plan, *Evidence & Argument*. The *QEP* is a key component of our SACSCOC Reaffirmation of Accreditation. More significant, however, it represents a commitment on the part of the institution to provide an educational experience for students that is relevant, aspirational, and built on objective assessment of where we are and where we want to be.

It is important to recognize and thank the dozens of individuals who have worked diligently over the past two years to bring *Evidence & Argument* from a concept to a plan of action that will enhance the undergraduate learning experience at WKU over the next five years and beyond. I would also like to thank the entire university community for their engagement in the process through which the *QEP* theme was identified, developed and refined. Your continued interest in and engagement with the *QEP* will ensure its success. I am confident that, through your efforts, *Evidence & Argument* will be a critical element in assuring WKU continues to achieve its mission of preparing "students of all backgrounds to be productive, engaged, and socially-responsible citizens-leaders of a global society."

Gary A. Ransdell

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Executive Summary

"Don't raise your voice. Improve your argument."
Desmond Tutu

The ability to locate, evaluate, and synthesize scholarly and authoritative information impacts student performance and academic achievement during their university careers. Further, these skills and knowledge are associated with beneficial behaviors that improve student persistence/retention, improve critical thinking skills, and prepare lifelong learners. In a 2009 American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) study entitled *Raising the Bar: Employers' Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Downturn*, 89% of employers surveyed identified "the ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing" as a learning outcome that is not sufficiently addressed by America's colleges and universities. Also, 81% of employers reported that "critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills" need to be emphasized more than they are today; 75% expressed dissatisfaction with graduates' ability to "analyze and solve complex problems"; and 68% expressed a desire to hire graduates with better preparation in "locat[ing], organiz[ing], and evaluat[ing] information from multiple sources" (Hart Research Associates, 2010).

In order for WKU to fully realize its mission of

preparing "students of all backgrounds to be productive, engaged, and socially-responsible citizen-leaders…" and providing "lifelong learning opportunities for its students…," our academic programs and priorities must be aligned and responsive to these national trends. WKU is sending graduates into increasingly-demanding work environments in which their employers expect them to know how to think through and solve problems, work successfully and creatively in teams, and communicate clearly and persuasively the results of their efforts.

Annual assessments of WKU's general education program from 2004/05 through 2007/08 identified a need for sustained focus on development of WKU students' critical thinking skills overall, as well as their specific ability to marshal documentation and evidence in support of a point of view. Results of a pilot administration of the nationally-normed College Learning Assessment (CLA) instrument indicated that, while WKU students performed adequately in critical analysis, they performed less well in the area of analytic writing. WKU students tended to lag behind national averages in their self-reported responses to National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) items

related to critical analysis, writing and speaking effectiveness. Results of the WKU Student Engagement Survey indicated that a consistent minority of WKU juniors and seniors felt that the general education program contributed substantially to development of their capacities for critical analysis, writing and speaking effectiveness.

WKU's Quality Enhancement Plan, *Evidence & Argument*, takes an intentional, cross-disciplinary approach to building students' skills and abilities in information mastery, critical analysis, and argumentation. *Evidence & Argument* articulates a single overarching student learning goal and three associated student learning outcomes:

QEP Student Learning Goal:

WKU students will bring evidence and argument to life through written, oral, and visual means. Graduates will apply and adapt this learning to their professional, social, and personal lives.

QEP Student Learning Outcomes:

1. WKU students will demonstrate the ability to gather sound and relevant evidence to address an issue. **(Evidence-Gathering)**

2. WKU students will demonstrate the ability to analyze and synthesize the assembled evidence. **(Sense-Making)**

3. WKU students will demonstrate the ability to articulate a logical and supported argument based on this analysis. **(Argumentation)**

The goal and outcomes of *Evidence & Argument* are directly tied to the institutional needs and priorities of WKU expressed in WKU's 2012-18 institutional strategic plan, *Challenging the Spirit*. *Challenging the Spirit* outlines key institutional priorities within four strategic goals, including: **(1) Foster Academic Excellence** – Extend the engaged learning and global dimensions of the WKU academic experience; reinforce WKU as a destination of choice for faculty, staff, and students; and **(2) Promote a Dynamic and Diverse University Community** – Emphasize the academic and social dimensions of diversity; support an intellectual climate of engagement and free exchange of ideas.

Strategic Goal 1, Objective 1.1 calls on the university to "sustain a vibrant curricular and co-curricular experience built on a liberal foundation." Specifically, Objective 1.1 addresses the implementation of a revised core (general education) curriculum, the *Colonnade Program*, aligned with AAC&U Liberal Education and America's

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Promise (LEAP) outcomes. Objective 1.3 commits WKU to "reinforce a global context for teaching and learning," in part by developing and offering new upper-division general education/core curriculum courses with a strong global dimension; these courses are represented in the Connections category of the *Colonnade Program* curriculum.

The *QEP* goals and outcomes, like those of the *Colonnade Program*, are directly tied to the AAC&U LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes. The LEAP initiative seeks to identify a set of essential learning outcomes for college learning and liberal education in the 21st century and to tie these outcomes to appropriate high-impact practices and authentic assessments.

Implementation of *Evidence & Argument* will include (1) a revised first-year writing and communication experience, (2) deeper integration of information mastery topics into key classes, (3) development and integration of online, discipline-specific teaching modules related to argumentation, and (4) alignment of the argumentation curriculum from the freshman year through junior/senior writing courses and capstone general education courses.

Through these initiatives, students will gain the skills to find, analyze, evaluate, and correctly cite pertinent primary and secondary sources, and to prepare speeches and written texts. They will strengthen their ability to recognize whether evidence is sound and reliable, distinguish between different kinds of evidence and how they function; analyze the provenance and credibility of various pieces of evidence, and synthesize that evidence in order to determine its meaning and significance.

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Students will learn how to develop an argumentative thesis based on data or evidence, understand how different kinds of evidence affect argumentation, employ logical reasoning that connects premises to conclusion, identify hidden assumptions, and evaluate the truth of premises and the validity of inferences.

We have designed a robust assessment strategy to document the impact of *Evidence & Argument* on student learning. We will evaluate student artifacts annually in key general education courses using AAC&U LEAP rubrics, along with periodic administration of the nationally-normed CLA+ instrument, which uses constructed-response tasks to assess students' higher-order critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication skills. By employing structured sampling of students at the first-year, sophomore/junior, and senior levels, our assessment design enables us to evaluate the impact of a progressively-organized curriculum that builds students' competencies in evidence-gathering, sense-making, and argumentation from the introductory to developing to mastery level. This design also allows us to assess individual relevant components of our *Colonnade Program* curriculum to ensure that course goals and outcomes are well-aligned and build upon one another.

Significant institutional personnel and resources will be dedicated to launch and ensure success of *Evidence & Argument*. We have identified key personnel necessary for administrative oversight, implementation, and assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes, and we have established a clear organizational framework to that end. We have established clear mechanisms to engage and incentivize faculty and staff to participate in professional development opportunities and contribute to *QEP* programmatic initiatives. We have committed to investing significant resources in technological infrastructure that will enable meaningful and authentic assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes, as well as enhance our capacity to build students' argumentation skills throughout the curriculum. In total, WKU has committed over $1.2 million to support the *QEP* and its programmatic initiatives.

We are confident that, through the implementation of *Evidence & Argument*, student learning at WKU will be enhanced, and that the university will, as called for in the institutional strategic plan, better "sustain a vibrant curricular and co-curricular experience built on a liberal foundation." In so doing, WKU will enhance its mission of preparing "students of all backgrounds to be productive, engaged, and socially-responsible citizen-leaders of a global society."

PHOTO BY CLINTON LEWIS

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EVIDENCE&ARGUMENT PART I
Topic Selection

Institutional Context

As a large public, comprehensive institution, Western Kentucky University is committed to meeting the individual needs of students while also contributing to the economic, educational, and cultural welfare of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. This commitment is clearly articulated in our mission statement:

Western Kentucky University prepares students of all backgrounds to be productive, engaged, and socially-responsible citizen-leaders of a global society. The University provides research, service and lifelong learning opportunities for its students, faculty, and other constituents. WKU enriches the quality of life for those within its reach.

While we take seriously our role in advancing the common good within Kentucky, we also aspire to be recognized for the quality and impact of our academic, scholarly, and service programs at the national level and beyond. To this end, WKU has articulated a vision of becoming *A Leading American University with International Reach*.

We recognize that realizing our vision and mission requires a sustained focus on a set of well-defined and focused priorities, each translated into cohesive and relevant implementation plans and linked to measurable indicators of success. Three overarching plans guide the academic mission at WKU, and provide the institutional context for the *QEP*.

Statewide Strategic Agenda

WKU's mission is aligned with statewide priorities established by the Kentucky General Assembly and the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. These priorities are reflected in the statewide strategic agenda for postsecondary and adult education, *Stronger By Degrees*. This strategic agenda establishes four statewide goals:

1. **College Readiness** – Ensuring more high school graduates, GED graduates, and working-age adults enter college prepared for credit-bearing work;

2. **Student Success** – Ensuring more of Kentucky's citizens complete college with the skills and abilities to be productive and engaged citizens;

3. **Research, Economic, and Community Development** – Generating new knowledge and research investments, producing high-demand degrees, increasing the educational attainment of Kentucky's workforce, and improving its communities;

4. **Efficiency and Innovation** – Creating new ways of serving more postsecondary students at a high quality in a challenging resource environment.

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These goals are undergirded by a series of policy objectives and strategies intended to ensure focused attention on statewide priorities. In addition, each postsecondary institution in Kentucky is charged with establishing aspirational performance targets for each of 14 institutional metrics, as a means of contributing to statewide attainment targets for these same metrics.

Institutional Strategic Plan

WKU's 2012–18 institutional strategic plan, *Challenging the Spirit*, is well-grounded in WKU's mission statement and serves to translate our mission priorities into a set of operational and aspirational goals, objectives, strategies, and performance measures. President Gary Ransdell contextualized *Challenging the Spirit* by saying, "First and foremost, we are committed to enhancing the academic mission and quality of our academic programs in ways that will set us apart as an institution. Second, we will continue to build a diverse university community which supports the learning and success of our students." *Challenging the Spirit* outlines key institutional priorities within four strategic goals:

1. **Foster Academic Excellence** – Extend the engaged learning and global dimensions of the WKU academic experience. Reinforce WKU as a destination of choice for faculty, staff, and students.

2. **Promote a Dynamic and Diverse University Community** – Emphasize the academic and social dimensions of diversity. Support an intellectual climate of engagement and free exchange of ideas.

3. **Improve Quality of Life for Our Communities** – Enhance the educational and cultural reach of WKU. Collaborate with external partners to advance regional priorities.

4. **Support the Core Mission with a Robust Campus Infrastructure** – Strengthen the capacity to fulfill institutional priorities. Manage resources efficiently and effectively.

The *Colonnade Program* for General Education

General education has long been the core of the undergraduate experience at WKU, providing students with a broad liberal education in important areas of human knowledge and inquiry. Through the integration of knowledge across multiple disciplines, WKU's general education program provides students the skills and knowledge they will need in a global society. It teaches them to think critically, solve problems, and communicate effectively. It also encourages them to explore connections among different areas of study in order to better understand their roles as students and citizens. And it promotes intellectual curiosity and a love of learning.

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In 2008, the Provost appointed a General Education Review Task Force to evaluate and redesign the general education program at WKU. The Provost charged the Task Force to "develop an imaginative and innovative core curriculum that best serves the educational needs of our students" in the 21st century. In 2012, upon recommendation of the University Senate, the Provost approved the new *Colonnade Program* for general education, effective fall 2014.

WKU's *Colonnade Program* addresses 24 statewide student learning outcomes for general education, as well as nine institutional outcomes designed to provide a culminating assessment of student learning throughout the general education program. Each of these outcomes is aligned with one or more American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Essential Learning Outcomes, which themselves represent a guiding vision for college learning and liberal education in the 21st century. The LEAP outcome categories are:

A. Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Natural and Physical World

B. Intellectual and Practical Skills

C. Personal and Social Responsibility

D. Integrative Learning

The *Colonnade Program* is organized into three tiers—Foundations, Explorations, and Connections. The statewide student learning outcomes for general education are incorporated into Foundations and Explorations courses. Connections courses address additional student learning outcomes, unique to WKU, that are designed to integrate discipline-specific knowledge and skills with the significant issues arising from our individual and shared responsibility as global citizens. Key tenets underlying the *Colonnade Program* organization are those of: **(1) progression**, emphasizing continuing development of students' fundamental skills throughout their entire course of study; **(2) perspective**, exposing students to different ways of knowing and/or seeing the world and themselves; **(3) connection**, which intentionally involves students integrating knowledge across disciplines; and
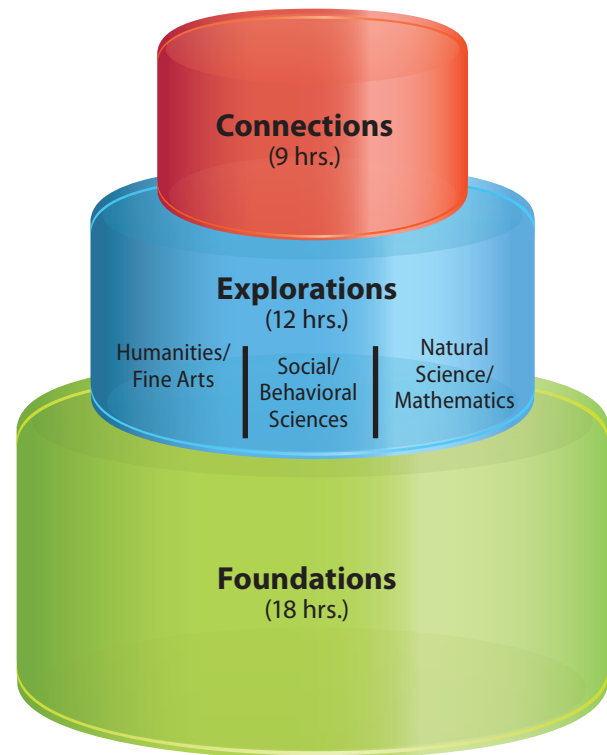
(4) application, whereby the general education experience provides students with opportunities to examine and engage in issues at the local, national, and international level.

Foundations courses ensure that students begin their education with the practical and intellectual skills necessary for college success and lifelong learning, including written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, and evaluation of the artifacts of human expression and experience. Explorations courses introduce students to discipline-specific concepts, theories, methodologies, and practices that provide a variety of ways to know and understand the world. Connections courses direct students to apply and integrate skills attained through Foundations courses with discipline-specific knowledge and context addressed across the breadth of Explorations courses; the intent is for students to examine significant issues challenging our individual and shared responsibility as global citizens. Connections courses thus provide a capstone experience for the *Colonnade Program,* and they form a core component of the institutional *QEP*.

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Broad-Based Involvement in *QEP* Theme Selection and Plan Development

WKU's Quality Enhancement Plan theme, ***Evidence & Argument***, was developed and refined over a 14-month period from April 2012 to May 2013, and engaged faculty, staff, and students from across the university. The Associate Vice President for Academic Enrichment & Effectiveness (AVPEE), on behalf of the Office of Academic Affairs, coordinated the process of selecting the *QEP* theme.

Call for and Review of *QEP* Theme Proposals

The process was initiated on April 13, 2012 with a *Call for QEP White Papers* distributed to all WKU faculty and staff, which offered individuals and units the opportunity to submit short proposals for potential *QEP* topics. The submission template limited proposals to three pages, while charging proponents with clearly articulating the "potential of the proposal to meaningfully impact and **document** student learning at WKU." Specifically, the template asked proponents to address the following questions:

1. Proposed Title. Provide a working title of 15 words or less that captures the focused intent of the proposal.

2. Problem Statement. Briefly describe the aspect of student learning this proposal is designed to enhance. What makes this dimension of learning particularly pertinent to WKU and its students?

3. Alignment. How does the proposal align with existing institutional and/or statewide priorities, as articulated in the emerging WKU 2012-17 Strategic Plan and *Stronger By Degrees: A Strategic Agenda for Kentucky Postsecondary and Adult Education 2011-2015*?

4. Initiatives. What specific initiatives or programs are proposed to address the identified *QEP* Theme? What would be the targeted student demographic and number of students to be impacted? How would the proposed activities be integrated into the existing curricular /co-curricular framework? What individuals or units would be responsible for ensuring that the activities

were appropriately implemented and successful? Map out a rough implementation timeline, beginning in fall 2015.

5. Student Learning Goals and Outcomes. What is the overarching student learning goal; that is, what is the primary academic purpose in implementing the proposed initiatives? What are 2-3 **measurable** student learning outcomes that will be targeted? Student learning outcomes describe the **specific** component of knowledge, skills, or perspectives that students will be expected to gain as a result of participating in the proposed initiatives.

6. Assessment. How might student learning outcomes be assessed? What metrics could be used to document enhanced student learning? What means of assessment (process, rubric) could be employed to track progress on these metrics? What would be appropriate criteria for success and institutional attainment targets? Where would the primary point of accountability lie for documenting enhanced student learning (individual academic departments, coordinating unit, Institutional Research, etc.)?

7. Resource Needs. What are the estimated resources needed to implement the proposed initiatives over a five-year period? Provide both dollar figures and an indication of how such funds would be utilized (personnel, materials and supplies, etc.). Justify the resource needs in terms of the **direct** impact on student learning, specifically in supporting attainment of the identified student learning goal and outcomes.

Six white papers were received from groups representing four of WKU's six academic colleges and WKU Libraries. These proposals each addressed dimensions of student learning that (1) had the potential to impact a large segment of the WKU student population and (2) were aligned with academic priorities established in the WKU strategic plan and vision of becoming ***A Leading American University with International Reach:***

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- WKU Libraries
Preparing Information Literate Students at WKU through Universal Information Literacy

- Departments of English and Communication, Potter College of Arts and Letters
Constructing Meaningful Discourse Locally and Globally: Producing Global Citizens to Meet 21st Century Challenges

- School of University Studies, University College
Pathways to Student Success

- Center for Leadership Excellence, Gordon Ford College of Business
Providing Leadership for All Aspects of the Global World

- Ogden College of Science & Engineering and College of Education & Behavioral Sciences
Inquiry/Project-Based Teaching Initiative across the University

- School of Professional Studies, University College
Creating a Sustainable Future through Social Responsibility and Stewardship

On May 9, 2012 these white papers were reviewed by the SACSCOC Leadership Team. Leadership Team members initially reviewed and scored each proposal using the SACSCOC *Quality Enhancement Plan Guidelines: Indicators of an Acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan* rubric. Following this initial screening, the Leadership Team met and discussed the merits of each proposal, subsequently providing feedback to the proposal writers. The Leadership Team ultimately determined that three of the six proposals – from WKU Libraries, Potter College of Arts and Letters, and the School of University Studies – merited further development as possible *QEP* themes. The AVPEE then worked with each of the proponent groups over the next two months to further develop, refine, and expand these three proposals.

At its June 19, 2012 retreat, the Council of Academic Deans (CAD) reviewed and discussed each of the three

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revised white papers. The CAD used the same process as the SACSCOC Leadership Team, considering the fit of each proposal to the underlying goals and intent of the Quality Enhancement Plan initiative, as articulated by SACSCOC in Core Requirement 2.12, Comprehensive Standard 3.3.2., and the *Quality Enhancement Plan Guidelines*. The CAD also considered alignment of the proposals to academic priorities established in the institutional strategic plan. In the end, the CAD reiterated the opinion of the SACSCOC Leadership Team regarding the merits of the three proposals, and encouraged each to be developed further.

The CAD also recognized the complementary nature of the proposals focusing on *Information Literacy* and *Meaningful Discourse*, and suggested these might form the basis for a single, integrated *QEP* theme; at the same time, they expressed a preference toward shifting the focus of the I*nformation Literacy* proposal to one emphasizing *Information Mastery,* arguing that this better reflected the intent to cultivate knowledge and skills related to acquiring, evaluating, and interpreting relevant literature throughout students' course of study.

During the fall 2012 and spring 2013 semesters, the AVPEE shared the three CAD-recommended white papers with the broader university community. Input was solicited from key governance constituencies, including the University Senate, the Staff Council, and the Student Government Association. In addition, proposals were shared with academic department heads, chairs, and directors, who in turn discussed them with their faculty and staff. Departments and colleges then provided feedback and recommendations on each proposal to the AVPEE. All of this feedback was then compiled and shared with the CAD.

Selection and Refinement of the *QEP* Theme

At its April 10, 2013 meeting, the CAD unanimously approved a motion recommending that the SACSCOC Leadership Team adopt a *QEP* theme built upon the *Information Mastery* and *Meaningful Discourse* white papers that "incorporates aspects of both proposals, and which addresses the broad objectives of enhancing students' ability to acquire, evaluate, and synthesize relevant information, and apply that information to produce relevant texts for meaningful discourse." At its meeting on May 2, 2013, the SACSCOC Leadership Team accepted the CAD recommendation and officially adopted a working *QEP* theme entitled *Information Mastery for Meaningful Discourse*.

This integrating step was important for two reasons: it recognized the commonality between the student learning outcomes of each proposal and paved the way for incorporating perceived needs from multiple disciplines. Broadly, each of these proposals focused on fact

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gathering, sense-making/analyzing and structuring, and mastery demonstrated by construction of logical and supported argument. In June 2013, a *QEP* Working Group was assembled that consisted of the AVPEE and representatives from the original *Information Mastery* and *Meaningful Discourse* proponent groups, including faculty from Academic Affairs, School of Professional Studies, and the Departments of Communication, English, Library Public Services, and Library Technical Services. This group melded the two proposals into a single, integrated *QEP* theme, *Evidence & Argument: Information Mastery for Meaningful Discours*e. In addition, this group developed the overarching *QEP* student learning goal and three attendant student learning outcomes. Finally, this group developed a framework for how and where the *QEP* goal and outcomes would be addressed and assessed, primarily within the context of WKU's new general education curriculum, the *Colonnade Program*.

On August 6, 2013, this draft framework was shared with the academic department heads and directors at their fall workday. In addition, the draft *QEP* framework was presented to the committee responsible for new program guidelines for general education, the *Colonnade* Implementation Committee. Committee members agreed that the proposed *QEP* fit well with learning objectives for the new *Colonnade Program*. This was not surprising, since the General Education Task Force had originally considered creating a Foundations course titled "Evidence and Argument" that would have had learning objectives very similar to the *QEP* proposed outcomes. The *Colonnade* Implementation Committee agreed that once the *QEP* was formally adopted by WKU, all Connection courses would be required to address the *QEP*'s outcomes. The section below entitled **Relevance to Institutional Priorities** further describes the relationship between the *QEP* and the *Colonnade Program*.

In November 2013, the Provost and AVPEE announced the *QEP* theme, ***Evidence & Argument***, in a series of forums open to all WKU faculty, staff, and students on the WKU main campus, as well as regional campuses in Elizabethtown/Ft. Knox, Glasgow, and Owensboro. Approximately 100 faculty, staff, and students participated in one or more of these forums. A separate forum was held for the Student Government Association. These forums included description of the *QEP* student learning goal and associated student learning outcomes, the linkage of these to statewide and institutional student learning outcomes for general education, and the framework for implementation and assessment developed by the *QEP* Working Group. The information presented in these forums was widely disseminated through articles in the WKU student newspaper and other local media outlets.

During the November 2013 open forums, the Office of Academic Affairs invited interested faculty, staff, and students to participate in the development and writing of ***Evidence & Argument***. The purpose of this invitation was to secure representation from as many academic departments and relevant constituencies as possible. In the meantime, the *QEP* Working Group continued to meet regularly to discuss and refine approaches to assessment of the *QEP*, including strategies for using the Blackboard Outcomes Assessment Module to facilitate capture and assessment of relevant artifacts and the suitability of AAC&U LEAP rubrics for assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes.

The AVPEE presented an update of progress on development of the *QEP* at the January 9, 2014 workday for deans, department heads, and directors. During this presentation, the framework for assessment of the *QEP* was described in relation to the previously-established implementation and accountability touch points. Also discussed was a plan to expand the *QEP* Theme Working Group to create a *QEP* Writing and Advisory Committee. Within this structure, it was proposed and affirmed that development of the *QEP* as a complete document would engage a core Writing Group, composed of 12-15 faculty with expertise and experience directly related to key

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elements of the *QEP* (e.g., literature best practices, implementation, assessment, and infrastructure support), and a broader Advisory Group of faculty, staff, and students who could provide additional context and direction on development of the *QEP* from the perspective of their particular disciplines and students.

By early spring 2014, the expanded Writing and Advisory Group had been established, including representatives from Academic Affairs, Student Government Association, WKU Libraries, all six of WKU's academic colleges, and 25 academic departments and programs. Departments and programs represented included the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program, Honors College, Schools of Journalism & Broadcasting, Kinesiology, Recreation, & Sport, Professional Studies, Teacher Education, and University Studies, and the Departments of Agriculture, Allied Health, Art, Biology, Communication, Counseling & Student Affairs, English, Geography & Geology, History, Library Public Services, Library Technical Services, Music, Philosophy & Religion, Physics & Astronomy, Political Science, Psychology, Public Health, and Social Work. **Appendix A** provides a complete list of *QEP* Writing and Advisory Group members.

During spring 2014, the Writing and Advisory Group met regularly to discuss the key sections of the *QEP*. At this time, a number of subcommittees were established to take the lead in researching, planning, and drafting specific sections of the *QEP*. Key among these were the subcommittees focusing on implementation/supportive environment and assessment. The implementation/supportive environment group was comprised primarily of individuals from departments that had proposed the

original white papers that were the genesis of the *QEP* theme—the Departments of English, Communication, Library Public Services, and School of Professional Studies. This was important, as these departments had already articulated plans for and commitment to most of the implementation initiatives that are articulated in the final *QEP*. Similarly, the assessment committee was comprised of individuals with prior experience in educational assessment, development of rubrics, sampling design, and statistics. Assignment of individuals on other subcommittees was based on expressed interest and/or prior experience with the topic. **Appendix A** provides a list of members on each of the subcommittees.

In March and April, 2014, subgroups focusing on process description, importance of the issue, and identification of key issues, goals, and outcomes, developed drafts of their respective sections. Subgroups focusing on implementation, institutional support, and assessment developed draft outlines for their sections. All of the subgroups convened in mid-April to review and discuss these first drafts. Throughout the summer, writing subgroups continued to meet regularly to refine and expand their sections of the *QEP*; in addition, the implementation and infrastructure subgroups reached out to relevant constituencies – including the Division of Information Technology, Dean of Libraries, and various academic departments – to discuss specific components of implementation and support being considered for inclusion in the *QEP*.

Evidence & Argument was officially unveiled by President Ransdell during his Fall 2014 Convocation address to the university community.

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Key Issues Arising From Previous Assessments

According to the 2010 AAC&U-funded report *Raising the Bar: Employers' Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Downturn*, 89% of employers surveyed identified "the ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing" as a learning outcome that is not sufficiently addressed by America's colleges and universities. Moreover, 81% of those employers reported that "critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills" need to be emphasized more than they are today, while 75% expressed dissatisfaction with graduates' ability to "analyze and solve complex problems." Finally, 68% expressed a desire to hire graduates with better preparation in "locat[ing], organiz[ing], and evaluat[ing] information from multiple sources" (Hart Research Associates, 2010).

The ability to locate, evaluate, and synthesize scholarly and authoritative information impacts student performance and academic achievement; such knowledge and skills are associated with beneficial behaviors that improve student persistence/retention, improve critical thinking skills, and prepare lifelong learners. Employers consistently ask for graduates with developed cognitive skills such as "the ability to comprehend, interpret, or extrapolate; to evaluate materials and methods; and to apply abstractions or principles…" (Terenzini, et al., 1996).

In a 2015 follow-up, comparative survey of employers and college students, *Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success*, employers identified "proficiency in the cross-cutting skills related to communication, teamwork, ethical decision-making, critical thinking, and applying knowledge in real-world settings" as their top priorities when hiring. Of slightly less importance were "capacities to problem solve, locate and evaluate information from multiple sources" (Hart Research Associates, 2015).

Most interesting, while the majority of college students surveyed felt that their college experience had prepared them well in 11 of 17 competency areas, including those key outcomes identified by employers, there was typically a 35-40 percentage point gap between their level of expressed confidence and that of employers; for example, while 59% of college students said they were well prepared for 'analyzing and solving complex problems,' only 25% of employers agreed (Hart Research Associates, 2015).

It is clear what employers expect of today's college graduates. In order for WKU to fully realize its mission of preparing "students of all backgrounds to be productive, engaged, and socially-responsible citizen-leaders…" and providing "lifelong learning opportunities for its students…," our academic programs and priorities must

be aligned and responsive to these national trends. WKU is sending graduates into increasingly-demanding work environments in which their employers expect them to know how to think through and solve problems, work successfully and creatively in teams, and communicate clearly and persuasively the results of their efforts.

Bringing Assessment Findings to Bear on the Issue

Much of the assessment data related to students' skills in areas related to critical analysis and argumentation have come from analysis of WKU's general education curriculum over the last decade. These assessments have included annual course-embedded assessments of general education competencies and, more recently, pilot assessments of selected new statewide learning outcomes for general education. These internal assessments have been supplemented by data from external, nationally-normed instruments, including the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA+). The sections that follow summarize the relevant findings from this decade of assessment.

Annual Assessments of General Education 2004/05 through 2007/08

In 2004, the General Education Committee of the University Senate developed a process for the annual course-embedded assessment of student success in meeting the targeted competencies of the general education program. The process included regional campus classes as well as those taught in Bowling Green. Among the ten general education competencies assessed, two are directly relevant to the *QEP*:

- The capacity for critical and logical thinking; and

- Proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking.

Patterns in assessment findings were relatively consistent from 2004/05 through 2007/08, encompassing four cycles of assessment. Students assessed in WKU's Introduction to College Writing (ENG 100) and Writing in the Disciplines (ENG 300) courses generally scored above targeted benchmarks (70% scoring 3 or higher out of 5) on 4 of 5 assessment measures related to critical and analytic writing. In both courses, however, students fell **below** benchmarks on the use of documentation and source material. Faculty members in several disciplines teaching general education courses commented on the inability of students to find sources and to marshal documentation in support of a point of view. In 2005-06, the assessment report concluded that "assessment of critical thinking remains an important challenge for the university's general education program," and that "the university's general education program faces several process related challenges…assessing critical thinking remains a special

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challenge, although the results from our current process are encouraging." Most of the proposed changes in general education courses following this assessment cycle were linked to improving student performance in this regard.

In 2008, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs established a General Education Review Task Force to undertake a systematic review of the general education program. Over the next three years, the Task Force worked to meet its original charge to "develop an imaginative and innovative core curriculum that best serves the education needs of our students" in the 21st century. The result of this effort was the *Colonnade Program*, which was implemented in the fall 2014 semester.

Pilot Assessment of Statewide Student Learning Outcomes for General Education 2012/13 through 2013/14

In 2012 WKU began to transition its assessment of general education to address the new statewide student learning outcomes for general education that serve as the basis of the *Colonnade Program*. To that end, one student learning outcome was selected from each of the five content categories (Written and Oral Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, Arts and Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social and Behavioral Sciences) and assessed in a number of high-enrollment, multi-section courses to generate baseline data on students' performance and guide development of a comprehensive *Colonnade Program* assessment strategy going forward. The following statewide learning outcome from the Oral/Written Communication category was assessed:

- Identify, analyze, and evaluate statements, assumptions, and conclusions representing diverse points of view; and construct informed, sustained, and ethical arguments in response.

Each year, the WKU Office of Institutional Research provided course coordinators with random samples of students, by section, from the identified high-enrollment courses. The number of students sampled from each course and section was established statistically to ensure acceptable error rates, and included sufficient oversampling to account for the possibility that some selected students were still enrolled but no longer attending class. Serving as primary means of assessment were course-embedded artifacts, including student writing samples and persuasive speeches for oral and written communication. These were assessed using rubrics designed to evaluate competencies and, as a key goal of this pilot, the alignment between existing course content, artifacts, and assessment rubrics and the new statewide student learning outcomes (SLO).

The Department of English incorporated the statewide SLO into their existing assessment process for ENG 100. A total of 91 randomly-selected student artifacts were included. Notes from multiple faculty evaluators indicated that many of the artifacts sampled were narrative or analysis assignments as opposed to argument papers; as such, they were not consistent with the emphasis on argumentation contained in the new statewide student learning outcomes and the upcoming *Colonnade Program*. Moreover, a significant number of papers did not include a bibliography and/or appropriate citations for sources. These findings indicated a need for revision of ENG 100 course goals to place more emphasis on development of students' argumentation skills, including drawing on source material.

The Department of Communication collected speech outlines from 57 randomly selected students across sections of Fundamentals of Public Speaking and Communication (COMM 145). A team of five faculty members rated the outlines for the Speech of Information and Diversity (4-6 minute informative speech, which must take a multicultural perspective) using the National Communication Association's Competent Speaker Speech Evaluation Form, the existing assessment tool and procedures used within the department. The following table shows the mean score for each competency:

The data show that students scored on the

Competency	Mean Score
1. Chooses and narrows a topic appropriately for the audience and occasion.	2.54
2. Communicates the thesis or specific purpose in a manner appropriate for audience and occasion.	2.58
3. Provides appropriate supporting material based on the audience and occasion.	2.09
4. Uses an organization pattern appropriate to topic, audience, occasion, and purpose.	2.49
5. Uses language that is appropriate to the audience, occasion, and purpose.	2.36

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satisfactory level or higher across all five categories. Students were quite effective in choosing an appropriate topic and were able to narrow this topic for the audience. While still at the satisfactory level, students scored lowest in their ability to incorporate different sources and supporting materials (Item 3). This finding was consistent with prior assessments that suggested WKU students have some difficulty in marshalling evidence to support their claims.

In the 2013/14 assessment cycle, WKU concentrated on assessment of statewide learning outcomes in the area of Written Communication. In particular, we expanded the assessment to include four statewide student learning outcomes addressed in our ENG 100 courses:

main campus and 14 papers from students enrolled in sections offered at WKU's south campus location.

In fall 2013 WKU (main campus) offered 62 sections of English 100 and 100 Enhanced. Full-time faculty taught 22 (35.5%) of those courses; part-time faculty taught 27 (43.5%) of those courses; and GTAs taught 13 (21%) of those courses. The courses used for the writing sample (only those sections with a Blackboard component) were taught by a higher percentage of part-time faculty (20 of 35 sections, or 57%); full time faculty taught 11 sections (31%); GTAs taught 4 sections (11%).

The Department of English established a mean rating target of 2.25 for each rubric element. The table below summarizes the findings from this assessment.

Overall mean ratings for student artifacts, disaggregated by location.			
Rubric Item	All (n = 83)	ENG 100 – Main Campus (n= 69)	ENG 100C – South Campus (n = 14)
Thesis Statement	2.14	2.16	2.07
Audience	1.89	1.97	1.50
Relevance of Sources	2.16	2.18	2.09
Integration of Sources	1.96	1.97	1.91
Quality of Sources	2.08	2.13	1.73

- Students will demonstrate the ability to write clear and effective prose in several forms, using conventions appropriate to audience (including academic audiences), purpose, and genre.

- Students will demonstrate the ability to find, analyze, evaluate, and cite pertinent primary and secondary sources, including academic databases, to prepare written texts.

- Students will demonstrate the ability to identify, analyze, and evaluate statements, assumptions, and conclusions representing diverse points of view, and construct informed, sustained, and ethical arguments in response.

- Students will demonstrate the ability to plan, organize, revise, practice, edit, and proofread to improve the development and clarity of ideas.

The assessment rubric evaluated student success in five areas, designed to measure the appropriate dimensions of the statewide student learning outcomes.

A total of 83 student artifacts were included, 63 from students enrolled in ENG 100 sections offered on WKU's

The results show that the target score of 2.25 on each rubric item was not attained; however, the goal was nearly met for three of the five rubric items (Thesis Statement, Relevance of Sources, Quality of Sources). Students scored lowest on those elements of the rubric related to tailoring their argument to an appropriate audience and integrating sources to support their claims. Ratings from main campus sections of ENG 100 were comparable to those for south campus sections of ENG 100C for three of five items, while scores for Audience and Quality of Sources were decidedly lower in the south campus sample. Again, these data are consistent with previous findings showing WKU students' challenges in the use of evidence to support their claims.

Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA+)

In 2009-10, as part of its involvement with the nationwide Voluntary System of Accountability, WKU participated in the nationally-normed Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA+). The instrument uses constructed-response tasks to assess students' higher-order critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication skills (CAE, 2009). Specifically, students are assigned to one of two types of tasks, a Performance Task or an Analytic Writing Task.

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In the Performance Task, students are provided a hypothetical but realistic situation, as well as a document library that includes a range of different types of information sources. Students analyze and synthesize these materials to generate answers to several open-ended questions. In generating these responses, students typically must integrate evidence from different sources, distinguish rational, factual arguments from emotional opinions, deal with data in tables and figures, and integrate appropriate information into a coherent and supported response.

In the Analytic Writing Task, students are given two types of essay prompts. The Make-an-Argument question asks them to develop a persuasive analytic essay to support their position on a given issue. The Critique-an-Argument question requires them to discuss the extent to which a presented argument is well-reasoned. In both cases, students must consider development of the thesis, support of the underlying thesis with valid, relevant information, and the logical and supported presentation of the argument.

The 2009/10 administration at WKU represented a small pilot of seniors intended to generate baseline data for the upcoming review and revision of WKU's general education program.

PHOTO BY JEANIE ADAMS-SMITH

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

Between 2003 and 2012, WKU regularly participated in the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE). NSSE collects information from samples of first-year students and seniors regarding the nature of their undergraduate experience. Survey items attempt to measure the extent to which students have engaged in high-impact educational practices that have been empirically-linked to learning, student success, and graduation (NSSE, 2012).

Recognizing that substantial course-based assessment data already existed, in 2008/09 the focus of general education assessment centered on student's self-reported perceptions of the program and its contribution to their learning. At that time WKU participated regularly in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Although NSSE items on writing, speaking, critical thinking, analyzing quantitative problems, and understanding people of differing backgrounds do not specifically reference general education, they are closely linked with four of the university's ten general education goals and thus constitute a valuable source of information about student perceptions.

The table on the next page summarizes the results of these assessments for a select group of survey items directly relevant to the *QEP*.

NSSE data indicated that, for items related to students' skills in critical analysis, writing and speaking effectiveness, the WKU academic experience has consistently added value to students' professional and personal development; for all items, mean responses for samples

Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA+)			
	N	Mean Score ($\pm$ SE)	Mean Percentile Rank Score
Total CLA+ Score	39	1147 $\pm$ 28.2	29
Performance Task	20	1162 $\pm$ 42.9	51
Analytic Writing Task	19	1131 $\pm$ 36.9	16
Make-an-Argument	19	1111 $\pm$ 45.0	12
Critique-an-Argument	19	1151 $\pm$ 43.1	20
Entering Academic Ability Score	39	1086 $\pm$ 33.5	59

Results of the CLA+ were mixed. WKU seniors scored in the 51st percentile of participating institutions on the Performance Task dimension of the CLA+ instrument; this percentile was consistent with WKU's students' Entering Academic Ability Score, an ACT-based metric used by CLA+ to baseline institutional student demographics. On the other hand, students assigned the Analytic Writing Task scored at the 16th percentile; within the Analytic Writing Task, students performed better on the Critique-an-Argument question (20th percentile) than on the Make-an-Argument question (12th percentile). While the sample size of this pilot assessment was small (n = 39), the data suggested that WKU seniors' critical analysis abilities are at or near the national average, but that their ability to formulate and analyze arguments is an area of concern and a potential target for improvement in student learning.

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National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)							
"To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?" (Likert scale: 1=Very Little, 2=Some, 3=Quite a Bit, 4= Very Much)	Class	2003 Mean	2006 Mean	2007 Mean	2009 Mean	2012 Mean	2012 Effect/Sig.[1]
Writing clearly and effectively	1st Year	2.74	2.82	2.86	2.90	2.96	-0.12*
	Senior	3.05	3.09	3.12	3.05	3.15	-0.02
Speaking clearly and effectively	1st Year	2.80	2.88	2.91	2.91	2.95	0.05
	Senior	3.01	3.05	3.02	3.03	3.08	0.04
Thinking critically and analytically	1st Year	2.96	3.05	3.07	3.09	3.14	-0.16**
	Senior	3.21	3.33	3.33	3.35	3.33	-0.10*
Analyzing quantitative problems	1st Year	2.50	2.78	2.84	2.96	2.90	-0.14**
	Senior	2.79	2.99	3.05	3.29	3.10	-0.05

[1] Comparison of 2012 WKU mean to the survey grand mean. According to NSSE, the effect size indicates the "practical significance" of the numerical difference in means, and is calculated by dividing the mean difference by the pooled standard deviation; an effect size of 0.2 is considered small, 0.5 moderate, and 0.8 large. Negative signs indicate that the WKU mean is less than the survey grand mean. Associated significance levels are as follows: * - $p<0.05$, ** - $p<0.01$, *** - $p<0.001$.

of seniors were consistently higher than those of first-year students. Moreover, comparison of item means among years indicated a trend toward increasingly higher means among both first-year and senior sampling groups.

Nevertheless, comparison of 2012 institutional data relative to survey grand means shows that, for most items, WKU sample means were lower than the corresponding grand mean derived from 546 participating institutions. Among first-year students, WKU students generated a mean response significantly below the national average on the items related to writing clearly and effectively, thinking critically and analytically, and

analyzing quantitative problems; the effect size of each of these was both large and statistically-significant. WKU seniors reported a lower-than-average agreement with the statement related to development of students' critical and analytic thinking skills; this effect was also large and significant.

Western Kentucky University Student Engagement Survey (WKUSES)

Between 2002 and 2008, the Western Kentucky University Student Engagement Survey (WKUSES) was distributed annually to juniors and seniors. This survey was intended to assess various aspects of students' curricular and co-curricular experience, particularly related to engaged and experiential learning. WKUSES also included questions related to general education goals (including critical thinking, writing and speaking effectively) as well as an overall question about the impact of general education. WKUSES data formed the basis for institutional assessment of student learning outcomes tied to WKU's previous QEP, *Engaging Students for Success in a Global Society*.

WKUSES data indicated that, consistently, fewer than 50% of students felt that WKU's general education program contributed 'Quite a Bit' or' Very Much' to their abilities in key areas related to critical writing, speaking, and analysis. Factor analysis of 2005 WKUSES data (McElroy and Cobb, 2010) identified 10 factors that accounted for a significant amount of the total variation

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Western Kentucky University Student Engagement Survey (WKUSES)							
"To what extent have your general education courses contributed to your:" (Likert scale: 1=Very Little, 2=Some, 3=Quite a Bit, 4= Very Much)	Percentage of Respondents Answering 'Quite a Bit' or 'Very Much'						
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Writing clearly/effectively	44.04	46.01	43.06	42.95	43.05	42.83	45.74
Speaking clearly/effectively	36.69	44.16	41.19	39.96	41.71	39.76	43.57
Thinking critically and analytically	42.44	43.64	40.97	41.87	41.76	39.16	43.73

in the data set; of these, a general education factor accounted for 8.52% of the total variation, second highest among the 10 factors. Despite the importance of this factor, none of the original survey items contributing to the general education factor showed any significant change in mean score between 2005 and 2008.

By contrast, 23 other survey items (51% of the 45 total items on the survey) did show significant increases in mean score over the same time period; 14 of these were directly related to engaged learning outcomes targeted by *Engaging Students for Success in a Global Society*, and five others reflected aspects of student advising, another targeted institutional priority during that time. These findings suggest that an intentional focus on a set of clearly-defined and articulated student learning outcomes, such as those associated with a *QEP*, can effect demonstrable positive change in those outcomes; by contrast, equally-important and high-priority outcomes may not respond as readily if they are not directly targeted for attention (McElroy and Cobb, 2010).

Conclusion

The collective and independent assessments described above can be summarized as follows:

1. Developing students' capacity for critical analysis and effective argumentation is a key expectation employers place on universities.

2. There is a gap in perception between employers and college students in the extent to which each group feels graduates are well-prepared in key competency areas.

3. Annual assessments of WKU's general education program identified a need for sustained focus on

development of students' critical thinking skills overall, as well as their specific ability to marshal documentation and evidence in support of a point of view.

4. Results of a pilot administration of the nationally-normed College Learning Assessment (CLA+) instrument indicated that, while WKU students performed adequately in critical analysis (51st percentile nationwide), they performed rather poorly in the area of analytic writing (16th percentile).

5. WKU students tended to lag behind national averages in their self-reported responses to National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) items related to critical analysis, writing and speaking effectiveness.

6. A consistent minority of WKU students felt that WKU's general education program contributed substantially to development of their capacities for critical analysis, writing and speaking effectiveness.

7. An intentional focus on clearly-defined and articulated student learning outcomes can manifest significant positive change, well beyond what is seen among equally-important but less specifically-targeted outcomes.

Taken together, these findings document the importance of the student learning outcomes articulated in *Evidence & Argument*, the key role and propitious timing offered by implementation of WKU's new *Colonnade Program,* and that WKU could significantly improve learning in areas which would have long term benefits to students.

EVIDENCE&ARGUMENT **PART II**

Linkage and Relevance

QEP Goals, Outcomes, and Relevance to Institutional Priorities

The overarching intent of WKU's *QEP*, **Evidence & Argument**, is to prepare students to utilize information and logically-supported claims to address complex and relevant questions of our time. At its best, education is a holistic and lifelong process, where students not only acquire information, but also learn how to think creatively, assess for truth and accuracy, and make a compelling case for the best way forward. Strengthening and sharpening skills in evidence analysis and argument evaluation is a critical part of WKU's mission to prepare "students of all backgrounds to be productive, engaged, and socially responsible citizen-leaders of a global society."

The ability to use evidence and evaluate arguments is an essential component of a liberal education at WKU. Through **Evidence & Argument**, students will practice engaged learning across the curriculum by gathering and analyzing data, evaluating assumptions, and critiquing inferences. The focus on evidence and arguments provides students with a common methodology and academic toolkit to make connections among diverse courses and disciplines, ultimately providing a sense of integration and purpose to their university education. **Evidence & Argument** will thus enable students to connect the critical thinking skills they acquire at WKU to their professional, social, and personal lives.

Evidence & Argument is built upon a single student learning goal, and three associated student learning outcomes:

QEP Student Learning Goal

WKU students will bring evidence and argument to life through written, oral, and visual means. Graduates will apply and adapt this learning to their professional, social, and personal lives.

QEP Student Learning Outcomes

1. WKU students will demonstrate the ability to gather sound and relevant evidence to address an issue. **(Evidence-Gathering)**

2. WKU students will demonstrate the ability to analyze and synthesize the assembled evidence. **(Sense-Making)**

3. WKU students will demonstrate the ability to articulate a logical and supported argument based on this analysis. **(Argumentation)**

Relevance to Institutional Priorities

The goals and outcomes of **Evidence & Argument** are directly tied to goals and objectives expressed in the institutional strategic plan, *Challenging the Spirit*. Objective 1.1 calls on the university to "sustain a vibrant curricular and co-curricular experience built on a liberal foundation." Specifically, Objective 1.1 addresses the implementation of a revised core (general education) curriculum, the *Colonnade Program*, aligned with AAC&U LEAP outcomes. Objective 1.3 commits WKU to "reinforce a global context for teaching and learning," in part by developing and offering new upper-division general education/core curriculum courses with a strong global dimension; these courses are represented in the Connections category of the *Colonnade Program* curriculum.

The *Colonnade Program*, as well as *QEP* goals and outcomes, are directly tied to AAC&U LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes. The LEAP initiative seeks to identify a set of essential learning outcomes for college learning and liberal education in the 21st century, and to tie these outcomes to appropriate high-impact practices and authentic assessments. LEAP outcomes include:

A. **Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World**

B. **Intellectual and Practical Skills** – including inquiry & analysis, creative & critical thinking, written & oral communication, quantitative literacy, information literacy, and teamwork & problem solving.

C. **Personal and Social Responsibility** – including civic knowledge & engagement at local and global scales, intercultural knowledge & competence, ethical reasoning & action, and foundations & skills for lifelong learning.

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D. **Integrative and Applied Learning** – including synthesis and advanced accomplishment with diverse communities and real-world challenges.

WKU's *Colonnade Program* incorporates 24 student learning outcomes for general education adopted statewide and described in Kentucky's *General Education Transfer Policy and Implementation Guidelines*. In addition to the statewide outcomes, the *Colonnade Program* includes nine institutional student learning outcomes designed to provide culminating assessment of student learning throughout the core curriculum. These latter outcomes are addressed through Connections courses, which direct students to apply and integrate discipline-specific knowledge and skills to the significant issues challenging our individual and shared responsibility as global citizens. Students learn to analyze and evaluate cultural contexts, examine issues on both a local and global scale, and apply system-level approaches to the stewardship of our social and physical environments.

The table below illustrates the direct relationship among *QEP* student learning outcomes, relevant *Colonnade Program* outcomes, and underlying LEAP outcomes upon which they are based.

In the 21st century, students are spending increasingly more time connected to media, without a corresponding increase in their ability to successfully gather, assess, and filter relevant and reliable evidence. WKU's General Education Assessment Report for 2007-2008 examined outcomes for general education courses in English and Communication and found that "student scores continue to be somewhat lower in measures relating to thesis development and the use of evidence, areas that both departments are addressing in future coursework." The development of WKU's *Colonnade Program* was a major step toward addressing this institutional issue, and ***Evidence & Argument*** will reinforce this relationship and establish development of students' evidence-gathering, sense-making, and argumentation skills as a central institutional priority.

QEP **Student Learning Outcomes**	*Colonnade Program* **Outcomes**	**LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes**
1. WKU students will demonstrate the ability to gather sound and relevant evidence to address an issue. (Evidence-Gathering)	Find, analyze, evaluate, and cite pertinent primary and secondary sources, including academic databases, to prepare speeches and written texts. Distinguish among various kinds of evidence by identifying reliable sources and valid arguments.	B. Intellectual and Practical Skills –written & oral communication, information literacy.
2. WKU students will demonstrate the ability to analyze and synthesize the assembled evidence. (Sense-Making)	Identify, analyze, and evaluate statements, assumptions, and conclusions representing diverse points of view, and construct informed, sustained, and ethical arguments in response.	B. Intellectual and Practical Skills – inquiry & analysis, creative & critical thinking. D. Integrative and Applied Learning –synthesis and advanced accomplishment with diverse communities and real-world challenges.
3. WKU students will demonstrate the ability to articulate a logical and supported argument based on this analysis. (Argumentation)	Evaluate solutions to real-world social and cultural problems. Evaluate the consequences of decision-making on local and global scales. Evaluate how systems-level thinking informs decision-making, public policy, and/or the sustainability of the system itself.	C. Personal and Social Responsibility –civic knowledge & engagement at local and global scales, intercultural knowledge & competence, ethical reasoning & action, and foundations & skills for lifelong learning.

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Gathering accurate, reliable, and meaningful evidence is an essential first step toward effective argumentation and communication. Specifically, the evidence-gathering outcome of the *QEP* will give students the skills to find, analyze, evaluate, and cite pertinent primary and secondary sources (including academic databases), and to prepare speeches and written texts. This outcome directly addresses a key issue identified through the annual assessments of general education program from 2004/05 through 2007/08, namely the perceived inability of students to find sources and to marshal documentation in support of a point of view. (See **Annual Assessments of General Education** above)

Students will also learn to **analyze** and **synthesize** the assembled evidence. The sense-making outcome of the *QEP* will strengthen students' ability to recognize whether evidence is sound and reliable, a core aspect of effective critical thinking. Specifically, students will learn how to: distinguish between different kinds of evidence (quantitative vs. qualitative, primary vs. secondary, etc.) and how they function; analyze the provenance and credibility of various pieces of evidence; synthesize a body of evidence in order to determine its significance; and identify strengths and weaknesses of a body of evidence.

This emphasis again is strongly aligned with the WKU *Colonnade Program*, as well as our institutional commitment to LEAP learning outcomes as expressed in the institutional strategic plan. (See **Institutional Context** above) Moreover, this outcome follows from the conclusion of annual general education assessments that "assessment of critical thinking remains an important

challenge for the university's general education program." (See **Annual Assessments of General Education** above)

Students will learn both how to construct and critique arguments. The **argumentation** outcome of the *QEP* will teach students how to: develop an argumentative thesis that is based on data or evidence; understand how different kinds of evidence (quantitative vs. qualitative, primary vs. secondary, etc.) affect argumentation; employ logical reasoning that connects premises to conclusion; identify hidden assumptions particular arguments might rely on; and evaluate the truth of premises and the validity of inferences. The need to address such skills was evident in 2012/13 assessments of the statewide learning outcomes for general education by both the Department of English and Department of Communication. In both cases, students scored lowest in their ability to incorporate different sources and supporting materials, indicating the need to place more emphasis on development of students' argumentation skills. (See **Pilot Assessment of Statewide Student Learning Outcomes for General Education** above) These findings were reinforced by the 2009/10 administration of the Collegiate Learning Assessment, which indicated that WKU students' ability to formulate and analyze arguments is an area of concern. (See **Collegiate Learning Assessment** above)

By explicitly supporting the outcomes of our newly established general education program, ***Evidence & Argument*** is tied directly to institutional needs and priorities. The *QEP* and *Colonnade Program* are mutually reinforcing, thereby helping sustain, as called for in the institutional strategic plan, "a vibrant curricular and co-curricular experience built on a liberal foundation."

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Literature Review

21st Century Skills

As our economy continues to globalize and the need for civic engagement increases, employers seek candidates with higher order thinking and communication skills (Saavedra and Opfer, 2012). Wagner (2008) argues students need seven survival skills to succeed in the contemporary workforce (as cited in Saavedra and Opfer, 2012). Of those seven skills, four deal directly with aspects of *Evidence & Argument*: critical thinking and problem solving, effective oral and written communication, accessing and analyzing information, and curiosity and imagination.

Commissioned by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), Hart Research Associates (2013) surveyed 318 employers from the private and nonprofit sectors that had at least 25 employees. These employers reported that "25% or more of their new hires hold either an associate degree from a two year college or a Bachelor's degree from a four-year college." Several findings from this survey indicate the value of employees having developed evidence-gathering, sense-making, and argumentation skills prior to entering the workforce. For example, 93% of those surveyed indicated that "a candidate's demonstrated

capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than [a candidate's] undergraduate major." Likewise, the survey revealed that "[m]ore than three in four employers say they want colleges to place more emphasis on helping students develop on five key learning outcomes: critical thinking, complex problem solving, written and oral communication, and applied knowledge in real-world settings." This same study documented a series of existing or emerging educational practices that employers feel have the potential to prepare graduates for success in the workplace; among these, the highest percentage of employers (83%) expressed confidence in learning outcomes that set expectations for students to "develop research questions in their field and evidence-based analyses."

These findings mirror an earlier AAC&U-commissioned study (Hart Research Associates, 2010). Here, 89% of employers surveyed identified "the ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing" as a learning outcome that is not sufficiently addressed by America's colleges and universities. Moreover, 81% of those employers reported that "critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills" need to be emphasized more than they are today; 75% expressed dissatisfaction with graduates' ability to "analyze

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and solve complex problems"; and 68% expressed a desire to hire graduates with better preparation in "locat[ing], organiz[ing], and evaluat[ing] information from multiple sources" (Hart Research Associates, 2010). The ability to locate, evaluate, and synthesize scholarly and authoritative information impacts student performance and academic achievement during their university careers. Further, these skills and knowledge are associated with beneficial behaviors that improve student persistence/ retention, improve critical thinking skills, and prepare lifelong learners.

The views of employers are not surprising given the findings of Arum (2011), who analyzed data from 2,322 college students at 24 U.S. colleges and universities from 2005-2009. His work demonstrated that "[f]orty-five percent of students made no significant improvement in their critical thinking, reasoning or writing skills during the first two years of college… After four years, 36 percent showed no significant gains in these so-called "higher order" thinking skills (as cited in Rimmer, 2011).

Information Mastery

Information mastery skills are important contributors to attainment of these necessary 21st century skills. They impact student performance and academic achievement, are associated with beneficial behaviors that improve student persistence, improve critical thinking skills, and prepare life-long learners. Employers consistently ask colleges and universities to place more emphasis on information literacy. In fact, the Hart Research Associates (2013) study found that 72% of surveyed employers want to see more teaching of information mastery skills, specifically "the ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources."

Many recent initiatives emphasize discovery and critical evaluation of relevant information. In Europe, the Bologna Process has dealt with the issue of information competency in postsecondary education (Holliday, 2011). Here in the U.S., the Lumina Foundation has done extensive work on the learning outcomes and competencies that should be obtained by graduates at each degree level. Lumina's major report, *Degree Qualifications Profile—Defining Degrees: A New Direction for American Higher Education to be Tested and Developed in Partnership with Faculty, Students, Leaders, and Stakeholders* (2011), outlined key competencies for undergraduate degree recipients related to the use of information resources:

At the associate level, the student:

• Identifies, categorizes, evaluates, and cites multiple information resources necessary to engage in projects, papers, or performance in his or her program.

At the baccalaureate level, the student:

• Incorporates multiple information resources presented in different media and/or different languages, in projects, papers, or performances, with citations in forms appropriate to those resources, and evaluates the reliability and comparative worth of competing information resources.

• Explicates the ideal characteristics of current information resources for the execution of projects, papers, or performances; accesses those resources with appropriate delimiting terms and

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syntax; and describes the strategies by which he/she identified and searched for those resources.

Within Kentucky, there are parallel efforts to define the outcomes of student learning. The 2011 draft revision of the *Kentucky General Education Transfer Policy and Implementation Guidelines* (2011a) carries the following student learning outcome (under written and oral communication): "Find, analyze, evaluate, and cite pertinent primary and secondary sources, including academic databases, to prepare speeches and written texts." Kentucky is also using the Lumina Foundation's Degree

Qualifications Profile by implementing the Kentucky Tuning Project. This initiative will develop common learning outcomes and competency outcomes using evidence-based research. The Kentucky Tuning Project includes evaluation and critical thinking in its overall competencies, as well as within individual disciplines. For example, the business competencies for "oral and written communication" emphasize finding, analyzing, and citing relevant information (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2011b).

Student use of library resources and services is positively correlated to many effective academic behaviors, including more student-faculty interactions, active learning, and writing activities. These behaviors, in turn, are associated with gains in student achievement. While there is no direct link between library use and these desired outcomes, this indirect link has been shown in many studies (Terenzini, et al., 1996; Braxton, et al., 2000). Student use of library resources and services is positively correlated to many effective academic behaviors, including "more student-faculty interactions, active learning, and writing activities. . ." These behaviors, in

turn, are associated with gains in student achievement. While there is no direct link between library use and these desired outcomes, this indirect link has been shown in many studies (Terenzini, et al., 1996; Braxton, et al., 2000).

There are many ways in which information literacy or mastery is defined. According to the Association of College and Research Libraries (2000), individuals "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information." This definition is endorsed by the American Association for Higher Education and the Council of Independent Colleges. The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) is now using the term "information competency," which is defined in a somewhat more comprehensive fashion. The IFLA definition reads as follows: "A competent citizen, whether a student, a professional or a worker[,] is able to recognize her/his information needs [and] knows how to locate, identify access, retrieve, evaluate, organize, and use information. To be an information literate person, one has to know how to benefit from the worlds of knowledge, and incorporate the experience of others into one's background" (Lau, 2006).

In a survey of corporate employers, The National Commission on Writing found that writing is an important part of "high-skill, high-wage, professional work." Effective writing is a prerequisite for hiring and promotion, while poor writing may keep candidates from being hired (College Board, 2004; Gray, et al., 2005).

Evidence and Argument from a Literacy Perspective

In many ways, a student's inability to navigate the rigors and complexities of text and communicate effectively through writing can be the biggest roadblock to success in college. Research, as included in the September 29, 2009 release of CCSSO's Career and College Readiness Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, is included with the following notation:

> "To be college and career ready, students must engage in research and present their findings in writing and orally, in print and online. The ability to conduct research independently and effectively plays a fundamental role in gaining knowledge and insight in college and the workplace."

Research related to the most effective practices in

supporting students' literacy skills in the classroom suggests that the pedagogical target addressing this issue is more spherical than it is flat. Even though students have experienced the necessary academic success in high school to be admitted into postsecondary education, it does not guarantee that they possess the comprehension and acquisition skills to navigate complex text (Taraban, et al., 2000) or form evidence-based written or oral arguments justified by said text.

Unfortunately, a prominent problem contributing to failure in the postsecondary environment is a significant number of students who are underprepared to comprehend complex texts assigned to them (Bauerlein, 2011; Bosley, 2008). Such students have difficulty discerning important from unimportant information; selecting, organizing, and interpreting across multiple texts; accessing a repertoire of effective reading strategies; managing executive control over underlying cognitive, metacognitive, and affective processes that are the foundation of these strategies; believing in their ability to control their success; and being motivated to read actively (Pressley, et al., 1997; Simpson and Nist, 1997). To fully support students who enter college underprepared, plans for intervention need to give emphasis to the vital role that faculty from all disciplines must play; an attitude of acceptance and support must be in place from faculty, staff, and administration at the university; and the intervention initiatives must be integrated "into the culture and mission of the university" (Kozeracki and Brooks, 2006).

Evidence & Argument as a Process

Understanding the research process is imperative to college success; nevertheless, many students are unprepared for such a task and require guidance. Gross and Latham (2011) reported that a typical college student is more concerned with the product rather than the process when conducting scholarly research.

An earlier study by Gross and Latham (2009) offered students' perceptions of their information literacy skills. Regarding evaluating information, students stated that resource quality is only important when gathering information for academic pursuits (Gross and Latham, 2009). By contrast, the sense-making stage challenges students to incorporate such evaluative elements as currency, reliability, accuracy, and validity into their analysis (Young and Von Seggern, 2001). After this analysis, the student can then begin to synthesize the evidence for a valid

argument.

Students face many challenges in synthesizing information and preparing their written or other work. Many students only scratch the surface of their topics. In her 1993 article, Howard offered a term for this. She wrote: "Patchwriting [is] copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym substitutes." Despite being surrounded by information sources including books, articles, and websites, students often have a very shallow grasp of the topic content and discourse. Therefore, students find themselves looking from one source to the next to find a sentence here and a passage there to complete their assigned papers or projects (Howard, et. al., 2010). Howard also offered a way to avoid patchwriting. She examined the need to teach summary writing within entry-level college writing courses (Howard, 1993).

Argumentation provides students a means to present their researched evidence in written, oral, or multimedia platforms. Within these platforms, students state their claims, grounded in evidence, and present their interpretations and predictions (Freeman, et. al., 2007).

Hillocks (2010) stated, "the process of working through an argument is the process of inquiry." Lutsky (2007) offered the idea that arguments are not just an opportunity to choose a particular side; instead, arguments can be used to support specific claims. Lutsky (2007) encouraged the use of quantitative evidence when creating an argument. He furthermore encouraged students to use all types of evidence to create arguments systematically, use statements to support their argument, present arguments clearly to an audience, and to evaluate other's arguments (Lutsky 2007).

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EVIDENCE&ARGUMENT PART III
Implementation and Assessment

Implementation Initiatives

The goal and student learning outcomes articulated in *Evidence & Argument* offer a natural complement to the underlying philosophy and organizational structure of WKU's new *Colonnade Program* for general education. The synergy affords us the opportunity to link implementation of *QEP* initiatives with key components of the *Colonnade Program* curriculum, thereby enhancing the attainment of established general education competencies as well as augmenting students' development with meta-knowledge and skills essential for success in the 21st century.

There is clear linkage between the organizational elements of the *Colonnade Program* and the *QEP* student learning outcomes related to (1) evidence-gathering, (2) sense-making, and (3) argumentation. Moreover, there is good alignment among these *QEP* learning outcomes and individual general education learning outcomes (as described in *QEP* **Goal, Outcomes, and Relevance to Institutional Priorities** above).

For these reasons, we have elected to implement *QEP* programmatic initiatives largely within the curricular framework of the *Colonnade Program*; these "push" initiatives will be intentionally targeted toward key courses and competencies. We will supplement these efforts with capacity-building, or "pull" initiatives that will enhance the teaching of argumentation skills across the disciplines; such resources will be available for use by faculty within Explorations courses as well as in-majors courses. The table below summarizes the key points in which *QEP* student learning outcomes will be addressed, as well as the progressive nature of this treatment; asterisks indicate those courses that will generate student artifacts

for assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes (see **Assessment** on page 36).

Programmatic ("Push") Initiatives

Programmatic initiatives are defined here as activities or programs that are designed to inculcate pedagogical best practices into targeted courses and experiences. Targeted courses will include those Foundations and Connections courses within the *Colonnade Program* that directly address student learning outcomes related to argumentation, including: (1) ENG 100: Introduction to College Writing; (2) COMM 145: Fundamentals of Public Speaking and Communication, as well as other equivalent Human Communications (HC) courses; (3) ENG 300: Writing in the Disciplines, as well as alternative writing in the disciplines courses; and (4) any and all courses within the Connections category of the *Colonnade Program*. In addition to being content-relevant and vertically-aligned, these courses also serve as the key points of accountability in terms of assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes. Additional courses and teaching and learning experiences to be targeted will be identified through a faculty-driven process associated with implementation of a sustained faculty development program.

We describe programmatic initiatives as "push" initiatives, because we envision the pedagogical enrichment efforts being embedded into all sections of a given course such that all faculty and students benefit from their incorporation. We intend to implement four complementary programmatic initiatives as described below.

	Evidence-Gathering	Sense-Making	Argumentation
ENG 100*	Introduced	Introduced	Introduced
COMM 145 / HC Course*	Introduced	Introduced	Introduced
ENG 300 / WID Course*	Developed	Developed	Developed
Foundations / In-Major Courses	Developed	Developed	Developed
Connections Courses*	Mastered	Mastered	Mastered

*Indicates courses that will generate student artifacts for assessment of QEP student learning outcomes.

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Sustained Faculty Professional Development Program

Five-Year Budget: $70,000
Year 1 and Year 3, and continuing in Year 2 and Year 4

In order to align the curriculum for maximum impact in addressing *QEP* student learning outcomes, it is essential that faculty across the university develop a shared understanding and vocabulary in argumentation pedagogy. To that end, we will deliver two year-long professional development programs for faculty (1) interested in improving their knowledge and skills in teaching evidence-gathering, sense-making, and argumentation, and (2) committed to applying this enhanced capacity to address a specific aspect of the curriculum. Two cadres of 15 faculty each will be selected through an application process that includes development of an outcomes-based plan to revise or enhance the curriculum in an area of identified need. These groups of E&A Argumentation Fellows will each work interactively over a two-year period to integrate what they are learning into the curriculum in a targeted way.

For example, faculty members might use the knowledge and skills gained through the professional development program to contribute to the revision of key *Colonnade Program* courses such as ENG 100, COMM 145, ENG 300, or Connections (see **Programmatic Initiatives** on page 30). Alternatively, they may elect to develop a set of online teaching materials to supplement the curriculum in their particular discipline (see **Capacity-Building Initiatives** on page 34). Finally, they may propose to

address some other element of the curriculum for which they have documented a well-defined opportunity or need. The professional development program itself will include:

- Providing two-days of professional development activities for each of two semesters, delivered by an outside content expert;

- Supporting this periodic training with regular in-house discussion/brainstorming sessions, coordinated by the WKU Center for Faculty Development;

- Creating a community of faculty who share a common interest and capacity in advancing *QEP* student learning outcomes, and who will serve in an advisory role to the Director of *QEP* Implementation; and

- Appropriate opportunities and incentives for faculty to ensure that targeted project outcomes are met.

A Revised First-Year Writing and Communication Experience

Five-Year Budget: $30,000
Year 1

Currently, ENG 100 introduces students to general expository writing in various genres, and COMM 145 provides instruction in planning, developing, and

delivering research-based argumentative speeches, as well as in communication theories and practices. A revised freshman writing and communication experience, with an introduction to writing and communication across disciplines, genres, and cultures will provide students with a foundation which can then be vertically aligned with the sophomore/junior and communication curricula. To that end, we will develop a first-year writing and communication experience focused on developing skills in evidence and argument revision. The Director of *QEP* Implementation will collaborate with faculty in the Department of English and Department of Communication in:

- Revising ENG 100 course goals to more explicitly require at least one argument paper, which must include appropriate integration of secondary source material;

- Identifying a set of common activities that instructors can choose from to deliver in ENG 100 that will provide instruction in in-text citation and bibliographies;

- Redesigning departmental professional development programs to assist faculty in applying pedagogical best practices to support the teaching of argumentation and the introductory level;

- Aligning course goals and student artifacts with *QEP* student learning outcomes to facilitate authentic and reliable assessment;

- Establishing appropriate targeted levels of student performance on assessments based on LEAP rubrics; and

- Dedicating particular focus to addressing identified weaknesses in student performance, specifically related to identification of high-quality and relevant source material, and the effective integration of that source material to support the argument.

A Comprehensive Writing Across the Disciplines Curriculum at the Sophomore/Junior Level

Five-Year Budget: $30,000
Year 2

The *Colonnade Program* calls for WKU to build on the first-year writing and human communication experience with a sophomore/junior-level Foundations course organized around a Writing in the Disciplines (WID) framework. The General Education Task Force that developed the *Colonnade Program* espoused the WID approach as a pedagogically-sound way to develop students' skills in

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written expression within the context of their disciplinary training and writing conventions. To operationalize this commitment, while strengthening the progressive development of students' evidence-gathering, sense-making, and argumentation skills, the Director of *QEP* Implementation will collaborate with faculty in the Department of English in:

- Revising the ENG 300 curriculum to include a combination of mixed-majors sections of ENG 300 and, for selected departments/colleges, single-discipline sections of ENG 300 for single majors or disciplinary emphases (such as the already-existing COMM 200 and GEOG 300);

- Exploring development of selected ENG 300 sections that are linked with specific majors courses; and

- Encouraging and supporting development of writing-intensive and writing-enriched courses in the majors;

- Aligning course goals and student artifacts with *QEP* student learning outcomes to facilitate authentic and reliable assessment; and

- Establishing appropriate targeted levels of

student performance on assessments based on LEAP rubrics.

Assurance of Mastery-Level Treatment of Argumentation Skills in Connections Courses

Five-Year Budget: $30,000
Year 1 through Year 4

Connections courses play a critical pedagogical and assessment role within the *Colonnade Program*. Connections courses serve to ensure a capstone experience within the general education curriculum and, as such, play a key role in program-level assessment of general education at WKU. It was originally envisioned by the General Education Review Task Force that Connections courses would be primarily new courses, developed specifically for the *Colonnade Program*. While some new course development has occurred, and more will likely come with time, most of the currently-approved Connections courses already existed among the WKU course inventory prior to development and implementation of the *Colonnade Program* (many as part of the previous cafeteria-style general education curriculum). Given this, it is critical to ensure that Connections courses are addressing **Evidence & Argument** student learning outcomes at a mastery level, and building upon

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the teaching and learning foundation established in Foundations courses such as ENG 100, COMM 145, and ENG 300. The Director of *QEP* Implementation will collaborate with faculty across the university in:

- Undertaking an evaluation of the treatment of argumentation skills within Connections courses;

- Working with faculty, academic departments and colleges to ensure that the treatment of argumentation is undertaken at a rigorous and consistent level;

- Aligning course goals and student artifacts with *QEP* student learning outcomes to facilitate authentic and reliable assessment;

- Assisting faculty in devising assignments that can serve as appropriate artifacts for assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes; and

- Establishing appropriate targeted levels of student performance on assessments based on LEAP rubrics.

Capacity-Building ("Pull") Initiatives

Capacity-building initiatives are defined here as activities or resources that support the teaching of argumentation by faculty across the university. Rather than being targeted for integration into specific courses, these resources will be available for general use by any interested faculty member of any program; we envision that these will be used by faculty teaching Explorations courses within the *Colonnade Program*, as well as

in-majors courses that include a significant component of content-relevant critical analysis. The primary thrust of our capacity-building initiatives will be to develop an inventory of online materials and teaching modules that address our targeted *QEP* student learning outcomes related to evidence-gathering, sense-making, and argumentation within the context of different disciplines and ways of knowing. We will also explore alternative web-based platforms that develop students' skills as peer reviewers of authentic and discipline-specific artifacts.

We describe capacity-building initiatives as "pull" initiatives because we see them as resources that faculty members may choose to integrate, or pull, into their courses as a means of reinforcing the teaching of argumentation skills specifically targeted through the programmatic initiatives described above. We intend to implement three complementary capacity-building initiatives, as described below.

An Online Resource Guide for Faculty

Five-Year Budget: $178,640
Year 1, and updated in Year 3 and Year 5

Teaching students the skills of evidence-gathering, sense-making, and argumentation is not new; faculty already address these concepts within their courses, and many likely have valuable teaching expertise and resources to share with others. In addition, faculty within WKU Libraries represent a valuable yet somewhat underutilized resource for the teaching of information gathering and information mastery. The Director of *QEP* Implementation will work with faculty across the university to assemble, organize, and regularly update these existing resources in an online Resource Guide that will be

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available to faculty and students as an aid to teaching and learning argumentation principles and skills. This initiative will involve:

- Surveying existing teaching and learning resources utilized by faculty across the university;

- Working with faculty of University Libraries to promote the availability and expertise of library faculty to contribute to the teaching of information gathering and information mastery;

- Assisting University Libraries in enhancing existing subject research guides to focus on disciplinary practices for the integration of research sources appropriate for individual fields; and

- Collaborating with instructional technology specialists to develop an effective web-based presentation of available resources, expertise, and contacts.

New Online Teaching Resources Related to Evidence-Gathering, Sense-Making, and Argumentation

Five-Year Budget: $252,960
Year 2 through Year 4

Shared teaching resources provide a common framework and vocabulary for addressing *QEP* student learning outcomes; by developing and embedding similarly-structured teaching modules into classes, students will be able to compare and contrast the specific attributes of argumentation among disciplines and ways of knowing. In addition, the availability of online teaching modules offers faculty the opportunity to flip the classroom, by requiring students to take control of their own learning outside of class time. Finally, shared resources will contribute to alignment of the teaching of argumentation skills from the first year through graduation. This initiative will be coordinated by the Director of *QEP* Implementation, and will include:

- Working with faculty across the university (including library faculty) in developing online teaching modules that address each QEP student learning outcome at the introductory, developing, and mastery level;

- Collaborating with faculty and programs to develop discipline-specific applications of argumentation principles and skills;

- Working with library faculty to utilize the Blackboard Learning Management System to create discussion boards, tutorials, videos, and other distributed resources to enhance teaching of information gathering and information mastery; and

- Collaborating with instructional technology specialists to develop effective web-based teaching modules that can be embedded into individual courses.

A Web-Based System for Calibrated Peer Review

Five-Year Budget: $60,000
Year 2 and Year 3

Peer review is a well-established pedagogical approach within core writing and human communications courses at WKU, including ENG 100, COMM 145, and ENG 300; however, it is not widely or systematically employed in other courses across the university that incorporate a significant component of critical analysis/argumentation. A web-based, calibrated peer review system could facilitate the training of students in recognizing important features of standard genres of argument, including lab reports, literature reviews, and rhetorical analyses.

A critical element of this calibrated approach is the training artifact, through which students learn to appropriately apply a designated rubric to a written, oral, or multimedia product in preparation for assessing their own work or that of others. A number of calibrated peer review systems are available on the market, including Calibrated Peer Review (University of California, 2012), Peerceptiv (Panther Learning, 2013), Eli Review (Drawbridge, Inc., 2015), and MyReviewers (University of South Florida, 2009). This initiative will be led by the Director of *QEP* Implementation, and specific activities will include:

- Evaluating the features, flexibility, and cost of various calibrated peer review solutions;

- Working with academic departments and programs to gauge their interest in incorporating a calibrated peer review system into their curriculum;

- Collaborating with Academic Technology staff to assess the technical requirements and associated cost of alternative products;

- Deploying an appropriate web-based system (assuming sufficient interest across the university) for use by faculty and programs; and

- Training faculty and departments on the use of the selected system, and identifying target opportunities for its incorporation.

Assessment

To assess the impact of ***Evidence & Argument*** on student learning at WKU, we will employ AAC&U LEAP rubrics in annual assessments of *QEP* student learning outcomes, as well as periodic administration of the nationally-normed Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA+). In both cases, we will take a cross-sectional approach, comparing levels of student performance among cohorts of students at different points in their undergraduate careers.

Ultimately, our assessment paradigm is designed to assess the effectiveness of a progressive curriculum, from first-year writing and communications courses through mid-level writing in the disciplines, to capstone-level treatment of argumentation in *Colonnade Program* Connections courses. To that end, we have identified key points of accountability within the *Colonnade Program*, from which our internal assessment artifacts will be drawn; these key courses are also places in the curriculum where our programmatic implementation initiatives will be directed. Capacity-building initiatives intended to support and enhance the teaching of argumentation across the curriculum (including in-majors courses) will, we believe, also contribute to documenting the enhancement of student learning in the key courses and student cohorts from which assessment artifacts will be derived.

Annual Assessment of *QEP* Student Learning Outcomes

Pre-implementation expenditures: $149,295
Five-Year Budget: $200,300
Year 1, and continuing through Year 5

Collection and Sampling of Student Artifacts

To facilitate institutional assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes, WKU has adopted the Blackboard Outcomes Assessment (BbOA) module within the Blackboard Learning Management System. BbOA allows for the collection and sampling of student artifacts to assist in course, program, and institutional assessment. Faculty members who use a Blackboard course shell can align their assignments with the higher-order learning outcomes (such as *QEP* student learning outcomes) contained in BbOA. Resulting course-embedded student artifacts that are linked to a given higher-order learning outcome can then be collected from one or multiple courses, generating a population of artifacts that can then be sampled for assessment using a common rubric. Artifacts from multiple courses and/or class sections (including online and regional campus sections) can be readily integrated into the assessment of a given student

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learning outcome, if those artifacts have been appropriately linked to that outcome within the course shell.

BbOA offers a number of advantages over traditional course-embedded assessment. First, assessment of the student artifact for grading purposes within the course is separated from assessment of that same artifact for evaluating program effectiveness. Second, because of this distinction, different rubrics can be applied to the artifact for grading and program-level assessment purposes; program-level assessment is typically done by one or more assessors trained in the use of this secondary rubric, ensuring greater among-rater consistency. Third, collection and sampling of artifacts for program assessment can be fully automated, and the artifacts assigned to reviewers electronically. Fourth, collected artifacts are stored in a database outside of individual course shells, allowing for re-sampling and more-focused analysis to address areas of interest suggested by the original assessment (such as potential differences in student performance among main campus, regional campus, and/or online sections). Finally, once the artifacts are all reviewed and rated, customized assessment reports can be created in BbOA.

Each year, the Director of *QEP* Assessment will work with instructors in key courses—ENG 100, COMM 145, ENG 300, and Connections courses – to link appropriate student assignments to *QEP* student learning outcomes. At the end of each academic year, relevant student artifacts resulting from these linked assignments will be collected and sampled to generate a statistically-representative pool of artifacts for program-level assessment.

Sampling Design

During each annual assessment cycle, three sets of 100 student artifacts each will be sampled for assessment. Samples will be stratified to ensure proportionate representation of students enrolled in main campus, regional campus, and online class sections. Because students enrolled in key courses are somewhat mixed in terms of both level (i.e., first year, sophomore, junior, and/or senior) and course-taking history, we will further restrict our sampling as follows:

- 100 student assignments will be drawn from **first-year students** enrolled in ENG 100 and COMM 145;

- 100 student assignments will be drawn from **sophomores/juniors** enrolled in ENG 300; and

- 100 student assignments will be drawn from **seniors** enrolled in Connections courses.

Analysis of enrollment patterns in ENG 100, COMM 145, and ENG 300 from fall 2011 through Spring 2014 has indicated that this represents a viable sampling design; while enrollments in each course include students at all levels, 75-85% of all students enrolled in ENG 100 and COMM 145 are first-year students, and 65%-75% of students in ENG 300 are sophomores or juniors. Connections courses require students to have either junior status or to have completed at least 21 hours of Colonnade courses as a prerequisite to enrollment, so we anticipate seniors to make up at least a plurality of students in these courses.

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Selection of Rubrics and Assessment of Student Performance

Five-Year Budget: $160,000
Year 1, and continuing through Year 5

Student assignments will be evaluated using elements derived from one or more AAC&U LEAP Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubrics (Finley and Rhodes, 2013). As part of the LEAP VALUE Rubric Development Project, faculty teams from 12 AAC&U partner campuses developed rubrics to address each of the 16 LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes; these rubrics (and their individual elements) were subsequently tested at over 100 AAC&U partner campuses using authentic student artifacts. Each rubric item includes descriptive evaluation language based on a four-point scale (1 – Benchmark, 2-3 – Milestones, 4 – Capstone) that will be used to assess student assignments.

To assess ***Evidence & Argument*** student learning outcomes, the Director of *QEP* Assessment will work with faculty in key courses to identify a set of five to seven elements from among the "Inquiry and Analysis," "Information Literacy," "Critical Thinking," and "Written Communication" rubrics that address the critical dimensions of learning espoused by our outcomes. **Appendix B** provides the rubrics being considered. The resulting composite E&A rubric will be applied to all student artifacts selected for *QEP* assessment. We have established the following initial targeted levels of student performance: (1) a mean score of 1.5 among first-year students in ENG 100/COMM 145; (2) a mean score of 2.5 for sophomores/juniors in ENG 300; and (3) a mean score of 3.5 among seniors in Connections courses.

Each summer, a group of 15 WKU faculty will be recruited to serve as part of the *QEP* Assessment Team for that year; after Year 1, we intend to stagger recruitment of faculty to ensure that at least half of the assessors each year have prior experience with the rubric and process. During a week-long Assessment Boot Camp, faculty assessors will first be trained to use the E&A rubric, to establish an appropriate inter-rater reliability. Processes already established by WKU in training raters to score Teacher Work Samples developed by students in educator preparation programs will be followed. Once an appropriate level of inter-rater reliability is attained, each of the 300 student artifacts selected for assessment will be scored by at least two faculty assessors, with the final score for each rubric element taken as the mean of the two raters' scores for that item. The Director of *QEP* Assessment will then compile and analyze the data, and develop an annual progress report to be shared with the university community.

Questions for Assessment

We will address the following specific questions through our annual assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes:

1. What degree of proficiency do students display at various points in their undergraduate careers?

   a. What overall level of student performance on assessments do students demonstrate as first-year students, sophomores/juniors, and seniors?

2. Are *QEP* initiatives having an impact on student learning at WKU?

   a. Does overall level of student performance on assessments increase within levels over the course of *QEP* implementation?

   b. **Is there evidence of a progressive impact of the QEP on student learning; specifically, does overall level of student performance on assessments increase among sophomores/juniors relative to first-year students, and/or seniors relative to sophomores/juniors?**

In addition to these primary questions, we will examine the data with an eye toward identifying any patterns of difference in mean level of student performance among student artifacts selected from main campus, regional campus, and/or online class sections. If such indications are identified, additional sampling and analysis will be conducted to explore the question(s) further.

Periodic Benchmarking Assessment Using the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA+)

Five Year Budget: $22,500
Year 1, Year 3, and Year 5

The CLA+ is a nationally-normed instrument that uses constructed-response tasks to assess students' higher-order critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication skills. The skills assessed through the CLA+ are well-aligned with *Evidence & Argument* student learning goals. The CLA+ instrument uses constructed-response tasks to assess students' higher-order critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication skills (CAE, 2009). Specifically, students are assigned to one of two types of tasks, a Performance Task or an Analytic Writing Task.

In the Performance Task, students are provided a hypothetical but realistic situation, as well as a document library that includes a range of different types of information sources. Students analyze and synthesize these materials to generate answers to several open-ended questions. In generating these responses, students typically must integrate evidence from different sources, distinguish rational, factual arguments from emotional opinions, deal with data in tables and figures, and integrate appropriate information into a coherent and supported response.

In the Analytic Writing Task, students are given two types of essay prompts. The Make-an-Argument question asks them to develop a persuasive analytic essay to support their position on a given issue. The Critique-an-Argument question requires them to discuss the extent to which a presented argument is well-reasoned. In both cases, students must consider development of the thesis, support of the underlying thesis with valid, relevant information, and the logical and supported presentation of the argument.

CLA+ will be used in Year 1 to develop baseline data on WKU students' levels of performance prior to implementation of *QEP* programmatic initiatives, and will also be deployed at the midpoint (Year 3) and end of *QEP* implementation (Year 5) to assess the impact of the *QEP* on student learning. During each cycle of assessment, a sample of 100 first-year students and 100 seniors will be assessed. At each point in time, the results from the CLA+ administration will be compared and contrasted with data from the annual assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes, in order to explore the alignment of *QEP* initiatives and assessments with nationally-normed standards of proficiency.

We will address the following specific questions through our periodic administration of the CLA+ instrument:

1. What degree of proficiency do students display at various points in their undergraduate careers?

   a. What overall level of student performance on assessments do students demonstrate as first-year students and as seniors?

2. Are *QEP* initiatives having an impact on students' performance on the CLA+?

   a. Does overall level of student performance on the CLA+ increase within and among levels over the course of *QEP* implementation?

   b. **Are patterns of student performance on the CLA+ correlated with those of annual assessments of *QEP* student learning outcomes?**

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Capability to Initiate, Implement, and Complete the *QEP*

Significant institutional personnel and resources will be dedicated to launch and ensure success of ***Evidence & Argument***. We have identified key personnel necessary for administrative oversight, implementation, and assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes, and have established a clear organizational framework to that end. We have established clear mechanisms to engage and incentivize faculty and staff to participate in professional development opportunities and contribute to *QEP* programmatic initiatives. We have committed to investing significant resources in technological infrastructure that will enable meaningful and authentic assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes, as well as enhance our capacity to build students' argumentation skills throughout the curriculum. In the following sections, we summarize the nature and extent of these commitments.

Administrative Oversight

Evidence & Argument is comprised of a targeted set of programmatic initiatives, linked to our *Colonnade Program* for general education; additional capacity-building initiatives will reinforce the impact of the *QEP* across the university. Successful implementation of *QEP* programmatic initiatives and robust assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes will require significant

administrative effort and coordination. To that end, we have identified a team of key individuals who will oversee implementation and assessment of the *QEP*. This team will be supported by an operating budget sufficient to undergird their efforts. The organizational chart below identifies key personnel and offices, and summarizes their involvement in implementation and assessment initiatives, respectively; individuals and units in red have direct accountability for *QEP* initiatives, while units in grey will provide indirect support.

The Associate Vice President for Academic Enrichment and Effectiveness (AVPEE) will provide broad administrative oversight of the *QEP*. The AVPEE serves as the liaison to the President for institutional strategic planning and assessment, and works closely with the Provost and the Senior Vice President for Finance & Administration to ensure that allocation of resources is aligned with institutional strategic priorities. Within the Office of Academic Affairs, the AVPEE is responsible for coordinating annual assessment of institutional effectiveness, including student learning outcomes, and periodic academic program review. In addition, the AVPEE is
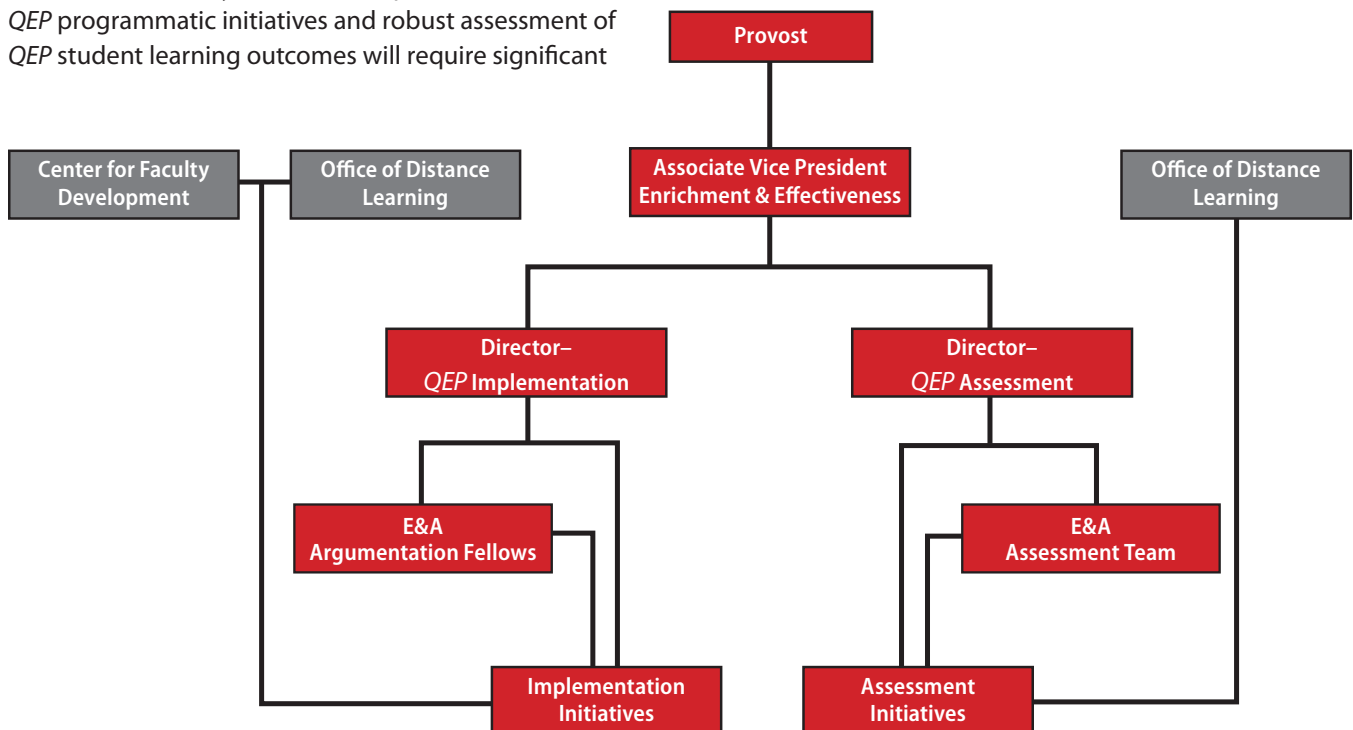
responsible for working with academic units to advance academic initiatives that cross colleges and disciplines, including the *QEP*. He served as director of WKU's previous *QEP, Engaging Students for Success in a Global Society*, coordinating implementation of programmatic initiatives across the university and documenting the impact of the *QEP* on student learning at WKU. The AVPEE will dedicate 10% of his time to oversight of **Evidence & Argument**.

The Director of QEP Implementation will be responsible for working with academic units across the university to implement programmatic initiatives associated with the *QEP*. In addition, s/he will be responsible for building awareness and understanding across the university of *QEP* student learning outcomes, promoting opportunities for faculty, staff, and student involvement, and regularly informing the university community of the *QEP*'s progress. Specifically, the Director of *QEP* Implementation will be charged with:

- Educating faculty, staff, and students across the university about the goals and outcomes of the *QEP*;

- Identifying and coordinating learning resources available to faculty and students in evidence-gathering, sense-making, and argumentation;

- Spearheading development of a series of online resources that compare and contrast the manifestation of argumentation in different disciplines, as well as teaching modules that can be integrated into individual class sections;

- Organizing and promoting opportunities for faculty professional development related to the pedagogical best-practices in the teaching of argumentation skills;

- Assisting individual faculty and departments interested in further embedding argumentation into their classes and programs;

- Coordinating the work of the **Evidence & Argument** Faculty Fellows group (see below); and

- Working closely with the Associate Vice President for Academic Enrichment and Effectiveness and the Director of *QEP* Assessment to ensure the successful implementation of **Evidence & Argument**.

The Director of *QEP* Implementation will be selected through a university-wide application and review process to begin in March 2015. To be eligible, an individual should

be a full-time, tenured faculty member holding the rank of Associate Professor or higher. S/he should demonstrate (1) an understanding of best practices in teaching argumentation skills, (2) the willingness and ability to work with diverse groups of faculty and staff in advancing the goals and outcomes of the *QEP*, and (3) strong organizational, operational, and communication skills. The successful candidate will be expected to dedicate 40% of effort during the academic year, and the equivalent of 1.5 months (50%) of effort during the summer.

The Director of *QEP* Assessment will be responsible for coordinating assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes and for documenting the results of these assessments in support of the Fifth-Year *QEP* Impact Report. In addition, s/he will be responsible for establishing and training a multidisciplinary team of assessors to assess student artifacts using AAC&U LEAP rubrics, coordinating *QEP* assessment with that of the *Colonnade Program*, and regularly informing the university community of the *QEP*'s impact on student learning. Specifically, the Director of *QEP* Assessment will be charged with:

- Working with the Office of Institutional Research to develop a robust sampling strategy to support assessment of the *QEP*;

- Deploying the Banner Outcomes Assessment module to identify and capture course-embedded student artifacts that will serve as the basis for assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes;

- Training and ensuring consistency among a multidisciplinary team of faculty in assessing student artifacts;

- Coordinating the work of the ***Evidence & Argument*** Assessment Team (see below);

- Integrating assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes with *Colonnade Program* assessment; and

- Working closely with the Associate Vice President for Academic Enrichment and Effectiveness and the Director of *QEP* Implementation to ensure the successful implementation of ***Evidence & Argument***.

The Director of *QEP* Assessment will be selected through a university-wide application and review process to begin in March 2015. To be eligible, an individual should be a full-time, tenured faculty member holding the rank

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of Associate Professor or higher. S/he should demonstrate (1) an understanding of best practices in institution-level assessment of student learning outcomes, (2) the willingness and ability to work with diverse groups of faculty and staff in assembling and assessing student artifacts as the basis for *QEP* assessment, and (3) strong organizational, operational, and communication skills. The successful candidate will be expected to dedicate 40% of effort during the academic year, and the equivalent of 1.5 months (50%) of effort during the summer.

Faculty and Staff Involvement

Together with the need for adequate administrative oversight, ultimate success of *Evidence & Argument* will depend on the efforts of dedicated faculty and staff across the university. To that end, we have created opportunities to identify and mentor a core group of faculty, and to support their efforts with informational technology professionals to assist with development of pedagogically-sound online teaching and learning resources that can be shared among all faculty.

Two cadres of 15 E&A Argumentation Fellows will be selected through a university-wide application and review process. Faculty fellows will be expected to articulate a plan to embed or enhance the teaching of evidence-gathering, sense-making, and argumentation within their courses or programs, or to work with faculty in their college to do the same. Fellows will participate in year-long professional development programs during either Year 1 or Year 3 of *QEP* implementation, and will work collaboratively during the subsequent year to achieve their identified goals and outcomes. This initiative will be coordinated by the Director of *QEP* Implementation, working in conjunction with the Center for Faculty Development. Faculty Fellows will also serve in an advisory capacity to the Director of *QEP* Implementation, and as key points of contact with their academic colleges and departments. Sufficient funds have been identified and earmarked to cover the expenses associated with this professional development program, as well as provide participating faculty members with $500 in professional development funds for each year of productive participation.

Instructional Technology Professionals from the Office of Distance Learning will provide instructional design support to the Director of *QEP* Implementation, *QEP* Faculty Fellows, and other faculty and staff interested in developing online resources related to *Evidence & Argument* for use in their classes. This team of eight professional staff members is highly-trained in both distance learning technology as well as online pedagogy, and serves as a vital resource to faculty across the university. It is anticipated that 10% of the staff's time and effort will be dedicated to supporting *QEP* initiatives and projects.

Technological Infrastructure

Evidence & Argument will exploit the power and flexibility of the Blackboard Learning Management System to facilitate assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes. We will also bring additional technological solutions to bear on improving students' abilities at evaluating their own and others' work. WKU has significant existing capacity in academic technology, and these additional investments will serve to further enhance our capabilities in support of student learning.

The Blackboard Outcomes Assessment Module (BbOA) is an element within the Blackboard Learning Management System. BbOA allows for the collection and assessment of student artifacts to assist in course, program, and institutional assessment. Faculty members can align their assignments within their Blackboard course shell with the higher-order learning outcomes (such as *QEP* student learning outcome) contained in BbOA. Resulting course-embedded student artifacts that are linked to a given higher-order learning outcome can then be collected from one or multiple courses, generating a population of artifacts that can then be sampled for assessment using a common rubric. WKU purchased and began to deploy BbOA in 2013-14, and the system will serve as the primary platform for assessment of *QEP* student learning outcomes going forward. Multiple personnel in the Office of Distance Learning support BbOA, dedicating between 2.5% and 10% of their time and effort to this initiative.

A Calibrated Peer Review System available to faculty across the university is one of the targeted programmatic initiatives of *Evidence & Argument*. Calibrated peer review systems provide the opportunity for students to learn the skills necessary to be critical evaluators of others' written, oral, or multimedia argumentation work, which in turn will enhance their capacity for self-assessment. A number of such web-based software platforms exist and will be evaluated as part of *QEP* implementation. Sufficient funds have been identified and earmarked to allow for annual licensing and hosting costs of the selected software platform in Years 3-5 of *QEP* implementation.

Assessment

Evidence & Argument will employ a multi-faceted assessment strategy to document the impact of *QEP* programmatic initiatives on student learning. This strategy

combines a robust annual assessment based on course-derived student artifacts and AAC&U LEAP rubrics with the periodic use of nationally-normed instruments; the former component relies on the recruitment and training of a multidisciplinary team of Faculty Assessors.

Annual Assessment of *QEP* Student Learning Outcomes will be coordinated by the Director of *QEP* Assessment. This assessment will employ a multidisciplinary team of 15 faculty trained to assess samples of student work collected through the Blackboard Outcomes Assessment Module and using AAC&U VALUE rubrics. Rubric training and assessment will occur during a week-long boot camp each summer, beginning after Year 1 of *QEP* implementation. The E&A Assessment Team will also serve as an advisory group to the Director of *QEP* Assessment, and as key points of contact between that individual and the academic colleges and departments. Sufficient funds have been identified and earmarked to cover the expenses associated with the annual boot camp, as well as provide participating faculty members with $500 in professional development funds for each year of participation.

The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA+) is a nationally-normed instrument that uses constructed-response tasks to assess students' higher-order critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication skills. The skills assessed through the

PHOTO BY CLINTON LEWIS

CLA+ are well-aligned with ***Evidence & Argument*** student learning goals. CLA+ will be used to develop baseline data on WKU students' levels of performance prior to implementation of *QEP* programmatic initiatives, and will also be deployed at the midpoint and end of the *QEP* implementation plan to assess the impact of the *QEP* on student learning. During each cycle of assessment, a sample of 100 first-year students and 100 seniors will be assessed.

Timeline of Implementation and Budget Expenditures

The table on the next page summarizes the timeline of implementation of *QEP* programmatic, capacity-building, and assessment activities.

Implementation of programmatic initiatives are staggered, initially focusing on first-year courses, and followed by initiatives targeting sophomore/junior courses and finally Connections courses taken by upper-division students. This approach allows us to vertically align our efforts across the curriculum, and to ensure that initiatives targeted towards sophomores, juniors, and seniors build upon the foundation established earlier in their course of study.

Similarly, capacity-building activities initially emphasize identification and organization of existing resources related to evidence-gathering, sense-making, and argumentation. Once this inventory has been completed, work will begin on developing new resources that can be utilized by faculty across the university; we will organize our efforts in this area around the individual *QEP* student learning outcomes. We will periodically update the resource guide to reflect the development of these new resources.

The schedule of assessment activities includes both annual assessment of course-derived student artifacts, as well as periodic administration of the nationally-normed CLA+ instrument. By combining regular in-house assessment with targeted use of the CLA+, we will be well-positioned to benchmark our internal assessment findings against national performance standards related to the skills of evidence-gathering, sense-making, and argumentation.

Finally, we believe it is essential to provide our Directors of *QEP* Implementation and Assessment with the professional development necessary to ensure they are best-positioned to successfully implement the *QEP* and assess its impact. As such, we intend to regularly engage these individuals with SACSCOC through attendance at the Annual Meeting; this will enable our Directors to learn from the experiences and perspectives of their counterparts at other institutions.

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	Year 0 2014/15			Year 1 2015/16			Year 2 2016/17			Year 3 2017/18			Year 4 2018/19			Year 5 2019/20		
	F	S	Su	F	S	Su	F	S	Su	F	S	Su	F	S	Su	F	S	Su
Faculty and Staff Involvement																		
Appoint *QEP* Directors		█	█															
Select E&A Argumentation Fellows		█	█					█	█									
Identify E&A Faculty Assessment Team					█			█			█			█			█	
Programmatic ("Push") Activities																		
Provide E&A Argumentation Fellows PD				█	█					█	█							
Embedded E&A Argumentation Fellows Initiatives					█	█					█	█						
Evaluate and Refine Initiatives						█	█					█	█					
Implement Changes to ENG 100, COMM 145				█	█													
Implement Changes to ENG 300							█	█										
Evaluate and Refine Initiatives					█	█	█	█		█	█		█	█				
Evaluate Connections Courses		█	█															
Identify Connections College Work Teams					█	█												
Identify and Implement Curricular Changes							█	█	█	█	█	█						
Evaluate and Refine Initiatives										█	█	█	█	█				
Capacity-Building ("Pull") Activities																		
Assemble/Update E&A Resource Guide				█			█			█			█			█		
Develop Online E&A Modules: SLO 1					█	█												
Develop Online E&A Modules: SLO 2										█	█							
Develop Online E&A Modules: SLO 3													█	█				
Evaluate Calibrated Peer Review Options							█	█	█									
Deploy Calibrated Peer Review System										█	█							
Assess Impact of Peer Review System																█	█	█
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Activities																		
Compile Baseline Assessment Results	█	█																
Link Assignments to Outcomes within BbOA				█	█		█	█		█	█		█	█		█	█	
In-House Assessment Boot Camp					█			█			█			█			█	
Administer CLA+: First-Year Students				█						█			█					
Administer CLA+: Seniors					█						█						█	
Compile Annual Assessment Report									█			█			█			█
SACSCOC-Related Activities																		
Develop *QEP* for SACSCOC On-Site Visit	█	█																
QEP Directors Attend Annual Meeting				█						█			█					
Prepare *QEP* Impact Report																█	█	█

Sufficient financial resources have been identified and earmarked to support implementation consistent with the timeline above. Sources of funding include a *QEP* recurring budget line of $74,000 ($370,000 total), supplemented by an additional $120,000 in available one-time funds. The AVPEE oversees a recurring budget line to support institutional assessment; $7,500 will be allocated to support *QEP* assessment in Years 1, 3 and 5 ($22,500 total). A total of $534,820 in faculty and staff effort (salaries + benefits) will be dedicated to implementation and oversight of the *QEP*.

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Finally, $258,875 in cost-sharing will be contributed by the Division of Extended Learning and Outreach to deploy the technological infrastructure that will support *QEP* assessment. The total available budget to support the *QEP* is $1.3 million. The figure at right summarizes the sources of dedicated funding.

The table below summarizes anticipated budget expenditures over the course of *QEP* implementation. Funding sources are indicated by color, consistent with the figure at right.

- **$258,875**
- **$370,000**
- **$120,000**
- **$534,820**
- **$22,500**

- ■ *QEP* Recurring
- ■ *QEP* One-Time
- ■ Assessment
- ■ Faculty/Staff Effort
- ■ Office of Distance Learning Cost-Share
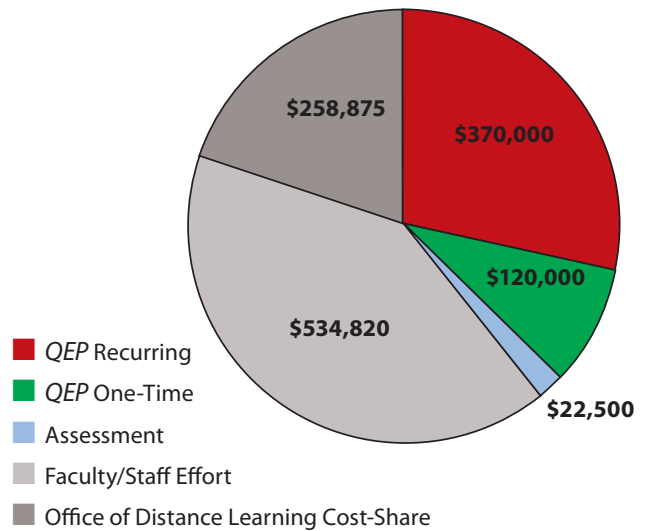
	2013/15	Year 1 2015/16	Year 2 2016/17	Year 3 2017/18	Year 4 2018/19	Year 5 2019/20	Total
Administrative Oversight							
Associate Vice President		$14,500	$14,500	$14,500	$14,500	$14,500	**$72,500**
Director of *QEP* Implementation		$22,000	$22,000	$22,000	$22,000	$22,000	**$110,000**
Director of *QEP* Assessment		$22,000	$22,000	$22,000	$22,000	$22,000	**$110,000**
Operating Expenses		$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	**$50,000**
Subtotal	**$0**	**$68,500**	**$68,500**	**$68,500**	**$68,500**	**$68,500**	**$342,500**

	2013/15	Year 1 2015/16	Year 2 2016/17	Year 3 2017/18	Year 4 2018/19	Year 5 2019/20	Total
Faculty and Staff Involvement							
Faculty Professional Development		$15,000		$15,000			**$30,000**
E&A Argumentation Fellows		$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000		**$40,000**
Instructional Technologists			$92,9000	$92,9000	$92,9000	$92,9000	**$371,600**
Subtotal	**$0**	**$25,000**	**$102,900**	**$117,900**	**$102,900**	**$92,900**	**$441,600**

	2013/15	Year 1 2015/16	Year 2 2016/17	Year 3 2017/18	Year 4 2018/19	Year 5 2019/20	Total
Technological Infrastructure							
BbOA Licensing and Implementation	$101,475	$31,480	$31,480	$31,480	$31,480	$31,480	**$258,875**
BbOA Support Personnel	$47,820	$8,500	$8,500	$8,500	$8,500	$8,500	**$90,720**
Calibrated Peer Review System				$20,000	$20,000	$20,000	**$60,000**
Subtotal	**$149,295**	**$40,060**	**$40,060**	**$60,060**	**$60,060**	**$60,060**	**$409,595**

	2013/15	Year 1 2015/16	Year 2 2016/17	Year 3 2017/18	Year 4 2018/19	Year 5 2019/20	Total
Assessment							
CLA+		$7,500		$7,500		$7,500	**$22,500**
Annual In-House Assessment		$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	**$50,000**
Subtotal	**$0**	**$17,500**	**$10,000**	**$17,500**	**$10,000**	**$17,500**	**$72,500**

	2013/15	Year 1 2015/16	Year 2 2016/17	Year 3 2017/18	Year 4 2018/19	Year 5 2019/20	Total
Grand Total	**$149,295**	**$151,060**	**$221,460**	**$263,960**	**$241,460**	**$238,960**	**$1,266,195**

Funding Sources: *QEP* Recurring, *QEP* Non-Recurring, Assessment Recurring, In-Kind Commitments/Pre-Implementation Expenditures

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Supporting Documentation

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Appendix A

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Linda Gonzales	OCSE	Department of Agriculture
Nancy Rice	OCSE	Department of Biology
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Mark Baum	UC	School of Professional Studies
Alexander Olson	UC	Honors Academy
Paige Settles	SGA	Student Government Association
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Blair Jensen	Student Affairs	Housing and Residence Life

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Appendix B

Inquiry and Analysis VALUE Rubric

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

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 by shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

Definition

Inquiry is a systematic process of exploring issues, objects or works through the collection and analysis of evidence that results in informed conclusions or judgments. Analysis is the process of breaking complex topics or issues into parts to gain a better understanding of them.

Framing Language

This rubric is designed for use in a wide variety of disciplines. Since the terminology and process of inquiry are discipline-specific, an effort has been made to use broad language which reflects multiple approaches and assignments while addressing the fundamental elements of sound inquiry and analysis (including topic selection, existing, knowledge, design, analysis, etc.) The rubric language assumes that the inquiry and analysis process carried out by the student is appropriate for the discipline required. For example, if analysis using statistical methods is appropriate for the discipline then a student would be expected to use an appropriate statistical methodology for that analysis. If a student does not use a discipline-appropriate process for any criterion, that work should receive a performance rating of "1" or "0" for that criterion.

In addition, this rubric addresses the products of analysis and inquiry, not the processes themselves. The complexity of inquiry and analysis tasks is determined in part by how much information or guidance is provided to a student and how much the student constructs. The more the student constructs, the more complex the inquiry process. For this reason, while the rubric can be used if the assignments or purposes for work are unknown, it will work most effectively when those are known. Finally, faculty are encouraged to adapt the essence and language of each rubric criterion to the disciplinary or interdisciplinary context to which it is applied.

Glossary

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

- Conclusions: A synthesis of key findings drawn from research/evidence.

- Limitations: Critique of the process or evidence.

- Implications: How inquiry results apply to a larger context or the real world.

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Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone	Milestones		Benchmark
	4	**3**	**2**	**1**
Topic selection	Identifies a creative, focused, and manageable topic that addresses potentially significant yet previously less explored aspects of the topic.	Identifies a focused and manageable/doable topic that appropriately addresses relevant aspects of the topic.	Identifies a topic that while manageable/doable, is too narrowly focused and leaves out relevant aspects of the topic.	Identifies a topic that is far too general and wide-ranging as to be manageable and doable.
Existing Knowledge, Research, and/or Views	Synthesizes in-depth information from relevant sources representing various points of view/ approaches.	Presents in-depth information from relevant sources representing various points of view/ approaches.	Presents information from relevant sources representing limited points of view/ approaches.	Presents information from irrelevant sources representing limited points of view/ approaches.
Design Process	All elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are skillfully developed. Appropriate methodology or theoretical frameworks may be synthesized from across disciplines or from relevant subdisciplines.	Critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are appropriately developed, however, more subtle elements are ignored or unaccounted for.	Critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are missing, incorrectly developed, or unfocused.	Inquiry design demonstrates a misunderstanding of the methodology or theoretical framework.
Analysis	Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus.	Organizes evidence to reveal important patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus.	Organizes evidence, but the organization is not effective in revealing important patterns, differences, or similarities.	Lists evidence, but it is not organized and/ or is unrelated to focus.
Conclusions	States a conclusion that is a logical extrapolation from the inquiry findings.	States a conclusion focused solely on the inquiry findings. The conclusion arises specifically from and responds specifically to the inquiry findings.	States a general conclusion that, because it is so general, also applies beyond the scope of the inquiry findings.	States an ambiguous, illogical, or unsupportable conclusion from inquiry findings.
Limitations and Implications	Insightfully discusses in detail relevant and supported limitations and implications.	Discusses relevant and supported limitations and implications.	Presents relevant and supported limitations and implications.	Presents limitations and implications, but they are possibly irrelevant and unsupported.

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Information Literacy Value Rubric

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

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 by shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success. In July 2013, there was a correction to Dimension 3: Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically.

Definition

The ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share that information for the problem at hand. - Adopted from the National Forum on Information Literacy

Framing Language

This rubric is recommended for use evaluating a collection of work, rather than a single work sample in order to fully gauge students' information skills. Ideally, a collection of work would contain a wide variety of different types of work and might include: research papers, editorials, speeches, grant proposals, marketing or business plans, PowerPoint presentations, posters, literature reviews, position papers, and argument critiques to name a few. In addition, a description of the assignments with the instructions that initiated the student work would be vital in providing the complete context for the work. Although a student's final work must stand on its own, evidence of a student's research and information gathering processes, such as a research journal/diary, could provide further demonstration of a student's information proficiency and for some criteria on this rubric would be required.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone	Milestones		Benchmark
	4	**3**	**2**	**1**
Determine the Extent of Information Needed	Effectively defines the scope of the research question or thesis. Effectively determines key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected directly relate to concepts or answer research question.	Defines the scope of the research question or thesis completely. Can determine key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected relate to concepts or answer research question.	Defines the scope of the research question or thesis incompletely (parts are missing, remains too broad or too narrow, etc.). Can determine key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected partially relate to concepts or answer research question.	Has difficulty defining the scope of the research question or thesis. Has difficulty determining key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected do not relate to concepts or answer research question.
Access the Needed Information	Accesses information using effective, well designed search strategies and most appropriate information sources.	Accesses information using variety of search strategies and some relevant information sources. Demonstrates ability to refine search.	Accesses information using simple search strategies, retrieves information from limited and similar sources	Accesses information randomly, retrieves information that lacks relevance and quality.
Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically*	Chooses a variety of information sources appropriate to the scope and discipline of the research question. Selects sources after considering the importance (to the researched topic) of the multiple criteria used (such as relevance to the research question, currency, authority, audience, and bias or point of view).	Chooses a variety of information sources appropriate to the scope and discipline of the research question. Selects sources using multiple criteria (such as relevance to the research question, currency, and authority).	Chooses a variety of information sources. Selects sources using basic criteria (such as relevance to the research question and currency).	Chooses a few information sources. Selects sources using limited criteria (such as relevance to the research question).
Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose	Communicates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources to fully achieve a specific purpose, with clarity and depth.	Communicates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources. Intended purpose is achieved.	Communicates and organizes information from sources. The information is not yet synthesized, so the intended purpose is not fully achieved.	Communicates information from sources. The information is fragmented and/or used inappropriately (misquoted, taken out of context, or incorrectly paraphrased, etc.), so the intended purpose is not achieved.
Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally	Students use correctly all of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrate a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.	Students use correctly three of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrates a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.	Students use correctly two of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrates a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.	Students use correctly one of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrates a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.

Corrected Dimension 3: Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically in July 2013

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Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

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 by shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

Definition

Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

Framing Language

This rubric is designed to be transdisciplinary, reflecting the recognition that success in all disciplines requires habits of inquiry and analysis that share common attributes. Further, research suggests that successful critical thinkers from all disciplines increasingly need to be able to apply those habits in various and changing situations encountered in all walks of life.

This rubric is designed for use with many different types of assignments and the suggestions here are not an exhaustive list of possibilities. Critical thinking can be demonstrated in assignments that require students to complete analyses of text, data, or issues. Assignments that cut across presentation mode might be especially useful in some fields. If insight into the process components of critical thinking (e.g., how information sources were evaluated regardless of whether they were included in the product) is important, assignments focused on student reflection might be especially illuminating.

Glossary

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

- Ambiguity: Information that may be interpreted in more than one way.

- Assumptions: Ideas, conditions, or beliefs (often implicit or unstated) that are "taken for granted or accepted as true without proof." (quoted from www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/assumptions)

- Context: The historical, ethical, political, cultural, environmental, or circumstantial settings or conditions that influence and complicate the consideration of any issues, ideas, artifacts, and events.

- Literal meaning: Interpretation of information exactly as stated. For example, "she was green with envy" would be interpreted to mean that her skin was green.

- Metaphor: Information that is (intended to be) interpreted in a non-literal way. For example, "she was green with envy" is intended to convey an intensity of emotion, not a skin color.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone	Milestones		Benchmark
	4	3	2	1
Explanation of issues	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.
Evidence *Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion*	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.
Influence of context and assumptions	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.
Student's position (perspective, thesis/ hypothesis)	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) acknowledges different sides of an issue.	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.
Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)	Conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.

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Written Communication VALUE Rubric

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

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 by shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

Definition

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

Framing Language

This writing rubric is designed for use in a wide variety of educational institutions. The most clear finding to emerge from decades of research on writing assessment is that the best writing assessments are locally determined and sensitive to local context and mission. Users of this rubric should, in the end, consider making adaptations and additions that clearly link the language of the rubric to individual campus contexts.

This rubric focuses assessment on how specific written work samples or collections of work respond to specific contexts. The central question guiding the rubric is "How well does writing respond to the needs of audience(s) for the work?" In focusing on this question the rubric does not attend to other aspects of writing that are equally important: issues of writing process, writing strategies, writers' fluency with different modes of textual production or publication, or writer's growing engagement with writing and disciplinarity through the process of writing.

Evaluators using this rubric must have information about the assignments or purposes for writing guiding writers'

work. Also recommended is including reflective work samples of collections of work that address such questions as: What decisions did the writer make about audience, purpose, and genre as s/he compiled the work in the portfolio? How are those choices evident in the writing—in the content, organization and structure, reasoning, evidence, mechanical and surface conventions, and citational systems used in the writing? This will enable evaluators to have a clear sense of how writers understand the assignments and take it into consideration as they evaluate.

The first section of this rubric addresses the context and purpose for writing. A work sample or collections of work can convey the context and purpose for the writing tasks it showcases by including the writing assignments associated with work samples. But writers may also convey the context and purpose for their writing within the texts. It is important for faculty and institutions to include directions for students about how they should represent their writing contexts and purposes.

Faculty interested in the research on writing assessment that has guided our work here can consult the National Council of Teachers of English/Council of Writing Program Administrators' White Paper on Writing Assessment (2008; www.wpacouncil.org/whitepaper) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication's Writing Assessment: A Position Statement (2008; www.ncte.org/ cccc/ resources/positions/123784.htm)

Glossary

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

- Content Development: The ways in which the text explores and represents its topic in relation to its audience and purpose.

- Context of and purpose for writing: The context of writing is the situation surrounding a text: who is reading it? who is writing it? Under what circumstances will the text be shared or circulated? What social or political factors might affect how the text is composed or interpreted? The purpose for writing is the writer's intended effect on an audience. Writers might want to persuade or inform; they might want to report or summarize information; they might want to work through complexity or confusion; they might want to argue with other writers, or connect with other writers; they might want to convey urgency or amuse; they might write for themselves or for an assignment or to remember.

- Disciplinary conventions: Formal and informal rules that constitute what is seen generally as appropriate within different academic fields, e.g. introductory strategies, use

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of passive voice or first person point of view, expectations for thesis or hypothesis, expectations for kinds of evidence and support that are appropriate to the task at hand, use of primary and secondary sources to provide evidence and support arguments and to document critical perspectives on the topic. Writers will incorporate sources according to disciplinary and genre conventions, according to the writer's purpose for the text. Through increasingly sophisticated use of sources, writers develop an ability to differentiate between their own ideas and the ideas of others, credit and build upon work already accomplished in the field or issue they are addressing, and provide meaningful examples to readers.

- Evidence: Source material that is used to extend, in purposeful ways, writers' ideas in a text.
- Genre conventions: Formal and informal rules for particular kinds of texts and/or media that guide formatting, organization, and stylistic choices, e.g. lab reports, academic papers, poetry, webpages, or personal essays.
- Sources: Texts (written, oral, behavioral, visual, or other) that writers draw on as they work for a variety of purposes -- to extend, argue with, develop, define, or shape their ideas, for example.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone	Milestones		Benchmark
	4	**3**	**2**	**1**
Context of and Purpose for Writing *Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).*	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).
Content Development	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions *Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields (please see glossary).*	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task (s) including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices.	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices.	Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation.	Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation.
Sources and Evidence	Demonstrates skillful use of high quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error free.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.

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