

Morehead State University



QEP Conversation

Let's Talk About SACCS!

Quality Enhancement Plan

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges

QEP THEME
APPLIED/EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

1. What are the best practices related to this theme? (external data)

A **best practice** is a technique or methodology that, through experience and research, has proven to reliably lead to a desired result. A commitment to using the best practices in any field is a commitment to using all the knowledge and technology at one's disposal to ensure success. The term is used frequently in the fields of health care, government administration, the education system, project management, hardware and software product development, and elsewhere. [<http://searchsoftwarequality.techtarget.com/>]

The Quality Enhancement Plan has been a requirement of SACS accreditation for approximately seven years. SACS evaluates the effectiveness of an institution's QEP five years after the plan is approved. Given the short time since the inception of the QEP by SACS, relatively few institutions have experienced a review by SACS. Because a best practice tends to spread throughout a field after success has been demonstrated, sufficient time has not passed to widely develop and recognize best practices in the QEP. Therefore, the best practices described below are based on the reputation of the institutions plus the evaluation of the QEP documentation available from the institutions.

The most widely know and long established (38 years) resource for experiential education is the [National Society for Experiential Education](#) (NSEE). NSEE mission is: "The mission of NSEE is to foster the effective use of experience as an integral part of education, in order to empower learners and promote the common good. The goals of the organization are:

- to advocate for the use of experiential learning throughout the educational system and the larger community;
- to disseminate information on principles of good practice and on innovations in the field;
- to enhance the professional growth and leadership development of our members; and
- to encourage the development and dissemination of research and theory related to experiential learning." (NSEE website, Retrieved 08/23/09 at http://www.nsee.org/about_us.htm#mission).

NSEE supports the use of learning through experience for:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • intellectual development | • ethical development |
| • cross-cultural and global awareness | • career exploration |
| • civic and social responsibility | • personal growth |

The eight principles of good practices according to NSEE are the following:

- Intention
- Preparedness & Planning
- Authenticity
- Reflection
- Orientation & Training
- Monitoring & Continuous Improvement
- Assessment & Evaluation
- Acknowledgement

Source: National Society for Experiential Education, 1998 Annual Meeting, Norfolk, VA

In 2006, Morehead State University (MSU) was one of 76 institutions that received the newly created Community Engagement elective classification through [The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching](#). The Community Engagement classification was broken down into three categories: 1) Curricular Engagement (5 institutions); 2) Outreach & Partnerships (8 institutions); and 3) Curricular Engagement and Outreach & Partnerships (63 institutions). Of those 76 institutions, then President George W. Bush, chose to

highlight three of the Community Engagement programs: [California State University @ Monterrey Bay](#); [Elon University](#) (NC); and [Portland State University](#) (OR). Others to consider include:

- [Kalamazoo College](#) (MI). Outcomes: Life-long learning, Career readiness, Intercultural understanding, Social responsibility, and Leadership (2004).
- [Northeastern University](#) (MA). Components: Engagement, Reflection, and Transformation (2008).
- [William Jewell College](#) (MO). Components: Disciplinary Scholarship, Reflective Citizenship, and Active Engagement (2009).

2. Do other QEP's exist related to this topic? If so, what are the best practices of other institutions related to this theme (external data)?

Several institutions consider this topic (i.e. University of Texas @ Arlington, Louisiana State University @ Baton Rouge), but Western Kentucky University and Western Carolina University (NC) are the two related to applied/experiential learning.

[Western Carolina University](#) *Synthesis: A Pathway to Intentional Learning*. Concept: Designed to help students create connections between what they learn inside and outside of the classroom and to afford faculty, staff, and students more opportunities to collaborate. Outcomes (Goals): Students will identify their aptitudes, abilities, and interests and articulate their future goals and aspirations; students will modify behaviors and values in response to knowledge and skills gained from their academic and co-curricular experiences; and students will recognize the synthesis of their university experiences and evaluate those experiences relative to their future education and career plans. Assessment: Using an electronic briefcase developed in house, students will provide demonstrative samples of work. This will take place throughout the students' freshman and senior years.

[Western Kentucky University](#) *Engaging Students for Success in a Global Society*. Core Values: Student – centered education; engaged learning; and disciplinary expertise within an interdisciplinary learning context. Concept: Students will engage with communities other than their own in purposeful learning activities that explicitly address their capacity and responsibility to contribute to community and society. Outcomes: Capacity to apply knowledge, respect for diversity, and civic responsibility.

3. What are employer expectations for potential employees surrounding this theme? (external data).

Employer expectations for potential employees are:

- 1) When hiring, employees obviously want the best possible candidates they can find. This doesn't always necessarily align with the most "educated" as in book sense or how many degrees that someone has obtained. Because of upfront cost, employers want to hire new employees where the basic "fundamentals" have already been obtained. In most cases, one of the only ways for basic job skill fundamentals to be learned is through "on the job learning" specific to the related field.
- 2) Universities, not just MSU, need to recognize that classroom learning is not the only learning environment that matters, especially to employers.
- 3) More emphasis needs to be placed on communication in general. Of particular interest are knowing how to speak, how to interact with different types of people in different settings, how to express ideas precisely and clearly in writing and knowing how to dress for different situations.
- 4) More emphasis needs to be placed addressing trust, morals and ethics and why these are critical components to having a successful career.
- 5) Time management and organization skills should be treated as high priorities. One of the best ways for students to gain useful knowledge in these areas is to place the student in situations where these skills need to be used.

4. How does this theme align with the mission of MSU (internal data)?

The theme of applied/experiential learning is embedded in the history, mission, and strategic planning for Morehead State University. From its establishment as an institution dedicated to bringing "a light to the mountains", educating and serving the region of Eastern Kentucky and bettering the lives of Kentuckians through campus and community partnerships has been a core value.

Applied and experiential learning may be drawn from MSU Mission Statement: "MSU is dedicated to improving the quality of life while preserving and promoting the unique cultural heritage of East Kentucky." Stated as a primary objective in institutional focus, the university is committed to enhancing the region with social, cultural, and economic resources and support. One avenue for developing and implementing applied/experiential learning is through the MSU Center for Regional Engagement.

From the MSU web page (<http://www.moreheadstate.edu/aboutmsu/>): "Meeting the educational needs of East Kentucky while striving to constantly improve the quality of its public service, economic development and applied research programs are the primary objectives of Morehead State University."

From the MSU Mission Statement (<http://www.moreheadstate.edu/aspire>): "MSU pursues academic excellence, research, community engagement and life-long learning. MSU is dedicated to improving the quality of life while preserving and promoting the unique cultural heritage of East Kentucky."

From ASPIRE: "Goal 3 - Productive Partnerships: How will we utilize partnerships to benefit the people, communities and economy within the MSU service region?"

- (a) We will strengthen and expand relationships with public schools and KCTCS institutions to facilitate alignment of the curriculum, enhanced student preparation, and shared recruitment and student support services.
- (b) We will collaborate with new and existing partners to achieve livable communities, an innovative economy, social inclusion and collaborative governance.
- (c) We will develop an infrastructure to support a more coordinated approach to building partnerships specifically focused on regional stewardship.

5. What are our student data and current practices related to this theme (internal data)?

Although certainly applied/experiential learning is being practiced in extra-, co- and curricular contexts, these student experiences are not organized nor are standard methods of delivery/assessment used. Internships are one of the primary ways for future employees to learn these basic job skill fundamentals. Current and potential employers of MSU graduates use internship programs to identify potential employees, train employees as to their expectations and then recruit from the pool. MSU should place more emphasis on creating internships at the college and department level and specific courses need to be developed and included in curriculum for internship and "on the job learning" opportunities.

Accurate record keeping is a must. It is only this year that MSU has begun to track data across the institution related to applied/experiential activities using the faculty/staff credentials database, *Faculty180*. In 2008-09, over 50% of the full time faculty at MSU reported professional activities related to regional engagement. Further, many faculty reported the use of service learning in their classes, where service learning incorporates some type of reflection by the students about their service, typically written. These reflection pieces are included as part of the overall grade for the class.

QEP THEME
CRITICAL/ANALYTICAL THINKING

1. What are the best practices related to this theme (external data)?

The definition of Critical/Analytical Thinking can vary drastically depending on the focus of the institution, the instructional approach of a college or department or one's individual's perspective. Critical and analytical thinking obviously infiltrates every academic discipline to some degree and is a fundamental tool required by all students headed out into the workforce. Critical Thinking was defined in the QEP reports of the following institutions:

- **Bethel College (Tennessee):** *"A process of successfully analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing information in an objective manner"*
- **Georgia State University:** *"wide range of cognitive skills and intellectual dispositions needed to effectively identify, analyze, evaluate arguments and truth claims; to discover and overcome personal prejudices; to formulate and present convincing reasons in support of conclusions; and to make reasonable, intelligent decisions about what to believe and what to do"*(Bassham, Irwin, Nardone & Wallace, 2005, p. 1)
- **University of Louisville:** *"Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action."* [The Foundation for Critical Thinking \(http://www.criticalthinking.org/about/centerforCT.cfm\)](http://www.criticalthinking.org/about/centerforCT.cfm)

2. Do other QEPs exist related to this topic? If so, what are the best practices of other institutions related to this theme (external data)?

- **Bethel College - *Improving Critical Thinking: A Plan for Quality Enhancement***
http://www.bethelu.edu/critical/faculty_resources

Instruction in critical thinking will be targeted in every stage of the undergraduate program, traditional and Educational Outreach. Every division will be involved, and best practices in critical thinking will be widely disseminated. It will involve the ability to view new information with an open mind, the ability to recognize external and internal biases, discerning both strengths and weaknesses of the information. Ultimately, the critical thinker will use information in an effective and ethical manner on a consistent basis. Critical thinking approaches include:

- a) Use active learning methods;
- b) Select activities and topics that will interest students;
- c) Use collaborative learning methods;
- d) Recommended types of exercises;
- e) Service learning debates;
- f) Case studies simulations; and,
- g) Active-learning with real-world problem solving.

Assessment includes:

- a) Students take MAPP test and the CAT test twice each during their college careers (during their first and fourth semesters for SUCCESS students and as freshmen and seniors in the traditional program).
- b) MAPP (formerly Academic Profile) is a multiple-choice test produced and scored by ETS, with sub scores in a variety of areas including critical thinking.
- c) CAT is a mostly short answer test produced by Tennessee Tech and scored locally at Bethel by traditional and SUCCESS faculty.

- **Eastern Kentucky University - Explore, Evaluate, Expand, Express**

http://www.sacs.eku.edu/qep/QEP_FAQ.pdf?PHPSESSID=b0oi41jui7foeqqpet9bkr521

EKU will develop informed, critical and creative thinkers who communicate effectively. Students will be able to: explore (discover, investigate) and use relevant information in order to gain knowledge and solve problems; evaluate (differentiate, analyze) information and ideas using appropriate methods; expand (develop) and generate their own ideas; express (deliver, communicate) a point of view and develop it with awareness of alternatives. The program components to help achieve their QEP are:

- a) Professional development plan, program initiatives, and overall university assessment plan.
- b) Level 1 program's are university-wide, co-curricular initiatives. The initially approved programs include *The Service Learning Project*, *Thinking and Communicating across the Curriculum*, *Addressing Critical and First Year Course: Transition to College* and *The Studio for Academic Creativity*.
- c) Level 2 programs are individual or unit specific pilot programs. Two programs are approved at this level: *The CACTUS Project (Citizens' Assembly for Critical Thinking about the United States)* and *The Science in Society Project*.
- d) Level 3 programming is described as unit specific, non-funded initiatives demonstrated through educational objectives on the strategic plan. These objectives demonstrate the application of critical and creative thinking principles to discipline specific knowledge.

Assessment: The overall University Assessment Plan describes a university-wide process of assessing the development of informed, critical and creative thinkers who communicate effectively. Both formative and summative evidence of students' progress toward the goal will be sought.

- **Georgia State University - Critical Thinking through Writing**

[http://www.gsu.edu/files/QEP_Final_Draft\(1\).pdf](http://www.gsu.edu/files/QEP_Final_Draft(1).pdf)

The goal of the QEP is to increase students' performance on two of the University's general education learning outcomes – critical thinking and written communication – as evidenced in their academic major. Writing is incorporated as the conduit for the expression of critical thinking as follows:

- a) University-wide graduation requirement (effective for students entering in fall 2009 and thereafter) that undergraduates pass two critical thinking through writing (CTW) courses in their major.
- b) Each course will contain multiple writing-to-learn activities and assignments that address issues relevant to that major.
- c) CTW activities and assignments will be structured to permit frequent feedback to students and opportunities for revision.
- d) Course assignments will align with the University's definition of critical thinking. The student to instructor ratio in CTW courses may not exceed 25:1, thus creating an environment conducive to active learning.

Assessment is conducted:

- a) Through department's annual reports of student learning outcomes for the major.
- b) Through a variety of surveys of instructors and students, and through written reports from ambassadors.
- c) Indirectly through use of NSSE Benchmark items and exit surveys of graduating seniors.
- d) By using questions added to alumni surveys, when academic units undergo Academic Program Review.
- e) To provide further useful information on the impact of CTW on student learning.

- **University of Louisville - Ideas to Action: Using Critical Thinking to Foster Student Learning and Community Engagement**

<http://louisville.edu/ideastoaction/what/i2a-frequently-asked-questions.html>

A cornerstone of the "i2a" project is students' engagement in what is called a "culminating experience." Before graduation, every student will be asked to apply his or her new knowledge and critical thinking skills in a project or research endeavor that has practical application. The style and scope of the culminating experience will vary by school, department or academic program. The University has chosen

to take an expansive approach to culminating experiences and expects participating units to develop a mix of approaches, which could include capstone courses/projects, internships, senior theses, research projects and/or service learning projects.

Assessment involves an *i2a* [evaluation](#) plan that aligns with the University-wide assessment activities, provides structure for unit-based *i2a* plans, and offers a range of resources for individual faculty to shape curricular innovations to support *i2a*.

3. What are employer expectations for potential employees surrounding this theme (external data)?

According to MSU's Career Services Center:

- a) "Problem solving skills" are listed in the top skills national employers want in recent college graduates along with "initiative".
- b) Employers, specifically MSU recruiters, have stated that they want to see skills and accomplishments on resumes. Being able to recognize a problem and taking the initiative to solve the problem is important. This is not industry specific.

Suggestions: Include real life case studies from business and industry for student projects. Utilize "mentors" from industry in classes. Include research and professional development in capstone courses. Create internships in which students perform at least 50% of their work in real life professional situations. Detailed learning contracts with employers are suggested that would include specific learning objectives.

4. How does this theme align with the mission of MSU?

MSU Mission: *We are a diverse community of learners committed to student success. MSU is accredited as a comprehensive University offering quality higher education opportunities in a collegial and open environment. MSU pursues academic excellence, research, community engagement and life-long learning. MSU is dedicated to improving the quality of life while preserving and promoting the unique cultural heritage of East Kentucky.*

Morehead State University's strategic plan, **ASPIRE to Greatness**, was developed as an institution-leading document through the year 2010. Our values indicate a commitment to scholarship, learning and service and that excellence will be achieved through teamwork, leadership, innovation and accountability. The strategic goal associated with critical/analytical thinking is identified by the "A" in ASPIRE. The "A" signifies academic excellence and that Morehead State University will develop, deliver and maintain superior academic programs. Achieving these significant goals will influence not only student critical/analytical thinking but many other academic crucial traits. This will be accomplished this by fostering a culture of excellence by maintaining quality instruction with high standards on teaching and learning, through scholarship, undergraduate and graduate research and creative activities.

5. What are our student data and current practices related to this theme (internal data)?

2008 Kentucky ACT High School Profile Report

- a) Only 19% of graduates met all four ACT College Readiness Benchmark Scores.
- b) Less than 35% of graduates were ready for college level math no matter the math curriculum they followed according to Math ACT College Readiness Benchmark.
- c) Less than 27% of graduates were ready for college level math no matter the math curriculum they followed according to Science ACT College Readiness Benchmark.
- d) The average MSU freshman in the fall 2008 had ACT sub scores in Math and Science of 20.2 and 21.5, which were 1.8 and 2.5 lower than the ACT College Readiness Benchmark Scores respectively.

2007 CLA Technical Appendices

- a) According to the mean CLA scores, first time MSU freshman in the fall of 2007 were "Well Below" their national counterparts with regard to their ability to synthesize information and "Below" their national counterparts with regard to their ability to write analytically.

QEP THEME
DIVERSE/GLOBAL CONTEXT

1. What are the best practices related to this theme (external data)?

The *best practices* of institutions using the diverse/global context as their QEP topic typically include three basic learning outcomes. The outcomes are: (1) Knowledge - an awareness of significant contemporary issues and their global scope, including the history, differences, and perspectives of and within regions and cultures; (2) Skills - the ability to engage positively with, and learn from, people of different backgrounds and in different environments; and (3) Attitudes - self-awareness as both national and global citizen.

2. What are the best practices related to this theme (external data)?

- **Duke University - *Global Duke: Enhancing Students' Capacity for World Citizenship***

The QEP is designed to increase Duke's focused attention on global challenges and paths to meeting them, and to foster attitudes and values that will enable Duke graduates to learn and function most effectively in the world—to be "world citizens," in other words. The overarching program objective is that activities associated with the QEP will contribute to the development of bonds within the student body through shared experiences, and in so doing will further strengthen the sense of Duke as a learning community. Three paths are proposed to fulfill these outcomes. Two of them are new curricular initiatives: a Winter Forum and a Global Semester Abroad. The third path is infrastructural: a Global Advising Program.

[\[http://academiccouncil.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/qep-draft-19-january-16-2009.pdf\]](http://academiccouncil.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/qep-draft-19-january-16-2009.pdf)

- **Kennesaw State University – *Get Global***

The purpose of the QEP is to make certain that global learning rises to the top tier of the university's educational priorities and outcomes in order to reinforce global learning for an engaged citizenship. The QEP focuses on increased opportunities for international learning experiences for students, faculty, staff and administrators, including implementing a global learning certification program and increased financial support for study abroad. The QEP student learning outcomes are: (1) Global Perspectives (Knowledge): Graduating students recognize and incorporate the diversity, commonalities, and interdependence of the world's people, nations, and/or environmental systems into their general knowledge, academic specializations and worldviews; (2) Intercultural Engagement (Skills): Graduating students demonstrate effective and appropriate communication, interaction and teamwork with people of different nationalities and cultures, either locally or internationally; and, (3) Global Citizenship (Attitudes): Graduating students demonstrate respect and support for the common good of the world community, including its diversity, attention to human rights, concern for the welfare of others, and sustainability of natural systems and species. [\[http://www.kennesaw.edu/getglobal/\]](http://www.kennesaw.edu/getglobal/)

- **University of Tennessee Knoxville – *Ready for the World***

The QEP is a program to help students gain the international and intercultural knowledge they need to succeed in today's world. It is part of a long-range plan to transform the campus into a culture of diversity that best prepares students for working and competing in the 21st century. This QEP calls for expanding the curricula, increasing global competency of faculty and staff and focusing on the intercultural issues of particular concern to the university. Along with recruiting more international students and faculty, UT-Knoxville will increase the number of students who study abroad and change the programming, the opportunities and the overall feel of campus life. To date, more than 100 *Ready for the World* grants totaling more than \$400,000 have been awarded for projects and programs that promote intercultural and international awareness. The learning outcomes are to provide students opportunities:

(1) to gain a worldview that recognizes, understands and celebrates the complexity of cultures and people; (2) to gain competence in cross-cultural communication, both domestic and international; (3) to develop the capacity to think critically about international and intercultural issues; (4) to develop the understanding that knowledge is global; and, (5) to develop a passion for life-long engagement with global learning. *Ready for the World* complements UT's Diversity Action Plan that requires all departments to strengthen recruitment and retention efforts to enhance diversity among all faculty and staff.

[<http://www.utk.edu/readyfortheworld/>]

Other QEP Examples Related to *Diverse/Global Context*

- Rollins College - [http://tars.rollins.edu/QEP/QEP%2015 05.pdf](http://tars.rollins.edu/QEP/QEP%2015%2005.pdf)
- Texas Tech University (crossover with multiple themes)
http://www.depts.ttu.edu/provost/qep/docs/QEP_PowerPoint.pdf
- University of Tampa - <http://www.hccfl.edu/sacs/qep/documents/UTQEPlink.pdf>
- Wake Forest - http://www.wfu.edu/qep/documents/QEP011906_SACSReport.pdf
- Western Kentucky University - <http://www.wku.edu/qep/QEPprimer.pdf>

3. What are employer expectations for potential employees surrounding this theme (external data)?

The MSU Career Services Center was asked to provide external data from employers of MSU graduates related to the *Diverse/Global Context* theme. The response follows.

- a. Employers state that they want employees who can work in a diverse global marketplace. This includes being able to work with others who have cultural, religious, and gender differences.
- b. Many employers now have minority recruiting programs.

Suggestions: Include cultural, religious, and gender studies as part of the humanities requirements. Offer multi-cultural recruiting/networking events for employers to meet students and alumni. Emphasize Career Fair for all students to network with employers.

4. How does this theme align with the mission of MSU (internal data)?

The *Diverse/Global Context* QEP theme motivates MSU to develop students who are skilled in cross-cultural adaptability and experienced in cultural diversity. While promoting and preserving the unique cultural heritage of Eastern Kentucky is paramount to the MSU mission statement, excellence will be achieved by developing a strong link and interaction to global views.

ASPIRE to Greatness, the institutional strategic plan describes MSU as being a “diverse community of learners committed to student success.” A global view of experiences will facilitate this success through the development of a clear linkage to students’ local views. The phrase “think globally, act locally” can be applied here to encourage students to learn about diverse global issues and then apply those lessons locally.

The exhibition of the institutional commitment to sustaining diversity and inclusiveness is demonstrated by the Board of Regents adoption of a resolution sustaining diversity. This resolution commits to the infusion of diversity into all aspects of University life. The Board of Regents has obligated itself to that shared value and challenges all members of the University community to act affirmatively in identifying, creating and accomplishing diversity in its many forms and venues.

5. What are our student data and current practices related to this theme (internal data)?

Originally developed as a three-year plan through the 2006-2007 fiscal year, the MSU Diversity Plan was incorporated into our University Strategic Plan, *ASPIRE To Greatness*, as the President’s Diversity Initiative.

The plan and supporting documents found at www.moreheadstate.edu/diversity provide greater detail of the original objectives and whether or not they have been achieved or are in progress. Additionally, the CPE CEO report indicates areas of improvement in both recruitment/retention of a diverse student population as well

as our faculty/staff presence. The President's Diversity Council, under the guidance of the Chief Diversity Officer, and in cooperation with the Campus Environment Committee is responsible for developing the next iteration of the plan.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was administered at MSU in 2007 to freshman and senior groups of students. The number of respondents was 218 freshman (5.9%) and 281 seniors (5.1%). Several survey questions are related the Diverse/Global Context theme, as follow.

NSSE Question	Class	MSU	KY Publics	Carnegie Peers	NSSE 2007
1.e. Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments	FY	2.79	2.74	2.79	2.76
	SR	2.82	2.77	2.86	2.80
1.u. Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	FY	2.24	2.46**	2.53***	2.57***
	SR	2.30	2.54***	2.64***	2.66***
1.v. Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	FY	2.73	2.63	2.64	2.68
	SR	2.63	2.66	2.67	2.71
10.c. Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	FY	2.45	2.61*	2.62*	2.63*
	SR	2.30	2.40	2.47**	2.44*
11.l. Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	FY	2.47	2.58	2.64*	2.61
	SR	2.34	2.55**	2.65***	2.59***
* Statistically significant difference [p=0.05 (2-tailed)]					
** Statistically significant difference [p=0.01 (2-tailed)]					
*** Statistically significant difference [p=0.001 (2-tailed)]					

As compared to the Kentucky public institutions, Carnegie peer institutions and overall NSSE institutions, the results from MSU students may be interpreted as follows:

- MSU students felt diverse perspectives were included in class discussions or writing assignments. However, both freshman and senior groups significantly lagged behind other peers (from KY public institutions, Carnegie peer institutions, and all NSSE surveyed institutions) in having serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity.
- MSU freshman felt they had serious conversations with students of very different religious, political or personal beliefs/values, when compared to their peers. However, seniors lagged behind their peers slightly.
- Most MSU students significantly lagged behind their peers when asked if the University encouraged contact among students from different economic, social, racial or ethnic backgrounds.
- Most MSU students, and particularly seniors, significantly lagged behind their peers in their opinion of how they understood people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds.
- From these results, the conclusion might be drawn that MSU students felt they significantly lagged behind their peers at other institutions in getting an adequate diverse/global context at MSU.

QEP THEME
LIFE/LEADERSHIP SKILLS

1. What are the best practices related to this theme (external data)?

Countless colleges and universities incorporate life/leadership skills in the comprehensive education of students. Often referred to as co-curricular programs/activities, these elements of higher education place an emphasis upon the development of skills through out-of-class experiential learning that complements the academic curriculum. Examples of programs include, but are not limited to:

- a) *Hancock Student Leadership Program (Western Connecticut University)*: “The emphasis of the program is to strengthen students’ ability to inspire, motivate and influence others on campus.” (<http://www.wcsu.ctstateu.edu/hslp/>)
- b) *The Student Leadership Development Program (Southern Illinois University Edwardsville)*: This program “offers a wide variety of opportunities that complement the classroom experience. These opportunities can provide a competitive edge as students/graduates enter the work force, or apply for scholarships, or Graduate School.” (<http://www.siu.edu/kimmel/sldp/>)
- c) *Student Leadership Academy (Collin College)*: This program is “designed to develop leaders through the acquisition and application of knowledge, skills, abilities, experience and personal reflection. An experiential learning environment fosters teamwork and builds character through scholarship and service.” (<http://www.ccccd.edu/academics/sla/>)
- d) *Student Leadership Institute (DePaul)*: “The Student Leadership Institute is dedicated to preparing socially responsible leaders who work for positive change in their chosen fields and communities and who are committed to the common good.” (<http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/sli/about/mission.asp>)
- e) *Ball State University Department of Educational Leadership: Engaging Educational Experts*: This program places an emphasis upon “preparing engaged educational experts who are sensitive and responsive to the contextual bases of teaching, learning, and development is the scope of the Department of Educational Leadership. Students who participate in this program acquire experience on a practical, theoretical and clinical level. The program reinforces professional expertise through advanced coursework, projects, authentic experiences, and leadership. Participants also use their professional leadership skills to serve and bless the lives of all with whom they come in contact. www.bsu.edu/edleadership.” (http://www.eep.com/merchant/newsite/best_practice.html)

2. Do other QEP’s exist related to this topic? If so, what are the best practices of other institutions related to this theme (external data)?

Research related to other institutions produced three examples of colleges and universities that have incorporated student life/leadership skills into their QEP’s.

- **Florida State University – LEAD: Leaders Educated to Make a Difference**
http://studentaffairs.fsu.edu/downloads/QEPsum_002.pdf
The focus of the QEP is leadership development among FSU students. Multiple research indicators suggest that higher education is not producing future leaders, attesting to the need for a renewed emphasis on leadership as part of the collegiate experience. Rising to this challenge, it is the FSU vision that students and graduates will learn and practice leadership skills that will make a difference in their scholarly, campus and wider communities. Seeing a natural link between roles of student-scholar-citizen, the QEP **LEAD** acronym captures the essence of what it wants to achieve: **Leaders Educated to Make a Difference.**
- **Marine Corp University - Leadership Through Enhancement of Communication Skills**
http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/mcu/sacs/qep/new_folder/toc.html
Implementation of the proposed QEP will improve the curricula and hone the leadership skills of MCU graduates. The MCU QEP directly supports student learning and strengthens leadership skills

critical for the demanding jobs students will be asked to perform after graduation. MCU students arrive with varying degrees of competence in communication skills. The QEP is designed to improve the abilities of all students through positive reinforcement and continual feedback on the execution of the student writing and speaking requirements across the curricula. The MCU QEP has four goals:

- (1) Standardize and strengthen university-wide assessment of communication skills;
- (2) Improve student written communication skills;
- (3) Improve student verbal communication skills; and,
- (4) Develop a Leadership Communication Skills Center (LCSC).

- **Rollins College - *Education for Citizenship and Leadership In Local and Global Communities***

<http://tars.rollins.edu/QEP/>

The mission of the QEP is to enhance student learning by developing an institutional culture that embraces local and global citizenship and leadership. Grounded by student learning outcomes, the initiatives include specific strategies that will lead to marked improvements in campus culture. The five major initiatives of the plan, to be developed and implemented over five years, are as follows:

- (1) Leadership and citizenship (curricular/co-curricular);
- (2) Student recruitment and retention;
- (3) Academic and social integrity;
- (4) Internationalization; and,
- (5) Diversity.

In support of each of these initiatives, there are learning outcomes, objectives and strategies, and assessment measures. Within Initiative #1 (Leadership and Citizenship), those are:

Learning Outcomes: Leadership and Citizenship

- Students will gain knowledge of self, especially in relation to integration with others on campus and within local and global communities.
- Students will enhance self-perceptions of socially responsible leadership and citizenship, as measured by the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS).

3. What are employer expectations for potential employees surrounding this theme?

Based upon the data provided by the MSU Office of Career Services, employers have provided the following data regarding the importance of life/leadership skill enhancement as it relates to preparing students to enter the workforce.

- a) Of the top skills and attributes requested by employers, team work was number three and leadership was number 14. Also, listed as #8 on the list was interpersonal skills.
- b) Employers suggest that students use examples of how they have used these skills in resumes, cover letters and in job interviews.
- c) Duck /Eagle concept. Many employers state that they can train employees in specific skills, but cannot change students' temperament, interpersonal skills, or work ethic; i.e. "can't teach a duck to be an eagle."

Suggestions: Students should take active roles in organizations and class projects. Students should use these specific projects to describe their leadership, teamwork, and interpersonal skills. Students must be able to tell stories about these projects, not just claim to have the skills.

4. How does this theme align with the mission of MSU?

The intentional development of life/leadership skills clearly supports goals 2 (Student Success) and 3 (Productive Partnerships) of the MSU strategic plan (ASPIRE).

5. What are our student data and current practices related to this theme (external data)?

In an effort to promote the development of life/leadership skills, Morehead State University supports a variety of programs and activities. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a) **LEAD Program:** The mission of the Leadership Development Program (LEAD) is to enhance and instill skills and qualities required in leadership environments by educated citizens who contribute time and talent to their community and organizations in a global civilization. The Leadership Learning Community (LLC) is an important part of the LEAD Program and is based on two fundamental components: rigorous scholarship and active community engagement. This combination of theory and practice seeks to foster academic excellence, creativity, self-knowledge, self-discipline, personal and civic responsibility, public spiritedness, effective communication skills, good moral character, and the ability to work in a mutually cooperative way. These aims are accomplished through classical liberal arts studies and are grounded in everyday life, the cultivation of a global perspective, and the opportunity for local and regional service. (Adopted LEAD Advisory Committee, 01.24.2008)
- b) **Student Organizations:** In an effort to promote student leadership, campus involvement, management skills, etc., the Office of Student Activities provides support and resources to student organization. Students are encouraged to form new organizations to meet their unique needs and/or join groups with long-standing traditions on campus. In 2008-09, there were 111 recognized student organizations. These groups have student leaders who manage their agendas on an annual basis. In addition, students serve as members of umbrella organizations such as Student Government Association (SGA), Residence Hall Association (RHA), Interfraternity Council (IFC), Panhellenic Council, National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), Student Programming Board (SPB). Participating in a student organization allows individuals the opportunity to develop transferable skills can be utilized during and after their college career.
- c) **Undergraduate Fellowships:** The MSU Undergraduate Research Fellowship Program was specifically designed to provide talented undergraduate students with the opportunity to work as a junior colleague with a faculty scholar/mentor on a research project, where research is broadly defined as the scholarly and creative work associated with all disciplines. The program is open to all full-time undergraduate students who meet one or more of the following criteria: 1) ACT Comp of 24 or higher; 2) overall cumulative and within major GPA of 3.00 or higher; and/or 3) other evidence of research potential. Faculty mentors must provide evidence of an active research/creative productions program (e.g., publications, grants, exhibitions, performances, etc.). Students may work up to 15 hours per week during the academic year and the fellowship is renewable for up to 4 years with satisfactory progress.
- d) **Resident Advisors:** The resident advisor (RA) position places an emphasis upon the development of life/leadership skills. Through the development and implementation of skills related to conflict resolution, personnel management, time management, administrative tasks, role modeling, etc., the RA position truly enhances the life/leadership skills of students. On an annual basis, the MSU Housing Office employs 65 resident advisors. Resident Advisors are responsible for the well being of all residents within his/her residence hall. The primary role of the RA is to assist residents in achieving their goals both personally and academically. The RA serves as a facilitator encouraging cooperation and consideration within group-living environments and is expected to help build a community atmosphere by initiating and helping to organize floor and/or hall programs/activities. S/he serves as an informational resource concerning the MSU campus, policies, organizations and the residence halls.
- e) **Emerging Leaders Symposium:** The mission of MSU's Emerging Leaders Symposium (ELS) is to provide students practical skills, knowledge of theoretical foundations of leadership, opportunities to network and information on further leadership opportunities on and off campus. In 2008, 73 students participated in the ELS program and 94 students in 2007. Students in the ELS program will be provided instruction on communication techniques, problem solving, decision-making tactics and life skills. They will: (1) learn self management skills such as time, stress and financial management; 2) have an opportunity to practice intercommunication skills amongst themselves and with university and community leaders; 3) be introduced to leadership styles and will have an opportunity to assess their own style; and 4) be provided a comprehensive set of leadership opportunities provided on campus (i.e. RA position, orientation leader positions, etc.) and be shown how to apply for such positions.

QEP THEME
ORAL/WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

1. What are the best practices related to this theme (external data)?

Within the past two decades, there has been a substantial shift in the pedagogy of writing and speaking at all levels. This shift represents a more informed understanding of how an individual learns rather than attending almost exclusively to the mechanics of the skill. Thus the emphasis in instruction is focused on the process as well as the product. Another aspect of this approach translates into writing and speaking for a variety of purposes, including discipline-specific communication. “Writing across the curriculum,” “writing in the disciplines,” and “business communication” are examples of this focused approach that attends to the specific modes of communication within each discipline. This focus, in turn, has implications for the workplace. Preparing learners to be successful and effective communicators in the workplace may be a viable outcome for programs.

Brain research has also had an impact on pedagogy as it reveals the need for making connections (or creating opportunities for making connections) among information, data, processes, and practices. While it has long been understood that transference of skills and knowledge across disciplines may not automatically occur, this cutting edge research helps in understanding the why and the how of such phenomena.

Finally, the prevalence and easy availability of new technologies as well as a keener awareness of accessibility on a global scale (literally) have made the necessity of integrating technology into the college curriculum a given. The use of these myriad resources for both teaching and learning appears to be endless. As technology becomes a more prevalent aspect of learning, research has focused on several areas that relate to both writing and oral communication. E-portfolios, podcasts, blogging, and videoconferencing are just a few ways that learners are making use of the plethora of technology.

2. Do other QEP’s exist related to this topic? If so, what are the best practices of other institutions related to this theme (external data)?

University of Southern Mississippi - *Finding a Voice: Improving Oral and Written Competencies*

http://www.usm.edu/gep/QEP_plan.html

The mission of *Finding a Voice* is to improve oral and written communication skills among students at The University of Southern Mississippi. This QEP involved the establishment of a Writing Center and a Speaking Center. Several student learning outcomes for oral and written communication were established for each area of communication. The first four outcomes of each area (content, organization, language, and adaptation to audience and context) highlight the commonalities of oral and written communication.

In achieving the mission of improving oral and written communication skills among students at Southern Miss, the following goals were established:

- Goal 1: *Finding a Voice* will result in faculty pedagogies that strengthen the oral and written communication skills of students at The University of Southern Mississippi.
- Goal 2: *Finding a Voice* will create a learning environment that offers enhanced support for speaking and writing, which includes the availability of one-on-one instruction and technologies in these areas.
- Goal 3: *Finding a Voice* will result in more effective assessment of oral and written learning.

University of Miami – *Communication Across the Curriculum*

http://www7.miami.edu/um_global_static_files/sacs_department_files/QEP%20FINAL.pdf

Technology, particularly the Internet, has given rise to the creation and dissemination of unprecedented amounts of information. Students utilize a whole range of technology tools such as the computer, cell phones, Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), and gaming devices to gather, share, and distribute information. Students’ use of technology provides opportunities to extend the scope of their information literacy skills and enhance critical engagement and representation of knowledge relevant to their academic experience. The QEP *Communication Across the Curriculum* is designed to:

- a) Improve the learning environment and prepare students to be effective communicators;

- b) Provide faculty development and support for full-time faculty members who would like to include new media or oral communication in their classes but need training and an environment in which to realize their aspiration;
- c) Embrace existing classes offered by full-time faculty members at the University that are either utilizing new media and/or oral communication in the classroom but do not currently have institutional support to do so purposively; and,
- d) Support a small number of new interdisciplinary classes that will be offered on an experimental basis by full-time faculty members as special courses that incorporate information literacy and utilize new media and/or oral communication for collaborative teaching and learning.

University of Mississippi – Improved Student Writing <http://www.olemiss.edu/qep/qepfull.html>

The goal of The University of Mississippi QEP is to improve student writing, with an initial focus on freshman writing. UM designed the QEP to achieve five desired student learning outcomes focused on Writing Process, Exploration and Argumentation, Purposes and Audience, Research, and Conventions and Mechanics. Their strategic approach includes reshaping the freshman writing curriculum, improving writing support services and resources, and enhancing the teaching-learning environment. Their QEP seeks to create a well-ordered, consistent, and sharply focused freshman writing program. Implementing the QEP will benefit first-year students by making expected learning outcomes clear and consistent across different sections of the same writing courses, as well as in tutoring experiences and other writing support areas. Clarity and consistency in approach, combined with increased student involvement in community-based assessment, will help students evaluate their own writing and encourage them to seek consultation and engage in peer review; they will have a clear and consistent starting place from which to work.

Albany State University – Writing Realized: Developing Writing Literacies in a Technological Age
<http://www.asurams.edu/president/governance/qep.php>

Students enrolled in the QEP classes will demonstrate enhanced writing competencies in *five writing literacies*: information acquisition (research), critical thinking, technological applications, visual constructs, and reflective practice. ASU will implement a university-wide program to impact student writing literacies in the disciplines represented in the undergraduate core curriculum. The program will build upon and expand the writing curriculum of the Department of English, Modern Languages and Mass Communication so that student learning in the courses in the freshman/sophomore core curriculum is more writing-centered. To develop the program, the professional staff will design and conduct workshops to equip faculty with teaching methods that infuse writing into their courses and thus positively impact student learning. The plan is to incorporate the writing intervention strategies into one course section of every discipline represented in the core, thereby impacting students early in their college years with learning that is writing centered and promotes the development of students' writing literacies skills. The design of this plan will provide a means for the University to address its strategic goals to serve the educational needs of its students and provide state of the art technology in support of its mission

Other QEPs of Note:

- Columbus State University– <http://sacs.colstate.edu/qep/CSUQEPcdversion1-23-2006.pdf>
- Converse College – <http://www.converse.edu/qep>
- UAB – <http://main.uab.edu/Sites/DOE/QEP/50582/>
- McNeese State– <http://www.mcneese.edu/write/>
- Barton College– <http://www.barton.edu/pdf/qep2008.pdf>

3. What are employer expectations for potential employees surrounding this theme (external data)?

1. This is the number one request from employers nationwide every year.
2. Employers who recruit at MSU say on surveys that MSU students need to learn to introduce themselves, express ideas verbally, and be able to talk about the skills and accomplishments they have to offer an employer.
3. Employers complain that students do not write emails and memos in a professional manner.

4. Employers want employees who can write a basic research observation and make suggestions to a board or committee.

Suggestions: Require speech and writing to be taken within the first few semesters as a college student. All courses should have a writing component for the purpose of expressing ideas. Require capstone courses to include resume writing, cover letter, memo/email correspondence and practice (mock) interviews. Increase attendance to career fairs in which students introduce themselves and communicate their skills to employers.

4. How does this theme align with the mission of MSU?

MSU Mission: *We are diverse community of learners committed to student success. MSU is accredited as a comprehensive University offering quality higher education opportunities in a collegial and open environment. MSU pursues academic excellence, research, community engagement, and life-long learning. MSU is dedicated to improving the quality of life while preserving and promoting the unique cultural heritage of East Kentucky.*

The ability to communicate effectively is basic core requirement for success in every academic discipline as well as the research and service mission of the University. Academic excellence, research, community engagement, and life-long learning are stated focuses in the MSU mission and none would be possible without first achieving success with ensuring that students can communicate effectively in both oral and written formats. The complexity of effective communication is even compounded as MSU prepares students to live and work in the 21st century global society.

5. What are our student data and current practices related to this theme? (internal data)

Internal data reviewed included the 2000-2006 Report on MSU's Academic Profile Test Scores prepared by Lola Aagaard (August 2007) and the 2007-2008 College Learning Assessment (CLA) outcomes. Both reports are available on the MSU Office of Institutional Research and Assessment website.

The Academic Profile Test measures skills rather than content knowledge and the report included charts of seniors' norm-referenced and criterion-referenced results across years from 2000 through 2006. The test includes three subject areas that assess performance in four key skills including reading, critical thinking, writing and mathematics. Both reading and writing were reviewed for purposes of evaluating internal data related to oral and written communication skills of MSU students.

In the reading category, the report indicates the MSU seniors have fallen from a score of 120.7 in 2000 to 118.7 in 2006 in the average reading score. More significant is how those scores compare to the benchmark schools selected for MSU by the publisher of the Academic Profile Test. In 2000, only 25% of the benchmark schools scores higher than MSU, but in 2006, 68% of the benchmark schools scored higher in reading than MSU seniors.

The summary of average writing score for MSU seniors across the years indicates that MSU seniors have never achieved above the 20th percentile in writing in comparison with benchmark institutions. For the last five years, the average score has been steady at the 10th percentile. In total, 65% of the seniors at benchmark schools scored higher than MSU seniors.

The Collegiate Learning Assessment instrument is an evaluation tool for learning more about the cognitive growth of students. The goal of the CLA project is not to measure changes in individual students, but rather to learn more about programmatic features that correlate with "institutional effects" associated with larger than expected gains in students' analytical reasoning, critical thinking, and writing skills. The CLA provides one of the first "value added" measures that can reliably compare institutional contributions to student learning. The CLA assesses student outcomes in the following categories: Performance Task, Analytical Writing Task, Make-an-Argument, and Critique-an-Argument. A comparison of the freshman tested in Fall 2007 and seniors testing in Spring 2008 stated that the "value added" estimated for each category were "Above Expected" for Analytical Writing, Make-An-Argument, and Critique-an-Argument and "Well Above Expected" for Performance Task and Total CLA Score. The "Above Expected" assessment indicates students scored in the 70-89th percentile range and "Well Above Expected" indicates scores in the 90-99th percentile range.

A more detailed analysis of each report would be required but the initial impression indicates that while MSU students are experiencing above or well-above "value added" during their educational experience (per the CLA assessment), MSU seniors are not performing strong in comparison with external benchmark peers in the areas of reading and writing.