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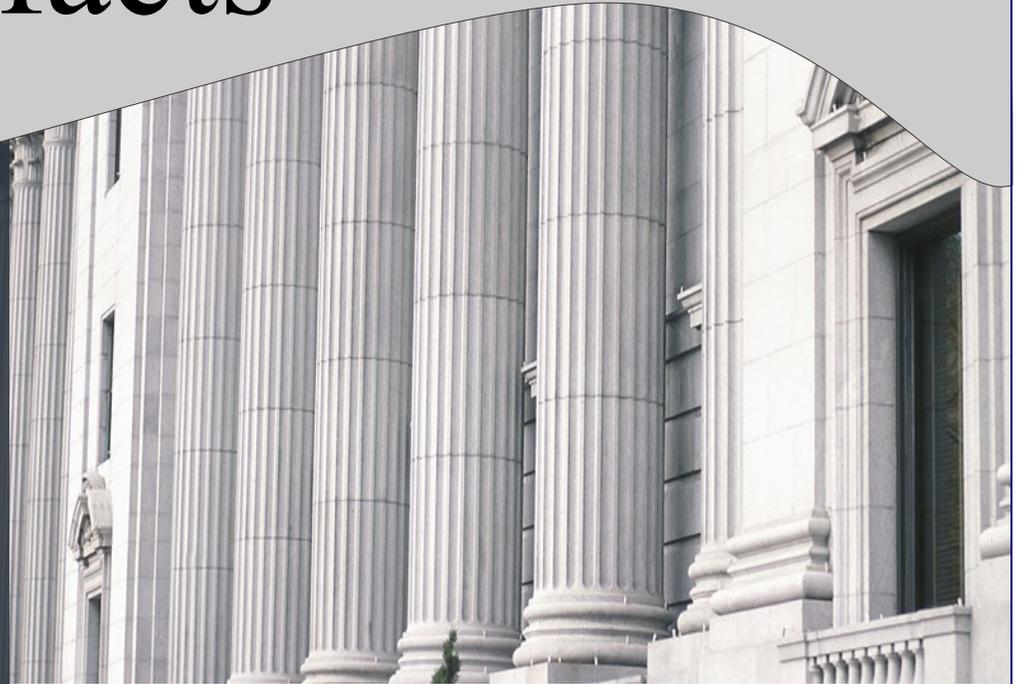
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Newsletter Editors

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COUNTDOWN:

Just two months to submit the Compliance Certificate!

Submitting the Compliance Certificate to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is the first formal step in the process of applying for reaffirmation. This certificate will be submitted March 1st. Additional requirements involved in the application are submission of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) and the on-site visit.

7 months to submit the QEP document

9 months till the on-site visit



ASSESSMENT

What is General Education?

The philosophy behind the idea of “General Education” is to provide broad exposure to multiple disciplines. Through this broad exposure, students learn to develop important intellectual and civic capabilities that will help them lead rich and productive lives beyond their college years. At Palm Beach State College, general education can be described by seven broad categories: Ethics, Communications, Personal Development, Critical Thinking, Quantitative Reasoning, Global Awareness and Technology and Information Literacy.



Learn more about the Palm Beach State College General Education Learning Outcomes. Each of the seven outcomes are listed with a descriptive statement at the Website below.

General Education Learning Outcome information
<http://www.palmbeachstate.edu/LearningOutcomes.xml>

Program Area Assessment

Did you know that Palm Beach State College offers over a hundred different vocational degrees and certificates? These programs prepare our graduates for employment in a wide variety of fields, such as Automotive Technology, Professional Pilot, Cosmetology, Fire Fighter, Nursing, Dental Hygiene, and many more. SACS requires that each of our degree programs and Post Secondary Adult Vocational programs undergo an assessment process on a regular and ongoing basis. As part of this process, every program has developed learning outcomes that describe what their students should be able to do upon completion of the program. These learning outcomes are assessed annually, using a variety of measures, such as tests, projects, evaluations, observations of skill performance, etc. The results of these measurements are then used to determine what aspect of the program needs improvement. Once that has been determined, the program instructors and faculty develop improvement strategies which could include such things as curriculum revisions, academic development, selection of new textbooks, etc. The purpose of this assessment process is to continually evaluate and improve what we do in order to increase our students’ success in school and after.

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Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

Operational definition:

Critical thinking is using the skills needed to explore, evaluate, express, and engage in purposeful reasoning in order to reach sound conclusions, decisions, positions, and solutions.

The QEP: Where are we now?

After numerous conversations, emails, focus groups, and Web-response submissions, we are able to move forward and write the plan. For the purpose of plan development, the College – with participation of about 800 constituents! – developed an operational definition of critical thinking (see box to left). The QEP will include strategies in and out of the classroom to help students acquire, develop, and apply critical thinking skills. It will also include a support system for faculty, instructors, and staff in the effort to create such a learning environment. The elements of the plan are in place, and were presented to the QEP Advisory Council in early December. A full draft is currently being edited.

Help name the QEP!

College-wide participation continues as all are invited to offer possible titles for the QEP. All suggestions received by January 18, 2011 will be considered as the title is selected. Late January into February, we will also solicit feedback for promotional ideas. This will include a poster and video contest. Updates about this and other activities that continue throughout 2011 will be posted on College social networks and the [QEP page](#) under the Current College-wide Activity link. The QEP will be presented to SACS during the site visit in October 2011– by then, everyone on campus will know what a QEP is, and will have many details about **our QEP!**

QEP Quick Facts



What is it?

Our QEP is a five-year plan to improve student learning by focusing on *critical thinking*.

Why are we doing it?

A college-wide QEP is a requirement of SACS. **However**, when we all work together to define what we want to do and how we can accomplish it, doesn't that make us a better teaching and learning institution? Beyond the SACS requirement, **that** is why we are doing it.

When does it begin? We will take preliminary steps in 2011. The plan is officially implemented in the 2012 spring semester.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE QEP, PLEASE VISIT OR CALL:
<http://www.palmbeachstate.edu/QEP.xml> ~ 561-868-3325

Assessing General Education

Because general education is so broad in its scope, assessing it can be a very complex process. Here at the College, we currently assess our general education learning outcomes in three distinct ways. The General Education Assessment Committee—which is comprised of 14 faculty members and 5 non-voting staff and administrators - has developed a series of problem-based “Scenarios” that measure each of the College’s seven general education learning outcomes. A random sample of students is selected each year to respond to these scenarios and those responses are in turn graded by the Assessment Committee. At the same time, another random sample of students is selected to receive the ETS Proficiency Profile. This is a nationally normed, standardized exam which measures critical thinking, communications and quantitative reasoning. This test not only gives us a second measure for three of our learning outcomes, but it also allows us to compare how well our students perform to the performance of students from other institutions. Finally, we have a number of indirect measures that we examine, such as, how well our students perform at in the state universities once they leave here. We also look at how well students perform in their general education courses and how students rate their own knowledge in these areas. Over the course of the next year, the Assessment Committee will be examining ways to augment the assessment process by introducing the use of assessments that faculty are already using in their classes, such as, test questions or projects.

WEAVEonline is Coming Soon!

Currently, all program assessment information is submitted to the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness on Word templates. While this process has worked for us, we are always looking for ways to make things easier and more efficient. One of the ways that we will be streamlining our assessment process is that beginning in January 2011, we will no longer be using templates to submit assessment information. Instead, we will be rolling out the use of an assess-



ment management program called WEAVEonline. This program will allow designated personnel—usually program managers and associate deans—to enter assessment information directly into this online tool. We believe that the use of this system will make the data collection process more standardized, and easier to understand. Training on WEAVEonline will take place during the spring 2011 semester.