



2013-2014

# Quality Enhancement Plan

2013-2014 Annual Report: Year 2  
Palm Beach State College



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PALM BEACH STATE COLLEGE  
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## Introduction

This second annual Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) report serves a three-fold purpose: it maximizes the potential for continuous improvement as it relates to QEP initiatives; it allows for transparent communication to College constituents; it ensures the availability of appropriate documentation required for continued accreditation status.

As it was in Year 1, this year's report is presented in the format expected as part of the 5<sup>th</sup>-Year Interim Report when it is submitted in 2016 to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The annual documentation will provide the College with immediate access to necessary data and narrative necessary to prepare the "Impact of the QEP" section that is required in that report. The following sections are required for that report, so they are included in each annual report as well:

- SACSCOC Section 1: Goals and intended outcomes of the QEP
- SACSCOC Section 2: Discussion of changes to the plan
- SACSCOC Section 3: Description of impact on student learning
- SACSCOC Section 4: Reflection on what the institution learned

Additionally, annual reports will include brief definitions of a QEP and the Palm Beach State College QEP specifically for the benefit of those who may be unfamiliar with either, and it will also include recommendations for the subsequent year. These definitions will remain the same each year, as will Section 1 unless otherwise noted.

## Defining a Quality Enhancement Plan

A Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is a requirement of Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) for any regional institution applying for reaffirmation of accreditation. Colleges and universities must submit a QEP about six weeks prior to an onsite visit. The plan undergoes a peer review process which culminates with an onsite review by members of the SACSCOC Visiting Committee. In general, a college's QEP must

- be found acceptable by the SACSCOC committee before it is implemented;
- be designed to improve student learning or the student learning environment as demonstrated by the assessment of measureable student learning outcomes;
- be faculty-driven;
- be broad enough to maximize impact while clearly defining a focus topic.

## Defining the Palm Beach State College QEP

The Palm Beach State College QEP focuses on critical thinking, which is defined as *using the skills needed to explore, evaluate, express, and engage in purposeful reasoning in order to reach sound conclusions, decisions, positions, and/or solutions*. The plan is intended to position faculty and staff to help students improve their abilities to interpret and analyze, to draw sound and relevant conclusions using a reasoning process, to evaluate and explain information, and to become more willing to think critically. The QEP is formally in effect from the fall of 2012 until the spring of 2017.

## SACSCOC Section 1: Goals and intended outcomes of the QEP

The goal and learning outcomes of the Palm Beach State QEP are listed below. Success of the QEP is measured by the outcomes, and to maximize results, the College has dedicated funding to support the initiatives. In 2013-2014, budget allocations covered the cost of resources and staffing necessary to implement the plan as required by SACSCOC.

- The goal of the QEP is: Students will develop and apply critical thinking skills.
- The QEP has four student learning outcomes.
  1. Students will analyze and interpret relevant information.
  2. Students will reach sound conclusions based on a demonstrated reasoning process.
  3. Students will evaluate and explain relevant information.
  4. Students will exhibit affective dispositions known to characterize critical thinkers.



*“The plan provides a framework to unite faculty, instructors, staff, and administrators in a venture to create a learning environment that includes a common understanding of what critical thinking is and of the skills and characteristics that are associated with critical thinking... the result will be a cultural shift to a pervasive awareness of the importance of critical thinking as a life- and career-enhancing skill.”*

*Excerpt from the QEP executive summary, February 2012*

## SACSCOC Section 2: Discussion of changes to the plan in Year 2

Table 1 lists the 2013-2014 initiatives and states completion status of each. As indicated, most actions were completed as planned. However, some minor adjustments are noted and one modification to the plan is described in a more detailed narrative. The change is to the original initiative referred to in the QEP as “Level 2 Training: Collaboration Cohorts,” a primary action of the QEP.

Table 1: 2013-2014 QEP initiatives

Initiatives for 2013-2014	Status
Delivery of opportunities for professional development on each campus (level 1 training)	Completed as planned
Develop online access for professional development that is specific to critical thinking (level 1 and 2 training)	Completed as planned
Establish additional collaborative professional learning cohorts (Level 2 Training: Collaboration Cohorts)	Leadership established; revised plan for subsequent years
Continue to build inventory of critical thinking resources for online access and for check-out on all campuses	Completed as planned
Continue to monitor outcomes assessment and reporting in programs and educational support areas	Completed as planned
Send four faculty to conference that includes a critical thinking focus	Completed as planned
Assessment	Completed with adjustments
Student contest to promote critical thinking	Completed as a supporting initiative; not included in original plan

### Noted correction to original narrative

The original plan stated (page 49) that the *California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory* would be administered annually to randomly selected students during the general education assessment process. It should read that students are sampled from among those taught by faculty who have been involved with QEP implementation, not the general population of students. This note is to document a correction to the narrative, not a change in the plan.

### Adjustments to assessment in Year 2

1. Administration of *The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)* was originally planned for the institution in the spring of 2014 (Year 2) but was postponed.
2. The process measure of faculty-selected embedded assessments has not yet been formally implemented because of changes at the institutional level. Specifically, a College-wide move to embedded assessment for general education outcomes had been anticipated as the QEP was written when critical thinking was a general education learning outcome. However, in 2013, the College revised the general education learning outcomes to align with the general education categories – Communications, Humanities, Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences. The critical thinking learning outcome, along with ethics, global awareness and information literacy at that time became defined as Institutional Outcomes which are designed to measure the Associate of Arts degree as well as career-oriented programs, as

appropriate. The College’s plan to introduce embedded assessment began in fall 2013 with the general education program. Once this is fully integrated, the embedded assessment process will be expanded to include the Institutional Learning Outcomes, including critical thinking.

Changes to the QEP

The implementation of collaboration cohorts was modified slightly in Year 2 and revised for subsequent years. Tables 2 and 3 compare the originally planned action to the revision, and explain the justification and expected impact of the change.

Table 2: Revision to QEP for years 3-5

Originally planned action: Level 2 Training Collaboration Cohorts ( <i>excerpt from original QEP</i> )	Revision
<p>Annual fall cohorts to be recruited and facilitated by the QEP manager in an effort to focus on critical thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discuss how the critical thinking literature and QEP outcomes are applicable to classes they teach or interactions they have with students;</li> <li>• identify and adopt measures to teach and assess critical thinking, thus integrating critical thinking into the classroom and into non-classroom interactions with students;</li> <li>• meet both online and in person regularly throughout one semester;</li> <li>• develop ways to share their findings with colleagues;</li> <li>• become trained to facilitate workshops or mentor other faculty and staff in integrating critical thinking into the classroom and into non-classroom interactions with students;</li> <li>• work with the QEP manager to document their integration of critical thinking into the classroom or other interactions with students.</li> </ul>	<p>Leaders will be recruited from the existing cohort to facilitate campus cohorts beginning Year 3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing cohort members will develop and facilitate new cohorts on their campuses in 2014-2015 (Year 3); eight team members will be formally trained for this leadership role.</li> <li>• Cohorts will be promoted as professional learning groups; each group will have five or more faculty or staff members in their group and will meet on a regular basis throughout the year.</li> <li>• The originally planned critical thinking focus will remain, but groups may discuss classroom and other interactions with students at will and as needed to improve instruction and educational support.</li> <li>• Groups may or may not choose to continue meeting in subsequent years, but other facilitators will be recruited with a goal of establishing one new group per campus in the last two years of the QEP (2015-2016 and 2016-2017).</li> <li>• Participants will be supported in developing and implementing personal improvement plans and documenting results; resources will be provided for learning, teaching, and assessing.</li> <li>• The QEP rubric to measure critical thinking will be provided to participating instructors; they will be asked to consider adapting the rubric as a means to capture the degree to which students are achieving the skills-based QEP outcomes in the classroom.</li> <li>• Facilitators may be asked to present workshops as Development Day breakout sessions.</li> </ul>

### Justification for Revision

The original cohort became cohesive as members continually focused on helping each other reach the QEP goal of helping students develop and apply critical thinking skills. The original cohort also became very good at developing “exposure” and “education” type activities such as workshops and seminars for colleagues. However, longer-term “engagement” type activities were not as easily developed. Two results manifested during Years 1 and 2 that justify the revision of the collaboration cohort initiative and are explained in the “Challenge” column in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Justification of revision to Level 2 Training (Collaboration Cohorts)

Challenge	Solution	Contribution revision will make to solution
<p>Original cohort structure has a “wide but not deep” impact.</p> <p><i>42 different workshops or seminars had been developed and offered by the end of Year 2 reaching nearly 300 faculty and staff members. This success promoted critical thinking College-wide but did not allow for the structure necessary to expand cohorts and strengthen classroom instruction. Thus, instead of having 65 faculty and staff cohort participants, only 28 had participated by the end of the second year. This also limited the pool of cohort faculty during fall assessment.</i></p>	<p>Develop additional cohort facilitators who will lead groups on each campus. As a result of the original plan, leaders emerged who wish to remain in place to work with others, an unexpected but welcome outcome. These leaders will be trained to lead others in the focus on teaching and assessing critical thinking. This will strengthen the impact of the QEP.</p>	<p>The revised structure will develop additional facilitators to recruit and lead other faculty and staff. This will allow for multiple groups to be run simultaneously, provide greater time to discuss and implement classroom strategies, and it will increase the pool of cohort faculty during fall assessment.</p>
<p>There is a “disconnect” between faculty and the QEP assessment plan.</p> <p><i>Assessment has been frustrating because the instruments selected to measure student learning, although appropriate for the QEP outcomes, do not necessarily measure what is being taught in the classroom. Additionally, students who are selected do not have incentive to perform well because assessment is not linked to their course grade. If data are to be useful to faculty in their attempts to improve instruction, the data must be collected in ways that are more relevant to what is being taught in individual classrooms.</i></p> <p><i>These issues are known to exist with most large-scale assessment processes, but they might be more readily addressed within QEP assessment.</i></p>	<p>Give faculty guided opportunities to identify how QEP outcomes are accomplished in the courses they teach, to select assessments which will measure what they teach, and to implement assessment in a way that is motivating to students by linking performance to course grades. The critical thinking rubric can be suggested as a measure. It can easily be edited based on specific course assignments and outcomes while still measuring the QEP learning outcomes.</p>	<p>Integrating and using the critical thinking rubric through cohort participants may provide a better opportunity to capture how well our students are developing and applying their critical thinking skills in the classroom. Having multiple cohorts will increase the number of faculty who are not only exposed to and educated about critical thinking and the QEP outcomes but also engaged in the intentional integration of both into classroom practices.</p>

### Expected impact

The revision will contribute to success of collaboration cohorts and the assessment of student learning as defined by success indicators in the original QEP assessment plan.

- The “indicator of success” for participation in cohorts is for 95 faculty and staff to have participated in a critical thinking cohort by 2017 when the QEP concludes. Training multiple facilitators and establishing groups on all campuses makes it more possible to achieve this level of participation than the original plan.
- The “indicator of success” for the improvement of student learning is that the average scores on the *California Critical Thinking Skills Test* and the Palm Beach State critical thinking scenario by students taught by cohort faculty will exceed the average scores for student in the College-wide sample. There were too few faculty during the first two years to effectively implement this portion of the assessment plan; more faculty members are needed who are focused, specifically because of QEP-related activity, on improving teaching as it relates to critical thinking. The revision will increase the number of these QEP faculty.





## SACSCOC Section 3: Description of impact on student learning

### Overview

Required assessment of student learning in the 2013-2014 year included five instruments: the *California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST)*, *ETS Proficiency Profile*, *Scenarios*, the *California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (CCTDI)*, all of which are direct measures, and the *Graduating Student Survey*, an indirect measure. These instruments and data collection are described in Table 4 below. Students are sampled during the General Education Assessment Cycle from the general population of students in classes where the median number of credits completed by the students enrolled was 35 or greater. They are also sampled from among classes taught by faculty and instructors involved in QEP implementation and the collaborative cohort. The 2013-2014 results represent the second full cycle of implementation. Results were compared to the baseline data and target or to previous year results as appropriate per the QEP assessment plan. The data and results are presented in Tables 5-9 (pages 9-12) and are followed by a summary of results and conclusion for this section.

Table 4: Description of measures and data collection

Instrument	Description of instrument	Data collection process
<i>California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST)</i>	Multiple-choice test with reporting scales that directly measure the three skills-based outcomes: analysis and interpretation; inference; evaluation and explanation	(1) 112 students in five classes randomly selected during the General Education Outcomes Assessment cycle. In each class, the median number of credits completed by the students enrolled was 35 or greater. Tests were administered during the first half of the fall semester 2013.  (2) 114 students in four sections selected from among sections taught by faculty who have integrated specific critical thinking strategies.
<i>Scenarios</i>	Faculty-developed situation to which students are asked to provide a written response – scores directly measure the three skills-based outcomes: analysis and interpretation; inference; evaluation and explanation	80 students in sections randomly selected during the General Education Outcomes Assessment cycle. Students in each section averaged at least 35 completed credits, and tests were administered during the first half of the fall semester 2013. Responses were scored with an analytic rubric developed to measure the QEP student learning outcomes.
<i>California Critical Thinking Disposition Skills Inventory (CCTDI)</i>	Survey on which students respond to statements designed to measure willingness to think critically; directly measures QEP Outcome 4	219 students in 12 classes taught by faculty who were selected from those on QEP committees; administered during the last weeks of the fall semester 2013.
<i>ETS Proficiency Profile</i>	Multiple-choice test that includes total score for student proficiency in critical thinking ; global measure of outcomes	390 students in sections randomly selected during the General Education Outcomes Assessment cycle. Students in each section averaged at least 35 completed credits, and tests were administered during the first half of the fall semester 2013.
<i>Graduating Student Survey</i>	Palm Beach State College internal survey; indirect measure of outcomes	605 students responded to a question regarding how well the College prepared them to think critically; collected June 2013 through May 2014.

Table 5: Results of direct measures of QEP student learning outcomes 1-3

Direct Measures of QEP Student Learning Outcomes 1, 2, and 3			
Measure	Baseline Spring 2012	Year 2 2013-2014	Target
	<b>Students will demonstrate a 10% increase over baseline scores on outcomes 1-3.</b>		
	<b>LO1: Students will analyze and interpret relevant information.</b>		
CCTST (max: 7)	2.89	<b>3.3</b>	3.2; target met
Scenario (5-pt scale)	3.03	<b>2.63</b>	3.33; target not met
<b>LO2: Students will reach sound conclusions based on a demonstrated reasoning process.</b>			
CCTST (max: 16)	6.25	<b>7.2</b>	6.9; target met
Scenario (5-pt scale)	3.08	<b>2.63</b>	3.39; target not met
<b>LO3: Students will evaluate and explain relevant information.</b>			
CCTST (max: 11)	3.19	<b>3.5</b>	3.5; target met
Scenario (5-pt scale)	3.00	<b>2.57</b>	3.30; target not met
<b>Total Scores</b>			
CCTST (max: 34)	12.33 (28 <sup>th</sup> -36 <sup>th</sup> percentile)	<b>14.0 (42<sup>nd</sup> percentile)</b>	13.6; target met
Scenario (5-pt scale)	3.04	<b>2.61</b>	3.34; target not met
ETS Proficiency Profile	110	<b>110</b>	121; target not met
<b>Notes</b>			
CCTST – baseline results reported to two decimal places but one decimal place thereafter. Scenario – original instrument was revised after multiple inter-rater reliability sessions during pilot semester.			

Table 6: Result of direct measure of QEP student learning outcome 4

Direct Measure of QEP Student Learning Outcome 4				
<b>LO4: Students will exhibit affective dispositions known to characterize critical thinkers.</b>				
	Baseline Spring 2012	Year 1 2012-2013	Year 2 2013-2014	Target
CCTDI	302.3	304.9	<b>300.9</b>	Annual Improvement; target not met

Table 7: Results of indirect measures of QEP success

Indirect Measures of QEP Success			
Measure	Baseline	Year 2 2013-2014	Target
<b>Student ratings on the selected question from the Palm Beach State Graduating Student Survey will meet or exceed the baseline and improve annually; student ratings on selected questions from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) will meet or exceed baseline and exceed national benchmark.</b>			
Palm Beach State College Graduating Student Survey: Please rate how you feel Palm Beach State has helped you increase your achievement on the outcome, “critical thinking” (Engage in purposeful reasoning to reach sound conclusions).	2009-2010: (5-pt scale)  4.1	(5-pt scale)  4.3	Greater than 4.14 with annual improvement; target met
<p>CCSSE: Average on questions related to integration of critical thinking in courses at Palm Beach State</p> <p>CCSSE items included in average score:</p> <p>4. In your experiences at this college during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">d: Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">n: Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">r: Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class</p> <p>5. During this current school year, how much has your coursework at this college emphasized the following mental activities?</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">b: Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experiences, or theory</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">5c: Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences in new ways</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">5f: Using information you have read or heard to perform a new skill</p> <p>12. How much has your experience at this college contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">e: Thinking critically and analytically</p>	2011 (4-pt scale)  2.68	Not administered	Greater than both 2.68 and national benchmark
<b>Notes</b>			
CCSSE was originally planned for second administration in 2013-2014 (Y2) but has been postponed until 2015-2016 (Y4)			

**Table 8: Results of professional development initiatives**

Measuring the Effectiveness of Professional Development Initiatives		
Desired outcome	Year 1 2012-2013	Year 2 2013-2014
<b>Level 1 Professional Development (L1PD)</b> <b>Workshops or other single-opportunity events (not all outcomes assessed every year)</b>		
At least 80% of participants will agree that participation has increased their knowledge and understanding of critical thinking.	Not assessed	75.61% - Strongly agree 24.39% - Agree (N=41; 100% agree)
At least 80% of participants will agree that participation has increased their desire to learn more about teaching and assessing critical thinking.	Not assessed	85.00% - Strongly agree 15.00% - Agree (N=41; 100% agree)
By fall 2013, 100% of incoming new faculty and adjuncts will participate in L1PD.	Not applicable	Implemented; L1PD integrated into new adjunct training and new faculty orientation so that 100% of incoming faculty and adjuncts will participate
By 2017, at least 50% of all instructional staff will have participated in L1PD. <i>(percentage calculation: total unduplicated count / total instructional staff by end of academic year)</i>	18.9% to date 224 of 1,188 instructional staff participated in L1PD  <i>224 total in Year 1 and the pilot semester</i>  <i>141 faculty or instructors; 83 adjuncts (unduplicated count)</i>	44.1% to date 545 of 1,235 instructional staff have participated in L1PD  <i>321 total new participants in Year 2</i>  <i>89 new faculty/instructors 232 new adjuncts (unduplicated count)</i>
By 2017, the number of non-instructional staff participating in L1PD will have increased annually.	154	295
<b>Level 2 Professional Development (PD): Faculty/Staff Cohorts</b>		
Average student scores on CCTST (max: 34) will exceed general education sample	Gen Ed: 15.1 QEP: 15.8	Gen Ed: 14.0 QEP: 13.2
Average student scores on critical thinking scenario will exceed general education sample	QEP sections assessed in CCTST only	
At least 80% of participants will agree that participation has increased their knowledge and understanding of critical thinking	81.80% - Strongly agree 18.20% - Agree (N=11; 100% agree)	80.00% - Strongly agree 10.00% - Agree (N=10; 90% agree)
At least 80% of participants will agree that participation has increased their desire to learn more about teaching or assessing critical thinking	81.80% - Strongly agree 18.20% - Agree (N=11; 100% agree)	80.00% - Strongly agree 10.0% - Agree (N=10; 90% agree)
By 2017, at least 95 faculty or staff will participate in a QEP cohort to improve instruction and professional practice.	15: 1 discontinued, 3 new, 26 total to date	10: 2 new, 28 total to date

Table 9: Additional process measures

Measuring the Effectiveness of Supporting Strategies		
<b>Critical Thinking Outcomes in Career Programs</b>		
Desired outcomes	Year 1 2012-2013	Year 2 2013-2014
By fall 2012, critical thinking outcomes in programs will be identified, aligned to QEP, and assessed in regular program cycle.	235 outcomes in 100% of programs; 182 assessed when QEP annual report completed <sup>1</sup>	342 outcomes in 100% of programs; 100% assessed
By 2013-2014, critical thinking outcomes will be reported annually.	143 (78.57%) met benchmark	80.61% met benchmark
<b>Critical Thinking Outcomes in Selected Educational Support Areas (Advising, Career Centers, Honors College, Libraries, Student Learning Centers, Student Life, and Wellness Center)</b>		
By fall 2013, critical thinking outcomes will be identified in selected educational support areas and assessed in the regular assessment cycle in each area.	10 outcomes; 2 assessed <sup>1</sup>	12 outcomes identified; 100% assessed
By 2013-2014, critical thinking outcomes will be reported annually.	2/2 met benchmark	100% met benchmark
<b>Resources</b>		
Inventory will increase annually on campus or online.	3 resources available for check-out on each campus  1 resource ( <i>A Guide for Educators to Critical Thinking Competency Standards</i> , Paul & Elder, 2007) distributed to all faculty, instructors, and adjuncts, some staff  37 resources added to online repository (POLO <sup>2</sup> )	23 additional resources added to each campus inventory  3 additional resources added to online repository (POLO <sup>2</sup> )
Survey respondents will agree that resources are useful.	Not assessed	11 of 16 users returned feedback. All agreed or strongly agreed that resources are useful for improving practice.
<b>Notes</b>		
1 – Due to curricular and staff changes, several outcomes were not assessed until after the QEP report. 2 – Panther Online Learning Objects		

### Summary of the 2013-2014 results

- Students sampled during the general education assessment cycle performed better than the baseline and exceeded the 5-yr target on the *California Critical Thinking Skills Test*.
- Student scores on scenarios and the *ETS Proficiency Profile* have not yet reached the expected 10% increase over the baseline results.
- Student scores on the *California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory* did not meet the targeted annual improvement.
- Process measures indicate that faculty and staff remain motivated to focus on helping students develop and apply critical thinking skills by participating in the Level 1 Training opportunities such as workshops; however, a greater emphasis in the Level 2 opportunities (cohorts) must be exerted to assess improved student learning as a result of faculty participation.

### Conclusions about the impact of the QEP

Assessment results are mixed. On one hand, it can be argued that the QEP is positively impacting the environment for student learning. Results on the *CCTST* for example are such that the targeted 10% increase over the baseline has been reached during both of the first two years. On the other hand, average scores are at the 42<sup>nd</sup> percentile, below the national average.

These results, as well as the results on scenarios and the *ETS Proficiency Profile*, however, do not provide the desired and useful insight. Scenarios were necessarily revised between baseline and first year assessment because the original scenarios were not well-suited for the analytical scoring that was required for the QEP, and the *Proficiency Profile*, while it includes an overall critical thinking result, does not directly assess the QEP outcomes. Additionally, the *CCTST*, while it does directly assess the QEP outcomes, does not necessarily measure what is being taught in the classroom. These measures were supported by faculty when the QEP was developed because it appeared they would track well with the QEP outcomes, but the measures do not allow a feedback loop to come full circle with useful results for a large number of faculty. A revision in the assessment plan should be considered for the remaining years of the QEP.

## SACSCOC Section 4: Reflection on what the institution learned

### Professional development

Primary actions to improve student learning are centered on professional development that equips faculty and staff to help students develop and apply critical thinking skills. Opportunities to offer exposure to and education about critical thinking were better developed in Year 2 of the QEP, evidenced by participation in several one-time learning opportunities in workshops and subsequent feedback. Beyond exposure and education, the College desires engagement among faculty and staff as it is engagement that leads to improved student learning.

Increasingly, those who are engaged in the cohort are developing presentations and material to share as they hone their own critical thinking skills and document improved instruction: two faculty members were invited in 2013-2014 to present content on other campuses, one faculty member was invited to present material to a group of K-12 teachers, and one faculty member presented a workshop with the QEP manager at a critical thinking conference at another institution. In each case, students taught by these faculty members in Year 1 (when they were included in the assessment sample) scored higher on the *CCTST* than students in the baseline and general education samples. And in each case, these faculty members had been actively involved in working with others to integrate instruction and find useful ways to assess critical thinking in their classrooms. Additionally, the QEP manager received more requests in Year 2 than previously to present content to non-instructional staff. Momentum and desire for learning better ways to help students develop and apply critical thinking skills remains evident.

Student learning remains the ultimate measure of QEP success. Assessment, particularly the *CCTST* results, indicates that instruction at Palm Beach State improves students' ability to use critical thinking skills over time and that, more immediately, professional development can lead to realized gains in student learning. However, scores on the critical thinking scenario continue to remain below the target, and scores on both the *CCTST* and *ETS Proficiency Profile* hover near mid-range percentiles only, results that clearly leave much room for improvement. There is some question, however, regarding the value of these assessments to faculty and students as the instruments do not necessarily assess what is being taught in the classroom, coupled with the problem that students do not have incentive to perform well.

***The institution has learned*** that continued improvement will only occur as professional development focuses on the integration of best practices for teaching and assessing critical thinking and as it focuses on making assessment useful to faculty and students in the classroom.

### Critical thinking outcomes in career programs and educational support areas

Ensuring that all career programs and selected educational support areas include critical thinking outcomes is an action that has promoted a focus on critical thinking College-wide. Assessment in career programs and educational support areas is becoming a mature process that includes the measurement of critical thinking outcomes and improvement when needed, and benchmarks are being achieved on a high percentage of the outcomes. The focus on outcomes related to critical thinking in educational support areas has resulted in wide-spread interest among staff that was sufficient enough in the second year to support a student contest to promote critical thinking. This contest was piloted College-wide and reached more than 200 students who participated individually and within class assignments. Critical thinking outcomes are resulting in a College-wide focus on critical thinking both in and out of the classroom as planned.

***The institution has learned*** that career programs continue to do well both in teaching and assessing critical thinking. Additionally, through the positive reception of the student contest in Year 2, we know that involved faculty and staff continue to be motivated to help students develop and apply critical thinking skills, and that many students in fact have a desire to learn these skills. Although many students participated in the contest, the lower-level thinking demonstrated on many entries indicated that stronger initiatives will be needed when the contest is repeated if excellence is to be achieved.

#### Critical thinking resources

Although resources are now available on three campuses for immediate check-out, and faculty and staff on the Boca Raton campus can borrow inter-office from the QEP office, very few are actually using the resources. On a positive note, the feedback regarding the selected resources is very encouraging.

***The institution has learned*** that a better job must be done to promote the availability of resources.

#### Overall impression at the end of Year 2

Helping students develop and apply critical thinking skills remains a focus and priority among faculty and staff at the College because of the QEP. However, room for improvement remains apparent, and efforts must continue if students are to demonstrate improved critical thinking skills. Recommendations for improvement are offered on the following page.





## Recommendations for improvement in 2014-2015

QEP initiatives should continue into the third full year of implementation in 2014-2015 with revisions described in this report. The following recommendations for improvement are suggested based upon evaluation and review of the first and second year results by the QEP manager, QEP teams, and staff from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Table 10: Recommendations for 2014-2015

Recommendation for improvement	Comments / updates
<p>1. In early fall 2014, discuss revision of the QEP assessment plan. Consider the following actions:</p> <p>Discontinue use of the <i>California Critical Thinking Skills Test</i> and the <i>ETS Proficiency Profile</i> as direct measures of student learning.</p> <p>Work directly with faculty to develop classroom activities or assignments that can be assessed with the QEP rubric, an adapted version, or another instrument offered by faculty that will measure the QEP outcomes as appropriate in the classroom.</p>	<p>The instruments are not useful to faculty and students as they do not assess what is taught in the classroom; additionally, the target has been reached on the <i>CCTST</i>.</p> <p>This recommendation replaces the plan to develop embedded assessment as was originally expected within the general education assessment plan. Although suggested to improve the QEP assessment plan, it may supplement efforts underway to move to College-wide embedded assessment as it addresses the institutional learning outcome of critical thinking.</p> <p>If successful, QEP assessment can become not only more targeted for classroom use, but also more helpful to faculty and students. In the meantime, scenarios and the <i>California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory</i> are still in place to assess the outcomes directly.</p>
<p>2. Develop a new College position within Academic Affairs for faculty development.</p>	<p>It has become necessary to designate full-time responsibility to faculty development. Critical thinking workshops have been effective in exposing faculty and staff to the outcomes, but ineffective in providing necessary training to help faculty assess those outcomes. If the integration of critical thinking is to be successful long term, assessment must become a tool that is useful to instructors at the course level. It is not possible to support such an effort without someone whose primary responsibility is instructional design of courses and workshops that are specifically created for faculty. This does not currently exist at the College.</p>
<p>3. Work with College Relations and Marketing to develop promotional material for faculty and staff to reference for access to QEP resources.</p>	<p>“Brochure” created and distributed in early fall 2014; QEP manager should continue to work on development of resource to help faculty and staff understand the QEP learning outcomes.</p>

**PALM BEACH STATE**  
  
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Explore, Evaluate, Express, and Engage  
2012-2017

A Quality Enhancement Plan to improve student learning  
by focusing on critical thinking

2013-2014 Annual Report