

# SACS facts

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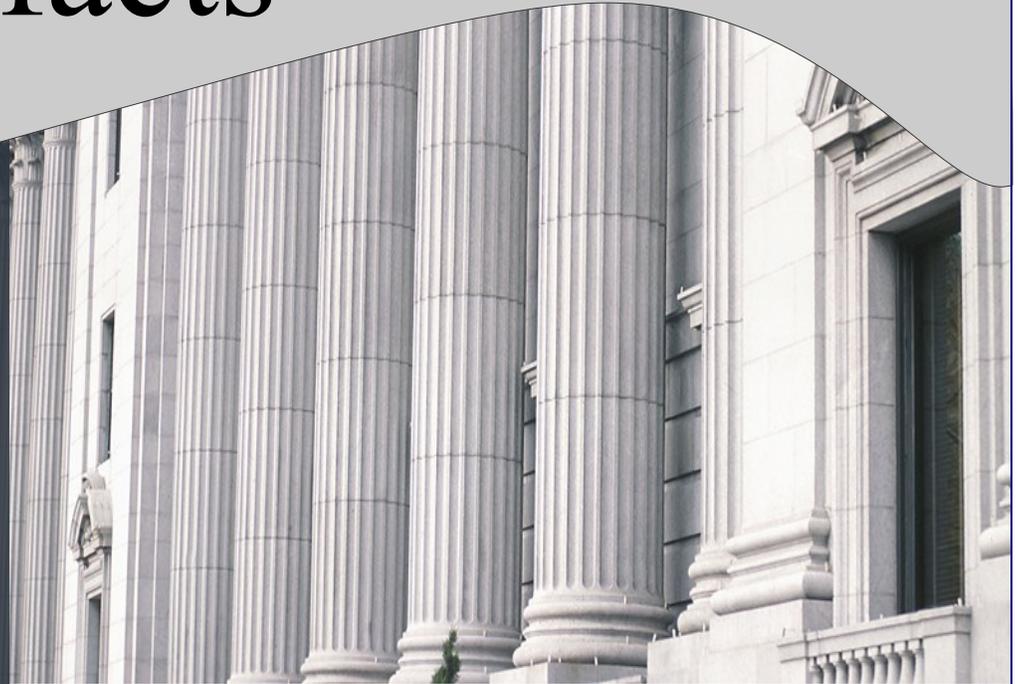
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Newsletter Editors

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## *The SACS onsite visit is days away!*

### *Members of the team will visit...*

- Belle Glade campus on Monday, October 10th.
- Palm Beach Gardens campus on Tuesday, October 11th.
- Lake Worth campus on Tuesday and Wednesday, October 11th and 12th.

Additional scheduling may occur when the SACS team arrives.

The onsite visit by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is a formal step in the process of applying for reaffirmation. This follows previous submission of the Compliance Certificate, a Focused Report, and the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). See page 2 for a brief description of this required documentation.



# SACSCOC - The onsite visit

## *SACSCOC site visit is October 10-13, 2011*

Be on campus during the visit.  
Know about our QEP.  
Know the mission of the College.

### *Reaffirmation documentation*

**Compliance Certificate:** evidence we submit to demonstrate that we meet the required standards, 395 pages plus thousands of supporting pages. It was submitted in March 2011 and evaluated by a SACS review team, different from the team that will visit in October. This document is the result of tremendous work by many participants. The process of compiling the evidence and writing the narrative is overseen by the vice-president of academic affairs.

**Focused Report:** our response to any concerns expressed by the review team in March. The report was sent in August to the review team who will visit in October.

**QEP:** our five-year plan to improve student learning by focusing on critical thinking. The QEP was also submitted in August to the review team who will visit in October.



### *Interview panels selected, some still on stand-by*

Faculty, staff, and students who will participate in scheduled interviews have now been selected and are preparing for the visit. A team is in place on the Belle Glade, Palm Beach Gardens, and Lake Worth campus, as requested by the SACS team chair. An additional team is preparing to participate in the QEP presentation on the Lake Worth campus.

Many people who were involved in QEP development have been asked to remain available throughout the day on Wednesday. This group is in place in case the SACS team has additional questions.

### *Mission of the College*

Palm Beach State College, founded in 1933 as Florida's first public community college, is a diverse, comprehensive institution dedicated to serving the educational needs of Palm Beach County. Integrally linked to the community through strong partnerships, the College provides associate and baccalaureate degrees, professional certificates, workforce development and life-long learning.

Palm Beach State College's mission is to create and sustain a dynamic teaching and learning environment that provides a high-quality, accessible, affordable education, preparing students to contribute and compete ethically and successfully in a diverse global community.

#### **WHAT IS A QEP?**

A Quality Enhancement Plan is a plan to improve student learning.

#### **WHAT'S OUR QEP?**

The Palm Beach State QEP is (focuses on) critical thinking.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ACCREDITATION AND THE REAFFIRMATION PROCESS,  
PLEASE VISIT: <http://www.palmbeachstate.edu/sacs.xml>

# Assessment

## *Did she say, “an assessment retreat”? Yes she did!*

You know the saying, “this is better than anything we could make up!”? Well, that’s how we feel about this one. Talk about a really cool idea...our hats are off to the Massage Therapy department on the Boca Raton campus! Recognizing the value in evaluating assessment results, this team spent nearly two days off campus last May to invest their energy on a few related tasks. They met to evaluate spring assessment results, create an improvement plan, and to consider additional assessment tools that might prove to be valuable in the upcoming year.

Using a Palm Beach State workbook on outcomes assessment (link below) and critical thinking rubrics obtained from other colleges and universities, they engaged in these activities:

- compared results from spring 2011 to the previous year and created an improvement plan;
- reviewed efficacy of existing assessment tools for assessing new learning outcomes;
- created “scenarios” for assessment to measure critical thinking in an effort to support and participate in the approaching QEP implementation;
- met with the program director to share findings and receive feedback.

“Invaluable and highly productive” are two ways that instructor Mindy Yale described the retreat. In their analysis, they discovered that a rubric they had been using was, in a sense, flawed. Not to be dismayed, Yale adds, “The solution was simple and set the tone for a holistic review of our program and the assessments conducted along the way. We defined more clearly where competencies were introduced, developed, and mastered. We added or improved teaching/learning tools to support student development more solidly at each level.”

The discoveries by this department demonstrate the significance of assessment. It is an ongoing process of identifying what we want students to learn and finding tools to help us know they are learning it.

Thanks to Mindy Yale, Margi Foley, and Sheryl Giese for this excellent example of using assessment to their advantage!



Outcomes assessment workbook:

[http://www.palmbeachstate.edu/Documents/Academic\\_Services/section1.pdf](http://www.palmbeachstate.edu/Documents/Academic_Services/section1.pdf)

MORE ABOUT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT, PLEASE VISIT:

<http://www.palmbeachstate.edu/LearningOutcomes.xml>

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*General education assessment is underway!*

*Students in a sample of courses will participate in the assessment process this semester.*

*Results will be available online in 2012.*

# Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

**QEP DEFINITION OF CRITICAL THINKING:** *using the skills to explore, evaluate, express, and engage in purposeful reasoning in order to reach sound conclusions, decisions, positions, and/or solutions. (from the definition reached by College-wide consensus, September, 2010)*

## *Who's ready?!*

A lot of us! But we're ready for more than just "the SACS visit." We are ready for this QEP!

Many faculty (too many to name them all, but we'll try in the months ahead!), full-time, part-time, and in all programs, are stepping out to share how they are teaching and assessing critical thinking. In the effort to prepare for both workshop development and assessment for the QEP, strategies are being collected and may be used in a variety of ways.

First, the implementation team will review dozens of ideas that have been submitted this semester to find examples to share in spring workshops. Most of these are for the classroom, but some are also for staff that have direct contact with students.

Second, sections taught by some instructors will be integrated into the assessment cycle. This is being done on a voluntary basis beginning in the spring 2012 semester.

Third, because assessing how well students are developing critical thinking skills is difficult, we will learn and share how faculty assess critical thinking in the classroom.

Finally, throughout the QEP, we will build an inventory of strategies. Some strategies will be made available as early as the spring 2012 semester.

So be ready! Stay alert to how **you** are using critical thinking, and as you work with students, consider how you require them to think critically, and how you know they're doing it. Keep sharing those stories with us. Contact Karen Pain (web link, phone below).



## *Students getting excited too*

Students on all campuses are also ready for the QEP. They're striking a "thinking" pose, they're drawing on the sidewalk, they are commenting on Facebook, and most importantly, they are beginning to ask questions! Some are even working on their own QEP commercials and getting ready for the "QEP Shuffle!" See the link on the QEP page (below) to learn how your students can join in the fun on October 6th!

Next spring, we will begin a campaign to move the focus to what critical thinking is and why it matters. The QEP attention this semester has laid the foundation for that awareness campaign. We look forward to "switching gears" soon!

## *Key QEP components*

- Curriculum development
- Workshops for students, staff, and instructors
- Student peer mentoring
- Events
- Projects
- Resource centers
- Collaboration groups
- Conferences

## *Key QEP dates*

### Spring 2012

- Workshops for faculty, staff
- Resource centers established

### Fall 2012

- Workshops for faculty, staff, and students

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE QEP, PLEASE VISIT OR CALL:

<http://www.palmbeachstate.edu/QEP.xml> ~ 561-868-3325

# Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

*Look who we caught doing great work!*

## **Boca Raton:**

Jessica Asam  
Elizabeth Caulfield  
Paul Estriplet  
Marc Fedderman  
Sherry Hall  
Ernso Jean-Louis  
Arlene Jellinek  
Audrey Lawrence  
Corinne Licostie  
Ewa Neginsky  
Lucia Pasqualini  
Tomas Pena  
Ed Rooney  
Adele Shapiro  
Horich Souverain  
Don Wagner  
Helena Zacharis

## **Belle Glade:**

Earl Bryant  
Ron Capute  
Nick Larocca  
Kristi Taylor

More to come!

**AND SPECIAL THANKS TO THE HONORS COLLEGE...**  
for providing bookstore vouchers to winners of the Sidewalk Chalk events on all campuses!

## *Boca Raton SLC integrates critical thinking into training*

Working as a united team, Elizabeth Caulfield and her staff in the Boca Raton Student Learning Center (SLC) coordinated a pre-term training event that was offered last month to tutors and Supplemental Instruction (SI) leaders.

Learning specialist Arlene Jellinek made specific use of the revision of Bloom's



taxonomy and questioning methods in her two breakout sessions. She helped participants explore various levels of understanding by discussing differences between lower levels such as gathering information (knowledge) to higher levels such as judging outcomes, taking information apart and putting it back together (evaluation, analysis, and synthesis).

Jellinek also made good use of familiar tales, adding an element of fun to learning. Tutors and SI leaders had to consider the wolf's side of the story and use Bloom's taxonomy with the "Three Little Pigs." Jellinek provided a handout (from University of North Texas, UNT) with questions or instructions that required use of each cognitive level of the taxonomy. Using other resources she found from UNT, she did a similar activity with the story of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears."

Caulfield says of the QEP, "Helping students develop critical thinking skills has always been an important part of the SLC mission, and the QEP has given us renewed energy to focus on that goal."

The Boca Raton SLC will offer a similar training again at the end of October. Great job Boca SLC!

## *Belle Glade prepares for QEP*

They are small in number, but they show up in force! Thanks to the help of student activities and some of the professors (left), many students participated in the Sidewalk Chalk event on 9/14, writing and drawing their own representations of critical thinking defined. A week later, many instructors and staff met after their campus meeting to discuss how they might be involved in QEP implementation. Included were Esther Barry, Dave Childers, Kathy Dowling, Steve Gibson, Mark Hendrix, Lester Mosely, John Pierson, Michael Roth, and Vetaley Stashenko. Faculty, staff, and students on this campus are ready to roll up their sleeves and take part in teaching and



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE QEP AND CRITICAL THINKING, PLEASE VISIT:  
<http://www.palmbeachstate.edu/QEP.xml>