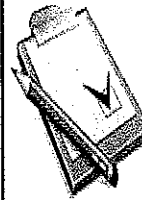


## **An Experienced Chair's Perspective on Evaluating the QEP's Acceptability**

**QEP Breakout Session  
SACSCOC Summer Institute  
July 27, 2010 Tampa, Florida**

**Ed Rugg, PhD Kennesaw State University  
See Handouts at <http://lvic.kennesaw.edu>**

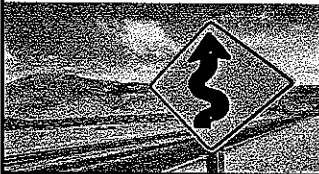
## **Expected Takeaways**



- ❖ **Key Elements of the On-Site Committee's Review of the QEP**
- ❖ **Tips for Demonstrating QEP Acceptability & Compliance**
- ❖ **QEP Pitfalls Often Leading to Recommendations**
- ❖ **Project Management Insights for a 7-Year QEP Commitment**
- ❖ **Ideas for Facilitating a Satisfying and Successful QEP Committee Visit and Follow-up**

## **QEP Compliance Follows a Long and Winding Road**

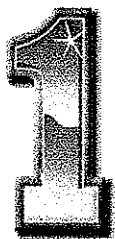
**It is Truly an Art and a Science--  
Certainly, There is More Than  
One Way to Get There**



**Mine is  
Just One  
Perspective,  
So Please  
Share Yours**

**Of all the things that we will  
discuss together today,...**

**...what would be  
the one piece of  
advice that I  
would give that  
encompasses  
all others?**



**Begin with the  
End in Mind--  
Know what the  
Committee  
Expects to Find,  
and Be Sure It's  
Easily Found in  
the QEP**

## **Basic Expectations of What the Committee Seeks**

- #1 Well-crafted composition**
- #2 Sound and Compelling narratives**
- #3 Sufficient supporting evidence to document the veracity of claims made**



**Enlist the services of a technical  
writer/editor with strong analytic and  
argumentation skills to draft the QEP**



**Misusing Supporting Evidence—  
What Kind of Lawyer Are You?**

- **Presenting Claims & Arguments Without Evidence or Proof of What You Say is True**
- **Presenting Piles of Evidence Without Analysis and Focused Arguments**
- **Expecting the Jury to Find the Evidence and Make Your Case for You**



**All Are Invitations for  
Adverse Judgments**

**What Will the On-Site Team  
Expect to Find in the QEP  
Regarding Compliance with  
CR 2.12 and CS 3.3.2?**



**Begin with the End  
in Mind—Focus on  
the Standard Form  
They Must  
Complete for the  
Final “Report of the  
Reaffirmation  
Committee”**

**The On-Site Committee Report  
Form Has Five Key Areas for QEP  
Evaluation, Corresponding Closely  
with CR 2.12 and CS 3.3.2**



**And each of  
those areas of  
analysis has multiple  
dimensions to be  
considered by the  
Committee**



**Key Caution!  
Plan Accordingly**

**Like Many Requirements and  
Standards, CR 2.12 and CS  
3.3.2 Contain More Than One  
Key Element That Must be  
Addressed and Documented  
Sufficiently in the QEP for  
Full Compliance**

**Three Versions of QEP Core  
Requirements Since 2004**



**Knowing the  
History of These  
Moving Targets  
Can Increase  
Understanding of  
What Committees  
Look For and Why**



**Key Caution : Give Extra  
Forethought to CR 2.12  
to Avoid Sanctions**

- **Expect a Public Sanction of Warning or Probation if C&R Finds Noncompliance in CR 2.12**
- **The Two Key Elements of 2.12, Institutional Process and Focus, No Longer Include the Earlier Challenge of Identifying Goals**

**Read What the Committee Reads About Evaluating the QEP (Even if It is Dated)**

See "Assessing the QEP" in the Handbook for Review Committees Second Edition, 2005 pp 33-36



**Begin with the End in Mind-- Know what the Committee Expects to Find, and Be Sure It's Easily Found in the QEP**

**Part III B.1. An Institutional Process—What is That?**

- It refers to the institution's topic selection process for the QEP
- It is the *who/what/when/how* of engaging campus constituencies in the generation of potential QEP topics and the final selection/adoption of one for the QEP
- Examples of "key issues emerging from institutional assessment" include initiatives to address institutional strategic goals/priorities involving student learning



**Key Caution--Limit the Time for Topic Selection**

- Institutions that spent the bulk of their QEP-prep time selecting a topic often had too little time left to fully develop an acceptable plan of action which actually constitutes the bulk of the QEP and its evaluation.



**Begin working on the QEP 18-24 months before it is due and spend no more than the first 6 months on topic selection**

**Part III B.2. Focus of the Plan—What is Important Here?**

- The selected QEP topic must be aimed at improving student learning and the learning environment
- The selected QEP topic must be linked to the institution's mission



**Be Careful Not to Interpret the "and/or" as a License to Avoid Addressing Learning Outcomes**



**Key Caution--Avoid Having Two or Three QEPs Rolled Into One**

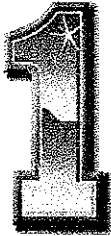
**The Wording of CR 2.12 Is Not Intended to Encourage an Institution to Develop a QEP That Focuses on More than One Key Issue Identified in the Institutional Process of Topic Formulation. To the Contrary, Committees Tend to Issue Recommendations in CS 3.3.2 When the Topic is Too Broad, Unfocused, or Unmanageable.**



**Picking a QEP Topic That Builds on an Area of Institutional Strength Which Has Room for Improvement Has Great Advantages Over a Start-up from Ground Zero of a "New" Initiative**



**Selecting an Institutional Strategic Priority for the Focus of a QEP Can Be a Very Powerful Combination For Achieving That Strategic Initiative in Deeper and More Effective Ways Than Might Have Been Done Otherwise, While Also Satisfying an Accreditation Requirement.**



**Begin with the End in Mind-- Know what the Committee Expects to Find, and Be Sure It's Easily Found in the QEP**

**Part III B.3. Institutional Capability--What Are Sufficient Resources?**

- **Sufficient Funding, Yes—But It is So Much More Than the Money**
- **Realistic and Achievable Action Plans, Timelines and Assignments**
- **Buy-in From Constituencies**
- **Leadership & Administrative Support**
- **Commitment Level of Campus Participants to the QEP's Success**

**Part III B.3. Institutional Capability—At Three Stages**

- **Committees Must Evaluate the Institution's Capability to Initiate the Proposed QEP Successfully**
- **Committees Must Evaluate the Institution's Capability to Implement the Proposed QEP Successfully**
- **Committees Must Evaluate the Institution's Capability to Complete the Proposed QEP Successfully**



**Capability Attracts Recommendations When...**

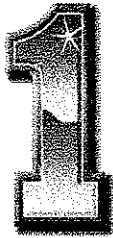
- **A Detailed Plan of Action is Missing or Insufficient for Describing Planned Steps in Implementation, Resources, Timetables, Assignments, etc. From QEP Initiation to Completion (Often a Five-Year Plan)**
- **Proposed Initiatives Appear Poorly Conceptualized, Unrealistic or Insufficiently Supported Organizationally, Financially, or Across Constituencies**



**Although Full Implementation Should Not Proceed Until After the Committee's Review of the Plan, the Case for Demonstrated Institutional Capability Typically is Strengthened if Initiation of Preparations for Launching the QEP are Successfully Underway Before the Visit. Committees Typically Expect to See Approved Budgetary Commitments, Established Administrative Structures, Assessment Tool Developments, Promotional Materials, Constituency Buy-in, etc. for the QEP.**



**Clearly, the Expansive Agenda for Demonstrating Compliance in the Institutional Capability Dimension of CS 3.3.2 and Its Equally Challenging Goal Setting and Assessment Dimension Are Likely to Require That the Bulk of the Suggested 18-24 Months of QEP Development Time Be Devoted to These Tasks.**



**Begin with the End in Mind-- Know what the Committee Expects to Find, and Be Sure It's Easily Found in the QEP**

**Part III B.4. Broad-Based Involvement—at Two Stages**

- **Broad-Based Involvement Typically Means that Many, But Not Necessarily All, Students, Faculty, Staff and Administrators Across the Institution Are Involved and Impacted by the QEP**
- **Broad Involvement is Expected During the Development of the QEP and also During Its Implementation**



**Note that Up Until 2010, the term "Broad-Based" was also Explicitly Part of the Requirement in CR 2.12 Involving the Institutional Process for Topic Identification and Selection. That is No Longer the Case. However, Demonstrating Broad-Based Involvement in the Development of the QEP as a Whole is Required in CS 3.3.2.**

**Part III B.5. Assessment of The Plan (Specifically, QEP Goals)— What Kind of Goals Are Expected to be Assessed?**

- **Instructions in the Handbook for Review Committees (2005) Point Toward Goals for the:**
  - **Success of the QEP;**
  - **QEP's Implementation;**
  - **Monitoring of the QEP's Progress;**
  - **Improvements in Student Learning**

**Part III B.5. Assessment of The Plan—What Does the New (2010) Handbook for Institutions Say About Assessing the QEP?**

- **It Calls for A Comprehensive Evaluation Plan that Includes Assessments of the:**
- **Success of the QEP**
  - **QEP Implementation Process**
  - **Progress Monitoring of the QEP**
  - **QEP Student Learning Outcomes**



**How Are Student Learning Outcomes Defined for the QEP?**

- **The 2010 Handbook for Institutions Seeking Accreditation Defines SLOs as Expected Changes in the Knowledge, Skills, Behaviors and Values of Students Who are Impacted by the QEP's Implementation (pp 39-40)**
- **Committees Expect to Find QEP Goals for Student Learning Outcomes Along with Goals for the QEP Program's Successful Implementation—Plus Planned Details for Their Assessment**



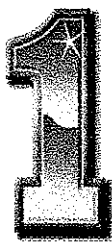
**Overall QEP Evaluation—On What Basis Might a Committee Judge the QEP to be Unacceptable**

**In my experience, when Committees found insufficient evidence of compliance throughout most of the QEP and in a majority of the five key elements, the QEP was judged to be unacceptable and in need of a major overhaul and re-write.**



**An Acceptable QEP is Like a Successful Grant Application or Dissertation Proposal**

- **It builds upon an established base literature of prior accomplishments in research and development**
- **It focuses on an important new contribution to be made**
- **Its proposed interventions and analysis are detailed and realistic**
- **It is well-written and compelling**



**Begin with the End in Mind-- Know what the Committee Expects to Find, and Be Sure It's Easily Found in the QEP**



**My Preference as Committee Chair & QEP Evaluator for the Organization of the QEP's Text**

**In keeping with my #1 refrain, if you want to help ensure that what the Committee expects to find is easily found, then organize the QEP's write-up to correspond with the outline, and the associated elements for evaluation, that the Committee must follow to complete their reaffirmation report.**



**There is No Need for Introductory Presentations of the QEP to the Visiting Team**

➤ *Before arriving on campus, the Committee will have already spent weeks on in-depth study of the QEP, discussed its preliminary evaluation findings together in a conference call, and generated a focused set of questions to ask and verifications to make while on campus. The team will have advanced knowledge of the QEP when they arrive and limited time to validate loose ends.*



**My Preference as Committee Chair & QEP Evaluator for On-Site Interviews on the QEP**

*In keeping with my #1 refrain, if you want to help ensure that what the Committee expects to find is easily found, then organize the on-site interview schedule such that the full committee holds five hearings to ask their specific questions of the key campus representatives associated with each of the five elements being evaluated for an acceptable QEP.*



**Take Full Advantage of the On-Site Committee's Consultative Role**

➤ *On-Site Committees Can Provide Highly Constructive Advice on Strategies for Strengthening the QEP That Can Facilitate Success in Subsequent Reviews as well as Enhance the QEP's Effectiveness.*



➤ *Accept the Committee's Advice and Suggestions Graciously (even if you don't plan to follow them).*

**Effective Presidential Leadership and Involvement in the QEP are Invaluable**



**And Impresses On-Site Committees**



**Consultants Can Point the Way**



- *During QEP Development And Write-up*
- *And for the Institutional Response*

**Where in the World Do We Go From Here?**



- More Questions?*
- More Comments?*
- Happy Hour?*

**Thank You!**

## **Ed Rugg, Ph.D.**

**Executive Assistant for Strategic Initiatives, Enterprise Information Management  
Emeritus Professor of Educational Research & Accreditation Liaison  
Kennesaw State University**

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770.499.3609 FAX: 770.499.3370 email: [erugg@kennesaw.edu](mailto:erugg@kennesaw.edu) Spring 2010**

Having retired in spring 2010 from his full-time role at Kennesaw State University and returned in a part-time capacity, Ed served as the university's Accreditation Liaison and Director of the Center for Institutional Effectiveness while orchestrating and editing all institutional reports for KSU's reaffirmation of SACS-COC accreditation and substantive change to the doctoral level in 2007. In that highly successful review, KSU was judged to be in compliance with all accreditation requirements, and was repeatedly commended for the strength of its QEP on Global Learning for Engaged Citizenship (see <https://sacs.kennesaw.edu>). Ed's career in higher education as a faculty member and university administrator spans over 37 years and has included central involvement in five SACS-COC reaccreditations at three very different public and private universities. Over the past 20 years, Ed has served on or chaired over two dozen SACS/COC visiting committees and been a special reader in institutional effectiveness for several C&R Committees. He continues to be an active peer evaluator and consultant on accreditation compliance.

Kennesaw State University is a fast-growing, public, comprehensive, doctoral, metropolitan university, located in suburban Metropolitan Atlanta and serving 22,500 traditional and non-traditional students. Dr. Rugg joined the faculty and administrative team at Kennesaw State University 28 years ago as Executive Assistant to President Betty Siegel. At that time, Kennesaw College enrolled fewer than 5,000 students and had only recently been elevated to four-year status. In 1986, he was selected to serve as Vice President for Academic Affairs, a position he held for 16 years. During his tenure as chief academic officer, KSU evolved into a large and progressive metropolitan university. In 2002, Ed assumed the role of Director of the Center for Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation Liaison where his expertise was applied to institutional compliance with the new *Principles of Accreditation*. In 2007, he became Executive Director of Enterprise Information Management (see <http://vic.kennesaw.edu>) and continued to serve as the University's Accreditation Liaison. Prior to coming to KSU, Ed was a faculty member and Associate Director of Institutional Research & Planning at the University of Mississippi, and before that, Assistant Academic Dean, Coordinator of Management Information, and Assistant Professor at George Peabody College, which merged with Vanderbilt University in 1979. He earned his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in psychology from Peabody with an emphasis in educational research and statistics.

**Excerpted from the Commission's standard form for  
the Report of the Reaffirmation Committee (On-Site)**

**Part III. Assessment of the Quality Enhancement Plan**

*To be completed by the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee.*

**A. Brief description of the institution's Quality Enhancement Plan**

**B. Analysis of the Acceptability of the Quality Enhancement Plan**

1. **An Institutional Process.** *The institution uses an institutional process for identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment.*
2. **Focus of the Plan.** *The institution identifies a significant issue that (1) focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and (2) accomplishes the mission of the institution.*
3. **Institutional Capability for the Initiation, Implementation, and Completion of the Plan.** *The institution provides evidence that it has sufficient resources to initiate, implement, sustain, and complete the QEP.*
4. **Broad-based Involvement of Institutional Constituencies.** *The institution demonstrates the involvement of its constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the Plan.*
5. **Assessment of the Plan.** *The institution identifies goals and a plan to assess the achievement of those goals.*

**C. Analysis and Comments for Strengthening the QEP**

# ***History of Changes in the Core Requirement for the QEP As it has Appeared in the Principles of Accreditation***

## **Core Requirement 2.12 in the Initial Edition, 2002**

**CR 2.12** The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan and demonstrates that the plan is part of an ongoing planning and evaluation process. (Quality Enhancement Plan)

*(Note that much of the detail we see in the 2010 requirements for the expected content of the QEP was absent here, but an early version of that detail appeared in the Handbook for Review Committees under four categories of (1) Focus, (2) Institutional Capability for the Initiation and Continuation of the Plan, (3) Assessment of the Plan, and (4) Broad-Based Involvement of the Community—see the current edition of the Handbook which was written in 2005 before the next two revisions were adopted.)*

## **Core Requirement 2.12 in the Revised Edition, 2007**

**CR 2.12** The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that (1) includes a broad-based institutional process identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment, (2) focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution, (3) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP, (4) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP, and (5) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement. (Quality Assessment Plan)

*(Note that the four key elements that had and still appear in the Handbook for Review Committees was expanded to five key elements with some rearrangement of wording and content.)*

## **Core Requirement 2.12 and Comprehensive Standard 3.3.2 in the Revised Edition, 2010**

**CR 2.12** The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that includes an institutional process for identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment and focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution. (Quality Enhancement Plan)

**CS 3.3.2** The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that (1) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP; (2) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP; and (3) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement. (Quality Assessment Plan)

*(Note that the five key elements from 2007 remained largely unchanged following their division into two requirements. The division was made to avoid having to put institutions on sanctions when recommendations were written under the Core Requirement for the QEP.)*

*Assessing the  
Quality Enhancement Plan*

The QEP describes a carefully designed and focused course of action that addresses one or more critical issues related to enhancing student learning. The QEP should complement the institution's ongoing integrated institution-wide planning and evaluation process and is not intended to supplant or replace the processes described in Core Requirement 2.5 and Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1. On the contrary, the topic or issue identified for the QEP may very well evolve from these existing processes, as well as from other issues stemming from the institution's internal reaffirmation review.

While many aspects of the accreditation process focus on the past and the present, the QEP is "forward-looking" and thus transforms the process into an ongoing activity rather than an episodic event. Core Requirement 2.12 requires an institution to have a plan for increasing the effectiveness of some aspect of its educational program relating to student learning. The plan launches a process that can move the institution into a future characterized by creative, engaging, and meaningful learning experiences for students.

Student learning is defined broadly in the context of the QEP and may address a wide range of topics or issues. Student learning may include changes in students' knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or values that may be attributable to the collegiate experience. Examples of topics or issues include, but are not limited to, enhancing the academic climate for student learning, strengthening the general studies curriculum, developing creative approaches to experiential learning, enhancing critical thinking skills, introducing innovative teaching and learning strategies, increasing student engagement in learning, and exploring imaginative ways to use technology in the curriculum. In all cases, the goals and evaluation strategies must be clearly linked to improving the quality of student learning.

The QEP is a significant component of the reaffirmation process, and members of the on-site committee should therefore seek validation of the institution's commitment to the QEP through the evidence presented by the institution concerning:

- A consensus among key constituency groups that the QEP, rather than being merely a requirement for reaffirmation of accreditation, can result in significant, even transforming, improvements in the quality of student learning.

- 
- Broad-based institutional participation in the identification of the topic or issue to be addressed by the QEP.
  - Careful review of best practices related to the topic or issue.
  - Allocation of adequate human and financial resources to develop, implement, and sustain the QEP.
  - Implementation strategies that include a clear timeline and assignment of responsibilities.
  - A structure established for evaluating the extent to which the goals set for the plan are attained.

**Conducting the  
Assessment of the  
Quality Enhancement Plan**

In assessing the QEP, you should consider that it will include but is not limited to the following components:

- A brief descriptive title.
- A topic that is creative and vital to the long-term improvement of student learning.
- A definition of student learning appropriate to the focus of the QEP.
- Evidence that developing the QEP has engaged all appropriate campus constituencies.
- A description of the importance of the QEP that will help you and others understand its value and appropriateness to the institution.
- Specific, well-defined goals related to an issue of substance and depth, expected to lead to observable results.
- Evidence of careful analysis of the institutional context in which the goals will be implemented and of consideration of best practices related to the QEP's topic or issues.
- A viable implementation plan that includes necessary resources and a framework that details matters such as:
  - timelines,
  - leadership,
  - resource allocation, and
  - assessment schedule.

- 
- A comprehensive evaluation plan clearly related to the QEP goals, with the latitude and flexibility to make adjustments to achieve the desired student learning outcomes.
  - Appendices, if applicable.

The On-Site Review Committee will evaluate the acceptability of the QEP based primarily on the following indicators:

1. **Focus.** The institution identifies a significant issue(s) related to student learning and justifies its use for the Quality Enhancement Plan.
2. **Institutional Capability for the Initiation and Continuation of the Plan.** The institution provides evidence that it has sufficient resources to implement, sustain, and complete the Quality Enhancement Plan.
3. **Assessment of the Plan.** The institution demonstrates that it has the means for determining the success of its Quality Enhancement Plan.
4. **Broad-Based Involvement of the Community.** The institution demonstrates that all aspects of its community were involved in the development of the Plan.

Listed below are some questions that a committee member might use when evaluating an institution's QEP against the indicators above. The questions are *guidelines only—not a check list—and only are meant to be of assistance.*

1. **Focus of the Plan.** (1) *Has the institution provided a clear and concise description of the critical issue(s) to be addressed?* (2) *Has the institution described the relationship between the focus of the plan and student learning?* (3) *Has the institution provided relevant and appropriate goals and objectives to improve student learning?* (4) *Has the institution provided a comprehensive and clear analysis of the crucial importance of the Plan for improving the learning environment?* (5) *Has the institution identified the benefits to be derived from the QEP?*
2. **Institutional Capability for the Initiation and Continuation of the Plan.** (1) *Has the institution provided a time line for implementing and completing the QEP?* (2) *Has the institution assigned qualified*

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*individuals to administer and oversee its implementation? (3) Has the institution provided evidence of sufficient financial and physical resources to implement, sustain, and complete the QEP? (4) Has the institution allocated sufficient academic resources and systems to implement and sustain the outcomes of the Plan? (5) Has the institution established appropriate administrative processes for maintaining the progress of its quality improvements?*

3. **Assessment of the Plan.** *(1) Has the institution developed means for assessing the success of its QEP? (2) Has the institution identified relevant internal and external measures to evaluate the Plan? (3) Has the institution identified an internal system for evaluating the QEP and monitoring its progress? (4) Has the institution described how the results of the evaluation of the QEP will be used to improve student learning?*
4. **Broad Based Involvement of the Community.** *(1) Has the institution described the methods used for the development of the QEP? (2) Has the institution demonstrated that all aspects of its community—faculty, staff, students, board members, and administrators—were involved in the development of the QEP?*

### ***Writing the Reaffirmation Report***

At the conclusion of the on-site review, the committee will write a report to submit to the Commission on Colleges. This report will indicate the Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards, and Federal Requirements with which it finds the institution to be in compliance and those with which it judges the institution to be in non-compliance.

For each Core Requirement and Comprehensive Standard with which it concludes that the institution is not in compliance, the committee will compose a recommendation(s) with supporting narrative that will guide the institution in developing its response to the recommendation. The institution will be required to respond to all recommendations in a report.

If the committee judges the QEP to be unacceptable and therefore not in compliance, it will write a recommendation as applies to Core Requirement 2.12. (See Appendix I for guidelines.)