

# Minutes from UNCSA QEP Steering Committee Retreat

July 27 – 28, 2015 at Graylyn International Conference Center

In Attendance:

**Jason Romney** (QEP Director), **Brenda Daniels** (Associate Dean of School of Dance), **Jeff Gredlein** (Division of Liberal Arts Faculty), **Laura Hart McKinny** (School of Filmmaking Faculty), **Geordie MacMinn** (School of Drama Faculty), **Karen Beres** (Interim Dean of School of Music), **Jamie Call Blankinship** (School of Design and Production Faculty), **David English** (afternoon of July 28, Vice Provost & Dean of Academic Affairs)

1. Overview of QEP Core Requirement 2.12, Core Standard 3.3.2
  - a. Discussion about key issues identified in SACSCOC Summer Institute
    - i. Philosophy & Intent
    - ii. Institutional Fit
    - iii. Focus on Learning
    - iv. Campus Engagement
  - b. Discussion of common problem areas identified in SACSCOC Summer Institute
    - i. Focus must be clear
    - ii. Scope must be appropriate for campus
    - iii. School must demonstrate capacity to complete the QEP
    - iv. Goals and outcomes must be clear
    - v. Goals and outcomes must be measurable
    - vi. QEP must address a significant student population
2. Discussion of reading assignments
  - a. *Critical Response Process* by Liz Lerman
    - i. Lot's of helpful advice about how to give and receive criticism
    - ii. Being able to give and receive criticism is an important skill for students and professionals in the arts
    - iii. The formal process described in the book is too time consuming to use all the time
    - iv. Some question how these rules would need to be adapted for a student/teacher relationship. For example, teachers do not need permission to criticize and share opinions regarding the work of their students. This permission is implicit in their role as a teacher. What is the responsibility of the teacher to prepare their student to receive the criticism?
    - v. Ms. Lerman has offered workshops on campus in the past. Perhaps she could be brought to campus again
  - b. *Show Your Work* by Austin Kleon
    - i. Author suggests that the key to engaging a modern audience is for the artist to share their work early and often, in as many ways as possible.

- ii. Artists tend to be very protective of their work while under development. Audiences, however, want to know the story behind the work and how it was created.
- c. *Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins* by Annette Simmons
  - i. Author suggests that storytelling is the key to effective communication.
    - 1. *“Once you can see these stories, it becomes obvious that the more stories you share the better your ability to communicate”*
  - ii. From the perspective of our campus population, storytelling is a core element of what we do and has been identified as a critical element of the curriculum of all of our programs.
    - 1. Perhaps the idea of storytelling as a communication tool could be a good angle for our QEP about communication.
- d. *Do Story: How to tell your story so the world listens* by Bobette Buster
  - i. A similar message to Annette Simmons’
  - ii. Talks about the elements of a good story
  - iii. *“When you tell a purposeful story demonstrating your attitude and passion, suddenly the data, facts and figures of your CV become memorable. The story your tell will hit your listeners’ hearts and stay top of mind long after you’ve left.”* – Bill Simon
- e. *Managing Teams for Dummies* by Marty Brounstein
  - i. At it’s core, this is a book about communication skills
  - ii. Performing artists are almost always working in teams so much of this advice fits well for us.
  - iii. Ten Qualities of an Effective Team Player
    - 1. Demonstrates Reliability
    - 2. Communicates Constructively
    - 3. Listens Actively
    - 4. Functions as an Active Participant
    - 5. Shares Openly and Willingly
    - 6. Cooperates and Pitches In to Help
    - 7. Exhibits Flexibility
    - 8. Works as a Problem-solver
    - 9. Treats Others in a Respectful and Supportive Manner
    - 10. Shows Commitment to the Team
  - iv. These ten qualities capture well the expectations we have for our students.
- f. *Send: Why People Email So Badly and How to Do It Better* by David Shipley and Will Schwalbe
  - i. We could improve in this area as a campus
  - ii. Email has become the primary mode of communication for faculty and staff
  - iii. An important topic but perhaps one that has more to do with the faculty and staff than the students

- g. *Beyond Talent: Creating a Successful Career in Music* by Angela Myles Beeching
  - i. Though specifically about music, the principles could be applied to any performing artist
  - ii. Most of her advice revolves around communication skills
    - 1. How to communicate your value clearly
    - 2. Self promotion
    - 3. Various methods for building a professional network
  - iii. Has some useful criteria for artist statements and introductions
    - 1. “At its best, an artist’s statement reads easily, is informative, and adds to the reader’s understanding of the artist, his intentions, and his work. At its worst, an artist’s statement is difficult to understand, is pretentious, and irritates rather than informs.”
  - iv. The author might be a good candidate for our QEP lead evaluator
- 3. Discussion on topic selection
  - a. General topic “Communication” for QEP has already been decided
    - i. Survey went out to campus community fall 2014 asking for feedback on five proposed topics
    - ii. Survey results were discussed at Deans, Faculty Council, Institutional Effectiveness, and Executive meetings
    - iii. Topic of “Communication” was decided
    - iv. When Jason Romney was named the QEP Director in spring 2015, he visited with faculty in each arts school and DLA to solicit suggestions that would narrow the focus of the QEP topic.
      - 1. Three questions were asked:
        - a. In what ways could your students be better communicators?
        - b. Of these areas of improvement, which ones would have the most positive impact on their success as a student and professional?
        - c. If they were to improve in these areas, how would we know?
  - b. First task for us is to narrow the focus of the proposed topic
    - i. This is a rare opportunity we get as a university to come together around a common issue and actually have the resources to address it
    - ii. Whatever we decide to do, it should be something important enough to us that we would want to do it regardless of SACS influence
    - iii. UNCSA mission statement was read and discussed
    - iv. Feedback from Spring 2015 visits with faculty in each school/division was reviewed. Feedback was organized into three main categories
      - 1. Students could improve their ability to communicate with others about themselves and their work.

- a. Examples include:
    - i. Film pitches
    - ii. Artistic Statements made at application to UNCSA
    - iii. Professional promotion
    - iv. Collaboration with fellow artists
    - v. Grant writing
    - vi. Publicity events
    - vii. Managing a public persona
    - viii. Personal reflection and criticism of own work and work of others
  - b. Lots of potential here. These issues are core to the mission of UNCSA and our professional goals for our students.
2. Students could improve their ability to communicate with others regarding their struggles.
    - a. Examples Include:
      - i. Keeping advisors informed about their academic progress
      - ii. Overcoming obstacles in communication
      - iii. Coping with stress
    - b. This is an important issue for our campus. One that needs attention. Would be difficult to justify this topic within the framework of the QEP core requirements and comprehensive standards.
  3. Students could improve their basic communication skills
    - a. Examples Include:
      - i. Civil discourse
      - ii. Appropriate uses of electronic communication
      - iii. Formal written communication
      - iv. Graduate Thesis in D&P
      - v. Language comprehension
      - vi. Listening/Empathy
      - vii. Understanding the appropriate form of communication for various scenarios
        1. When to use email
        2. When to use telephone
        3. When to use text messaging
        4. When to meet face to face
      - viii. Effective verbal communication
      - ix. Thoughtful speech (think before you speak)
    - b. These are important skills for anyone and we would hope to help students develop these skills within the framework of a more focused effort that fits the

unique nature of our institution as a performing arts conservatory.

v. Potential topics

1. Artist Statements

- a. Every applicant writes one
- b. Not asked to do it again
  - i. Music and Film has students do something similar in a class
  - ii. Perhaps there could be an institutional initiative to help students do this more often and get better at it
- c. What would be the learning outcomes of this?
  - i. Basic written communication skills
  - ii. Writing and talking about their work
  - iii. Communicating the story about why they do what they do
  - iv. Communicate what makes you distinctive
  - v. Explain what they have to contribute to a team
  - vi. Define what motivates them
- d. 2015 Deans retreat identified storytelling and communicating with an audience to be a critical element of curriculum in every school.
- e. The ability to do this is a critical skill for the profession. This speaks to the professional readiness element of our mission statement
- f. Students need to be able to do this verbally and in writing

vi. The Topic

1. Tell/Share your story: Communication skills for the artist
  - a. The choice between Tell/Share needs further discussion.
  - b. Subtitle speaks to the unique nature of our campus
  - c. Encompasses all specific communication skills that are important for someone working in the arts, including the ability to communicate critically about your own work and the work of others as we read in Liz Lerman's Critical Response book.

vii. How do we justify the topic?

1. Outline the activities that led to this topic
  - a. Get the survey data from fall 2014
  - b. Get minutes from Deans, Faculty Council, IE, Executive Council meetings where this was discussed
  - c. Explain the suggestions solicited from the faculty in visits to each school in spring 2015

2. Identify existing activities on campus that demonstrate this is a subject that is already valued
  - a. Portfolio reviews in D&P and Film
  - b. Training in pitching in Film
  - c. Written evaluations of each drama student by faculty
  - d. D&P and Film peer evaluations
  - e. Music has introductory course in listening skills.
  - f. Studio classes where group critiques happen
  - g. Junior level career development class in Music where they learn how to conduct “informances”
  - h. Dance has senior year class where they learn verbal presentation skills
  - i. Sessions with 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year Drama students where they meet with the Dean and attempt to articulate their craft and process.
  - j. There are probably many more that could be identified
4. Discussion on learning outcomes for QEP
  - a. Communicate clearly their passion for a professional career
    - i. What does it mean to communicate clearly?
      1. Easily understood
      2. Succinct
      3. Unambiguous
    - ii. What is passion?
      1. Motivation
      2. Driving influence
      3. Purpose
      4. The word “passion” has been used often in the history of the school.
    - iii. Why say “professional career”?
      1. This is an important element of our mission statement
      2. The idea here is to explain why they are so passionate about this that they want to pursue it as their career
  - b. Communicate critically about their own work
    - i. Being able to self-reflect and criticize their own work is an important step to understanding their passion and driving influence
    - ii. The ability to discuss their work critically is a crucial skill for a professional career
  - c. Communicate critically about the work of others
    - i. Another crucial skill for the professional artist
    - ii. The desire and ability to help a collaborator or colleague find success in their work is important to the performing arts profession
  - d. Identify and explain next steps based on criticism
    - i. This can also be described as synthesizing.
    - ii. This is an important element of critical discussions

- iii. This learning outcome was ultimately removed from the final list in order to simplify the plan.
      - 1. The idea being that this step is implicit in the process of criticism.
      - 2. Also the output of successful criticism is a clearer focus for the work which feeds back into the first learning outcome
- 5. Justification for the topic (Suggestions from the group)
  - a. Mission statement mentions the need to provide students with the skills to excel in their disciplines and their lives.
    - i. These kind of communication skills are critical to success in any of our disciplines
  - b. Mission statement mentions our goal to prepare students for a professional career in the arts
    - i. These kind of communication skills are critical for a successful career in the arts
  - c. Feedback we receive from employers and other industry leaders suggests that these kind of communication skills are critical.
    - i. We need to get formal evidence of this.
  - d. We have anecdotal evidence from faculty across the campus that the artistic statements required of all applications are not as effective as we would like.
    - i. We need to start conducting formal assessments of these artistic statements for students who enroll.
  - e. We have anecdotal evidence from D&P and Film faculty that 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> year design students are lacking the necessary skills to give and receive criticism. These skills are important for them to have in order to succeed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year curriculum.
    - i. We're hearing this information second-hand. We need to get some actual data on this from the source.
  - f. Dance faculty have observed that dance students are not able to clearly talk about their own work.
    - i. Emerging choreographers projects were specifically mentioned.
    - ii. Could use some more info on this.
  - g. There used to be a session that 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year Drama students would have with Gerald Freedman where they would have to speak about their craft and process as they now understood it. Unsure whether this is still done in Drama.
    - i. Follow up on this to find out if something similar is still happening.
    - ii. Regardless, it speaks directly to an institutional interest in our QEP topic.
  - h. Schools of Dance and Music have added acting classes for their dance and singing students to help them develop verbal skills
  - i. Music is piloting a new freshman course this year involving critical listening and response.

- i. We should find out more on this and see how we might collaborate on the assessment.
- j. We have heard from School of Filmmaking department heads that they have been in discussions about creating a “living portfolio” project for students and alumni to chronicle their process and work. The hope is that students can develop their skills in critiquing and discussing their work but also this could serve as helpful information for new students who need models for how students transition from the school into their career.
- k. DLA have been assessing students’ ability for personal reflection on their work and have noticed that the skill does improve between year 1 and year 2.
  - i. We should see what assessment data exists for this. Perhaps we could use this a baseline data and ideas for our institutional assessment mechanisms.
- l. Town hall meeting in spring 2015 showed us that we need more opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to engage in civil discourse about the school.
  - i. There were moments in that meeting where faculty and students were engaged in critical discussions about the curriculum.
- m. Some D&P graduate students are required to produce a written thesis. They struggle with this kind of formal research writing.
  - i. This is an important issue but may not have a clear connection to the goals of the QEP as currently outlined.
- n. There is currently no student newspaper on campus. The closest thing we have is the Every Friday Email but this is mostly a list of announcements. It would be nice if there was something where editorials and reviews could be written by students and published to the campus community.
- o. Most of what our students do on campus involves some form of collaboration. Effective communication skills are critical to successful collaboration.
- p. Color and Design class in D&P involves some exercises where group critiques happen and are assessed.
  - i. Let’s follow up on this and see what data exists and what we might learn from this.
- q. D&P peer production evaluations could benefit from questions about communication skills
- r. D&P portfolio reviews could benefit from better assessment mechanisms for the students’ presentation skills.
- s. Student grant programs on campus usually require the students to produce some form of artistic statement. Perhaps we could leverage this as an assessment opportunity.
- t. Music students are often required to give public speeches about their work at recitals. Many are uncomfortable with this.
  - i. Can we get a more clear statement from Music on this?
  - ii. Is there a way that this could be assessed?



- u. There was a general consensus in the room that our students are uncomfortable speaking in public.
  - v. Also a general consensus that alumni seem to have better communication skills. So our goal is that they could show more improvement before they graduate.
  - w. 2015 Deans retreat observed that storytelling and communicating with an audience was a critical element of the curriculum across campus.
6. Discussion of potential actions to be implemented
- a. Need to nominate lead QEP evaluator. Some names were suggested. More are needed
    - i. Tony Strawn from Henderson Community College in Henderson, KY. Professor of Communication and QEP Director.
      - 1. Heard him speak at SACSCOC Summer Institute. Seems to have a good disposition for serving as a lead evaluator.
    - ii. Angela Myles Beeching. Author of *Beyond Talent*.
      - 1. Has an academic background in a conservatory setting.
  - b. SACS guidelines say that there needs to be broad involvement in the development and implementation of the QEP by all relevant constituencies.
    - i. We need to consult with the Staff Council, SGA, Alumni, BOT for their input
    - ii. As for faculty involvement, we will define “constituency” as an arts school or DLA.
      - 1. This way each school can decide the best way to implement the QEP in their area without having to worry about getting every faculty member involved in conducting assessments. Some classes are simply not a good fit and that’s OK.
  - c. We need to develop a plan to ensure that adequate faculty representation exists from each constituency for the duration of the QEP.
    - i. A QEP Steering Committee will be created with members rotating out every two years like other faculty committees
      - 1. DLA and each arts school will have a representative plus an alternate
      - 2. Director of the writing center should be on the committee
      - 3. Director of teaching and learning center should be on the committee
      - 4. Would be nice to have at least one Dean on the committee. This could double as the representative from one of the schools.
      - 5. What about staff and student representation?
        - a. Someone from institutional research?
    - ii. Other committees may need to be created.
      - 1. Assessment committee?
      - 2. Research committee?
  - d. At the faculty development day on August 13 we will give a presentation to the entire faculty and host a breakout session for Q&A.

- i. Faculty will be invited to review the reading materials
  - ii. Faculty will be asked to discuss these learning outcomes and identify activities already happening in their school and classes where these learning outcomes can be assessed and developed.
  - iii. Faculty will be invited to participate on the QEP steering committee and/or some of the sub committees that might be created.
  - iv. Faculty will be invited to nominate people who could serve as our lead evaluator.
- e. Make reading materials available to the campus through the library
- f. Get a video booth for people to give short verbal artistic statements
  - i. Could be used to build interest and awareness of the QEP
  - ii. Faculty, staff, and students could participate
  - iii. Videos could be used in marketing material
  - iv. Could also be shown to the SACS committee
- g. Develop branding for QEP with page on new website
- h. Banners, posters, swag, etc.
- i. Seek alumni input during the Picklestock weekend in September.
- j. We need to nominate the lead evaluator for our QEP
  - i.

## 7. Assessment

- a. Need to develop an assessment mechanism (rubric) that could be used across campus to assess QEP learning outcomes
  - i. Specific enough to assess what we need
  - ii. Generic enough that it can be used in any area on campus
- b. We need help with this. Perhaps hire a consultant?
- c. Ask students to write a new artistic statement when they graduate
  - i. This could be used as a capstone assessment mechanism
  - ii. If we are successful in all the work we will do in individual classes and departmental activities, we should see these artistic statements improve.
  - iii. We should start assessing the statements from incoming students now!
- d. Looked at NCC&U rubrics for written and verbal communication
  - i. Benchmark, Milestone, Capstone are good terms for assessment
  - ii. Some helpful stuff in here but we should really adapt to something better suited for us
- e. Attempt to identify values for rubrics for each learning outcome
  - i. Explain clearly their passion for a professional career
    - 1. Succinct/Clear
    - 2. Evidence of Passion
    - 3. Distinctive
    - 4. Delivery
  - ii. Communicate critically about own work
    - 1. Objectivity
    - 2. Acknowledges both positive and negative

- 3. Engagement
  - 4. Synthesis
  - 5. Contextualize
  - 6. Brevity
  - iii. Communicate critically about work of others
    - 1. Expressing opinions effectively
    - 2. Acknowledges both positive and negative
    - 3. Contextualize
    - 4. Honesty
    - 5. Collaborative Engagement
    - 6. Brevity
  - iv. Attempts were made to describe benchmark, milestone, and capstone levels for each of these values. More work needs to be done on that.
8. Timeline
- a. Written QEP needs to be sent to the off-site review committed from SACS in January.
  - b. Onsite visit is first week of March
  - c. We would like to implement a phased roll out of the QEP to give us an opportunity to test our assessment tools before they are widely adopted
    - i. Some discussion about how to limit the roll out
      - 1. Limit to a specific population of students
        - a. Gets complicated and faculty involvement balloons
      - 2. Limit to specific numbers of faculty seems to work better
    - ii. Year 1 we engage two faculty in each constituency to test our assessment tools. Revise as needed
      - 1. Ideally this would involve assessing 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students but this is not critical
    - iii. Year 2 we engage more faculty
      - 1. Ideally this would involve assessing 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students but this is not critical
    - iv. Year 3 all identified faculty are engaged
    - v.