



# Making Critical Connections

Quality Enhancement Plan

Annual Report #4

Board of Trustees University Affairs Committee

July 21, 2010



# Making Critical Connections

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- The Quality Enhancement Plan, “Making Critical Connections,” was developed and adopted in April 2006 as part of the University’s decennial reaffirmation of accreditation process. It focuses on innovative educational programs, undergraduate research, and international activities. The full report is available at: [http://www.unc.edu/inst\\_res/SACS/sacs.html](http://www.unc.edu/inst_res/SACS/sacs.html)
- The implementation committee is appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. It met once this year, on November 13, 2009. It also maintains a listserv.



# Implementation Committee

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- David Bevevino, *Undergraduate Student, Political Science and Spanish, Class of 2010* (Student at Large)
- Peter A. Coclanis, *Albert Ray Newsome Distinguished Professor of History and Director of the Global Research Institute (as Director of the GRI)*
- Margaret Jablonski, *Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs* (as Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs)
- Lydia Lewallen, *Undergraduate Student, Women's Studies and Sociology Class of 2011* (Student at Large)
- Erika Lindemann, *Adjunct Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Curricula* (as Associate Dean)
- Bobbi Owen, *Chair, Michael McVaugh Distinguished Professor of Dramatic Art and Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education* (as Senior Associate Dean)
- Patricia Pukkila, *Professor of Biology and Director of the Office for Undergraduate Research* (as Director)
- J. Steven Reznick, *Professor of Psychology* (Academic Affairs Faculty Member-at-Large)
- Gwendolyn Sancar, *Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics* (Health Affairs Faculty Member-at-Large)
- Lynn Williford, *Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment* (as Assistant Provost)
- Jan Yopp, *Professor of JOMC and Dean of the Summer School* (as Dean of the Summer School)



# Leadership

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- Dr. Peter Coclanis, Albert R. Newsome Professor of History and Director of the Global Research Institute, leads the internationalization implementation
- Dr. Patricia Pukkila, Professor of Biology and Director of the Office for Undergraduate Research, leads the research implementation
- Dr. Jay Smith, Professor of History and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Curricula, has led the curricular innovation implementation
- Dr. Jan Yopp, Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication and Dean of the Summer School, is implementing Maymester
- Dr. Lynn Williford, Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment, leads the assessment effort



# Goals

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- Connecting the learning expected inside the classroom with what happens outside it – and enhancing the connections between and among courses
- Making research a critical connection between the curriculum and the faculty and the students
- Internationalizing the undergraduate experience



# Accomplishments: Curricular Innovations

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## Maymester

- Maymester 2009 ran 17 courses (309 students); Maymester 2010 has approved 26 courses across 18 units for summer 2010.

## Interdisciplinary Cluster Program

- 8 clusters exist (Border Crossings; Defining Difference; Evolution; Global Environmental Change; Knowledge at the Crossroads; War, Revolution and Culture; World Wars).
- Obstacles remain.



# Accomplishments: Undergraduate Research

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- Through the “Making Critical Connections” initiatives, we expect that research will become a distinctive feature of a Carolina education for increasing numbers of our undergraduate students, as appropriate for a research university.
  - Four term-based Professorships are in place, one each in the four divisions of the College: Drew Coleman (Geological Sciences), Jane Danielewicz (English), Don Reid (History), and Elin O’Hara Slavick (Art)
  - The Graduate Research Consultant program continues to have a significant impact with the number of course offerings in which students carry out original research projects exceeding the five year projection
  - 70 SURF grants have been awarded for Summer 2010
  - 31 students received the Carolina Research Scholar designation in 2009-2010 (up from 16 in 2008-2009)



# Accomplishments: Internationalization

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- Embedding internationalization as deeply as possible in the curriculum is critical in our global society.
  - Two fulltime ESL positions in the Writing Center are struggling to cope with campus-wide demand.
  - UNC-Chapel Hill's "international infrastructure" has been improved through support of programs and people. These efforts continue to be refined through a pan-University committee's efforts and recommendations, and via the "Strategic Roadmap for Internationalizing UNC-Chapel Hill," developed by the Chancellor's Global Leadership Circle and endorsed by the BOT in March 2009.





# Assessing Outcomes of the QEP

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- The evaluation attempts to measure the effectiveness of the QEP initiatives in enhancing student learning outcomes.
- Major question: Does participation in QEP and related curricular initiatives enhance students' ability to:
  - Integrate and apply knowledge from various disciplines, and
  - Make connections between classroom learning and the outside world?
- Methods used:
  - Longitudinal study of the entering first-year class of 2006 and later cohorts, comparing outcomes to those of pre-2006 cohorts
  - Tracking course-taking patterns and out-of-class activities
  - Pre- and post-assessments of the impact of study abroad and research experiences;
  - Intensive interviews of sophomores and seniors
  - Focus groups and surveys of faculty and students



# Feedback on First Year Experiences

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**At the end of their first year, students in the 2006 and later cohorts were more likely than prior cohorts to report:**

- Integrating ideas or concepts from different courses in class assignments and discussions
- Taking coursework that emphasized applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Working on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements
- That faculty members were available, helpful, and sympathetic
- That the university contributed greatly to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in solving complex real-world problems
- Plans to study abroad

Source: Responses to the National Survey of Student Engagement, Spring 2005 and 2007-2009



# Connecting Academic Experiences

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## Students' Reflections on Most Important Learning Experiences During the First Two Years

- Variety of courses and learning opportunities offered in the new curriculum:
  - Encouraged experimentation with courses from a wider range of disciplines, often offered in formats other than traditional lecture mode,
  - Increased awareness of new fields of study
  - Recognized that issues could be viewed from the perspectives of multiple disciplines
- First Year Seminars had a powerful impact on academic and social engagement. Early exposure to interdisciplinary topics and small, dynamic classroom environment encouraged students to:
  - Reconsider original choices of majors
  - Pursue double majors and minors at higher rate
  - Pursue a more interdisciplinary pattern of coursework
  - Create lasting bonds with faculty and other students through shared learning experiences

Source: Sophomore Interviews with 2006 Cohort



# Connecting Academic Experiences, continued

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## Senior Students' Reflections on Most Important Learning Experiences Across the Curriculum

- Compared to prior cohorts, students participated at higher rates in:
  - Research with faculty and graduate students
  - Study abroad
  - Internships
  - Service learning
  - Independent studies
- Engagement in active learning activities appears to be the most powerful factor in students' ability to make connections between:
  - Different disciplines
  - Knowledge obtained from classroom study and implications for “real world” issues
  - Courses that describe approaches to knowledge used in various disciplines and the actual practice of research and reporting findings
  - Knowledge of different cultures through academic study and the experiences of individuals in other parts of the world as observed through living and working within that culture
  - Academic knowledge and the direct application to practical problems and public policy

Source: Senior Interviews with 2006 Cohort (preliminary)



# Participant Feedback on Maymester

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- Students reported that Maymester's intensive focus on a single theme challenged them to:
  - Become more deeply engaged in the course topic
    - *“Through Maymester, I was able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The class was small and intimate... providing a learning environment that encouraged intense and highly academic class discussions.”*
  - Examine a topic through a wider variety of perspectives
  - Draw upon the knowledge and skills acquired in other courses
- Instructors reported professional rewards from participating in this unique teaching/learning experience.
  - *“I found the Maymester experience satisfying to me as a researcher, edifying as a scholar, and enjoyable as a teacher.”*



# Outcomes from Increasing Curriculum Focus on Internationalization

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- Taking courses focusing on international issues and study abroad:
  - Helped students develop a greater sense of global citizenship
  - Provided the opportunity to reinforce knowledge and skills gained from prior coursework and to make rich connections between their experiences and courses taken afterwards
- In particular, participation in Study Abroad appeared to be a transformative experience:
  - Shaped choices of majors and careers
  - Resulted in an increased sense of independence and self-reliance in moving between cultures
  - Large numbers of students reported plans to work abroad following graduation.

Source: Senior Interviews (preliminary)



# Feedback from Participants in Undergraduate Research Initiatives

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- Practiced applying the scientific process in their own research projects
- Had opportunities to connect with faculty members and to be mentored by graduate students, which encouraged thinking about pursuing graduate study
- Increased critical thinking and analysis skills, e.g., evaluating strengths and weaknesses of published research
- Developed their writing and editing skills through co-authoring research papers with faculty



# Questions?

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