

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Faculty, Deans, Department Chairs, and Directors

FROM: Dr. Victoria Farrar-Myers
QEP Coordinator

RE: QEP Pre-Proposals

DATE: February 2, 2006

As part of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) reaffirmation process scheduled for spring 2007, a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) needs to be created. Last fall, through a series of faculty forums, the theme of *active learning* was identified along with the process of identifying exemplars, whether new initiatives or ongoing, within colleges, schools and programs (both academic and non-academic). An RFP **pre-proposal** process was determined the best means to solicit these exemplars. You can access the call for pre-proposals at:

<http://sacs.uta.edu/qep/assets/qeppreproposal.pdf>.

Please disseminate this memo to your colleges, schools and programs and bring it to the attention of those who may be already engaged in *active learning* related initiatives.

The working definition of *active learning* identified through this faculty-driven process – a definition that will be refined through the identification of these exemplars – is as follows:

Active learning is a process that employs a variety of pedagogical approaches to place the primary responsibility for creating and/or applying knowledge on the students themselves. It puts the student at the center of the learning process, making him/her a partner in discovery, not a passive receiver of information. Active learning requires students to interact with and integrate course material by reading, writing, discussing, problem-solving, investigating, reflecting, and engaging in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and critical thinking. An active learning approach draws upon such teaching and learning strategies as question-and-answer sessions, short in-class writing exercises, simulations, team learning, student research, internships and community service, clinical placements, and problem-based learning.

Surveys of our student population (e.g., the *College Learning Assessment (CLA)* and *National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)*) indicate that our seniors have difficulty in the areas of critical thinking, analysis and developing effective arguments. Further, UTA lags behind the national benchmarks, for example, in terms of providing enriching educational experiences and student-faculty interaction. This evidence suggests that *active learning* strategies will enhance our students' learning.

SACS has indicated they want focused approaches that are well-developed and that identify specific assessment measures of student learning achievement outcomes. They also require determination of

whether goals are being met and for the refinement and proliferation of the QEP across the university. Implementation of our QEP will initially use identified exemplars as models that will provide insights into best strategies.

Some individuals might already be engaged in activities that qualify as *active learning*, but have not begun to systematically assess the impact on student learning. Others might have ideas of how to foster student learning, but have not yet had the opportunity to pursue them. There also may be those who have already undertaken *active learning* initiatives but do not currently have the resources to expand assessment strategies. In any of these scenarios, assessment can range, for example, from the use of Educational Testing Service (ETS) standardized subject exams, to capstone courses and portfolios, to questions imbedded in exams and assignments. The identification of these assessment strategies along with how they will be utilized to improve student learning is key to a successful QEP pre-proposal.

There is no limit on the number of pre-proposals that will be accepted for consideration; however, all pre-proposals should be done in consultation with the appropriate supervisor, such as Department Chairs, Deans, Directors, and heads of programs (academic and non-academic). While exemplars identified by the QEP Steering Committee will be utilized as the basis of the QEP, other initiatives identified through this process can be utilized to formulate a plan to integrate this theme further throughout the student learning experience. Furthermore, it has been determined that the plan shall focus primarily on the undergraduate experience, although exemplars from programs serving the graduate level may be identified in the initial pre-proposal process. Pre-proposals can also be collaborative in nature (e.g., between departments and colleges, or between non-academic and academic programs).

After reviewing the pre-proposals and identifying those having the most potential for development, the QEP Steering Committee will work with the author(s) of such proposals to refine as necessary. Those pre-proposals finally chosen are ensured funding. Please be aware that at this stage there are no budget parameters set (i.e., allocation decisions, etc.). Careful consideration should be given to the funds requested and every effort should be made to identify existing resources that might be drawn upon. These considerations (i.e., the feasibility of implementation, including personnel, budget, facilities, technology, library resources, etc. required) will all be taken into account in selecting the exemplars to be fully developed. Those finally selected will not be implemented until fall 2007 when SACS has approved our QEP.

In order to facilitate adequate time for selection, refinement and sharing of the full QEP outline with the academic community in early April, pre-proposals are **due by Friday, March 3, 2006, by 5:00** and should be submitted electronically to Victoria Farrar-Myers, QEP Coordinator, at Victoria@uta.edu. The pre-proposal must be signed by the person submitting it and the appropriate supervisor, whether Department Chairs and Deans or Directors/Program Chairs (for academic and non-academic programs).

There are some who might be engaged in *active learning* initiatives, but at this time may choose not to submit a pre-proposal. I would encourage you to forward this information to me as to provide us with additional examples to highlight across campus. You can also forward these examples directly to me at Victoria@uta.edu.

University of Texas at Arlington Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

Request for Pre-Proposals

Background

In connection with its upcoming reaffirmation by the Southern Associations of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the University is preparing a *Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)* that will focus on the theme of **active learning**. The QEP Steering Committee is seeking pre-proposals for development of courses and programs (both academic and non-academic), that promote the use of active learning among our students. The Steering Committee will select exemplars to develop the QEP and to serve as models for others to use in crafting their own exemplar courses and programs of active learning. Exemplars chosen will begin implementation in the fall of 2007.

Pre-proposal Objectives

A strong pre-proposal will accomplish the following objectives:

- * Identify the course/program and the reasons why it is an appropriate mechanism to enhance the quality of student learning at UTA.
- * Identify the active learning tasks or activities employed, and provide a clear link between these tasks/activities and student learning outcomes.
- * Identify methods and approaches for measuring the effects of the active learning tasks/activities on student learning, and plans to continue to improve the course/program based on the assessment implementation.
- * Identify the time-frame for implementation and the scope of resources (including personnel, budget, facilities, technology, library resources, etc.) needed to run and/or expand active-learning in your course/program.

Pre-proposal Structure

The pre-proposal should address how active learning strategies can be utilized (or are currently being utilized) and how the course/program could be developed (or improved and/or expanded). The pre-proposal should be no longer than five (5) pages. Up to an additional five (5) pages may be included for exhibits and attachments. The pre-proposal should include the following:

Summary:

Provide a clear and concise description of the course/program and how it promotes active learning.

Description and Scope of Student Learning:

Describe the course/program in which active learning activities are employed. Describe the scope of application and involved parties (e.g., students, faculty members) with their roles. Identify what groups of students are or would be affected. What are the goals and objectives for improving student learning? What active-learning activities are or would be employed? How do these activities affect and improve student learning at UTA? What kind of prior research or literature supports using such active-learning activities in your discipline? What is the time-frame needed to implement, assess, and improve the plan you outline?

Assessment:

Describe the kinds of student learning outcomes that have been assessed or could be assessed to demonstrate the effects of the active learning activities. What specific student learning outcomes can be achieved? What kind of measures and instruments could be used? How have such assessments been used, or how could they be used, to further improve student learning? What kind of prior research or literature supports using such assessment tools? (For a useful resource regarding assessment of student learning outcomes see <http://dev.tlct.ttu.edu/Redesign/assessment/faq.asp>)

Resource Requirements:

Describe what kinds of resources are needed to implement the course/program's implementation of active learning activities. What kinds of resources (e.g., estimated budget, personnel, facilities, technology, library resources, etc.) would be needed to improve the use of active learning as you specify in your pre-proposal?

Procedures for Submitting and Evaluating Pre-proposals

Pre-proposals are **due by Friday, March 3, 2006, by 5:00** and should be submitted electronically to Victoria Farrar-Myers, QEP Coordinator at Victoria@uta.edu. The pre-proposal must be signed by the person submitting it and the appropriate supervisor, whether Department Chairs and Deans or Directors/Program Chairs (for academic and non-academic programs).

Pre-proposals will be evaluated by the QEP Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will select from among the pre-proposals received those exemplars to be utilized in crafting UTA's QEP. Authors of the pre-proposals selected will work with the QEP Steering Committee to fully articulate all aspects of the proposed activity. These refined proposals are ensured funding.

The Steering Committee will consider the following criteria in their selection:

- * The number of students who may be affected by the course/program.
- * The ability to employ the pre-proposal as a model for other departments/programs.
- * How clearly student learning outcomes and the plan for assessing outcomes are described and how this assessment will be utilized for continuous improvement.
- * Feasibility of implementation, including personnel, budget, facilities, technology, library resources, etc. required.

Any questions should be directed to Victoria Farrar-Myers, QEP Coordinator, at Victoria@uta.edu or 2x1024.