

Quality Enhancement Plan: *Reading Critically for Success*
Averett University

Averett's Quality Enhancement Plan, *Reading Critically for Success*, redirects the university's academic focus and resources to address the problem of reading at the post-secondary level. Through data gathered from student and faculty surveys, review of research and best practices, the Averett community has determined that one of the most important factors in academic success is the ability to read college material well. We expect a campus-wide program that encourages better and more frequent reading will help students achieve a higher degree of aggregate improvement across institutional learning outcomes.

The process of reaffirmation began in 2004 when the Dean invited the Averett community to suggest topics for the QEP. The reaffirmation committee culled the list of opportunities to two topics. On March 21, 2006, the faculty voted unanimously to select "reading" as our QEP topic. The QEP development committee, composed of faculty, students, staff and administrators, met to create an appropriate and feasible proposal. November 14, 2006 the faculty voted to accept the QEP. The QEP committee incorporated suggestions in the next draft and the faculty approved the completed document on January 16, 2007.

More than one third of Averett's entering students characterize themselves as "first generation" college attendees. Through student support services, nationally normed student surveys and anecdotal evidence from faculty, it became evident that many of our students either had difficulty reading or had no interest in reading. These factors guided the QEP committee's work and led it to conclude that reading skills and reading-related activities were common denominators in any equation of academic success for our students

Averett's Quality Enhancement Plan has one goal: *to establish a culture of reading across the traditional undergraduate program*. The primary objective of the plan is to *improve students' reading comprehension*. The Averett community also determined that two ancillary or support objectives were important to the successful implementation of the plan: faculty development in the field of reading and improvement of students' attitudes toward reading in general. To establish a reading culture on campus, students have to find themselves in an environment in which reading is a highly visible and desirable activity. In addition, faculty need training in strategies to help students read better while students need opportunities to improve their skills and to use those skills.

The QEP Assessment sub-committee chose the reading portion of the CAAP test to establish baseline scores of incoming freshmen, to assess reading skills of seniors, to monitor student improvement, and to provide longitudinal data in order to adjust components of the plan as needed. As faculty training progresses, departments will incorporate testing results to improve reading comprehension at the disciplinary level. This assessment will become part of the annual review of institutional effectiveness goals and evaluation process. A standing committee has been established to oversee implementation of the QEP. The university's president has made a commitment that appropriate leadership and resources will be provided to ensure the timely implementation and sustainability of Averett's *Reading Critically for Success* plan.

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