

Executive Summary of Quality Enhancement Plan “Critical Thinking: Lighting the Path to Lifelong Learning”

The mission of Cape Fear Community College’s Quality Enhancement Plan is to improve learners’ abilities to apply critical thinking skills in academic and professional contexts. This, in turn, will reinforce and further the College’s broader vision of “Building a future-oriented world-class workforce and a community of lifelong learners” by fundamentally enhancing the personal, professional, and civic development of students through an emphasis on critical thinking skills.

The College defines critical thinking as the deliberate process of questioning, evaluating, and responding to problems, scenarios, and arguments in order to reach sound solutions, decisions, and positions. Based on this working definition, students demonstrate critical thinking learning outcomes when they:

- Ask pertinent questions that clarify and focus a problem, scenario, or argument;
- Evaluate the quantity, quality, and usefulness of information;
- Articulate a sound solution, decision, or position based on appropriate standards, of reasoning; and
- Monitor and reflect upon the quality and fairness of their reasoning.

The College will seek to enhance these outcomes by implementing three focused initiatives to improve student learning and effect institutional change by:

1. Providing all faculty and staff with training opportunities and resources that enhance their abilities to improve students’ critical thinking skills;
2. Emphasizing to students the application of critical thinking skills for student success; and
3. Facilitating and assessing critical thinking as a general education core competency

Implementation will begin with faculty/staff development followed by the enhancement of selected pilot courses, including College Student Success and Expository Writing. The college will use the data from these pilot courses in subsequent enhancement efforts.

Assessment of the Plan

The College will use internal assessments of improved student learning that will be complemented by external measures to produce information that can be used to evaluate the success and effectiveness of each initiative. Furthermore, the Quality Enhancement Plan will be fully integrated into the College’s ongoing institutional effectiveness process with each initiative being tied to specific college goals along with the assignment of timelines, responsibility, assessment measures, and criteria for success.

Institutional Capability

This plan has been developed with the College’s financial resources in mind. Wherever possible, this plan utilizes existing college resources for optimum efficiency.

Broad-Based Involvement

The idea of focusing on improving the critical thinking skills of students at the College was generated through focus group meetings consisting of faculty, staff, and administration, as well as representatives from a local university and the College’s advisory committee members. During development of the plan, the College solicited input from students, faculty, staff, administration and board members.

For more information about the development or implementation of the plan please contact:
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