

Chowan Critical Thinking Program

Chowan University

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Executive Summary

The focus of Chowan University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is "*Enhancing Student Learning Through Critical Thinking*." This focus is consistent with Chowan's institutional history, mission statement, academic values, and strategic plan. It also addresses a need that has become evident through the analysis of assessment data. The focus and specific plans for implementation emerged from an on-going and broad-based conversation with University stakeholders, including faculty, staff, administrators, and students.

The plan for achieving the focus of the QEP is called the Chowan Critical Thinking Program (CCTP). The goal of the CCTP is for students at Chowan University to become effective critical thinkers. The components of student learning (knowledge, skills, behavior, and values), are conceptualized, analyzed, evaluated, internalized, and communicated through the process of critical thinking. Students who are proficient critical thinkers will be more proficient learners.

As a result of the analysis of Richard Paul, Linda Elder, and other authorities on critical thinking, the CCTP begins with the understanding that a critical thinker is an individual who is committed to improving the quality of thought by the skillful use of elements and standards in the analysis and evaluation of their thinking and the thinking of others.

The CCTP follows an infusion-based model for critical thinking instruction. This perspective affirms that critical thinking is learned as a transferable skill when the elements and standards of critical thinking are taught in the context of an existing academic discipline. Yet the CCTP begins with the affirmation that students must first be led to analyze the dispositions of the effective critical thinker. A student who understands and adopts these dispositions will be more likely to expend the effort necessary to master and apply the elements and standards of the effective critical thinking.

Specifically, this QEP has four objectives. The first objective is for students to understand and evaluate the dispositions essential to effective critical thinking. Students will also define what it means to be a critical thinker and consider the importance of becoming an effective critical thinker. The second objective is for students to understand the elements and universal standards of effective critical thinking. The third objective is for students to demonstrate their ability to successfully utilize the elements and standards of critical thinking. The fourth objective is for Chowan University to provide its students with a high-quality learning experience. The first three objectives will be achieved through the CCTP, while the last objective will be achieved through the Chowan Master Teacher Program.