

Quality Enhancement Plan Title: “Improving Student Learning Outcomes through Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills”

Institution: Clearwater Christian College

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Clearwater Christian College is committed to providing an excellent liberal arts education centered on God’s Word, the Bible. This QEP is designed to enhance this goal as students are challenged to become not just educated but learned individuals, wise in decision-making, humble in intellect, and arriving at conclusions that are reasonable and informed by both what students know and what they believe. The QEP committee decided that the locus for critical thinking is the classroom where faculty take specific, deliberate steps to empower students to convert problems into solutions. Thus, the final decision was to implement a plan to improve student learning outcomes by enhancing critical thinking skills. The major goal of the project is to improve students’ critical thinking skills.

After clearly defining the topic “critical thinking,” examining underlying theory, refining and creating a definition, the QEP committee developed a plan to enhance critical thinking skills. The QEP began with a pilot study. For the pilot study, the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST) was administered as a pre- and post- test measure in three general education courses with a cross-section of students. Students in three general education courses, two sections of one course, participated in the Pilot Study. One section was used as a control course, and the faculty in the other two courses implemented teaching critical thinking skills and utilizing critical thinking skills exercises.

The two professors in the study pre-selected the critical thinking skills they implemented/taught, and during each course, they utilized a common rubric to assess and document the success or lack thereof in student success with the skills. During the pilot study, the QEP committee and the participating professors refined the QEP process.

Beginning with fall 2010, faculty self-reported courses in which critical thinking skills were implemented, utilizing the same common rubric for level of attainment for additional data points. Each year the freshmen class will take the CCSTS, and the data will be analyzed and compared. The CCSTS will be given again as a post-test to the 2010 freshman class as seniors in 2013 to measure gains in critical thinking.