

QEP Executive Summary

The Quality Enhancement of Teaching and Learning at East Mississippi Community College: Problem Solving in the Context of Teamwork

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The EMCC QEP purposes to improve teaching and learning at EMCC by enhancing the curriculum through the inclusion of learning outcomes in the general education core related to problem solving within the context of teamwork. The plan began with the broad topic of training in soft skills needed for the workforce and was narrowed down to the inclusion of student learning outcomes related to the specific soft skills of problem solving and teamwork, which were identified as the most important skills for EMCC graduates to be successful in their future careers and educational pursuits. There are two distinct components of the plan based on the organizational divisions at EMCC and the extant literature concerning problem solving in the context of teamwork. The two components include instructional programs in which individual level instruction in problem solving will take place, and the student services division in which teamwork activities will occur. The QEP will involve both associate of arts programs and associate of applied science programs. The primary purpose of the plan is for students to have better teamwork and problem solving skills. The college is convinced that if teams are to be successful in solving problems, students must be introduced early in the undergraduate experience to both problem solving and teamwork.

The development of the plan followed the same process as that used to propose any new instructional program at EMCC. A survey of need was conducted, an initial review of the proposal was shared with colleagues at other colleges, and the final plan was approved through existing institutional procedures. The college first surveyed the needs of the EMCC community to identify the soft skills that students needed to “be successful.” This included business and industry, universities, faculty, non-faculty employees of the college, and students. Upon institutional approval of the focus of the plan, a faculty leader was appointed. The faculty leader worked with the faculty to develop the final goals, objectives, activities, and assessment strategies.

The college will use computer-based assessment instruments and content delivery based on WorkKeys to provide individual-level instruction to participating students. Team-level learning opportunities will also occur through group activities based on the EPICS program at the Colorado School of Mines. These activities include plate stacking, Lego tower building, Jenga, and atomic popcorn. Students will complete reflective statements of learning after participating in the various team activities. Both the quantitative data gathered from the individual-level instruction and the qualitative reflective statements will be used to assess students’ attainment of the stated learning outcomes. The budget for the plan includes funds for a full-time faculty leader, assessment materials, travel, and supplies.