

## Quality Enhancement Plan Executive Summary (2010)

### **GET A CLUE! Information Literacy and the First-Year Student**

Eastern Shore Community College, Melfa, VA

Robin Rich-Coates, QEP Chair, Associate Professor of Biology/Chemistry (rrich-coates@es.vccs.edu)

Eastern Shore Community College (ESCC) has always aimed to provide meaningful academic opportunities and effective services in a student-centered environment. Faculty, staff and administration have actively worked together to prepare students to be independent, productive members in a global society. Guided by this philosophy and in light of technological advancements and increased student need in the area of research and information literacy, the college constituency decided to focus its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) on “Information Literacy and the First-Year Student.”

Having expanded from an unduplicated headcount of 171 in 1971, its first year as a community college, to 1446 in 2009-2010, ESCC still remains the smallest college of twenty-three in the Virginia Community College System. However, for the advantages and disadvantages this standing holds, the ESCC collegia – students included – agreed upon the need for improved information literacy skills.

The days of reliability in library searching have been replaced by the inconsistencies of computer searching. Information Literacy skills now join oral and written communication skills as skills most necessary to succeed in today’s society. As student needs at ESCC change, so must the college change its ways of guiding students in their scholarly pursuits.

When researching the vast body of information now available in increasingly complex and technologically advanced systems, students are faced with a plethora of available knowledge, inconsistent formats, layperson perspectives, and opportunities for inaccuracies. Students need discerning analytical skills for determining the best types of information for their academic and personal needs and in evaluating sources used and information gathered.

Through the QEP, it is the college’s goal to help students learn, refine and fine-tune their search skills as they “GET A CLUE!” The plan was developed, Leadership and QEP Teams were established, the focus and work was prepared, and the student goals for information literacy determined – Conceptualizing, Locating, Utilizing and Evaluating. All have been properly aligned with the means for implementation, assessment, and utilization of assessment outcomes ascertained.

The QEP Team established the following goals for the QEP:

1. Develop strategies that will improve information literacy skills across the curriculum.
2. Involve administration, faculty, staff, and students in the plan.
3. Provide professional development for faculty and staff.
4. Assess the effectiveness of the plan when implemented.

Now, with input and approval from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (2008), ESCC is enthusiastically implementing its QEP (2009-2014). After two years of preparation, five years of implementation through the use of a carefully prepared timeline and budget, and two years of baseline assessment, ESCC anticipates better and well-prepared students who will be able to function more successfully in this “information age” and to adapt as new advancements come their way.

A sampling of QEP Team strategies used and QEP accomplishments to date include:

- Total integration of the QEP Plan into the library's mission and goals;
- A strengthened library/faculty relationship through cooperative information literacy projects, related materials purchased, increased information literacy workshops for classes across the curriculum;
- Development of an orientation class for transfer students, with a focus on information literacy;
- Implementation of a "Students Helping Students" project, with students trained to assist other students in utilizing the databases from on and off campus;
- An information literacy component added to course syllabi in the majority of courses;
- The LRC's *Connect for Success* Information Literacy interactive modules integrated into the curriculum with results gathered for QEP assessment;
- Student portfolios demonstrating information literacy skills have been piloted;
- Purchase and implementation of a Student Response System for a variety of classes;
- Numerous opportunities for information literacy professional development, both internally and externally, with data collected on relationship to the QEP;
- Development of a mini-grant program by the College Foundation to encouraged faculty and staff to apply for funds for continued focus on QEP projects;
- Establishment of a Student Center for Achievement as well as a faculty writing lab to assist students with information literacy skills as well as other learning activities;
- Purchase of *EasyBib*, an automatic citation writer, added to college Web site;
- Aggressive marketing of the QEP ( Facebook, Web site, plasma screens, mass e-Minders and QEP Updates to college community, President's Newsletter, banners, giveaways, trivia contests, etc.);
- Application of internal/external assessment for ongoing evaluation of QEP activities including the use of a graduate exit exam, *Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS)*.