

**“Engage the Mind, Engage the Student:” The Art of Critical Thinking**  
**Huntingdon College’s QEP**  
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Huntingdon College’s Mission Statement declares “each student will study a core curriculum that develops the student’s ability to comprehend new ideas, to examine concepts critically, and to communicate clearly.” Our Quality Enhancement Plan, “The Art of Critical Thinking” (ACT), supports this goal by developing a more intentional approach to teaching critical thinking throughout the college. As educators, we agree that critical thinking is a powerful way of looking at the world. It is the process of observing subjects from an fair-minded point of view, asking thoughtful, informed questions, and developing answers that are well-reasoned, well-supported, and clearly communicated. Our QEP is designed to encourage these skills, to help our students see the world beyond their received opinions, to help them engage with unfamiliar ideas, and aid them in developing thoughtful and reasoned positions on complex issues.

We plan on achieving this goal through three interrelated steps.

**The Three Steps of Huntingdon’s QEP**

- 1) The development of the PACT Colloquium, a freshman seminar on practicing the art of critical thinking.
- 2) The integration of explicit critical thinking practices across the core curriculum.
- 3) The development of culminating experiences that demonstrate high-level critical thinking skills.

Our first step, and the primary focus of our QEP, is developing the PACT colloquium (or “Practicing the Art of Critical Thinking”), which will introduce incoming students to the skills of critical thinking from an interdisciplinary perspective. This will give all of our incoming students a shared understanding of this core intellectual value which will support their later academic success.

Our goal in the PACT Colloquium is to produce rational and fair-minded critical thinkers who can think actively, read closely, and write substantively about significant issues.

Since critical thinking cannot, and should not, be limited to the first year, the second step of our plan is that over the next two to three years we will integrate and coordinate specific critical thinking skills throughout our core classes.

We also want to encourage the development of our students’ critical thinking skills beyond the core. So, the third step of our QEP is that within five years the college faculty will establish clear and unified expectations for critical thinking “culminating experiences” for all students: i.e. upper-level classes, capstones, seminars, or other senior-level projects, that include high-level critical thinking.

It is our ambition that our QEP will help our students understand, care about, and even take pride in, their education. We see critical thinking as a tool to produce this student engagement; hence our QEP’s motto, “Engage the Mind, Engage the Student.” We feel that if we are deliberate and systematic across the college in helping our students develop the tools to be better thinkers, they will feel empowered as a member of our learning community, and so take greater pride in their Huntingdon education. It all starts with a new first-year class. But that is only the foundation on which we will build our community of thinkers.