

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
CRITICAL THINKING FOR A LIFETIME: THE FIRST STEP
QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN for KENTUCKY WESLEYAN COLLEGE

QEP Director, Dr. Roger Gardner
gardner@kwc.edu

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) of Kentucky Wesleyan College (KWC) is *Critical Thinking for a Lifetime: The First Step*. The QEP is centered on a pilot study that will eventually lead to a college-wide program that will improve the critical thinking of KWC students. The QEP will begin in the Fall of 2008 and will involve six sections of freshman English, a two-semester course in exposition, rhetoric, composition and investigation. Three sections will constitute the experimental group, and three will serve as the control group.

Relying on the Richard Paul and Linda Elder model of critical thinking, the instructors in the experimental group will be trained to facilitate critical thinking among their students. The faculty training and the entire program will focus on three specific learning outcomes: (1) students will learn to better distinguish reliable information from questionable information, (2) students will learn to identify assumptions supporting an argument and be able to distinguish reasonable assumptions from unreasonable ones, and (3) students will develop a clear understanding of points of view relevant to the issue at hand. These three outcomes will, in turn, lead to a fourth outcome: students will develop greater intellectual openness.

These outcomes will be measured by comparing pre-and post-test scores on the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST) and the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (CCTDI) and by comparing term papers scored with a critical thinking rubric. It is hypothesized that the students in the experimental group will score significantly higher on these measures of critical thinking.

After instituting appropriate modifications to the QEP following first year data analysis, two more sections of freshman English will be added to the second year of the pilot study. During the third year, another discipline (in addition to English) will be added to the study. By the fifth year, the QEP will include a discipline from each division of the college. At the conclusion of this five-year project, KWC will be in position to launch a college-wide program in critical thinking.

The fundamental purpose of the QEP is to enhance student learning through the cultivation of critical thinking skills and dispositions. *Critical Thinking for a Lifetime: The First Step* will not only improve student learning but will enhance the overall quality and effectiveness of Kentucky Wesleyan College.