

**Thinking Critically Across the Curriculum: A QEP**  
Madisonville Community College  
Madisonville, Kentucky

Executive Summary

The goal of the Madisonville Community College (MCC) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is to improve the critical thinking skills of students across the curriculum using active learning strategies. The plan establishes a framework within which the systematic improvement of a critical thinking pedagogy can be replicated discipline by discipline. The goal is an outgrowth of important learning-centered initiatives underway by MCC, including the revision of the pedagogy of Developmental Education, the revision of key “gateway” courses, and the design and implementation of a “developmental” advising curriculum. Because the college was engaged in the crucial shift from a teaching-centered to a learning-centered paradigm, a focus on the improvement of the important core competency of critical thinking presented itself as a project which would unite faculty in a common pedagogical enterprise and enable students to integrate the subject matter of courses too often disconnected.

In addition to a review of learning-centered initiatives already underway and the gathering of substantive input from the college community at large, the plan’s components are derived from a study of the literature about the meaning of “critical thinking,” on its pedagogy and assessment, and on a review of educational best practices that promote active and engaged learning. Integral to the overall project is an assessment plan that uses multiple measures of learning outcomes associated with the ability to think critically. Student performance *within* and *between* subjects will be assessed. Special attention will be paid to gain scores *within* subjects since these data are likely to yield the most useful results. The students’ perceptions about the extent to which they are engaged in active learning practices will also be assessed.

The plan consists of five initiatives. Action steps necessary to execute, assess, and revise the plan will be woven into the college’s existing comprehensive planning and evaluation process:

- **Initiative #1:** Identify core critical thinking skills in each discipline and across disciplines to help students integrate their learning.
- **Initiative #2:** Increase the use of active learning best practices that nurture critical thinking and content acquisition in each discipline.
- **Initiative #3:** Establish a professional development program that promotes the use of a critical thinking and active learning pedagogy across the curriculum.
- **Initiative #4:** Provide library and on-line learning resources – including an up-to-date website – that support implementation of the QEP project.
- **Initiative #5:** Implement a comprehensive assessment plan – linked to the college’s on-going institutional effectiveness process – that supports continuous improvement of the project.

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