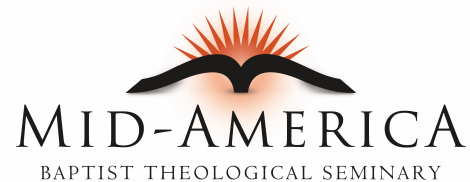


# POWER Up Quality Enhancement Plan Executive Summary

Julia E. Bickley, PhD, Director of Institutional Assessment  
jbickley@mabts.edu 901.751.3078



The goal of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is to improve student writing for effective service in ministry, to promote critical thinking through the use of writing, and to increase support for student learning in the area of writing, since the school offers no formal assistance in the improvement of student writing. Since the fall of 2013, the school has completed four cycles of peer review (January 2014, August 2014, January 2015, and August 2015), which have shown little to no improvement in critical thinking as evidenced in excellent writing. Educators generally define critical thinking according to the skills needed by people in and out of the classroom- to solve problems, make decisions, and learn ideas. Jane Halonen defines critical thinking as "when a student engages with the material in a thoughtful, personal, and critical way to move to some new level of understanding about themselves or the world in which they live (Halonen 1986, 25). In her book, *Professional Development as Transformative Learning*, Patricia Cranton discusses the need for educators to be critical thinkers in order to teach their students to be critical thinkers. Educator development that incorporates critical reflection results in educators articulating the assumptions that underlie their practice, determining the sources and consequences of those assumptions, critically questioning the assumptions, and imagining alternatives to their current perspective or practice (Cranton 1996, 37).

The choice of writing as the topic of the QEP grew out of a lengthy and deliberative process. The constituents (faculty [1], students [2], administrative staff [3]) of the school were asked questions on a survey regarding their perceptions of what would enhance student learning at the institution in relation to critical thinking, writing, reading, lifelong learning, and active and collaborative learning. The faculty responses indicated that a majority favored the improvement of student writing as a topic for the QEP [4]. The student responses were evenly

distributed among the three areas of improving student writing, lifelong learning, and the improvement of critical thinking [5], and the administrative staff responses were distributed among the three areas of improving student writing, lifelong learning, and improving critical thinking with a slightly higher majority of responses toward the improvement of student writing [6]. This information was then presented to the academic council on April 10, 2015 where it was discussed [7] and voted upon the following week [8] before being submitted to the full faculty for a vote [9] on April 23, 2015. The three QEP goals include the improvement of student writing for effective service in ministry, the improvement of critical thinking through writing, and the increase in support for student learning in the area of writing. These goals are accomplished through the use of the Power Up curriculum, the writing center, and the peer review process.

The seminary has committed sufficient resources in its financial plan to implement the initiatives outlined in the QEP over the next five years, as demonstrated by the timeline, academic support staff, the budget, and organizational structure.