



NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY

Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Executive Summary

R.E.A.S.O.N.: Creating Coherent Pathways to Develop Critical Thinking Skills in Students

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Purpose

The purpose of the Norfolk State University (NSU) Quality Enhancement Plan is to improve critical thinking skills in undergraduate students. By embedding critical thinking in teaching, learning, and assessment strategies across the general education curriculum, students will acquire the skills and/or disposition to analyze, criticize, synthesize and advocate ideas; to reason holistically in an inductive and deductive manner; and to reach factual or judgmental conclusions based on sound inferences drawn from integrated and diverse frames of reference.

Rooted in a rich liberal studies tradition, critical thinking dispositions and skills stimulate the spirit of critical inquiry and provide a foundation for life-long learning. The QEP supports the general education goal to develop undergraduates who possess a rational open-mindedness that leads to analytical and critical patterns of thought.

Pathways to Develop Critical Thinking Skills in Students

The QEP spans undergraduate educational programs and consists of three coherent pathways:

Pathway One: Curricular and Pedagogical Innovations focuses on designing curricular structures and teaching practices to stimulate, facilitate, and assess student development of critical thinking skills in a sequential systematic way.

Pathway Two: Enriching Educational Experience focuses on developing structured co- and extra-curricular activities designed to reinforce progression in cognitive complexity and learning in the classroom. Strategies include the enhancement of service-learning/civic engagement experiences, implementation of living-learning communities in selected residence halls, and implementation of peer mentoring programs in student clubs, organizations, and academic support services.

Pathway Three: Faculty and Staff Engagement refers to learning, pedagogical, and advising practices that facilitate measurable and significant development of critical thinking skills and dispositions in students. Strategies include professional development workshops, Critical Thinking Communities of Inquiry, faculty and staff mini-grants to develop innovative pedagogies and assessment tools, and participation in national Summer Institutes to learn about and share best practices in developing critical thinking skills in students.

The intended student learning outcomes for the QEP are to:

- **R**eflect on the information presented in diverse media and diverse frames of reference to identify main ideas, themes, and assumptions as well as to make comparative judgments from data;
- **E**valuate the validity/credibility and implications/limitations of the assumptions in relation to evidence;
- **A**rgue to effectively advocate their own ideas, alternative solutions, and implementation plans;
- **S**olve problems in creative, efficient, and effective ways;
- **O**btain desired outcomes or assess potential deviations from such outcomes; and
- **N**etwork to communicate the ideas, alternative solutions, implementation plans, and/or desired outcomes of the project in a variety of media and in diverse frames of reference.