



The Tortoise and the Hare: Thinking Slowly to Think Quickly

Executive Summary

Through its current Quality Enhancement Plan, Southwest Virginia Community College (SWCC) seeks to enhance student critical thinking skills as a prerequisite to improved academic performance and greater achievement of graduates at senior institutions and on the job. This project is an interdisciplinary and co-curricular approach to supporting one of the college's most important Core Values: "SWCC strives for excellence in instruction and service through rigorous academic and professional standards."

The QEP will restructure classes from across the curriculum to employ pedagogy more effectively to improve critical thinking. These classes include SDV 108, ACC 211, ITE 115, PSY 200, PSY 230, and PSY 231. Revisions include new assignments, a critical thinking textbook, a new pedagogy of critical reflection, a Critical Thinking Center, and a redesigned library orientation. These classes will be guided by SWCC's definition of critical thinking—*Critical thinking is the internalized and recursive process of decision making using acquisition, analysis, synthesis, and application to solve problems creatively*—and its student learning outcomes:

SLO 1 Acquisition of Data

Students will identify appropriate resources and synthesize academic information with their personal experiences.

SLO 2 Data Analysis/Synthesis

Students will collect and analyze data.

SLO 3 Problem Solving/Argumentation

Students will form and evaluate arguments.

Measurement and assessment of the academic effectiveness of the QEP will include four levels: traditional classroom testing; a new Class Common Exam for each QEP critical thinking class; a rubric for tracking and assessing individual student intellectual development over time; and two traditional objective assessment tests. One of these, the General Studies Assessment Test, is an in-house measure of student academic achievement. The other, the Test of Everyday Reasoning-Numeracy, is a norm-referenced national test of critical thinking providing an array of external comparison groups.

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