

Title: *The Power of Two*

Institution: The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The partnership between The University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB) and Texas Southmost College (TSC) combines the strengths of a university and a community college, offering educational opportunities that range from certificate programs to doctoral programs. As an open admissions community university, UTB/TSC is highly responsive to regional needs and ever vigilant of its mission “to provide accessible, affordable, postsecondary education of high quality” in a region with great economic challenges and low educational achievement. In taking innovative steps to maximize student success, this QEP project, *The Power of Two*, will be a catalyst to improve students’ learning outcomes. Demographic data indicate that a significant number of students face unique challenges often associated with adult and English language learners. Moreover, the results from assessment data indicate that the majority of entering freshmen are only minimally prepared for college coursework and general writing assessments indicate challenges specifically in writing. Thus, the target population for *The Power of Two* is college freshmen who are enrolled in composition courses.

The Power of Two is designed to improve overall student learning outcomes by strengthening students’ writing and performance through linking general education courses with composition. The following goals for *The Power of Two* originate from assessment, self study, and the campus community: (1) Create a university model of writing to learn and writing to demonstrate learning that will serve as a template for future curricular design and program development for general education core courses and (2) Create a sustainable Center for Teaching and Learning that will foster professional faculty development in the use of best practices of teaching composition, implementing linked courses, and utilizing the benefits of cooperative learning strategies. Students and faculty will incorporate the technology of e-portfolios to store the writing samples for both the linked courses and the comparison groups. The advantage of e-portfolios is that the writing samples can be used to assess student writing in short term and longitudinal studies.

The review of the literature and of best practices attests to the effectiveness of linked courses in creating a positive learning environment. Studies affirm the advantages of linking composition to content courses, particularly in promoting critical thinking. Studies also show that by adding cooperative learning strategies and integrating course goals and methodologies, linked courses address the needs of Hispanic students, who progress best in an environment of affiliation and cooperation.

The plan for implementing *The Power of Two* describes the components necessary for integrating composition with general education courses. Building on existing professional development initiatives, the plan provides a crucial support network for faculty. These initiatives include strategies for promoting writing, cooperative learning, innovative use of technology and the integration of assessment into the process of curriculum development. The first linked courses will be offered in spring 2009 with a pilot project that links composition and biology. Each year additional linkages will be created with other general education core courses along with composition. Over the five-year period, *The Power of Two* will benefit as many as three thousand students, produce eight pairs of linked courses, and involve faculty across campus.

Service-Learning: The Focus of Dallas Baptist University's Quality Enhancement Plan

Institutional Mission and Culture

Central in Dallas Baptist University's mission statement is the vision to produce servant leaders. In order to be more intentional in facilitating this goal, the campus community resoundingly identified service-learning as the University-wide initiative to enhance student learning.

Definition

At Dallas Baptist University, service-learning is defined as a teaching and learning strategy that integrates academic instruction, community service, and guided reflection from a Christ-centered, faith-based perspective in order to enhance student learning, foster civic responsibility, and develop servant leaders.

Service-Learning Mission

The mission of DBU's Service-Learning Program is to enhance student learning and to support the University's overall mission to produce servant leaders who have the ability to integrate faith and learning through their respective callings by

- Communicating the importance and purpose of service-learning to faculty, staff, and students;
- Assisting faculty in the integration of service-learning into the curriculum of every student's degree plan;
- Encouraging faculty and staff involvement in the incorporation of service-learning into student co-curricular activities;
- Coordinating and promoting civic engagement in selected community service projects; and
- Providing support and resources to establish mutually beneficial campus and community relationships.

University Partnership

In order to implement this strategy, DBU utilizes Student Affairs and Academic Affairs as two essential avenues of learning through service. Through academics, campus activities, spiritual life resources, athletics, community service, and missions, DBU students have the opportunity not only to learn about servant leadership but also to practice it as well. The long-standing partnership between the University's Academic and Student Affairs divisions enthusiastically views service-learning as a shared significant initiative.

Service-Learning Liaison

Justin Gandy is the Director of the Center for Service-Learning. He may be reached at justing@dbu.edu.

Auburn University Montgomery Quality Enhancement Plan

Writing for Success

Aware of the need to address concerns expressed by community and business leaders over the weak written communication skills of today's workforce, Auburn University Montgomery selected a writing across the curriculum program entitled *Writing for Success* as the University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The QEP was overwhelmingly selected from three submitted proposals following extensive university-wide discussion by students, faculty, and administrators. The following student goals form the basis for the QEP.

- Students will demonstrate the ability to use discourse, analysis, and evaluation skills appropriate to their academic discipline in writing.
- Students will sustain a focused discussion in written assignments.
- Students will write using documented evidence to support their points.
- Students will demonstrate writing skills (including grammar, mechanics, and spelling) in order to correctly convey information.

The *Writing for Success* program will require that students complete five writing intensive courses spread throughout their curriculum in order to meet graduation requirements. These courses will include two freshman composition courses, a sophomore-level writing intensive course, a junior-level writing intensive course, and a senior-level writing intensive course in the student's major. The underlying premise for the *Writing for Success* program is, while students develop proper writing skills in freshman composition courses, these skills slowly erode if they are not continually applied and practiced throughout a student's curriculum. This program will require the continued writing throughout a student's curriculum culminating in writing practice specific for their program of study.

The effectiveness of the QEP will be evaluated by external and internal assessments. External assessments will include the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Internal assessments will include among others the use of rubrics and student writing portfolios.

For information on the development and implementation of Auburn University Montgomery's QEP, please contact:

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A Quality Enhancement Plan of Experiential Learning Career, Culture, and Community

Centenary College of Louisiana
Shreveport, Louisiana

Centenary College of Louisiana's quality enhancement plan integrates into Centenary's required curriculum a distinctive, experience-based educational program focused on career and graduate school preparation (Career), intercultural engagement (Culture), and civic involvement (Community). At Centenary, a selective liberal arts college affiliated with the United Methodist Church, students, faculty and staff work together to strengthen the foundation for students' personal lives and career goals, encouraging students to become leaders in the workplace, the community and the world at large. In this quality enhancement plan, academic co-curricular professionals in the offices of career services, intercultural engagement, and community collaborate with faculty across all departments to create, facilitate, and evaluate this experiential educational program that furthers an overarching college purpose.

Moreover, this program encourages a distinct set of experiences for each student. As implemented, experiential learning for Career credit may include a comprehensive career skills course in which career tools and portfolios are developed, a research project with a faculty mentor which replicates the research of a professional within the field, and/or an internship in the workplace a student hopes to join after graduation. In the Culture component, opportunities to study other cultures for intercultural credit will expand to provide students with a broader selection of peoples, places, and experience types. For Community, true 21st century service learning opportunities will connect the act of serving one's community with newly learned skills and/or knowledge within the academic discipline(s).

Our learning outcomes, assessment, and timeframe for this program are as follows:

- We have three learning outcomes for this program: (1) Students will demonstrate an understanding of the connections between classroom learning and practical application, (2) Students will demonstrate enhanced self-knowledge, and (3) Students will demonstrate enhanced social awareness.
- Assessment of the program includes, but is not limited to the following: (a) completion of a questionnaire prior to beginning the first program component as well as after a student has fulfilled his or her second and third component of the program; (b) inclusion in our annual all-student satisfaction questionnaire, the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory; (c) inclusion within our first-year and senior student questionnaire, the National Survey of Student Engagement; and (d) inclusion within our biannual alumni relations questionnaire.
- Because of the vast scope of our experiential learning program and the coordination of efforts among individuals, committees, and departments involved in more than one major component of the program, the three components of Career, Culture, and Community will roll out in phases: Career to launch in 2009 – 10, Culture in 2010 – 11, and Community in 2011 – 12.

Our Millennial students want seamless transitions from their past to their future; an experiential learning program focused on Career, Culture, and Community is poised to assist Centenary College in helping our students translate their academic trek into one of transparent relevance.

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