

IMPACT: Improving Mental Power and Critical Thinking

The Richard Bland College QEP will focus on improving the critical thinking skills of its students by promoting curricular and pedagogical innovations in the classroom, better assessing students' higher-order thinking and metacognitive abilities, and fostering a college culture of engaged reflection and dialog, with the aim of better preparing its graduates for baccalaureate study and beyond.

The selection of "critical thinking" as the QEP topic was informed by a multi-phase process that involved faculty, staff, and students at the college. The topic represents a strongly-identified instructional need at RBC, and was one of a small number of topics that 100% of faculty survey respondents ranked either "important" or "very important".

The QEP Task Force worked with the academic departments and the Instructional Programs and Curriculum Committee to develop a set of critical thinking student learning outcomes. As evidence that reveals their ability to engage in critical thinking, students will demonstrate the ability to...

1) Clearly define and articulate a question or issue

Students are able to formulate questions, pose problems, and present issues clearly and precisely.

2) Gather and evaluate sources of information

Students are able to gather relevant information, to critically evaluate their sources, and to analyze them in terms of their reliability, credibility, expertise, and bias.

3) Identify and evaluate claims and assumptions

Students are able to evaluate claims, identify important underlying assumptions, and analyze the relevance and influence of context.

4) Identify or articulate a clear position or thesis

Students are able to articulate a clear position, thesis, or hypothesis and analyze alternative perspectives.

5) Synthesize information and use logic to draw informed conclusions

Students are able to draw logical, evidence-based conclusions, apply knowledge in new contexts, and synthesize information from multiple sources to generate new ideas and to support and evaluate positions.

The five-year QEP plan includes initiatives and actions related to professional development, student assessment, critical thinking pedagogy, course and curriculum design, student learning experiences inside the classroom, and campus culture and events outside the classroom. The execution of the QEP will be guided by the QEP Steering Committee (QEPSC), which will be made up of faculty and staff and chaired by an RBC faculty member. The QEPSC will report to the Provost and work alongside the Institutional Effectiveness Committee in its role of overseeing the SACS reaffirmation process.

For more information, contact David L. Morgan, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Physics and Astronomy and QEP Steering Committee Chair (dmorgan@rbc.edu)