



CARSON-NEWMAN

A CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Carson-Newman University is a four-year, private, Christian liberal arts-based University in Jefferson City, TN. Jefferson City is a small town of about 8000, located in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains and about 30 miles east of Knoxville, TN. Founded in 1851 as Mossy Creek Baptist Seminary, it remains affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention. Total student enrollment is about 2800, with about 1700 of those being traditional undergraduates. Most of the undergraduate population is residential. C-N offers about 50 undergraduate majors and 11 graduate degrees in Education, Nursing, Business, Counseling, Applied Theology, and Divinity.

Carson-Newman University developed its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) to fulfill the SACSCOC standard 7.2 of the Principles of Accreditation. A QEP Topic Selection Committee tasked with examining University assessment results determined that there was a need for increased attention to instruction in critical thinking for the University's undergraduate students. That committee specifically recommended that the QEP focus on student learning outcomes (SLOs) in specific areas that are part critical thinking, broadly defined: analytic reasoning and diversity awareness.

Recent research in the field of critical thinking pedagogy suggests that essential skills for critical thinking include developing awareness of diverse perspectives and the ability to analyze one's assumptions. With this in mind, the two deficits identified by data were coupled under the banner of *intellectual empathy*. The QEP Development Committee determined that the goal of the QEP would be: *Our students will demonstrate Intellectual Empathy skills when engaging perspectives other than their own*. This goal aligns with the University's Christ-centered mission.

The committee held conversations with faculty from all the schools of the University to determine the best ways to achieve this goal. After these conversations with faculty and consultation with SACSCOC, we created the following plan. Carson-Newman will: 1) Include Intellectual Empathy (IE) lesson content, discussions, assignments, and assessments in every section of the required first-year course, LA 101 (HUM 101 for honors students), and 2) include discipline-specific IE content of a similar shape in select non-first-year courses across all schools in the University. Assessment of intellectual empathy for the first-year component includes a pre-post self-report survey instrument. The same will be done at the beginning and end of the IE-designated non-first-year courses, which will allow for longitudinal growth data. Additionally, in the non-first-year courses, professors will evaluate IE growth with a common rubric. These data, along with relevant data from its results on the National Survey of Student Engagement, will be analyzed to determine progress and areas for improvement.

Carson-Newman's mission statement reads, "Our mission as Christian educators is to help our students reach their full potential as educated citizens and worldwide servant-leaders." We think that helping our students improve their Intellectual Empathy skills through this QEP is a crucial part of helping them to reach their full potential. In addition, this emphasis is directly in service to C-N's stated University Learning Goal 2, "Apply Critical and Analytical Reasoning Skills Appropriate for Multiple Ways of Knowing" (Catalog, p. 4).

This QEP emphasis also works in concert with the University's current strategic plan, *Acorns to Oaks*, by encouraging the explicit "articulation of assumptions of a Christian Anthropology" (Goal 1, Action Step 1, p. 16) and fulfilling the explicit QEP goals of appointing a director, assembling a QEP team, and implementing the QEP (Year 3, Goal 1, Action Steps 1-3, p. 26).

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