Active and Collaborative Engagement for Students (ACES)

Quality Enhancement Plan

LAMAR UNIVERSITY
A Member of The Texas State University System
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I. Summary

The Lamar University Quality Enhancement Plan, Active and Collaborative Engagement for Students (ACES), will focus on improving student learning in core and developmental courses by promoting active and collaborative learning. Careful assessment will lead to continuous improvement of both active and collaborative learning activities and of student learning.

Lamar University has selected these freshman courses as an area of need based on student satisfaction surveys, results of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, 2006, 2008), strategic plan goals, and results of core curriculum student learning assessments conducted in 2005 and 2008. These data indicated that students were less satisfied with core classes than with upper-division classes and that levels of student engagement in freshman-level classes were disappointing when compared to levels of freshman engagement at peer institutions and when compared to levels of senior engagement at Lamar University. In addition, the university’s Strategic Plan 2007-2011 (see Appendix B) identifies the need to promote student engagement and improve student retention. Reducing the dropout rates by improving engagement of freshmen is an unstated goal of this initiative. In addition, the most recent student learning assessment of core curriculum indicated that writing skills and critical thinking skills should be targeted for improvement. More effective classroom techniques and improved assessment in high-enrollment core and developmental classes are likely to address all these issues.

The selection of active and collaborative learning and assessment has been driven by NSSE findings of low incidence of active and collaborative learning in classes taken by freshmen and by data from the Higher Education Research Institute survey of faculty that indicate that teaching methods commonly used by Lamar University faculty do not emphasize active and collaborative learning. The need for better assessment of student learning became evident as the university began systematic assessment of the core curriculum (see Appendix C). Improving faculty understanding of best practices in course-level assessment is fundamental to any large-scale improvement in student learning.

The ACES Project will provide faculty professional development related to active and collaborative learning and assessment. However, to support faculty development more generally, the university is simultaneously creating a faculty professional development center whose work will facilitate and supplement the actions undertaken for the ACES Project.

The Active and Collaborative Engagement for Students project will pursue actions in three main areas:

1. Enhancing faculty understanding of the importance of active and collaborative learning for student engagement and student success and enhancing faculty skill at implementing it. These efforts will be
directed broadly at all faculty teaching core and developmental courses.

2. Establishing an ACES Fellows incentive program by which faculty teaching core and developmental courses may apply for reassigned time and/or stipends for course improvements related to active and collaborative learning in targeted courses. Several types of incentives will be offered:

- Faculty stipends or reassigned time for individuals or departmental groups for improvement/assessment of a core or developmental course. Recipients will be designated as ACES Fellows.
- Equipment grants for items directly related to the course improvement efforts of ACES Fellows.
- Individual and departmental continuation grants to reward ongoing improvement and assessment in target courses and continued activity as ACES Fellows, including presentations to other faculty members.
- ACES Certification faculty whose core or developmental courses meet high standards of active and collaborative engagement and student learning.

3. Assessing a number of related dimensions of the project:

- Faculty satisfaction with professional development related to active and collaborative learning;
- Implementation of active and collaborative learning activities in core and developmental courses across the university;
- Implementation of active and collaborative learning activities in classes of ACES Fellows and others receiving incentives; and
- Student learning in classes of the ACES Fellows.

The project will be led by a full-time Director who will be responsible for implementation of ACES professional development, initiation and operation of the incentives program, and continuous assessment and improvement. A full time Instructional Mentor will work directly with faculty as they implement course improvements. A half-time LU faculty member serving as Associate Director will complete the professional staff.
II. Description of LU

Lamar University is a regional comprehensive institution enrolling 10,562 students in spring 2008. The university offers a wide range of degrees from an associate degree in nursing to over 30 master’s-level degrees and five doctoral degrees. Traditionally, the university’s strengths have been in Deaf Education, Engineering, Nursing, and Teacher Education. Over 80% of our undergraduate students come from the immediate region, with increasing numbers of freshmen each fall coming from Houston. Approximately 5% of enrollment consists of foreign students, most of whom enroll at the graduate level. Of the approximately 9,000 undergraduates, about 2,000 reside in dormitories on the campus. About half of the undergraduates fall into the traditional 18-21 age range. The vast majority of students work at least part-time, and many have families (NSSE, 2006). In 2006, 18% of students entered the university with a combined (old style) SAT below 800, and almost half of the freshman class was required to take at least one developmental education course. Approximately 30% of all students receive Pell grants. The student body is highly diverse and is steadily becoming more so. In 2000, the freshman class was approximately 70% white, 20% black, and 10% other ethnicities including American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, and international. In 2008, the freshman class was approximately 49% white, 35% black, and 16% other ethnicities. The university was recognized by the New York Times in November 2006 as one of the most racially and ethnically diverse 4-year institutions in the U.S. (9,682 students; 60% white; 28% black; 3% Asian; 6% Hispanic; 35% on Pell grants). Compared to our NSSE peers, we have a higher proportion of African-American students, part-time students, first generation in college students, off-campus workers, and students who are providers of care for dependents. Retention rates for freshmen from fall to fall have gradually increased since 2004, but 2007-2008 rates were only 65.41% (see Appendix D). The university opened its Student Advising and Retention Services (STARS) Program in August 2008. Services focus on freshman and sophomore students in academic difficulty, and include Academic Enhancement workshops, tutoring, learning and study skills instruction, early alert identification and referrals, and learning communities for freshman and sophomores. A variety of mentoring programs are also offered for all students.

Figure 1. QEP Process
III. Process

Committees and Process

Lamar University used an open, inclusive, two-phase model to develop its ACES Project. The first development phase, led by a QEP Development Committee, identified a general topic; the second planning phase, led by a QEP Planning Committee, narrowed that topic and prepared the detailed proposal.

The QEP Development Committee at Lamar University was formed in spring 2005 with a mandate to investigate and identify topics for the Quality Enhancement Plan. It was a university-wide task force with representation from the student body, the division of Student Affairs, Staff Senate, Faculty Senate, and faculty members from all five colleges at Lamar University (see Appendix E).

After a review of data, the QEP Development Committee identified freshmen and their experiences at Lamar University as a critical topic. Identifying a number of possible approaches to increased freshman success, the committee conducted meetings for faculty and conducted an online survey to gauge faculty interest in those approaches. Finding no clear preferences, the committee recommended Freshman Success as a general focus for the QEP and presented its short list of possible approaches to the President and the SACS Leadership Team in 2007.

The SACS Leadership Team approved this recommendation and authorized a QEP Planning Committee to consider the various approaches, identify a specific approach, and conduct detailed planning.

The QEP Planning Committee (see membership in Appendix G,) formed in 2008 also represented faculty, staff, and administration. This committee researched potential approaches during spring 2008. In late spring, they selected active and collaborative learning as the approach, a choice that was approved by the SACS Leadership Team. In spring and summer 2008, the Planning Committee held a series of meetings with faculty who regularly teach core and developmental courses. The details of implementation were further refined in fall 2008, and the Planning Committee held open forums for faculty, staff, and students. The draft action plan was presented to department chairs, the Faculty Senate, and deans. It was posted on the university portal for comment and sent to all faculty (see Appendix S). Feedback from these groups was incorporated into a revised proposal. This revised proposal was presented to the Texas State University Board of Regents in February 2009.
Identification of the Topic

Phase I.

The QEP Development Committee reviewed existing statistical information about the Lamar University student population, including data from the Institutional Research and Reporting office and the most recent National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, 2003 and 2006) results available at that time. Examination of these data quickly led to the identification of a clear and striking need to focus on freshmen. NSSE results suggested that Lamar University freshmen were significantly below the university’s Carnegie peers in all benchmark areas of engagement, whereas all LU senior benchmark areas of engagement were at or above the level of our Carnegie peers. Of all the benchmark areas identified by the NSSE, Lamar freshmen were lowest in active and collaborative learning

- 2003: LU ACL 32.5; Carnegie Peers 41.1
- 2006: LU ACL 34.6; Carnegie Peers 41.1

For NSSE questions related to the active and collaborative learning benchmark, please see Appendix H.

In an effort to understand these low levels of active and collaborative classroom activity, the committee analyzed the demographics of LU’s freshmen. The committee discovered that the profile of this group has changed rapidly in recent years. From 2000 to 2006, LU freshmen had become

- younger (from approximately 70% to 80% under 20)
- more diverse (from approximately 75% white/25% of color to 50/50)
- more full-time (from about 60% full-time/40% part-time to 75/25)

The committee formed a hypothesis that classroom pedagogies which would most likely engage these students have not been widely adopted by Lamar University faculty.

Searching further for an understanding of institutional strengths on which to build or weaknesses which should be corrected, the committee conducted focus groups with over 200 faculty, staff, and students. These groups identified existing strengths and weaknesses in learning and the learning atmosphere at Lamar University (see Appendix F). Participants in the focus groups included 244 faculty members, 139 students, 22 staff members, and 55 administrators from across the university. Strengths identified included small classes, well-qualified faculty members, strong rapport between students and faculty (especially in upper-division courses), a diverse student body, and a lively campus environment.

Weaknesses identified included academic programs that do not reflect the diverse student body, lack of college preparedness among freshmen, and an academic culture (particularly in freshman classes) that is not always conducive to learning.
The QEP Development Committee also analyzed results from the Higher Education Research Institute faculty survey of 2004. In this survey, faculty members were asked to indicate teaching methods they used routinely in most of their classes.

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<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>LU %</th>
<th>Peer Institutions %</th>
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<td>Class Discussion</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>81</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperative learning</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay midterm/final</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>57</td>
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<td>Extensive lecturing</td>
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<td>Multiple drafts of written work</td>
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These results indicated that Lamar University faculty members were less likely than their peers to use classroom practices that promote active and collaborative learning.

The Development Committee also reviewed results from surveys of graduating seniors in 2005 and 2006. These indicated that students were far less satisfied with their core curriculum courses than with courses in their major fields. Graduating seniors identified core curriculum courses as the least satisfactory aspect of their experience at Lamar University (see Appendix I).

Finally, the QEP Development Committee identified fundamental principles to shape the Lamar University QEP:

1. We will add no new course requirements.
2. We will elicit voluntary faculty involvement by using incentives.
3. We will attempt to incorporate the activities most preferred by faculty.
4. We will attempt to affect a large percentage of Lamar freshmen by the conclusion of the five year project.

After the data review and establishment of principles, the committee investigated a variety of approaches to freshman success and identified a short list, including Course Redesign, Undergraduate Research, Inquiry-Based Learning, Enhanced Use of Technology in Teaching and Learning, Experiential/Applied Learning, and Integrative Learning. Finally, the committee conducted an online survey in spring 2007 for students, faculty, staff, administrators, and alumni to gauge levels of interest in these approaches. Of the 75 respondents, 80% were faculty members. No clear preference emerged.
Selection of the Topic

As a result of this initial investigation, the QEP Development Committee recommended to the SACS Leadership Team in 2007 that the QEP should focus on freshmen and should incorporate some or all of the approaches named above.

Phase II.

The SACS Leadership Team strongly endorsed the general focus on freshmen and charged the QEP Planning Committee with determining the approach to be used. The QEP Planning committee (see membership Appendix G) first considered the question of whether all freshman courses should be targeted. The committee determined that core curriculum and developmental studies courses should be the focus of the QEP project. This decision was made because all LU students must complete the core curriculum and because over 45% of Lamar University FTIC freshmen in 2006 were required by state regulations to take at least one developmental course.

The various approaches were further researched and discussed. The QEP Planning Committee concluded that intensive redesign of all core and developmental courses was impractical, and redesign of only a few courses would affect fewer students than desired. Furthermore, initial discussions with Lamar University faculty indicated that they considered course redesign a daunting task in which there was limited interest. In the committee’s view, undergraduate research was not well-suited to the focus on core and developmental courses, nor to the profile of Lamar University freshman students. The final three approaches were considered, but found to be too prescriptive to attract widespread faculty interest and engage a broad range of faculty teaching core and developmental courses.

The Planning Committee turned its consideration to several other approaches: learning communities, and curricular linkages between developmental and related core curriculum courses. For a time, committee members attempted to craft an action plan and assessments that would include all three of these elements. Ultimately, however, the committee decided by consensus that active and collaborative learning in core and developmental courses should be the Lamar University approach to freshman success. This selection was made after review of the results of the 2008 NSSE survey that continued to show our freshmen lagging in this aspect of engagement (LU ACL: 38.9; Carnegie Peers 42.3).

Other information which influenced this decision included results of the Core Curriculum learning assessment conducted in spring 2008 showing students continuing to lag slightly in communication and critical thinking (see Appendix C). The committee also considered the NSSE 2006 report Engaged Learning: Fostering Success for All Students, which indicates that such engagement activities as active and collaborative learning have an even more positive effect on non-traditional students such as Lamar’s than on well-prepared, college-savvy freshmen. Finally, they considered the Pell Institute report Demography is Not Destiny, which identifies active and collaborative learning as a strategy for
improving the educational experiences and therefore the retention of freshmen like Lamar’s. Ultimately, the QEP Planning Committee collectively reached the conclusion that the preponderance of available research indicates that increased use of active and collaborative learning is highly likely to improve student learning in the broad range of core and developmental courses taken by Lamar University freshmen.

The committee also felt that the focus on active and collaborative learning would be sufficiently elastic to allow faculty to improve courses in a wide variety of ways, including such possible approaches as increased use of technology, experiential learning, and integrative learning. Pursuing the principle that faculty should be encouraged to incorporate the activities they prefer, the committee judged that this approach would allow the project to tap faculty energy and interest and thus to improve classroom experiences for our students.

**Review of Literature on Active and Collaborative Learning Techniques**

Active and collaborative learning theory grew out of a need for industry to develop practical solutions to problems occurring when humans have to work in group settings (Burton, 2004). One of the founders was Reg Revens (1907-2003), who created one of the first models of Action Learning in 1955. Revens’ work was probably the model for the highly productive Japanese Quality Circle groups (Albers, 2008). Since that time, the study of active learning has spread through all the social sciences, resulting in a large body of research in educational, psychological, and sociological fields. The following review is meant to provide an overview of this voluminous body of knowledge while indicating many of the reasons that active and collaborative learning techniques have been chosen as the approach to improving Lamar University freshman learning.

**Definition of Active and Collaborative Learning.**

Active and collaborative learning techniques are classroom approaches based on constructivist learning theory. Common to both is the understanding that maximum learning cannot be achieved when students are considered passive receivers of knowledge. Learning takes place best when students construct their own understanding of a topic, assembling and reassembling their mental schemata. Learning is maximized when students mentally engage with each other and with course concepts, subjecting them to application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation through such activities as writing, discussion, and problem-solving (Amburgh, Devlin, Kirwin, & Qualters, 2007). In both active and collaborative learning, faculty members intentionally structure the learning environment and activities within it to ensure this engagement (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2004). Active and collaborative learning encompasses a wide variety of teaching and learning strategies that all focus on creating situations in which students have rich opportunities for interaction with other learners and with the content of the discipline.
Lewis and Woodward (1984) studied 19 large (more than 100 students) classes at the University of Texas for a semester and found that the instructors lectured 80-95% of the time. Subsequently, Mathie et al. (1993) reported that the 80-95% figure was a reasonable estimate of time spent lecturing in college classes regardless of their size (Eble, 1988). Certainly, lecturing is a time-honored tradition in higher education for several good reasons (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Meyers & Jones, 1993). Primarily, lecture is an efficient way of conveying large amounts of otherwise unavailable information to large audiences. Lecture also can help auditory learners, help instructors maintain control, and “protect” students from undesired attention. In addition, dynamic lecturers can spark audience interest in a discipline and model ways of thinking for the audience.

However, there are also several disadvantages linked to lecture (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Kuh, 2001; McKeachie, 1999; Meyers & Jones, 1993). First, lectures tend to put learners into the passive role of empty vessels that need to be filled by professors. Modern cognitive theories of learning uniformly conceive of learning as an active process, so that any approach that creates passive learners is less than ideal. Second, attention wanes relatively quickly during lectures. Hartley and Davies (1978) reviewed research on attention and found that attention increased during the first 10 minutes of lecture and then began to fall. The third major problem of lecture is that the learning outcome is typically poor retention. Low retention is not surprising, given the problem of falling attention. Hartley and Davies also found that students retained new material at a 70% level during the first 10 minutes of lecture, but that retention fell to only 20% in the last 10 minutes of lecture. It is clear that 20% is an abysmal outcome, but even 70% is not particularly outstanding. Rickard, Rogers, Ellis, and Beidleman (1988) found that students retained information from a lecture-based introductory psychology course at a 72% rate on a 60-item multiple choice test four months after the course ended. Although this figure seems fairly reasonable, a control group that had never taken introductory psychology scored 62% on the same test. Together, these three shortcomings indicate that other classroom approaches are likely be more favorable for student learning.

There is an ancient Chinese proverb (also attributed to Benjamin Franklin) that states:

Tell me, I forget.
Show me, I remember.
Involve me, I understand.

This proverb meshes well with what cognitive scientists know about the learning process. As Ashcraft (2002) writes in his cognitive psychology text, a basic assumption of cognitive science is that humans are “active information processors” (p. 31). Further, he rejects the notion that learning occurs passively as a function of simple conditioning or reinforcement.
In 1984, the National Institute of Education (NIE) issued a report that listed active learning as the highest priority in American higher education. Active learning moves students from being passive recipients of lectures to being active participants in their education. Students engage with class information in a “hands-on, minds-on” approach, which prevents them from remaining passive and uninvolved. The NIE report noted:

There is now a good deal of research evidence to suggest that the more time and effort students invest in the learning process and the more intensely they engage in their own education, the greater will be their growth and achievement, their satisfaction with their educational experiences, and their persistence in college, and the more likely they are to continue their learning (p. 17).

Mathie et al. (1993) pointed out that active learning leads to other benefits for students besides increased learning and retention. Research has shown that active learning improves interpersonal communication, human relations skills, and self-esteem (Amburgh et al., 2007). Also, because active learning often involves student-to-student communication, students gain exposure to other ideas and perspectives. Thus, they may gain social and cultural breadth. Finally, active learning approaches tend to accommodate different learning styles and cultural backgrounds. Interestingly, students are not the only beneficiaries of active learning. Faculty members who use active and collaborative learning techniques are able to more closely monitor the process and progress of student learning (Jernstedt, 1982). Faculty members’ satisfaction with their courses often increases, as well as their student evaluations.

Thus, although the age-old approach of lecturing predominates when it comes to college teaching, active learning has many benefits to recommend it. Although it may not be realistic to expect faculty to give up lecturing, supplementing lectures with active learning approaches may allow faculty members to both cover the material and have students learn and retain the material better.

Collaborative/Cooperative Learning Techniques (CoLTs):

Collaborative and cooperative learning techniques developed out of the active learning literature. Other similar terms are team learning, group learning, or peer-assisted learning. CoLTs are class activities designed for and carried out through small, interactive groups of students. Definitions for CoLTs vary; simply put, learning occurs when both faculty and students work together to create knowledge with “the assumption that people make meaning together and that the process enriches and enlarges [the student]” (Matthews, 1996, p. 13).

CoLTs are group learning settings in which students not only work in groups, but also become connected to their peers during the learning process. This connection allows students the opportunity to learn from one another and act as a collaborative group while solving classroom challenges. This process builds skills that are desired by employers recruiting college graduates. These are sometimes referred to as Team Building Skills.
CoLTs help students to better connect “hands on” activities with abstract knowledge. Barkley et al. (2004) states that using CoLTs increases the ability of students to improve their learning environment and actually improves their learning process.

**Highlighting Which Students Learn Better with CoLTs.**

Past research supports the argument that group learning benefits students across a wide range of ability and backgrounds. Group learning was has been shown to increase all students’ knowledge and higher level thinking skills; however, students who help other students actually learn more, especially at the conceptual level (McKeachie, Pintrich, Lin, & Smith, 1986). Therefore, students who act as leaders and teachers improve their organizational and articulation skills and have been found to learn the most (Kuh, 2001; Slavin, 1986).

Other student groups found to benefit from CoLTs are underrepresented multi-cultural groups and nontraditional college students who have in the past lacked educational opportunities (Barkley et al., 2004; Millar, 1999). These studies found that the use of CoLTs improves retention and graduation rates of underrepresented groups and nontraditional college students. For such students CoLTs capitalize on the group’s diverse knowledge and therefore create a more productive learning environment (Amburgh et al., 2007; Cuseo, 1996). These more diverse learning environments parallel governmental or business “think tanks” that bring together diverse yet ingenious specialists to efficiently solve problems. Furthermore, when diverse knowledge contributes to a group solution, students view learning as a living experience, not just a dead artifact.

**Best Practices for CoLTs.**

There are many specific CoLTs developed in various disciplines; however, effective CoLTs share common characteristics. CoLTs should focus on peer learning, and the faculty member must intentionally design the activity to create collaborting and meaningful learning (Barkley et al., 2004).

- Intentional design -- faculty members must structure intentional learning activities for students. They may do this by selecting from a range of pre-structured activities where the focus is on intentional structured learning.

- Co-laboring is the Latin root of collaborate. This process encourages all participants in the group to engage actively in working together toward the stated objectives. All group members work together on all of the assigned projects, and all students must contribute more or less equally.

- Meaningful learning must take place -- as students work together on a collaborative assignment, they must increase their knowledge and increase their understanding of course concepts. The task assigned to the group must be structured to accomplish the learning objectives of the course while
still creating educationally meaningful goals shared by the teacher and students (Barkley et al., 2004).

Smith (1998) identifies five qualities required for successful CoLTs:

- **Positive interdependence**: The successes of individual students are linked to the success of the group; individuals succeed to the extent that the group succeeds. Thus, students are motivated to help one another accomplish group goals.

- **Pro-motive interaction**: Students are expected to actively help and support one another. Members share resources and support and encourage each other’s efforts to learn.

- **Individual and group accountability**: The group is held accountable for achieving its goals. Each member is accountable for contributing his or her share of the work; students are assessed individually.

- **Development of teamwork skills**: Students are required to learn academic subject matter (task work) and also to teach the interpersonal and small group skills required to function as part of a group (teamwork).

- **Group processing**: Students should learn to evaluate their group productivity. They need to describe what member actions are helpful and unhelpful, and to make decisions about what to continue or change (Smith, 1998, pp.74-76).

**Other Research Findings on CoLTs.**

A variety of research studies strengthen the case for the broad effectiveness of collaborative learning techniques.

- McKeachie et al. (1986) reviewed over 500 research studies pertaining to teaching and learning in college classrooms. In trying to determine the most effective teaching method, they found the answer varied by goal, the student, the content, and the teacher, but what they found that was universally positive was students teaching other students (Kuh, 2001; McKeachie et al., 1986).

- The evidence is strong and quite consistent across the literature of educational research studies that students who study and learn in different forms of peer interaction, including class discussion (versus lecture), have more positive attitudes toward the subject matter, increased motivation to learn more about the subject, and are better satisfied with their experience than students who have less opportunity to interact with fellow students and teachers (Barkley et al., 2004; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991; Light, 1992).
• CoLTs have been found to be particularly good in improving academic achievement as well as outcomes such as self-assurance and understanding of difficult theories and concepts (Brandon & Hollingshead, 1999; Nelson, 1994). Use of CoLTs often improves learning in ways lecture cannot (Li, 2002).

• The research also indicates that students working in learning groups rate the instructor better and perceive the instructor as more supportive and accepting, both academically and personally (Barkley et al., 2004). This improvement in instructor ratings is thought to exist because collaborative learning creates a connection between the student and faculty member.

• Furthermore, an active and cooperative learning study of physics students (Buck & Wage, 2005) found a considerable difference between the learning results of 14 traditional lecture format classes, which achieved a normalized gain \( g = 0.23 \pm 0.04 \), and those of 48 courses using active and collaborative learning techniques, which achieved \( g = 0.48 \pm 0.14 \), nearly two standard deviations better than lecture courses. Such techniques have been found to be effective in most scientific educational settings.

In conclusion, Springer, Stanne, and Donovan (1999) conducted a meta-analysis on undergraduates in science, mathematics, engineering, and technology (SMET) and found that various forms of collaborative learning were effective in promoting greater academic achievement, more favorable attitudes toward learning, and increased persistence through SMET courses and programs. This study shows a common theme in the natural sciences that active and collaborative techniques produce greater student learning and higher student satisfaction across a wide variety of college subjects.
IV. ACES Project

Overview

Implementation of the ACES Project at Lamar University aims to improve student learning by incorporating more active and collaborative learning in core and developmental courses, with a particular focus on high-enrollment core curriculum courses which are designated by the university Core Curriculum Assessment Committee as “key core courses” (see Appendix J). Such substantial change in an institution requires sustained and focused effort over time. The university has selected activities consistent with its internal goals of improving the learning of Lamar University freshmen and doing so through active support and compelling incentives for faculty. One essential pre-requisite for this effort is the establishment of a faculty professional development center at Lamar University. This center will open in fall 2009 with its own designated budget, staff, and location. The center will provide essential support for the faculty professional development aspects of the ACES Project.

The ACES action plan consists of three main elements:

1. Raising the awareness of all faculty teaching core and developmental courses concerning the importance of active and collaborative learning for student engagement and student success. This goal will be addressed through Freshman Focus Days, a Web site, and a regular newsletter. These broad-reaching activities will insure that all faculty regularly teaching freshman courses are familiar with principles of active and collaborative learning and have access to a variety of relevant information. They will also provide recruiting opportunities for the more intensive ACES Fellows activities.

2. Establishing an ACES Fellows incentive program through which faculty teaching core and developmental courses will apply for reassigned time or stipends for course improvements to incorporate more active and collaborative learning techniques. In order to both initiate and sustain change over time, incentives are designed to attract new adopters, sustain them as they hone their skills, and recognize those who have attained high proficiency. The incentive program will include the following:

   • Individual faculty awards of $5,000 to be used for stipends or reassigned time for improvement and assessment of a targeted core or developmental course. Individuals selected through an application process will be designated as ACES Fellows. Full-time faculty and adjuncts teaching two or more sections and having a continuing relationship to the university will be eligible for these awards.

   • Departmental stipends and/or reassigned time for groups of faculty teaching a core or developmental
course to work collaboratively on improvement and assessment of the course. Faculty members participating in such a departmental effort will be designated as ACES Fellows.

- Equipment grants for items directly related to the course improvement efforts of ACES Fellows, such as student response systems or specialized software.

- Continuous improvement grants for individual ACES Fellows after the term of the initial fellowship to further improve and assess the target courses and to continue to present their results and experiences to faculty peers.

- Departmental continuous improvement grants to further improve and assess multiple sections of a targeted core or developmental course and to continue to present results and experiences to faculty peers.

- ACES Certification for faculty teaching that meet high standards of implementation of active and collaborative learning and that have a demonstrable record of improved student learning.

3. Assessing the success of the project in multiple dimensions. Assessments will focus on:

- Faculty satisfaction with professional development related to active and collaborative learning (Freshman Focus Days, ACES Fellows workshops, and other professional development offered through the ACES project).

- Degree of implementation of active and collaborative learning in core and developmental courses across the university and in courses taught by ACES Fellows.

- Improvement of student learning in classes of ACES Fellows.

**Faculty Professional Development**

Ongoing faculty development is critical to the effective implementation of the ACES project. Success is dependent on fostering change in faculty attitudes and pedagogical skills in order to improve student learning outcomes. Faculty must have access to development opportunities that emphasize current research-based best teaching practice and continuous improvement of instruction. These opportunities must also clearly establish the relationship between instructional methodology and student learning.

As the faculty development initiative is established, it will be guided by several factors identified by Hickson, Sheeks, and Loughman (2008) as characteristic of successful faculty development programs. Strong faculty development programs exhibit the following characteristics:

1. The programs are faculty-based and not directed from above. Faculty must be involved in decision making and leaders should have strong faculty credentials.
2. Programs have strong institutional support and adequate funding (Davis et al., 2003).

3. A variety of methods and opportunities are utilized to serve a diverse group of faculty. Leaders recognize that a ‘one size fits all’ approach does not serve the needs of different disciplines and individual faculty (Baldwin & Krotseng, 1985).

4. Workshops and training provide an evident connection between the faculty development activities and student learning (Weimer, 1990).

Lamar University has been guided by these principles in the planning of faculty development aspects of the ACES Project. Faculty will be provided incentives to participate, supported in their efforts, and given opportunity for self reflection and assessment. In accordance with these principles, the steering committee directing the ACES Project will consist primarily of faculty, and the Director of the project will hold faculty credentials and experience. Equally important, institutional support for the project is well established. In spring 2009, President James M. Simmons and Provost Steve Doblin are meeting with every academic department to discuss the ACES Project. Funding is adequate, as the budget provided here makes clear, and faculty development opportunities directly connected to the project will be varied in focus and delivery mode. Workshops for all developmental and core faculty will focus on basic issues such as the nature of active and collaborative learning (ACL), learning outcomes, and assessment. Workshop format will be supplemented by podcasts and webinars so that the same content is available to those not able to attend. Faculty development seminars for ACES Fellows will be more intensive, focusing in greater detail on planning ACL activities for the target class, clarifying outcomes, and refining assessments. These seminars will be provided at a variety of times to include Summer I, Summer II, and a distributed schedule for delivery during a long semester. In addition, faculty will be supported during implementation of their revised courses in a variety of ways including Fellows peer-group lunches, regular individual consultations with project staff, and targeted work-sessions as needed. All of these efforts will be complemented by ongoing programming in the Lamar University faculty development center. Throughout the project, the focus on improving student learning will be clear and sustained.
Implementation

ACES Project implementation is organized into three broad strands.

The first, the Foundations program, is designed to provide ACL information and training broadly to the majority of faculty who regularly teach core and developmental courses. The second, the ACES Fellows program, is designed to intensively engage volunteer faculty for a minimum of a year, and the third, ACES Certification, is designed to institutionalize and reward transformation of teaching and improvement of student learning.

1 The Foundations program.

This broad-scope program aims to build a wide faculty knowledge base about active and collaborative learning and valid assessment. The program’s goal is to make all faculty teaching core and developmental courses, including adjuncts, more aware of research pertaining to active and collaborative learning, of the scholarship of teaching and learning, of best practices in instruction, and of assessment and its critical role in improving learning. The planned university faculty professional development center will provide in-kind support for this strand. Specific activities will include:

- Three Freshman Focus workshop days a year; all core and developmental faculty will be expected to attend two of these three events. Attendees will receive a certificate of participation which may be included in their yearly activity reports. These workshops will also be delivered in asynchronous formats that make them accessible to everyone, such as webcasts and podcasts.

- A monthly ACES newsletter to be sent to all Lamar University faculty members. It will include teaching and assessment tips, articles of interest, and local success stories.

- An ACES Faculty Web site and print handbook.

2 The ACES Fellows program.

This intensive strand is designed to provide awards of $5,000 to faculty members who may use the funds as stipend and/or reassigned time. They will be available through a proposal process to full-time faculty and to adjuncts who teach more than two sections and who have a continuing relationship to the university. Faculty members teaching core and developmental courses, either individually or in departmentally-organized groups of up to five, will submit proposals to participate in this program (see Appendix K for application form). The ACES Steering Committee described in Chapter V will review proposals and make selections. Within the general scope of key core and developmental courses, priority will be given to high-enrollment courses and courses with high drop/fail/withdraw rates.
Individual faculty members may choose whether to receive a stipend, reassigned time or a combination. Faculty groups will be approved by the department, with a commitment that the improvements developed by the group for the targeted course will be implemented as widely as possible across multiple sections of the course. Faculty groups assign individuals stipends and/or reassigned time within the limits of the block funding provided.

Those chosen as ACES Fellows have the option of attending either a three-week summer workshop (scheduled either Summer I or Summer II at the convenience of the individual faculty member or group) or equivalent events during the initial long semester of the fellowship. In the workshops, faculty refine student learning outcomes, aligning them with university general education goals and best practice in the discipline, plan for increased active and collaborative learning, and develop valid, course-specific assessments of student learning. At the conclusion of the summer workshop or training, Fellows develop an Instructional Plan (IP), including an assessment plan, for the target course (see Appendix L). This IP is reviewed and approved by the ACES Steering Committee using a rubric (see Appendix M). Instructional Plans will include student learning outcomes and assessments related to course-specific content. They will also include student learning outcomes and assessments related to selected core curriculum outcomes in communication, quantitative reasoning, and critical thinking. Assessments of core learning in Fellows’ classes will be aligned with the university’s core curriculum assessments, thus strengthening and extending that aspect of institutional effectiveness. ACES Fellows commit to implement the Instructional Plan for a minimum of two semesters and to provide reports on their activities. ACES Fellows will also be responsible for making presentations to other Lamar faculty concerning their projects.

ACES Fellows receive support during implementation of their instructional plans through such activities as regular peer-group meetings to share struggles and successes, one-on-one check-in sessions with the ACES Director and other staff, occasional guest speakers, and individual activities such as specialized webinars or readings. At the conclusion of the first semester of implementation, ACES Fellows conduct self-assessment and hold a conference with the ACES Director or other ACES staff to assess progress and make revised plans for the subsequent semester. At the conclusion of the second semester of implementation, Fellows repeat this process, ultimately assessing where the target course fits on the ACES Quality Continuum (see Appendix N). This active and collaborative learning Quality Continuum Instrument identifies progressively greater levels of ACES implementation and serves as a useful framework for faculty as they assess their progress. At the conclusion of two semesters of implementation, an individual faculty member or faculty group decides whether or not to continue engagement with the ACES program by applying for a Continuous Improvement Grant, described below.

A pilot ACES departmental group for English 1302 will begin work in fall 2009, complete training in that semester, and begin implementation in spring 2010. Because of the nature of this course, which is offered year-round on many different schedules and in different delivery modalities, faculty may choose
to implement in summer sessions or the fall semester, and implementation instances will continue through spring 2010. The first full cohort of ACES Fellows will apply in March of 2010, have access to summer workshops, and begin implementation the subsequent fall.

ACES Fellows are eligible to receive two other types of supplementary support as described below:

- **Equipment Grants.** ACES Fellows who need equipment to support the approved Instructional Plan may also apply for an equipment grant following approval of the plan. Equipment grant applications will be reviewed and recipients selected by the ACES Steering Committee.

- **Continuous Improvement Grants.** Individual continuous improvement grants of $1,000 may be applied for at the conclusion of the initial two-semester commitment. These stipends will reward progressively greater improvements in the targeted course and continued participation as a presenter at Freshman Focus Days and other professional development events on campus. ACES Fellows II will commit to achieve advanced levels of active and collaborative learning and create second-stage Instructional Plans. Similar continuous improvement grants will be available to departments whose working groups commit to progressively greater improvement for a multi-section course after the initial grant. ACES Fellows II will continue to assist other faculty in ACES implementation by serving as mentors and speakers.

3 **ACES Certification.**

The third strand of ACES Project implementation is intended to recognize faculty who have achieved and maintained high levels of active and collaborative learning along with improvements in student learning in a course. ACES Certification provides a formal review and recognition system which will institutionalize the university’s commitment to high-quality teaching. This certification process will be available in the third year of ACES Project implementation (Fall 2011). Individual faculty members or departments may apply to have specified courses so certified, and certification will be good for a three-year period. ACES Certification will be granted by the ACES Steering Committee to a faculty member for a course that has achieved a high level on the ACES Quality Continuum (see Appendix N) and has a documented history of improvement in student learning. Goals for numbers of ACES Certifications will be established in departmental and college planning documents, and the achievement of ACES Certification will be recognized both on individual faculty evaluations and departmental evaluations as a measure of excellence in teaching. Formal awards ceremonies will be held. Individuals and departments will receive cash awards of $1,500 and $5,000 respectively.

In the third year of the program, ACES Certification will be available only to core and developmental courses. After that time, Certification will be open to any freshman or sophomore course, in the hope that awareness of active and collaborative learning will be so widespread that even faculty who have not participated as ACES Fellows may teach courses suitable for this designation.
The goal is that these three strands of the ACES Project will invigorate the energy and inventiveness of the faculty to bring about progressively more substantial and effective instructional changes that increase student learning.

Figure 3. ACES Project implementation

Timelines

Pre-QEP

Conduct one Freshman Focus Day (pre-fall semester 2009).

Hire ACES Director; establish office.

Create QEP Steering Committee and begin meetings.

Plan first-semester activities for Pilot Group.

Conduct baseline assessment of active and collaborative learning in core and developmental courses across the university.
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<td>Assessment of progress, planning of improvements</td>
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<td>January &amp; May</td>
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<td>January</td>
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<td>August: Orientation for Pilot Group September-November: Faculty Professional Development December: Instructional Plans due</td>
<td>First semester implementation of Pilot May: Assessment, closing the loop, revision</td>
<td>Optional Second semester implementation (may be Summer or Fall)</td>
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<td>February: Request for proposals March: Submission of proposals April: Identification of Fellows</td>
<td>Instructional Plans due</td>
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<td>Ongoing - at all events</td>
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<td>April: Assessment in core and developmental courses across LU</td>
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<th>Third semester implementation</th>
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<td>May: Final Assessment</td>
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<td>Second semester of implementation</td>
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<td>December: Assessment</td>
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| ACES Fellows Cohort 1                                 | First semester implementation | Second semester implementation | |
|                                                       | December: Assessment | May: Assessment Continuous Improvement Grants applications received & Recipients selected | |

| ACES Fellows Cohort 2                                 | February: Request for proposals | March: Submission of proposals | Workshops Instructional Plans due |
|                                                       | | April: Identification of the Fellows | |

| Assessment of faculty satisfaction with FDP          | Ongoing |         |        |

<p>| Active &amp; Collaborative Assessment                     | April: Assessment in core and developmental courses across LU |         |        |</p>
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<td>March: Submission proposals</td>
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<td>March: Certification awards event</td>
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<td>October: Applications deadline</td>
<td>March: Certification awards event</td>
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**Five Year Goal:** as indicated earlier in this document, the five year goal of the project is to use active and collaborative instructional methods to transform instruction in core and developmental classes.
V. Organization

Personnel

The ACES Project will be led by a full-time director reporting to the Senior Associate Provost. An Instructional Mentor will be the second full-time professional staff member. This individual will be an experienced and expert faculty member on one-year leave from teaching duties to participate in the project. Thus Instructional Mentors will rotate through the project, providing expertise in various disciplines as needed. A half-time faculty member will serve on a continuing basis as associate director. An administrative assistant will provide office support. Other funding will be provided for student assistants and consultant services such as instructional design.

The director will be responsible for the implementation, assessment and ongoing improvement of the project (see director’s job description Appendix R). A search committee was formed in February 2009 with the aim of having the director at work no later than August 1. The director will organize activities related to this project, including faculty development and assessment and work in collaboration with the director of the planned faculty professional development center, the university Assessment Coordinator, and the ACES Steering Committee. The director will have budget and personnel responsibilities and will report regularly to the ACES Steering Committee described below. The director will also be responsible for gathering assessment data as outlined in the Assessment Action Plan in Chapter VII as well as the revision of ACES practices after review of all collected data.

An Interim Director will serve in spring and summer 2009.

Governance

An ACES Steering Committee will supervise the program, meeting monthly. This group will consist of the Senior Associate Provost, a dean, a department chair, the director of the university faculty professional development center, five faculty members representing the five colleges, and a student. All will serve by appointment or election from their respective groups.

The university Academic Council, consisting of deans and academic program directors, will serve as an advisory body which reviews the results of the ACES program once a year and makes recommendations for changes to the steering committee. ACES student focus groups convened annually will follow the same procedure.
Location

The university will designate a centrally-located space consisting of at least three offices with space for an administrative assistant and storage. If possible, this space will be adjacent to space allocated for the faculty professional development center.
## VI. Budget

### QEP Five Year Budget

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<th>Yr 1</th>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>331,768</td>
<td>372,556</td>
<td>416,002</td>
<td>426,611</td>
<td>437,388</td>
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</table>

(a) Faculty member will be provided ½ load reassigned time (2 courses a semester) at $2,500 a course and a stipend of $5000 for the academic year.

(b) Individual faculty members will receive $5,000 as either cash stipend, 2 courses reassigned time at $2,500 a semester, or a combination.

(c) The pilot year will focus on English 1302 and a group of 6-7 faculty. After this pilot the department groups (maximum five members) will receive a block grant of $12,500 to the department and will allocate resources as appropriate among members of the group over two semesters. Budget allocates $2,500 per member.

(d) Equipment grants may not exceed $2,500 for an individual. Note that university HEAF funds are also available to fund equipment requests.

(e) Individual continuous improvement grants are $1,000 for an academic year

(f) Departmental continuous improvement grants are $5,000 for an academic year as a block grant to the department.

(g) ACES Certification will bring with it a monetary award of $1,500 for an individual or $5,000 for a department.
VII. Assessment

Program Assessment, Process Assessment, and Continuous Improvement

Principles

A variety of assessment options have evolved over the last few decades as indicated by publications such as Gardener’s (1977) article entitled, “Five Evaluation Frameworks: Implications for Decision Making in Higher Education,” Guba and Lincoln’s (1989) book, Fourth Generation Evaluation, and Cronbach and Shapiro’s (1982) book, Designing Evaluations of Educational and Social Programs. In more recent years, authors such as Palomba and Banta (1999) and AAHE (http://www.apa.org/ed/aahe_principle.html; formerly at http://www.aahe.org/assessment/principl.htm) have developed lists of principles or characteristics of effective assessment in higher education. A number of these principles are used to guide development of this assessment plan and are noted appropriately in the text.

Process and Program Assessment

The success of this program will be judged primarily in terms of improvements in student learning outcomes associated with ACES training and implementation. However, these results must be interpreted in the context of the program’s success in its formative stages, such as training faculty and convincing them of the importance of active and collaborative learning. As the AAHE principles state, “Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.” A breakdown at any stage of implementation could have negative effects on the summative measures of student learning. If, for example, student learning appears insufficient in a course, it will be useful to know whether the faculty member experienced difficulties implementing the ACES Instructional Plan for that course.

The assessment plans subsequently described are therefore designed to provide balance between measures of process and measures of student learning. Ample assessment results throughout the training and early implementation process will support improvement decisions and document the level and quality of implementation efforts. The intent is to operate the ACES program in an information-rich environment that supports continuous self-correction by faculty and program staff. The governance structure makes the ACES director responsible for ensuring that adequate assessment data are gathered and reviewed and that appropriate changes are proposed. The ACES Steering Committee is the decision-making group that will review and approve proposed changes.
Five Year Expectations: What will success look like?

At the end of five years, the ACES project will have transformed instruction in freshman courses. The instructional changes will produce clear gains in student learning and academic success and will be supported by rich formative assessment. In addition, our summative success will be fully documented by the achievement of targets like the following.

1. 80% of departments offering key core courses or developmental courses will employ faculty who have been ACES Fellows.

2. At least 70% of key core and developmental courses will have at least one section taught by an ACES Fellow using active and collaborative methods.

3. 90% of ACES Fellows will express satisfaction with the new approach and will be able to provide evidence of increased student learning.

4. At least half of the ACES fellows will be able to provide high quality evidence of improved student learning on core curriculum outcomes.

5. Indicators of institutional success such as freshman persistence rates will increase significantly over the five year period.

6. Support for active and collaborative instructional activity will be permanently integrated into the university administrative structure at the freshman level, and instructional innovations will begin to be integrated into academic programs beyond core and developmental education.

Recurring (subject to yearly review) Student Learning Outcomes (SLO), Measures, and Performance Targets

SLO1. Improve the percentage of students performing acceptably on direct measures of learning outcomes in key core and developmental courses taught by ACES Fellows.

Measure 1. Course-specific measures of student learning described in the Instructional Plan for each course.

Target 1. 70% of students in target courses taught by ACES Fellows will perform at or above the standard of acceptability designated in the Instructional Plan (see Appendix L) on direct measures of course-specific SLOs. Subsequent semesters after initial implementation will show progressive increase in percentage of students achieving these standards.

Target 2. 70% of students in target courses taught by ACES Fellows will perform at or above the standard of acceptability designated in the Instructional Plan on direct measures of SLOs related to core
curriculum outcomes of critical thinking, quantitative reasoning and communication (See Appendix C). Subsequent semesters after initial implementation will show progressive increase in percentage of students achieving these standards.

Sample SLO related to Core Curriculum Outcome

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLO related to CC Outcome for ENGL 1301: Critical Thinking</th>
<th>ACL Strategy</th>
<th>Direct Assessment Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Students will analyze and evaluate a rhetorical strategy used by a candidate for political office | - Model analysis using video clips  
- Students practice in small groups  
- Student pairs gather examples and present in poster session | Rubric used to assess poster sessions |

SLO2. Improve rates of successful course completion with a grade of C or above in core and developmental courses taught by ACES Fellows.

Measure 1. University grade records

Target 1. Course success rates in sections of developmental and core courses taught by ACES Fellows will exceed those for comparable sections not taught by ACES Fellows.

Target 2. Student success rates in sections of developmental and core courses taught by ACES Fellows will exceed success rates for comparable courses taught by these faculty members prior to ACES training.

Process Outcomes (PO), Measures, and Performance Targets

PO1. Expand opportunities for high-quality faculty development concerning active and collaborative learning (ACL).

Measure 1. The Foundations program will provide high-quality faculty professional development concerning active and collaborative learning and assessment broadly to faculty who teach core and developmental courses

Target 1. Ninety % of faculty teaching a core or developmental course in an academic year will participate in at least one faculty professional development activity during that year.

Target 2. Ninety % of participating faculty will rate the training positively.

Measure 2. The ACES Fellows program will provide high-quality intensive training in active and collaborative learning and assessment to a minimum of five fellows the first year and eight fellows each subsequent year.
Target 1. Training will be provided to a minimum of five fellows the first year, and eight fellows each subsequent year.

Target 2. 90% of participating faculty will rate the training positively.

PO2. Insure high-quality planning and implementation of course improvements by ACES Fellows.

Measure 1. The ACES Steering Committee will use a locally-developed rubric (see Appendix M) to score Instructional Plans submitted by ACES Fellows at the conclusion of training.

Target 1. 90% of ACES Fellows’ Instructional Plans will be judged as acceptable on first submission.

Measure 2. Near the end of each semester of implementation of ACES courses, the instructor will complete a self-assessment (see Appendix Q) to document the level of implementation of the Instructional Plan in the course.

Target 1. A minimum of 80% of ACES Fellows will report “Most of the time” or better implementation of the Instructional Plan in the first semester of implementation. In second semester, a minimum of 90% of ACES Fellows will report “Most of the time” or better implementation of the Instructional Plan.

Measure 3. Near the end of each semester of implementation of ACES courses, students will complete a survey to document the level and quality of ACL activity in their section from the student perspective (see Appendix P).

Target 1. The pattern of ACL activity reported by students will be judged by the ACES Director and the University Assessment Coordinator to be consistent with the Instructional Plan and the faculty self-assessment.

Target 2. On the student survey 70% of students in the first semester of implementation and 80% of students in the second semester will perceive that they learned from each ACL activity.

Measure 4. ACES staff and Fellows will jointly conduct a review of each target course as taught in the second semester of implementation to include the following: implemented ACL activities, faculty feedback, student feedback, and student learning. They will collaboratively categorize the course on the ACES Quality Continuum (see Appendix N).

Target 1. All courses implemented by ACES Fellows will achieve a rating of acceptable on the ACES Quality Continuum.

PO3. Increase the frequency of active and collaborative learning activities in key core and developmental courses across the Lamar University curriculum.

Measure 1. On a yearly basis, survey a representative sample of students from core and developmental courses to document the frequency of ACL activity in these courses.
Target 1. Freshman students’ NSSE statistics related to active and collaborative learning will increase compared to baseline data from 2008.

Target 2. Students completing the locally-developed ACL Assessment Instrument-Student Form (See Appendix P) will report increased levels of active and collaborative activity as compared to baseline data gathered using this form in 2009.

Measure 2. ACES Fellows will complete the ACL Assessment Instrument-Faculty Self Assessment (see Appendix O) to document ACL activity in the target course before ACES training and at the conclusion of each semester of implementation.

Target 1. ACES Fellows will show increased levels of ACL activity in the target course as implemented after ACES training. Subsequent semesters will indicate progressively greater ACL.

Assessment Action Plan: Student Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Type/Measure</th>
<th>When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline: ACL at LU</td>
<td>Assessment Coordinator</td>
<td>ACL Assmt Student Form (Appx P) admin in sample sections</td>
<td>Spring 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO1 Measure 1</td>
<td>Target 1</td>
<td>ACES Fellows</td>
<td>Course SLOs, measures and targets set in IPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target 2</td>
<td>ACES Fellows</td>
<td>Course SLOs, measures and targets set in IPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO2 Measure 1</td>
<td>Target 1</td>
<td>Dir &amp; Staff</td>
<td>Student success rates in ACES sections / Other sections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target 2</td>
<td>Dir &amp; Staff</td>
<td>Student success rates in ACES sections / previous sections of same course</td>
</tr>
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</table>
## Assessment Action Plan: Process Measures

<table>
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<th>When</th>
</tr>
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<td>PO1</td>
<td>Target 1</td>
<td>Dir &amp; Staff</td>
<td>Numbers attending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 1</td>
<td>Target 2</td>
<td>Dir. &amp; Staff</td>
<td>Assign rubric for training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 2</td>
<td>Target 1</td>
<td>Dir. &amp; Staff</td>
<td>Numbers of Fellows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target 2</td>
<td>Dir. &amp; Staff</td>
<td>Assign rubric for training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO2</td>
<td>Target 1</td>
<td>Dir. &amp; Staff</td>
<td>Rubric for asmt of IPs (see Appx. M)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Target 1</td>
<td>Dir. &amp; Staff. Also Fellows</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Fellows</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measure 4</td>
<td>Target 1</td>
<td>Dir, Staff and Fellows</td>
<td>Quality Continuum (Appx. N)</td>
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<td>PO3</td>
<td>Target 1</td>
<td>Dir. &amp; Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measure 1</td>
<td>Target 2</td>
<td>Dir. &amp; Staff</td>
<td>ACL Asmt-Student form (Appx P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 2</td>
<td>Target 1</td>
<td>Dir. &amp; Staff</td>
<td>ACL Asmt-Faculty form (Appx O)</td>
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Abbreviated Terms -- Sem = Semester, Impl = Implementation
VIII. Appendices

Appendix A. References


for teaching and learning, 67, 71-82.


STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1. STUDENTS. To offer undergraduate and selected graduate educational experiences of excellence, both curricular and co-curricular, which engage students with faculty and staff to meet their diverse needs.

1a. To attract, retain, and graduate high-quality students.

1a.1 Increase enrollment by 2-4% a year (against 2006 base), percentage goals to be adjusted biennially.
   a) Expand recruitment efforts that target high ability students using SAT data and scholarships.
   b) Expand recruitment of students in new markets, specifically metropolitan areas and transfer students from two-year institutions.
   c) Increase number and value of scholarships and assistantships.
   d) Recruit graduate students in degree programs.
   e) Expand distance education opportunities (targets: high school co-enrollment, developmental, core and degree programs).

1a.2 Project and address on-campus residence needs of students.
   a) Estimate student housing demand.
   b) Study feasibility of Cardinal Village V and VI.
   c) Secure funding and construct additional residence hall space.

1a.3 Develop, advertise and promote a distinctive identity for Lamar University. Completed

1b. To engage students with faculty and staff through academic, social, and civic experiences.

1b.1 Enhance student-faculty engagement
   a) Expand student-faculty programs (e.g., mentorship, undergraduate research, student affairs programming, community internships).
   b) Evaluate engagement using the NSSE (against 2005-06 NSSE baseline) and/or other appropriate measures.

1c. To determine and meet diverse learning needs of students through developing curriculum, improving instructional effectiveness, and fostering personal development, advising, and mentoring.

1c.1 Conduct program improvement reviews (PIRs) for academic departments which are not nationally accredited. Pilot in 2006-2007, three per year thereafter.
1c.2 Improve student learning by careful implementation of institutional effectiveness planning and reporting in all academic colleges and departments.

1d. To provide contemporary educational experiences of excellence focused on developing leadership and professional skills, expanding intellectual abilities, and encouraging life-long learning in a global context.

1e. To promote an environment that encourages and facilitates constructive communication between students and other members of the university community.

1e.1 Implement the My.Lamar portal for faculty, students and staff and encourage its use as the campus communication vehicle.

a) Provide training and support for faculty, staff, and students.

b) Evaluate usage and implementation.

c) Provide feedback for improvement.

d) Provide one robust, reliable, full-featured e-mail system (and related organizational tools) through the My.Lamar portal for all Lamar University faculty, staff and students.

1e.2 Develop and implement a plan to increase student participation in the Academic Lecture Series.

1f. To enhance student life.

1f.1 Enhance resident student life programs by evaluating current activities and increasing the number of programs and participation by the residents. Target: to increase the number of programs/activities by 5 per cent and the number of students participating by 10 percent.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2. FACULTY AND STAFF. To attract, develop, and reward a staff and a faculty of teacher-scholars committed to the mission and values of Lamar University.

2a. To attract and retain high-quality faculty and staff by offering salaries and benefits that are competitive with other universities and, where appropriate, with the private sector.

2a.1 Benchmark faculty salaries with the aim of having Lamar University faculty at the 50th percentile or above by rank and discipline as compared against the THECB-defined peer institutions. Note: a subcommittee is presently researching how to combine data from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, CUPA, and possibly other sources to create a benchmark.

2a.2 Benchmark salaries of classified and non-classified staff with the aim to have Lamar University at the 50th percentile or above by job classification as compared against the THECB-defined peer institutions. Note: a subcommittee is presently researching how to combine data from CUPA, the Texas State University System and other sources of regional employment information to create a benchmark.

2a.3 Budget new faculty positions each year to ensure that an increasing percentage of student credit hours in lower division and especially core courses is taught by tenured and tenure-track faculty.

2a.4 Designate funds to be used at the discretion of the Provost, Vice Presidents, and Deans for market adjustments of faculty and staff salaries on a case-by-case basis.
2b. To retain and reward faculty and staff who demonstrate outstanding support for the mission and core values of the university.

2b.1 Continue to implement the current Lamar University Faculty Equity Plan in order to assure that salaries and benefits are competitive with other universities and, where appropriate, with the private sector.

2b.2 Develop a merit pay plan for staff (both exempt and non-exempt—with the exception of the President) based on the current performance evaluation forms and processes.

- Year one: a) Form a committee and charge it with development of the plan including the appropriate level of aggregation of staff (department, division, college, etc.); b) Initiate educational processes regarding merit plan for all levels.
- Year two: Implement approved plan for raises.

2c. To implement professional development activities that support the mission and core values of the university.

2c.1 Provide support and training for faculty focused on improving student learning and student engagement in their classes.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3. DIVERSITY. To promote a rich and varied campus culture through diversification of programs, services and people.

3a. To offer and continuously enhance curricular and co-curricular programs that develop students’ abilities to function in a multicultural world.

3a.1 Establish a standing University Multicultural Enhancement Committee to: a) seek funding for innovative curricular and co-curricular programs that promote multiculturalism, and b) study and implement innovative activities such as:

- Offer annually at least one co-curricular program or activity that reflects diverse cultural viewpoints, i.e., artist/lecture series; student activities and organizations.
- Offer annually at least one professional development event for faculty that promotes awareness of classroom dimensions of diversity to include such issues as multicultural content and perspectives, open debate of values and interpretations, and needs and concerns of students with disabilities.
- Offer at least one workshop annually to celebrate diversity on campus, and emphasize obstacles and prejudices encountered by individuals with disabilities in order to generate discussion and raise awareness.

3b. To further diversify Lamar University’s students, faculty, and staff.

3b.1 Recruit and retain qualified students from underrepresented populations. Identify and provide academic, social and financial support to retain students from underrepresented populations with goals of retention rates at or above those for the university.

3b.2 Continue efforts to recruit and retain high quality faculty from underrepresented populations through advertisements in publications that target underrepresented populations and through establishing search committees with representation from these populations.

- To provide diversity, faculty search committees may include non-voting, ex officio members from departments other than the one advertising the position.
To aid in the retention of faculty from underrepresented populations (i.e., those from federally protected classes), internal salary equity should be reviewed annually by the faculty salary equity committee.

3b.3 Continue efforts to recruit and retain high-quality staff, and make every reasonable effort to identify and encourage applications from high-quality prospects from underrepresented populations.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4. COLLEGIAL ENVIRONMENT. To provide physical, social and learning environments which are diverse and collegial and which enhance the personal and professional development of students, faculty and staff.

4a. To continuously improve all aspects of university life by using data-driven collegial decision making.

4b. To enhance the physical environment through efficient use of space and careful planning of renovations and expansion.

4c. To sustain participatory strategic planning involving faculty, staff, and students.

4c.1 Monitor progress and completion of the Strategic Plan using web technology.

4c.2 Foster faculty and staff awareness of the Strategic Plan through communication technology and formal and informal discussion.

4d. To provide a technological infrastructure that supports university needs, including hardware, software, people and training.

4d.1 Increase the availability of classroom technology throughout the university by the following procedures:

   a) survey currently available classroom technology and needs;
   b) make recommendations;
   c) create a multi-stage plan for implementation. (to be assigned to Academic Computing leader)

4d.2 Design, purchase and deploy standard operating environment for Enterprise IT Services (including Enterprise Data Storage and Recovery System). (added 3/08)

4d.3 Provide high availability platform for Student Information System (added 3/08)

4e. To plan, execute and monitor institutional effectiveness assessments and improvements based on the assessment results, including:

4e.1 Program-level student learning assessment

4e.2 Core curriculum student learning assessment

4e.3 Academic support assessment

4e.4 Administrative and operational assessment
STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT. To build strong relationships with stakeholders through leadership in economic development, outreach, and public engagement with the region, the state, and the nation.

5a. To provide leadership in economic development.

5b. To engage students, faculty, and/or staff in outreach and community service.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 6. RESOURCES. To expand, enhance, and broaden Lamar University’s financial resources in order to enhance programs and services.

6a. To identify, pursue, and increase funding for the university.

6a.1 Significantly increase research and sponsored program funding through the Office of Sponsored Programs Administration.

6a.2 Make progress on university fund raising plans through the Division of University Advancement working cooperatively with the Lamar University Foundation. Timeline: two years.

6b. To utilize resources more efficiently.

6b.1 Year one: Implement Ad Astra software to monitor space use and collect baseline data on space utilization and other aspects of facilities use. Year two: Use data gathered to set targets for increased efficiency of facilities use.

6b.2 Improve efficiency of processes, procedures and people.

   a) Identify and define key processes at Lamar University, prioritize them according to the potential cost reduction or revenue enhancement achievable (cost of quality) in order to identify those most in need of improvement.

   b) Choose one high-priority process each year, beginning as soon as possible, and appoint a task force to redesign that process.
Appendix C. Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes and Assessment Results

Ways of Knowing/Critical Thinking

1. Students will apply critical thinking appropriately to identify, analyze and resolve complex issues.

Quantitative Reasoning

2. Demonstrate mastery of quantitative reasoning and algorithms used to address applied problems.

Communication – Written and Oral

3. Students will develop written and oral presentations that are clear, precise, organized, efficient and appropriately adapted to audience and purpose.

Approved by Core Curriculum Assessment Committee, December, 2007

Approved as amended by University Institutional Effectiveness Committee, January 2008

Approved as amended by Faculty Senate, February 2008.

Amended by Core Curriculum Assessment Committee, July 2008.
Outcome 1

State the outcome.
Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively in writing.

Describe assessment(s) actually conducted:
Implement course embedded, rubric based assessment of writing in all sections of a freshman and all sections of a sophomore English writing course. Writing samples were uploaded to an electronic portfolio and reviewed by a cross section of faculty at Lamar University.

Summarize data gathered (Complete data should be uploaded to the assessment site in a separate file):

Communication: Writing

- Freshman Writing (Early phase ENGL 1302)
55 reviews of 30 student essays by 6 faculty judges

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<th>% Proficient or above</th>
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<tr>
<td>Clear thesis and introduction:</td>
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<td>Support and Paragraphing:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sentence style, conventions, grammar, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content &amp; Critical thinking:</td>
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Met Target: (70% or above for each rubric dimension)  No

- Sophomore Writing in Literature Class (Late phase ENGL 20...)  
  57 reviews of 40 student essays  by 7 faculty judges

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<th>% Proficient or above</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Sentence style, conventions, grammar, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content &amp; Critical thinking:</td>
<td>56%</td>
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Target: (75% or above for each rubric dimension)  No

How were results reviewed? (update if subsequent review occurs):
Results were reviewed by CCAC and a newly established core curriculum steering committee composed of representatives from the Provost’s office, the QEP Committee, CCAC and core Deans.

Was the target met?:
No

Actions recommended for learning improvement:
Context for improvements and recommended instructional improvements are summarized for each outcome at the end of this document.

Outcome 2

State the outcome.
Students will demonstrate the ability to apply critical thinking skills effectively.

Describe assessment(s) actually conducted:
Implement course embedded, rubric based assessment of critical thinking in the Philosophy of Knowledge course as a measure of early phase critical thinking in the core and in POLS 2302 as a measure of late phase critical thinking in the core. Student writing samples based on analysis of a published opinion were uploaded to an electronic portfolio and reviewed by a cross section of
faculty at Lamar University.

**Summarize data gathered. (Complete data should be uploaded to the assessment site as a separate file):**

- **Critical Thinking (Early phase: Phil 1370)**
  37 reviews of 27 student essays by 6 faculty judges
  
  % Acceptable or above
  
  
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<td>Analysis: Describe the reasoning and evidence</td>
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  Met Target: (70% or above for each rubric dimension)  No

- **Critical Thinking (Late phase: PolSci 2302)**
  50 reviews of 33 student essays by 8 faculty judges

  % Acceptable or above

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State the problem or issue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis Summarize author’s position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis Describe the reasoning and evidence</td>
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<td>Analysis Conclusions about author’s reasoning</td>
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<td>Communicates effectively</td>
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  Met Target: (75% or above for each rubric dimension)  No

**How were results reviewed? (update if subsequent review occurs):**

Results were reviewed by CCAC and a newly established core curriculum steering committee composed of representatives from the Provost’s office, the QEP Committee, CCAC and core Deans.

**Was the target met?: NO**
Actions recommended for learning improvement:
Context for improvements and recommended instructional improvements are summarized for each outcome at the end of this document.

Outcome 3

State the outcome.
Students will successfully solve appropriate problems using college level math skills.

Describe assessment(s) actually conducted:
Implement course embedded, rubric based assessment of quantitative thinking in the Algebra I course as a measure of early phase critical thinking in the core and in a sophomore level statistics course (PSYC 2471) as a measure of late phase quantitative thinking in the core. Samples of student solutions and explanations of quantitative solutions were uploaded to an electronic portfolio and reviewed by a cross section of faculty at Lamar University.

Summarize data gathered (Complete data should be uploaded to the assessment site as a separate file):

- Freshman Math (Early phase: Algebra 1314)
  55 reviews of 39 students by 6 faculty judges

  % Acceptable or above
  Understands the quantitative issue: 81%
  Builds appropriate math expression: 75%
  Calculates accurately 73%
  Uses results appropriately in a decision 79%

  Met Target: (70% or above for each rubric dimension) Yes

Sophomore Statistics (Late phase Stat in Psych course)
35 reviews of 26 students by 4 faculty judges

  % Acceptable or above
Understands the quantitative issue 94%
Builds appropriate math expressions 94%
Calculates accurately 91%
Uses results appropriately in a decision 86%
Appropriateness of assignment 97%

Met Target: (80% or above for each rubric dimension) Yes

How were results reviewed? (update if subsequent review occurs):
Results were reviewed by CCAC and a newly established core curriculum steering committee composed of representatives from the Provost’s office, the QEP Committee, CCAC and core Deans.

Was the target met?: Yes

See recommendations in a separate file
Appendix D. Lamar University Retention Rates

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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>874</td>
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Appendix E. QEP Development
Committee Members 2005

Co-Chairs:
Donna B. Birdwell, Director, Honors Program
Paula Nichols, Director, Center for Distance Education

College of Arts and Sciences
Nancy Blume, Nursing
Nancy Staub, English

College of Education
Kimberly Griffith, Prof. Pedagogy

College of Engineering
Ryan Underdown, Industrial Engr.

College of Fine Arts
Bob Culbertson, Music

College of Business
Richard Drapeau, Info. Sys. & Analysis

Council of Instructional Departments (Chairs)
Eileen Curl, Nursing

Faculty Senate
Fara Goulas, Prof. Pedagogy

Staff Senate
Diann Palmer Brodnax, Developmental Studies

Student Affairs
Janet Warner, Health Center

Library
Jeff Lacy, Reference

Student Government
Jasimi Bankston

Alumni
Richard Cantu, Principal, Vincent Middle School
Appendix F. Summary of Focus
Group Responses Gathered by QEP Development Committee

Strengths Identified affecting STUDENT LEARNING at Lamar University:

- At Lamar, students enjoy small classes taught by well qualified faculty who maintain good rapport with students, who make themselves available to students, and who are committed to student success.

Small classes (good student/faculty ratio) 51
Well qualified faculty (var: terminal degrees) 27
Good student-faculty rapport/interaction 24
Faculty availability to students (var: 1-1 advising) 29
Commitment to student success/learning (var: dedicated faculty) 19
Emphasis on quality teaching 8

- At Lamar, students have opportunities for hands-on learning experiences, including research, internships, and study abroad.

Field based experience/ real life work experience (Engr. Co-op) 20
Support of student/faculty research and projects (e.g. McNair, LSRO) 7
Prepare students for “real world” 2
Study abroad program 2
Mentoring of students
Students can interact with community professionals
Student access to research labs
Lamar has a lively and livable campus environment.

Diverse student body 18
Attractive campus (new/improved facilities) 7
Good core group of on-campus students (C. Pride; positive atmosphere; campus life) 6
Physical facilities for student life (e.g. dorms) 3
Extracurricular organizations 2
Invited speakers/lecturers 2

- Lamar makes information technology available.

Technology available in classrooms (var: for teaching) 8
Student computer labs (var: writing lab) 5
Wireless internet 2
Computer access to library
Technology
Online and video classes
Online research databases
Interactive classes

- Lamar has diverse academic programs meeting the needs of a diverse student body.

Supplemental instruction/tutoring/remediation/workshops 11
Variety of majors/programs 6
Strong core curriculum supports learning 4
Honors Program 3
Pre-requisites for course sequencing 2
Accreditation/"recognition" of many programs 2
Outstanding academic programs 2
Strong programs (engineering, nursing, business)
Other features…
Local community supportive of LU 5
Affordability 5
Student commitment to improvement (willing learners) 5
Academic advising and support/ Mandatory advising 4
Good library resources and personnel 4
Well qualified, supportive administration 3
Flexibility for lifetime learning 2
Students are “not just a number” 2
Student unity/equality 2
Diverse faculty 2
Adequate space, facilities, funding 2
Strong alumni support 2
Location (central to MSA) 2
Night degree available (night classes) 2
Opportunities for oral presentations 2
Peer-to-peer interaction in departments 2
Scholarships 2
Mini-sessions 2
Career center/ job postings 2
Student professional societies 2
High standards of classroom performance
Enrollment standards
Student evaluations of faculty
Accommodation of disabled
Financial stability of institution
Mature, hard-working students
Proximity to Houston – access to training
Interaction at graduate level
Grade replacement option
Online resource availability
Growing enrollment
Good balance of teaching/research
Big Red Resources, Wings, Freshman Experience
Course work emphasizes cultural diversity
Grad students get individual instruction

**Weaknesses Identified affecting STUDENT LEARNING at Lamar University:**

- **Lamar’s academic standards and academic culture...**
  Students unprepared for college work 37
  Need stronger academic admission requirements (var: enforced) 22
  Students work too much (no time for classes) 11
  Ethics (var: and professionalism; academic dishonesty) 9
  Lack of student engagement with (motivation for/ accountability to) learning 7
  Inadequate academic advisement 7
  Bimodal distribution of student abilities 6
  Poor attendance (var: no attendance policy) 5
  Lack of support mechanisms for weaker students 3
  Lack of writing skills 3
  Grade inflation 3
  Poor study habits/skills 3
  Weak academic culture 2
  Students don’t do homework 2
  Retention of students 2
  Over-retention of students who lack ability 2
  Students focused on graduation, not learning Education low priority for most students
  No placement tests
  Lack of learning communities
  Insufficient contrast between high school and college experiences
  Low completion rates
  Poor graduation rates

- **Lamar’s academic programs and resources ...**
  Lack of critical thinking /analysis – too much knowledge-based learning 12
  Not enough hands-on/experiential learning opportunities 8
  Lack of library resources (var: too few hours- want 24 hours) 5
  Need comprehensive examinations
  Weak basic courses (math, English)
  Inconsistent course content
  Don’t teach (technical/scientific) writing well
  Need more library work and writing
  Weak attention to teaching research
  Need more research opportunities for undergraduates

- **Lamar educational technology...**
  Lack of support (hardware, software, training, maintenance) for incorporation of technology in courses 10
  Lack of up-to-date computer facilities and computer support 6
  Inadequate student access to up-to-date computer resources (var: software) 4
  Online resources often unavailable 2
  Need more technology integration

- **Lamar academic programming...**
  Need more diverse programs/degrees (e.g. African American studies) 4
  Availability of needed courses (more sections/summer/evening) 4
  Need interdepartmental cooperation in course scheduling 4
  Need more course offerings 2
  Lack of evening degrees 2
  Course sequencing not adequately structured/enforced 2
  Too few specialized course offerings 2
  Lack of evening and weekend courses
  Lack of coordination in multi-section courses
  Too many combination (grad/undergrad) classes

- **Lamar faculty...**
  Not enough faculty 6
  Professors with inadequate communication in English 6
  Lack of faculty development opportunities/resources 4
Too many adjuncts in classrooms 4
Need better professors (evaluations ineffective) 3
Faculty have low expectations of students 3
Underpaid faculty (not competitive) 3
Faculty diversity (not enough) 2
Office hours of some professors hard to find 2
High teaching load of faculty/Faculty need more released time 2
No faculty retention plan
“Crabby faculty”
Faculty over-rely on PP presentations
Need more professors who specialize in the classes they teach
Faculty need more graduate assistants
Inadequate support staff in some areas

- Lamar campus life...
Quality of campus life (Commuter mentality) 8
Student parking 4
Lack of geographical/social diversity of students 3
Location – high crime area (student security concerns) 3
Lack of global/multicultural understanding 2
Conflict among students of diverse backgrounds/de facto segregation of students 2
Dorms are “prison camps”
Dorms loud and unsafe
Noise level in Setzer Center
Dining hall hours
No football team
Insufficient recreational sports facilities for students
Students have limited family support
Too many family obligations
Inadequate housing for non-traditional students (e.g. grad students)

- Lamar educational facilities...
Inadequate learning facilities (classrooms/labs/lab equipment) 10
Overcrowded classrooms (classes growing too large) 9
Classroom layout not conducive to learning (var: desks too small) 3
Inadequate opportunities and facilities for study/tutoring 2
Not enough large classrooms 2
Need more classrooms and labs
“Homeless” departments (lack of faculty/student proximity)
Student financial needs...
Students have inadequate financial resources 4
Cost of textbooks 3
Inadequate financial support for continuing students 2
Inadequate financial support 2
Inefficient financial aid office
Need more financial aid for study abroad
Lack of on-campus employment opportunities

- Miscellaneous...
Failure to access educational supports 2
Lack of monitoring graduates
Foreign students struggle
Too many obstacles to drop classes
Inefficient online student registration
Lack of support for ESL students
Need for education portability
Need more interdisciplinary interaction
Need more student self-service (?)
Need more upper level Honors classes
Need more wireless internet
Need more career development
Need access to laptops
Lack of outreach to area schools about Lamar
Students too isolated (big fish in small pond)
Students don’t understand the importance of paper work
Students need higher-level computer skills
Lack of knowledge of current events
Beyond our scope…
State budget cuts (threaten resources) 3
Lack of industry-university collaboration/respect for Lamar strength 3
Weak economy means lack of opportunity for students/interns/grads 2
Legislative constraints 2
Small size of Lamar and corresponding lack of money 2
Employers intolerant of student schedules
Operational funds based on credit hours
Lack of respect for higher education in local culture
Weakness of feeder high schools
Appendix G. QEP Planning Committee Members

Dr. Benjamin May, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Social Work and Criminal Justice
Dr. Brenda S. Nichols, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Dr. Daniel Bartlett, Director of Developmental Studies
Dr. Jason I. Lambert, Assistant VP for Student Affairs
Dr. Judith R. Mann, Associate Professor of Psychology
MS Katherine Dewitt, Director of Learning Communities
Dr. Kevin B. Smith, Senior Associate Provost
Dr. Kurt Gilman, Professor of Music, President of Faculty Senate 2007-2008
Dr. Madelyn D. Hunt, Associate Provost for Student Retention
Dr. Paula Nichols, Director of Center for Distance Education
Dr. Randolph Smith, Professor and Chair of Department of Psychology
Dr. Sherri L. Shoefstall, Director of STARS Center
Dr. Tom Matthews, Coordinator of Assessment
Dr. Stephenie Yearwood, SACS Liaison (ex officio)

Appendix H. NSSE Questions included in ACL Benchmark

- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Made a class presentation
- Worked with other students on projects during class
- Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments
- Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)
- Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)
Appendix I. Summary of Senior Survey Responses 2005-2006
Appendix J. Key Core Curriculum Courses and Developmental Courses List

Because many courses can fulfill core curriculum requirements at Lamar University, the Core Curriculum Assessment Committee has identified the high-enrollment courses which the vast majority of Lamar University freshman actually take to fulfill core requirements. Assessment and improvement efforts in these courses will have maximum effect on LU freshmen.

**PHIL** 1370 Philosophy of Knowledge

**ENGL** 1301, 1302, 1374 Freshman Composition I and II; 2310, 2320, British Literature; 2326 American Literature, 2331 World Literature, 2322 British Literature

**HIST** 1301, 1302 American History I and II

**POLSC** 2301, 2302 Intro to American Government I and II

**MATH** 1314 College Algebra, MATH 1342 Elementary Statistics

**PSYC** 2471 Introduction to Statistical Methods, 2301 General Psychology

**SOC** 1301 Introduction to Sociology

**BIO** 1408 1409 Introductory Biology I and II; 1406, 1407 General Biology I and II, 2401, 2402, Human Anatomy and Physiology I and II.

**CHEM** 1406 Chemistry for Allied Health, 1408 Biochemistry for Allied Health; 1411, 1412 General Chemistry I and II, 2411 Integrated Science

**PHYS** 1401 General Physics I, 1402 General Physics II, 1405 Elementary Physics I, 1407 Elementary Physics II

**GEOL** 1403 Physical Geology, 1404 Historical Geology

**COMM** 1315 Public Speaking, 1375 Film Appreciation

**MUS** 1306 Music Appreciation

**ART** 1301 Art Appreciation

**DAN** 2304 Dance Appreciation

**HUM** 1315 Humanities

**THEA** 1310 Theater Appreciation

Developmental Studies

To assist students in meeting the requirements of the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) Program, Lamar University offers courses at the developmental or pre-college level. Students who fail one or more portions of the approved college readiness test(s) must be enrolled in at least one developmental course or program.

Pre-Collegiate Courses
To serve students whose performance on the college readiness test(s) indicates under-preparation, pre-collegiate course are offered in each of the skills areas. The following pre-collegiate courses are offered:

**DRDG 0371 – Developmental Reading**

Development of basic reading skills at the college level. The course is required of all students who have not passed the reading portion of the THEA exam. This course does not satisfy the general degree requirements for any major.

**DMTH 0370 – Pre Algebra**

**DMTH 0371 – Developmental Algebra I**

Development of basic algebraic skills. This course is a prerequisite for DMTH 0372 and require for all students who have not passed the mathematics portion of a college readiness exam. This course does not satisfy the general degree requirements for mathematics.  

*Perquisite for DMTH 0370*

**DMTH 0372 – Developmental Algebra II and Geometry**

Development of intermediate Algebra skills. The course is a prerequisite for MATH 1314 or MATH 1324. This course does not satisfy the general degree requirements for mathematics.  

*Perquisite for DMTH 0371*

**DWRT 0371 – Developmental Writing**

Development of basic composition and writing skills. This course is a prerequisite for all students who have not passed the writing portion of a college readiness exam. This course does not satisfy the general degree requirements for freshman English.
Appendix K. Draft Application form for ACES Fellows Program

The application shall consist of the following:
- Internal Routing Sheet
- Title and Abstract (50 – 100 words)
- Narrative Description (Addressing items 1 - 7)

Narrative Description (Six page limit)

1. Participants. List the name(s) of those making this Proposal and the department

2. Plan – Identify the target course, and describe your proposal. What exactly do you intend to do to increase active and collaborative activities and student learning and how do you intend to do it? Most readers of your application will not be from your discipline so please avoid the use of jargon. Descriptions should be clear, concise and easily understood.

3. Significance – Describe the significance of the active and collaborative changes to be made. How will these changes affect student learning?

4. Student Impact – How many sections of the target course do you (or the applicants as a group) normally teach in an academic year? What is the normal enrollment in each section? What is the Drop/fail/withdraw rate in this course (across all sections)?

5. Are there existing common student learning outcomes for all sections of the course? Are there existing assessment instruments and targets for each of the outcomes?

6. Will your department collaborate with you in setting student learning outcomes, measures and targets for the course, to include some student learning outcomes tied to core curriculum learning outcomes (critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and communication)? Will the department adopt these outcomes, measures, and targets across all sections of the course?

7. Do you have the commitment of your department that it will make substantial efforts to implement your successful course changes across as many sections of the course as possible at the conclusion of your second semester of ACES implementation and assessment?

8. Timeline – When can you participate in ACES Fellows Training Workshops? (These are three-week intensive sessions offered in Summer I, in Summer II, and in a distributed fashion throughout the first part of fall.) When would you begin implementation of the planned changes in the course?
Appendix L. Draft Template for ACES Instructional Plan

Name of Instructor(s):

Name of Course:

Date:

Context for Learning

Number of students expected in a section?

Age range?

Instructional delivery model (distance ed, face to face, other)?

Expected prior student knowledge or skills?

Cultural notes?

Expected student learning styles (Ex., visual, auditory, kinesthetic)?

Other pertinent factors?

Outcomes

Student Learning Outcome

Each instructional plan should address three to five student learning outcomes. Use a separate planning form to summarize activity for each outcome.

Describe a desired learning outcome for the course.

Does this outcome overlap substantially with a core outcome (critical thinking, communication, quantitative thinking)? If so, indicate which core outcome.
Methods, Tools and Materials

Tools and Materials
Describe the tools, media, and materials you will use to address the outcome.

Instructional Methods I (Your instructional theory)
Describe your instructional theory: i.e., How do you think your instructional activities will support learning on the targeted outcome? (Note: This theory will be important when you are asked to reflect on the success of the course and offer recommendations for improvement.)

Instructional Methods II (with special emphasis on active and collaborative learning)
Describe in detail the instructional activities that will be used during the course to address the student learning outcome. Include a timeline of major instructional processes that engage students in active and collaborative learning.

Assessment

Assessment I (What happened?)
Describe how you will document whether the instruction was implemented as planned.

Describe how you will measure student learning on the targeted outcome. Include a sample of the measurement instrument and a description of the measurement process with a proposed timeline.
Specify a student performance standard for the course, i.e., How will you use your measure of student learning to decide whether the course was successful in attaining the student learning outcome?

Assessment II (Self reflection and improvement)

At the conclusion of the course you will be asked to review the instruction in terms of successful implementation and effects on student learning. You will also be asked to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate based on your review and self-reflection. Describe what sources of information you will collect to inform the self-reflection process and how you plan to use them to support your recommendations.
### Appendix M. Draft Rubric for Reviewing Instructional Plans

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Instructional Context</td>
<td>Little if any meaningful description of instructional context offered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rich and pertinent description of instructional context presented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description of Student Learning Outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcome linkage</td>
<td>Not clear how the outcome is integrated into the course or core curriculum</td>
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<td>Outcome is clearly linked to the course and to the core curriculum where appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description of Instructional Methods, Tools, Materials and activities</td>
<td>Little meaningful description of appropriate methods, tools or materials</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Clear and rich description of methods tools and materials</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Instructional Theory</td>
<td>No statement about how the instruction is expected to produce desired outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Compelling reasons presented to explain how the instruction will produce desired effects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment to document what was implemented</td>
<td>Few if any plans presented to document successful implementation of instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clear procedures presented to document instructional implementation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe measure(s) of student learning</td>
<td>Methods for measuring student learning are poorly described and documented</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clear presentation of procedures for measuring student learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe Performance Standard</td>
<td>No clear performance standards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clear performance standards (decision rule) presented to determine success learning outcomes in the course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan for self reflection</td>
<td>No plans presented to support self reflection about success of the course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clear process and measures proposed to support self reflection about success</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix N. Draft of ACES Quality Continuum

Rubric of Instructional Quality
(A working outline)

• Scale

Exemplary Level of ----------------------------→ Low Level of Implementation

• Dimensions

Curriculum Planning
Standards for learning are clearly defined, rigorous and challenging.
Essential knowledge and skills identified and prioritized.
Diverse learning needs addressed.
A clear and effective implementation plan is provided.
An effective process for evaluating the curriculum is provided.

Instructional Design
Aligns instruction with course outcomes, university outcomes and student performance standards.
Includes timely assessment of student learning.
Provides for flexibility.
Effectively plans for a variety of approaches to student engagement.
Emphasis is placed on essential knowledge, skills and higher order thinking skills.
Students are provided with a variety of opportunities to receive additional assistance.

Assessment Design
Student learning assessment based on clear definition of type of achievement to be assessed and performance standards.
A shared vision of desired student learning is developed by providing models and exemplars.
Assessments are clearly linked to specific instructional activities.
Methods of assessment are aligned with the instructional approach, administratively feasible and cost effective.
Assessment of student learning covers a full range of essential knowledge and skills and students are provided with multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning.
Performance standards and criteria for judging student performance are established and shared with students in advance.
Assessments are systematically reviewed to eliminate sources of mis-measurement.

A Collaboration and Shared Vision
The implementation reflects a consensus building, collaborative approach that engages students and faculty beyond a single section.
Fosters community building and working relationships across sections, courses or colleges.
Appendix O. Draft ACL Assessment Instrument-Faculty Self-Assessment

Please read the list of different classroom teaching approaches BEFORE you complete the survey. For each teaching approach that you used in class, please estimate the percent of time you used it. If you did not use a particular approach, leave it blank. When you have entered percentages for all teaching approaches, they should sum to 100%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Approaches</th>
<th>Percent of Time Used</th>
<th>Teaching Approaches</th>
<th>Percent of Time Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active note-taking</td>
<td></td>
<td>Library assignments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application activity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Misconception/preconception check</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td></td>
<td>Muddiest point</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td></td>
<td>One-minute paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorizing grid</td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer-assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept maps</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pro-con grid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative cases</td>
<td></td>
<td>Problem-based learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>Question raising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking exercises</td>
<td></td>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debates</td>
<td></td>
<td>Role playing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining features matrix</td>
<td></td>
<td>Self-assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback lecture</td>
<td></td>
<td>Simulations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field experience</td>
<td></td>
<td>Small-group discussions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field trips</td>
<td></td>
<td>Small-group presentations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free write</td>
<td></td>
<td>Student-generated questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group quizzes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching internships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jigsaw groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>Think/pair/share</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratories</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ungraded quizzes/surveys</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td></td>
<td>Using primary sources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix P. Draft ACL Assessment Instrument - Student Form

Please read the list of different classroom activities BEFORE you complete the survey. For each activity that you used in class, please estimate the percent of time you used it. If you did not use a particular approach, leave it blank. When you have entered percentages for all teaching activities, they should sum to 100%. Also, please rate how MUCH you learned using these various activities (1 = none, 2 = some, 3 = a moderate amount, 4 = a great deal).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Activities</th>
<th>Percent of Time Used</th>
<th>How much did you learn with this activity?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 = none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 = some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 = a moderate amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 = a great deal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask questions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debates</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate other students’ work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate your own work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field trips</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratories</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library research</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentation (alone)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentation (group)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use clickers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ungraded work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in groups (in class)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in groups (out of class)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with 1 other student (in class)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with 1 other student (out of class)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing (in class)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing (out of class)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Q. ACES Fellows Self-Assessment of Implementation Success

Name:

Target course:

Date:

First implementation, second, or later?

*For each Outcome on your Instructional Plan for the course, please indicate how much you were able to implement the IP as you actually taught the course this time.*

Outcome number and text:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools/materials</th>
<th>Very little-Less than 25%</th>
<th>Some of the time-25-50%</th>
<th>Most of the time-50-75%</th>
<th>Frequently-75-100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional methods (other than ACL)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of ACL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix R. Job Description for ACES Project Director

Director, ACES Project

The director is responsible for the implementation, assessment and ongoing improvement of the Lamar University Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). This project, Active and Collaborative Engagement for Students (ACES), focuses on increasing active and collaborative learning for students in freshman-level classes across the Lamar University curriculum. The director will organize activities related to this project, including faculty development, and project assessment. The director will work in collaboration with ACES Steering Committee, the Assessment Coordinator, and the director of the proposed Center for Teaching and Learning. The director has budgetary responsibility for the ACES project. The director will maintain records and generate reports according to institutional and SACS requirements and may be asked to serve on various committees as appropriate. The director will report directly to the Senior Associate Provost.

Qualifications

Education and Experience: The director of the project must have an earned doctoral degree and be eligible for a tenure-track or tenured faculty appointment. The director must have experience administering and evaluating programs involving faculty professional development, instructional improvement, and/or student academic success. Superior oral/written communication skills, computer skills and knowledge of Microsoft applications are a must. Official transcripts are required at the time of employment. This position is security-sensitive and thereby subject to the provisions of the Texas Education Code §51.215.

Preferred Qualifications

The successful candidate should

• understand best practices in faculty professional development, instructional design, and assessment;
• operate effectively within a highly collaborative, team-oriented environment;
• possess strong organizational and interpersonal skills to serve a diverse faculty and student population.
ACES: Tell Us What You Think

The QEP Planning Committee

As a part of the reaffirmation process for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Lamar University is putting the finishing touches on its Quality Enhancement Plan. Each university is required to choose a project which will enhance student learning and present a detailed proposal for how the project will be implemented.

Faculty committees have been at work since 2007, and the proposal is almost complete. The project is Active and Collaborative Experiences for Students or ACES. Its goal is to improve student learning in developmental and core curriculum courses by promoting active and collaborative learning. The project will run for five years.

Now it is your turn to comment. Everyone at LU—faculty, staff, and students—is welcome to read and respond. The DRAFT proposal is posted on a comment site available through the myLamar main page. Read through it and share your thoughts about how the committee might make it clearer or design incentives or activities that would better suit Lamar.

We are on a tight deadline. The comment site will be available through Wednesday, February 11. The QEP Planning Committee will consider the comments as they make final revisions and prepare the document for submission to SACS by March 1.

The committee hopes you will find the proposal a practical, engaging blueprint for how to engage our entering students with challenging learning.

ACES: Summary

The ACES Project will offer a variety of activities to promote improved student learning in developmental and core courses:

- Workshops for all faculty teaching developmental and core courses
- A website, print handbook and a newsletter
- The ACES Fellows program in which individual faculty members or groups from a department will apply for grants of $5,000 (individual) or $12,500 (group).

Fellows will attend workshops, use more active and collaborative learning activities in a target class, assess student learning, and share with their peer faculty.

- After the first round of grant activity is complete, continuous improvement grants will be available for further work.
- ACES Certification. In the third year, a formal review process will certify that a target class presented by an individual faculty member or a department meets high ACES standards for learning.
What is Active and Collaborative Learning?

Tell me, I forget.
Show me, I remember.
Involve me, I understand.

This statement conveys the philosophical essence of the ACES Project. Active and collaborative learning (ACL) is a classroom approach which maximizes student learning by engaging students actively in the construction of knowledge, skills, and understanding.

Active and collaborative learning is based on the understanding that students are not passive receivers of knowledge. Instead, learning takes place best when students construct their own understanding, assembling and reassembling their mental constructs. This concept building happens most effectively when students engage with each other and with course concepts, subjecting them to application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation through such activities as writing, discussion, and problem-solving.

QEP Planning Committee Members

Members of the QEP Planning committee are:

Kevin Smith, Senior Associate Provost;
Brenda Nichols, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences;
Randy Smith, Chair of the department of Psychology;
Sherri Shoefstall, Director of STARS;
Jason Lambert, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs;
Madelyn Hunt, Associate Provost for Student Retention;
Paula Nichols, Director of the Center for Distance Education;

Daniel Bartlett, Director of Developmental Studies;
Judith Mann, Assistant Professor of Psychology;
Ben May, Assistant Professor of Social Work;
Tom Matthews, Coordinator of Assessment;
Kay DeWitt, Coordinator of Foundations of Excellence;
Kurt Gilman, President of Faculty Senate (served spring 2008);
Cindy Valdivia, student;
Stephanie Yearwood, SACS Liaison (ex officio).

To comment on the draft ACES Proposal, go to
myLamar>main page>
ACES channel