Austin Peay State University Response to Part III SACSCOC Onsite Report Feedback

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Recommendation 1:   The committee recommends that the institution provide evidence of clear QEP outcomes matched to specific assessments which will provide data appropriate for each outcome.

We have structured our response to this recommendation by addressing the analysis and comments provided by the onsite reviewers. In short, we have clarified our student learning outcomes, augmented our institutional goals, and developed a better focused assessment plan for evaluating student work that is based on the use of random sampling. This approach will allow us too more efficiently assess the impact of the Explore Experience Excel Quality Enhancement Plan on student learning.

C.   Analysis and Comments for Strengthening the QEP

The APSU QEP is a significant initiative with the potential to significantly impact the learning environment for students. Areas to consider for strengthening the plan are as follows:

1. Learning Outcomes: Carefully think about your learning outcomes. Be clear about what you want to do and what the appropriate assessments are for each outcome. If you are evaluating whether or not students can demonstrate particular knowledge, skills, or dispositions, direct assessment of student work (such as artifacts in a-portfolios) is important to include. A standardized assessment such as the California Critical Thinking Skills Test can also be used, but it is important to also clearly link results from this assessment to learning outcomes. For example, is there a particular segment of the test that can be identified that is most relevant? Will you compare results across students who have and have not participated in TLEs?

It is acceptable for an institution to have outcomes that relate more to creating an environment that enhances learning than to specific learning outcomes, but this QEP seems clearly focused on students' integrative learning.

Austin Peay Response:

The following revised student learning outcomes have been proposed. These outcomes were derived from elements of the AAC&U VALUE Integrated Learning rubric. The outcomes are more specific to the changes in student competence that we believe will be realized through participation in high-impact practices. In addition to these cognitive/behavioral measures of student learning, additional program goals have been added that will track changes in the culture of engagement as reflected in changes in student perceptions of opportunities to engage in activities that may lead to transformational learning. Comments about the plan to assess these outcomes follow later in this document.

Student Learning Outcome 1 of 3:

- The student will be able to connect applied experiences derived from participation in high-impact practices with relevant knowledge acquired from exposure to course work from multiple academic disciplines.

Student Learning Outcome 2 of 3:

- The student will be able to adapt and apply skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies acquired in classroom settings to address novel situations or problems in applied settings.

Student Learning Outcome 3 of 3:

- The student will be able to demonstrate the ability to engage in meaningful self-reflection that leads to self-awareness and a sense of competence to effectively respond to new and challenging contexts.

2. Institutional Goals: Goal statements could be slightly revised to better match assessment as well. For example, one goal is "encouraging the growth in the number of TLE courses, assignments, and activities". This could be stated as "Increase the number of TLE courses, assignments, and activities and the number of faculty, staff, and students engaged in TLEs". This would then match your measures of progress (incremental growth in faculty/staff involved in TLE activities, approved TLEs offered, etc.).

Austin Peay Response:

In addition to focusing on student learning, we have reframed the institutional goals for the QEP to focus more on tracking desired changes in the behavior of individuals, and in the overall campus culture, and less on the process steps needed to successfully implement the QEP, e.g., provide development opportunities to faculty and staff.

Goal 1:   Increase overall faculty use of high-impact practices.

Possible measures:

- Percentage of faculty who employ a designated high-impact practice in one or more of their courses in the past year
- Count of the number of faculty who used a high-impact practice in the past year
- Percentage of faculty by College who employ a designated high-impact practice in one or more of their courses in the past year
- Count of the number of faculty by College who used a high-impact practice in the past year

Goal 2:   Increase the number of high-impact practices offered to students.

Possible measures:

- Count of the number of high-impact practices offered to students in the past year
- Percentage increase in the number of high-impact practices offered to students in the past year
- Count of the number of high-impact practices by College offered to students in the past year
- Percentage increase in the number of high-impact practices by College offered to students in the past year

Goal 3:   Increase student participation in high-impact practices.

Possible measures:

- Count of the number of students who participated in a high-impact practice in the past year
- Percentage increase in the number of students who participated in a high-impact practice in the past year
- Count of the number of students by College who participated in a high-impact practice in the past year
- Percentage increase in the number of students by College who participated in a high-impact practice in the past year

Goal 4:   Improve student perceptions about the climate for reflective and integrative learning at Austin Peay.

Possible measure:

- Student ratings on the set of NSSE items that reflect perceptions of reflective and integrative learning.

Goal 5:   Improve student perceptions about the climate for higher-order learning at Austin Peay.

Possible measure:

- Student ratings on the set of NSSE items that reflect perceptions of higher-order learning.

Goal 6:   Improve student perceptions about the climate for student-faculty interaction at Austin Peay.

Possible measure:

- Student ratings on the set of NSSE items that reflect perceptions of faculty-student interactions.

Goal 7:   Improve student commitment to self-reflection as a precursor to future self-development.

- Students will be asked to complete a modified version of the Learning Activities Survey Questionnaire (King, 1998 as cited in Brock, 2010). This is a 12-item measure of the precursor steps to

transformative learning in which students are asked to reflect on their learning experiences. A sample item is "I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles." Students are asked to check all items that apply. In addition, students will be provided with a list of standard high-impact practices and asked to check those in which they have participated and indicate the number of times they have participated, e.g., undergraduate research-2. This instrument will be completed as part of the senior exit exam taken by all graduating seniors.

Once the baseline levels of performance have been established for these goals, aspirational targets for each goal will be created for use in evaluating goal attainment in subsequent assessment phases.

3. Transformational Learning Experiences (TLEs):

   a. Define TLEs for Austin Peay: While AACU's High Impact Practice criteria provide a framework for TLEs, these criteria are rather generally stated. Expectations for TLEs can be made clearer to all parties which will improve consistency, ease administration, and provide a more reliable base for assessment. For example, how does APSU define "significant investment of time and effort by students over an extended period of time" or "frequent, timely, and constructive feedback"? How many of the HIP criteria must be met for an experience to qualify as a TLE?
   b. Consider multiple ways in which students could demonstrate that beyond-the-classroom experiences have had an impact. For example, an option to having pre-approved TLEs is to provide students with more general parameters of what can be included and assessing the totality of a student's work in thee-portfolio after the artifacts are submitted. This could potentially ease the heavily administrative process of having all TLE's approved prior to submission.
   c. Carefully plan how you will organize the inventory of TLEs and for what purposes. Will you have a searchable database that students and others can access to search for TLEs? Would you want to provide a mechanism to track student participation in TLEs? How are these possibilities related to the functions that you will incorporate into a-portfolios?

   Austin Peay Response:

   Austin Peay State University will initially rely on pre-established categories of high-impact practices (Kuh, 2008) that include such well known activities as internships, study abroad, service learning, undergraduate research, and capstone courses and projects. Examples are provided in the full QEP report. These experiences are created/proposed by faculty and are reviewed as part of the curriculum approval process. The curriculum committee of each College will also evaluate proposals for identifying unique high-impact offerings that don't fit within the scope of conventionally defined high-impact practices. There are three key criteria that such experiences must meet in order to qualify as a high-impact practice that is consistent with the focus of our quality enhancement plan:

   - Opportunities to discover the relevance of interdisciplinary learning through real-world applications
   - Opportunities to engage in active reflection
   - Opportunities to demonstrate competence

   Academic courses that qualify as high-impact will be identified in our system with a "course attribute" that will make it possible to identify all students who have participated in high impact practices in any given term.

4. E-portfolios: Be very clear about how you want to use a-portfolios. Are they strictly a repository for completed TLEs? Will students add a component in which they summarize their learning across experiences so that, as they graduate, they are able to "tell their story" in a cohesive way (e.g., what they know and can do; personal and professional goals)? How much flexibility will there be in the design of e-portfolios-will students design and organize e-portfolios in their own ways or are there particular categories or basic requirements you need fulfilled in a consistent way to facilitate assessment?

Austin Peay Response:

E-portfolios will be used as a repository for student work that will be assessed to determine student mastery of learning outcomes. If a student's work is sampled as part of the assessment process, their e-portfolio will be reviewed to determine if there are artifacts linked to each high-impact practice in which they were a participant. Where artifacts are missing, the supervisors of each experience will be contacted to secure the original documents. (Supervising faculty will be asked to retain an original copy of the relevant assignment until QEP assessment for the particular academic year is complete.)

5. Rubric: The BRAVO-VALUE Integrative Learning Rubric is helpful conceptually, but will be a challenge to apply because it is so comprehensive and broad. Consider how it could be broken down or simplified to apply the assessment of student work. For example, in assessing students' integrative learning, is it essential to map across integrative learning and BRAVO or would it be clearer and more efficient to separate out these two assessments:

    a. TLEs mapped to BRAVO components (an institutional or program assessment, not a student learning outcome assessment).
    b. Students' integrative learning (however you define It) which could be assessed through a variation of the Integrative Learning Rubric standing separately from BRAVO. Consider the possibility of selecting certain elements of the rubric (those that best fit your goals and definition of integrative learning). You do not necessarily need to use all elements of the VALUE Integrative Learning Rubric.

    Rubrics to assess student work must be specific and clear to produce reliable data across multiple reviewers. There are good examples of integrative learning rubrics available on-line.

    Austin Peay Response:

    As suggested in the onsite feedback we received, we have decoupled the assessment of our QEP from the BRAVO student learning outcomes to provide for a cleaner assessment of the student learning outcomes associated with the QEP. The following rubrics that will be applied to the evaluation of student work as addressed in Part III C.6 were derived from the AAC&U VALUE Integrative Learning rubric**.**

Student Learning Outcome 1 of 3:

> The student will be able to connect applied experiences derived from participation in high-impact practices with relevant knowledge acquired from exposure to course work from multiple academic disciplines.

Capstone 4	Milestones		Benchmark 1
	3	2	
Meaningfully **synthesizes** connections among experiences outside of the formal classroom and content from various academic disciplines to deepen understanding of relevant fields of study and to broaden own points of view.	Effectively **selects and develops** examples of applied experiences to illuminate concepts/theories/frameworks from relevant fields of study.	**Compares** applied experiences and academic knowledge to infer differences, as well as similarities, and acknowledge perspectives other than own.	**Identifies** connections between applied experiences and those academic texts and ideas perceived as similar and related to own interests.

Measurement Plan:

- The person (faculty, staff) supervising the student in their participation in a high-impact practice will be responsible for providing the student with a capstone assignment that will enable the student to demonstrate his/her level of mastery of this outcome as described in the accompanying rubric. Acceptable assignments could include, but would not be limited to a written project, a written paper, an oral examination, or a written examination.

Student Learning Outcome 2 of 3:

The student will be able to adapt and apply skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies acquired in classroom settings to address novel situations or problems in applied settings.

Capstone 4	Milestones 3	2	Benchmark 1
Independently adapts and applies skills, abilities, theories methodologies gained in a classroom setting to active learning contexts to **solve** difficult, **ill-defined problems** or explore complex issues in original ways.	Adapts and applies skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in a classroom setting to new situations that involve solving **well-defined problems** or exploring issues that are routine to nature.	Use skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in one situation to contribute understanding of problems or issues.	**Identifies** connections between applied experiences and those academic texts and ideas perceived as similar and related to own interests.

Measurement Plan:

- The person (faculty, staff) supervising the student in their participation in a high-impact practice will be responsible for providing the student with a capstone assignment that will enable the student to demonstrate his/her level of mastery of this outcome as described in the accompanying rubric. Acceptable assignments could include, but would not be limited to a written project, a written paper, an oral examination, or a written examination.

Student Learning Outcome 3 of 3:

The student will be able to demonstrate the ability to engage in meaningful self-reflection that leads to self-awareness and a sense of competence to effectively respond to new and challenging contexts.

Capstone 4	Milestones 3	2	Benchmark 1
Based on experiences in multiple and diverse contexts, **envisions** an evolving and more competent self and states personal development intentions to build on past integrative experiences.	**Evaluates** changes in own learning over time, recognizing complex contextual factors (e.g., works with ambiguity and risk, deals with frustration, considers ethical frameworks.)	**Notes** strengths and challenges (based on participation in specific high-impact practice) to increased effectiveness in different contexts (Represents the beginning of increased self-awareness).	**Describes** own performance with general descriptors of success and failure.

Measurement Plan:

- Students will be asked to complete a reflection essay in conjunction with the project, paper, or assignment used to assess student mastery of outcomes 1 and 2. The purpose of the assignment is to provide the student with an opportunity to comment on the learning experience as an exercise in self-reflection and self-awareness.

6. Assessment Process:

   a. Reliability: If student work is assessed by instructors in many different contexts and with many different interpretations of "applying learning", how will you ensure reliability? A specific, clear rubric as noted above is one important component. Perhaps a random sample of student work (e.g., e portfolios) could be selected and rated by trained reviewers on an annual basis.

   b. Timeline: In addition to continuing to collect and analyze data from NSSE, FSSE, etc. consider how you can begin to assess student work as soon as possible. For example, if students are creating TLE artifacts as part of their first year experience course in Fall 2014, how could you capture and assess those artifacts? You will have some helpful data and learn how you can better devise procedures and communicate clear expectations in the future through this process (even though it might not be ideal in terms of how you ultimately envision your data collection and assessment).

Austin Peay Response:

The following narrative supplements the assessment framework as found in the original QEP plan. As a result of student participation in each high-impact practice, each participating student will add to his/her e-portfolio the relevant capstone assignment noted above that permits the student to demonstrate mastery of outcomes 1 and 2 and a reflection essay that speaks to their mastery of outcome 3.

As we assess the effectiveness of the QEP, we want to reach conclusions about the performance of the group of students who participate in high-impact practices as a whole, not the performance of individual students. This focus, coupled with the fact that we envision a large number of students being involved in the initiative, suggests that using a random sampling strategy for evaluating student work products would be appropriate. The sampling frame will consist of students who completed for-credit academic experiences that have been designated as involving high-impact learning activities and whose work has been stored in their e-portfolio or available from the supervising faculty member. (Supervising faculty will be asked to keep the original copy of the assignment that has been linked to student learning outcomes assessment.) In addition, the work of students who complete co-curricular activities that are recorded in their PeayLink Activities Transcript will also be included in the sampling frame.

The selected sample of student work products will be evaluated by a committee of faculty and staff who have employed high-impact practices in educating students. The selected faculty, representative of all faculty involved in offering high impact practices, and relevant staff will be provided frame-of-reference training to standardize the use of the rubrics created for the three student learning outcomes.

The training will consist of a thorough review of the meaning of the language in the rubrics, an opportunity to assess a sample of student work, and extensive debriefing about the application of the rubrics to that work. The goal will be to instantiate a common frame of reference among raters to maximize inter-rater reliability.

The assessment of student work will occur on an annual basis. Each student assignment included as part of the sample will be evaluated by a team of three raters. (The number of assessment teams will be determined based on the number of work products to be evaluated.) All raters will evaluate a small subset of student work to re-establish the common frame of reference developed in the training sessions as a means of promoting inter-rater reliability. The percentage of students receiving ratings at each level of each rubric after the first assessment phase will be used as a baseline. Once the baseline level of student performance has been established, aspirational targets for student performance on each student learning outcome will be created for use in evaluating student performance in subsequent assessment phases. In addition, it may be possible to examine changes in overall student performance over time for those students who participate in high-impact practices early and again later in their academic career. Finally, we are exploring multiple uses of an e-portfolio system. Should we elect to use that system as a repository of student work for those students who do not participate in high-impact practices, we may be in a position to make comparisons between the work of students who have and have not participated in such experiences.

7. Engaging Faculty: The plan includes measures to engage faculty (e.g.,grants, awards), but this is always a tremendous challenge. The component of the plan that includes recognition for TLE activities in tenure and promotion is impressive and could help if implemented. It is important to design systems so that faculty see participation as providing resources that help them accomplish their goals and/or provide a clear benefit to their programs. If faculty see a clear benefit to their students that can also be a significant motivation.

Austin Peay Response:

The success of the QEP rests heavily on the engagement of faculty. As a teaching institution, we have seen a culture of pedagogical innovation take hold in recent years. Two internal grant programs that provide a small financial incentive to faculty to focus on student success and course redesign have significantly changed the culture on campus to refocus faculty on student engagement. The evaluation of proposals and the awarding of funds has been a faculty-led process. There is a commitment among faculty to broaden the focus of these programs to incentivize faculty to renew their commitment to offering high-impact practices to more and more students.

In addition to providing financial incentives to faculty patterned after two existing academic success initiatives, we have begun the process of reviewing departmental retention, tenure, and promotion (RTP) criteria to determine the extent to which we can provide a further incentive to tenure-track faculty to engage with the QEP. Successful past efforts to alter the RTP guidelines within the departments of the College of Science and Mathematics to encourage more grant submissions give us reason to believe that many departments across campus will embrace additional revisions to their guidelines that will give added weight to the pedagogical work of faculty who are supporting the QEP.

8. Engaging Students: While students may be drawn to "real-world,"engaging experiences in and of themselves, administrative layers of any initiative can be a disincentive for students. The more the initiative is integrated into general education requirements and majors, the more natural a fit it will be for students. Students also respond to significant recognitions, such as a cord at graduation and/or recognition on transcripts (e.g., graduation with distinction in community engagement). When students are enthusiastic about pursuing such a benefit. the effects can flow beyond an immediate impact on students. Faculty want to support their students in meeting their goals and may be encouraged to provide paths for their students to be eligible for such a distinction.

Austin Peay Response:

A review of general education courses and key courses in the major will be undertaken to determine the feasibility of incorporating high-impact practices into these courses thus making it possible for students to be exposed to high-impact practices without the need to complete elective courses to ensure such exposure. Success in this regard would enable us to ensure that a representative cross-section of students will be exposed to such practices. The students who are less likely to voluntarily pursue these opportunities might very well derive the greatest benefit from exposure to them. In addition, the Learning Opportunities committee will determine appropriate and feasible ways to recognize students who have participated in high-impact practice experiences.

9. Administrative Support: The support of the initiative from upper administration (President, Provosts, Deans) is key. While support at the highest levels for the QEP is clear at Austin Peay at this time, the institution is in transition with key administrative leaders. All that can be done to secure the initiative such as establishing proposed positions and the e-portfolio system may help to maintain momentum.

Austin Peay Response:

The Administration under the leadership of President Alisa White is committed to supporting the QEP. As tangible evidence of that commitment, the University has created the Learning Opportunities Center. A number of staffing measures have been taken to prepare for the implementation of the QEP. They include the following:

- We have recently filled the new position of Administrative Assistant 3 to support the work of the Learning Opportunities Center.
- We are interviewing for the position of Learning Opportunities Coordinator.
- We have restructured an administrative support position as an International Education advisor.
- We have upgraded the position of Coordinator of International Education to Director of International Education.
- We have restructured the University's e-dossier position so the incumbent can provide support to the QEP in the use of e-portfolios.
- We have elevated our focus on service learning by converting the position of Assistant Director for Student Life and Engagement, whose incumbent had responsibility for service learning (among other responsibilities) to Director of Service Learning and Civic Engagement where the incumbent will focus full-time on our commitment to service learning.
- We will soon advertise the position of Internship Coordinator within the recently revitalized Office of Careers Services.

These personnel actions, along with the acquisition of an e-portfolio system, the training we will be providing to faculty, and the incentive plans in place for encouraging faculty and staff involvement in the QEP (budgeted at $125,000), are illustrative of the structural and financial commitment we are making to ensure the successful implementation of the QEP.