QEP Committee
Friday, May 16, 2014
Spring Faculty Assembly: PBH 172 5:00 pm-6:15 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Isaac, Ed Madden, Ursula Lande, Amanda Bond, Kara Jensen, Jeff Wells, Tarn Burton, Randy Elvidge, Joy Hughes
*MEMBER/S ABSENT: LTG Caldwell, COL Van Horn, COL Beer, Dr. Holmes, Jody Yearwood, Katie Johnson, Andrea Bourne, Justin Mays

* The Executive Advisors were not required to attend since this meeting was held as part of faculty assembly.

Discussion:
Dr. Isaac prepared a PowerPoint presentation focusing on the literature review for critical thinking and what information has been gathered from the research, such as, what it is and how it was implemented by others. The following topics were discussed:
a.   The importance of teaching the thought process along with teaching knowledge (content)
b.   The importance of moving from rote memorization to critical thinking
c.   Ensuring that critical thinking training is deliberately taught to students (why critical thinking is important, the definition of critical thinking, and how students can do critical thinking)
d.   Critical Thinking is a "conceptual swamp" because it stems from three disciplines that discuss it:
    a.   Philosophy – What is thinking?
    b.   Cognitive Psychology – How do people actually think – the process?
    c.   Education – How do we teach people to think critically?
e.   Discussed the four types of critical thinking (Mason, 2008)
    a.   Acquiring Skills Only – Critical Thinking is only learning skills that can be taught in any course or in a separate course
    b.   Context Only – Critical Thinking only occurs in higher level thinking in senior and graduate courses because students need to memorize the basics before thinking critically in an area
    c.   Skills and Context – Critical Thinking is learning skills and acquiring the ability to develop a critical thinking attitude in a discipline
    d.   Morals and Ethics – Critical Thinking should always be grounded in morals and values
f.   Critical thinking can be embedded in existing courses or critical thinking courses can be created. Research showed that Baker University has proven success with creating critical thinking courses. Solon (2006) had success with embedding critical thinking in his Introductory Psychology course. Currently, GMC embeds critical thinking in perspective courses. Also, Solon (2006) provides confirmation that critical thinking can be taught in introductory courses.
g.   Technology does not equal active learning, learner-centered instruction, or critical thinking. It can be a tool for teaching critical thinking if faculty have training on what constitutes teaching critical thinking.
h.   Discussed the Learning Pyramid and average retention rates of students' learning.
i.   Active Learning and Learner-Centered instruction can be paired to teach critical thinking, but it is not critical thinking by itself
j.   The three highest levels of Bloom's taxonomy demonstrate critical thinking. Also, that critical thinking is scary for students and teachers because as Dewey pointed out, it is a "leap from the known." Students have to learn to apply critical thinking to problems/issues that faculty members have not walked them through already.
k.   Faculty need to be cautious when using subject specific textbooks for teaching critical thinking because most of them do not assist with learning critical thinking, and in fact, they have exercises that state they are critical thinking when they are not (Nosich, 2005).

l. Other variables need to be addressed while teaching critical thinking because they are found to impact it. Students need motivation training, metacognition training, critical thinking instruction as it is tied to a context, and they need to be taught to use critical thinking skills. Utilizing critical thinking does not come naturally, so it is something that a person has to work at all the time.

m. Faculty need training to be able to improve critical thinking skills for their students. Training in areas such as, Critical Thinking instruction, Technology and critical thinking, active learning/learner-centered instruction and critical thinking, motivational instruction, metacognition instruction, and assessment for improving student learning. A teaching and learning center would be one solution for accomplishing this task. Another suggestion was a virtual café for faculty to see successful techniques used by others.

n. Discussed strategic thinking for the development of our critical thinking plan utilizing the contextual radar model. Discussed GMC's current critical thinking strategies, call for critical thinking outside GMC, students wanting critical thinking but not really knowing what that means, and the BOR calling for critical thinking but not defining it. The current core competency outcomes were provided to the committee members.

o. Research directs us to first define critical thinking as an institution. Two handouts were provided to the committee members to review others' definitions and overlapping critical thinking strategies discovered so far in the literature.

p. Committee members also need to review the assessments used to measure critical thinking and the definition and the assessment has to align with one another. A handout of the possible assessments was provided to the committee members.

Dr. Isaac informed the group about the breadth and depth of the literature review being larger than normal. The QEP share drive houses a thirty page reference list for writing the literature review. Therefore, she thanked committee members with assisting with reading the articles and providing summaries to be included in it, and she stated that faculty not on the committee also have already volunteered to read and summarize articles. Dr. Isaac said that by having faculty members participate in reading the research, she believes it will improve their buy-in with critical thinking. Therefore, she extended the literature review to have a first draft completed by the end of July 2014.

Taskers:
Committee Members: Dr. Isaac asked committee members to review the handouts and select which definitions and skills that each person feels should be included in the critical thinking definition for GMC. The committee members will also review the handouts on assessment and determine which assessments they recommend. Online meetings with the committee over the summer will occur in order to prepare for the August meeting at Fall Faculty assembly where the final draft of GMC's definition for critical thinking will be decided and the assessments will be chosen. The committee will have read the literature review before this meeting, and at the meeting, Dr. Isaac will lead the committee in drafting the goals, objectives, strategies and tactics for the planning process.

Dr. Isaac: Continue with the literature review and provide the committee with the first draft end of July 2014.