

# QEP General Description

After lengthy consideration and debate led by the QEP Team, Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College has chosen for its enhancement focus the institutionalization of a service-learning methodology to curricular courses and programs. Such programs have many benefits for students—both affective and cognitive. They afford the opportunity for students to strengthen their sense of social responsibility, to develop spiritually, and to heighten their understanding of human differences and commonalities. They also develop in students a habit of critical reflection, help them to deepen their comprehension of course content, and give them opportunities to blend theory with practice. In other words, service-learning combines community service with academic learning. Thus, it is not just volunteerism; it is an educational strategy that allows students to better master academic learning objectives.

The QEP Team recognized that a service-learning project is most effective when integrated into a regular program of instruction, not just an “add-on.” Such an initiative, then, would impact each program of study on the campus at its core—the curricular level, for it would encompass a tie-in between course objectives and service-learning activities. To this end, service-learning would take account of the complete spectrum of the campus learning environment. However, the QEP Team also recognized that measures of effectiveness would be integral to the success of a service learning project. In order for there to be a significant impact on student learning, reflection is required, the kind of thinking that allows students to critically analyze their service experiences and connect

these back to outlined course objectives. Reflective writing would have to be a major component of the plan. These activities would have to be done in all courses and curricula, an approach clearly aimed at promoting writing across the curriculum, for written communication is an integral part of every content area and discipline. As the improvement of writing skills has long been a concern on our campus, service-learning would allow us to both foster better student comprehension of course objectives, for, as educational philosopher John Dewey put forth, student learn best by doing, as well as boost student writing skills called forth by critical analysis. Such writing skills would include the following:

- Using writing to discover and articulate ideas
- Identifying and analyzing the audience and purpose for any intended communication
- Choosing language, style, and organization appropriate to particular purposes and audiences
- Gathering information and documenting sources appropriately
- Expressing a main idea as a thesis, hypothesis, or other appropriate statement
- Developing a main idea clearly and concisely with appropriate content
- Demonstrating mastery of conventions of writing, including grammar, spelling, and mechanics.
- Demonstrating proficiency in revising and editing.
- Developing a personal voice in written communication.

Initial efforts of the QEP will focus on the development of measurable goals and expectations for a service-learning initiative on both the course and curricula level, as well as the creation of an assessment structure for ascertaining the improvement of writing skills levels on those skills identified by institutional writing competencies. Successful implementation and evaluation of the results of the assessment measures will result in stronger academic course and programs as

they produce graduates better prepared to enter the workforce or to continue their education.

Our QEP will help us to meet the learning outcomes of our students. Through its emphasis on a connection with course objectives, it will be an instructional methodology that will create better preparation and training. With its focus on reflection, it will allow for the needed emphasis on writing skills. The benefits of a strong service-learning program can last a lifetime for all its participants.