



# SIZZLE

## What's Hot in Assessment

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### QEP Topic Selection Process

#### Where We've Been, Where We Are, and Where We're Headed Next

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As the University of Kentucky prepares for its SACS reaffirmation of accreditation review, a team of faculty, staff, and students has been engaged in the process of identifying a topic for the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a core requirement that came into effect since our last SACS review. As co-chair (along with Diane Snow, Professor of Spinal Cord and Brain Injury Research in the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology), I welcome this opportunity to provide an update on our process for doing so.

During the Spring 2010 semester, the Topic Selection Team (TST) canvassed the campus and community to announce the QEP initiative and brainstorm for "big ideas" regarding what we might focus on for our five-year QEP to improve student learning or the environment for student learning at UK. We did so because the topic we ultimately identify must (a) clearly stem from broad-based input across all stakeholder groups, (b) be related to the strategic plan, and (c) potentially affect a large percentage of our students.

In June, a subset of the TST participated in a two-day retreat examining the "big ideas," as well as program review reports and assessment data from units across campus, two years worth of issues of the *Kernel*, university press releases, and various Lexington community documents to identify emergent themes related to improving student learning that cut across them.

At the start of the Fall 2010 semester, the team rolled out six emergent themes and invited faculty, staff, students, alumni, parents, and community members to submit proposals related to one or more of them. This was done via an interview with President Todd on WUKY, postcards distributed across campus, an announcement to the University Senate, an article in the *Kernel*, and announcements on a variety of pages on the UK website (including the homepage). These themes are:

1. Developing Engaged Citizenship
2. Expanding Global Awareness and Involvement
3. Fostering a Supportive and Vibrant Campus Culture

4. Enhancing Scholarship: Critical Thinking, Effective Communication, and Academic Integrity
5. Advancing 21st Century Teaching and Learning
6. Navigating Successful Transitions

The team was pleased to see that individuals representing undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, and community partners submitted proposals.

In October 2010, the team met to identify 8-10 proposals to be developed into white papers. The white papers will provide more details in terms of what the project would entail, who it would affect and how, who would be involved, and a proposed budget. The white papers will be reviewed in December to identify three that will be forwarded to the SACS leadership team. The SACS leadership team will select the one they believe to be most feasible for UK based on human and financial resource, as well as improving student learning related to the strategic plan. The proposals for which we have invited white papers focus a variety of topics including global awareness and global competence, a center for service-learning and civic engagement, a multi-modal communication skills faculty consulting and student tutoring center to facilitate communication across the curriculum and in the disciplines, classroom redesigns to encourage active and team-based learning, information literacy, programs to facilitate effective transitions from high school to college and from college to career, fostering creative leadership skills, and a thematic year program. A small group led by the proposal submitter and a liaison from the TST (who can help the group adhere to SACS requirements for the QEP) is now developing white papers on these topics. White papers are due December 1, 2010.

We thank all those who contributed "big ideas" and proposals, as well as those who are now developing white papers. You are helping us demonstrate to SACS that our topic selection process is truly transparent, reflects broad-based involvement, and will ultimately be one that can transform student learning at UK in meaningful ways.