Pellissippi State Community College

Academic Audit

Humanities and Social Sciences

January 29, 2014

Compiled by:

Betty Dahl, Professor, Sociology (Team Leader)
Jake Hamric, Assistant Professor, History
Sara Malley, Instructor, Sociology
Toni McDaniel, Professor, History
Katie Morris, Instructor, Sociology

Edited by:

Charley Anderson, Professor, Philosophy

Introduction

This is the first academic audit conducted by the Liberal Arts Department at Pellissippi State Community College (PSCC). Formed in 1999 from three previous academic departments (Fine and Applied Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities), Liberal Arts has since been home to a variety of programs, including fine arts (art, music, theatre), communication studies (speech and mass communications), foreign languages (Chinese, French, German and Spanish), as well as the subject of this study, humanities and social sciences (HSS). Included in the HSS program are two humanities subjects, history and philosophy, and four social sciences, political science, sociology, social work, and women's studies. It should be noted that social sciences courses in anthropology, psychology and education are not part of Liberal Arts. Those subjects have been located in the Natural and Behavioral Sciences Department since the aforementioned reorganization.

The HSS program serves a large majority of PSCC students. In fact, 9,260 students enrolled in HSS courses during the 2012-13 academic year. While history courses enjoyed the most robust enrollment overall, 4,264, sociology and philosophy enrollments were also strong. In fact the three highest enrollment courses included Western Civilization I (1,580), Introduction to Sociology (1,361) and Introduction to Philosophy (1,306), while courses four and five were Western Civilization II (1,220) and Survey of World Religions (848), respectively.

The program has proved quite flexible in meeting this heavy demand. HSS offers multiple sections of its courses, especially those meeting general education requirements, at each of the College's five campuses: Blount County, Division Street, Hardin Valley, Magnolia Avenue, and Strawberry Plains. Moreover, the program regularly schedules day and night sections, distance-learning sections (two-way audio-visual and web), as well as accelerated cohort and fast-track sections. In recent years HSS has also offered several dual enrollment courses each semester in local high schools.

The primary constituents served by HSS are degree-seeking students who need to meet their general education requirements in history, social/behavioral science, and humanities/fine arts. Below is a list of HSS courses (15) that fulfill Tennessee Board of Regents requirements in these areas:

1. HISTORY REQUIREMENT:

    U. S. History I (HIST 2010)
    U. S. History II (HIST 2020)

    Western Civilization I (HIST 1010)
    Western Civilization II (HIST 1020)

    World Civilizations I (HIST 1110)
    World Civilizations II (HIST 1120)

2. SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES REQUIREMENT:

Introduction to Political Science (POLS 1020)
American Government (POLS 1030)

Introduction to Sociology (SOCI 1010)
Social Problems (SOCI 1020)

African American Studies (HIST 2040)

3. HUMANITIES/FINE ARTS REQUIREMENT

Introduction to Philosophy (PHIL 1030)
Philosophy and Film (PHIL 1500)
Survey of World Religions (PHIL 2010)
Introduction to Ethics (PHIL 2400)

Whether seeking a general associate's degree or a more technical degree in applied science, students depend on courses offered by HSS. Industrial management students, for example, are required to complete both a humanities/fine arts elective and a social/behavioral science elective. Many of these enroll in philosophy to meet the one and sociology to meet the other. On the other hand, university parallel (transfer) students, those seeking either an Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, or Associate of Fine Arts degree, typically have even greater contact with the HSS curriculum, since their general education requirements typically include two history courses, two social/behavioral science courses, and two humanities/fine arts courses beyond the one required literature course.

But the HSS does not solely function to provide general education courses for the general PSCC student population. HSS also serves a significant number of students who identify as either sociology, social work, political science, philosophy, or history "majors." These students commonly follow the Tennessee Transfer Pathway (TTP) that corresponds to their "major." The HSS offers additional coursework over and beyond the general education courses for these students, including: Introduction to Social Work (SWRK 2010), Social Welfare (SWRK 2030), Ethical Theory and Its Business Applications (PHIL 2420), Medical Ethics (PHIL 2450), and Marriage and Family (SOCI 2010). Finally, HSS, specifically the philosophy faculty, serves learning-support students by offering useful courses that are open to them, especially PHIL 1300 Critical Thinking.

The HSS program's full-time faculty includes ten tenured and six tenure-track faculty who carry a normal five-course load per semester. In terms of discipline, eight are history faculty, four are sociology faculty, and four are philosophy faculty. The program does not have any full-time faculty in social work or political science. HSS employs part-time faculty to teach in these areas; it also regularly employs another 30 to 35 adjunct faculty to supplement the full-time faculty in philosophy, history, and sociology. As needed, HSS also hires adjunct faculty on one-semester full-time contracts. For fall 2013 the department required three such positions (two in history and one in sociology).

In addition to teaching duties, HSS faculty play key roles throughout the college. History and political science faculty, for example, typically coordinate campus-wide co-curricular

activities celebrating Constitution Day and Black History month. In addition, HSS faculty have taken a lead in directing study abroad programs for the Tennessee Consortium for International Studies (TnCIS); have been active presenters at PSCC in-service sessions as well as the Faculty Lecture Series; and have participated in service learning projects. Two HSS faculty are also active as PSCC Student Success Coordinators and as such teach a reduced load of four sections per semester. Two sociology faculty serve as course developers for the Regents Online Degree Program (RODP). They teach exclusively for RODP and are therefore unavailable for PSCC offerings.

Leadership of the HSS program is marked by a collaboration between three faculty "coordinators" and the department dean. One coordinator oversees history/political science/women's studies, another philosophy, and the third sociology/social work. Each coordinator has a reduced teaching load of four sections per semester; and the dean, a member of the history faculty, carries a teaching load of one section per year.

Following a series of conversations and correspondence with faculty in the HSS Program, the dean called for volunteers to serve as team members for the self-study. Two history, three sociology, and one philosophy full-time faculty members chose to serve, with one member serving as the team leader to facilitate the audit. The dean, team members, and interested faculty attended a Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) Academic Audit Training session conducted by Randy Schulte. The team leader assigned each team member responsibility for a specific focal area of the self-study. The team, in turn, solicited input from HSS faculty during special program meetings, informal conversations, and email correspondence. Faculty were asked to evaluate and comment on the five focal areas, as well as offering their thoughts on areas and ideas for improvement. In compiling important statistical information, the team consulted the Liberal Arts Department, Academic Affairs, and Institutional Effectiveness. Once each team member had composed the draft for her/his focal area, the team met and reviewed each section. The drafts were corrected and submitted to a general editor for further revision before being submitted to the dean and assistant vice president of Academic Affairs.

Overall Performance

The HSS Program plays a critical role in the life of PSCC. Because the offerings include courses that fulfill key general education requirements, there are few students who will leave the College without enrolling in at least one of the classes that HSS offers. Therefore, the quality of the program and courses within will, in no small measure, determine the quality of the students' educational experience.

This was the first academic audit conducted by any program in the Liberal Arts Department. A team made up of HSS faculty members, including the program coordinators of History and Political Science and Sociology and Social Work, conducted the audit. The team sought input from full-time and part-time faculty members, the dean of the Liberal Arts Department, and other stakeholders, including the assistant vice president of Academic Affairs.

The audit revealed much stability and shared purpose among the three major disciplines that make up the HSS Program. Enrollment in HSS courses has kept pace with the overall increased enrollment at the College. As a result, full-time faculty positions have increased significantly, especially in Philosophy and Sociology, whose faculty has increased 100% in the last five years. History has not seen this kind of dramatic increase in hiring, but has maintained its staff of eight full-time faculty members, although one of those now serves as dean and accordingly teaches only one section per year. Part-time faculty teach 59% of courses in the three major disciplines, but 100% of the courses in Political Science and Social Work.

The HSS Program and its faculty play a vigorous part in the academic life of PSCC. All disciplines are involved or will soon be involved with the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) instituted at the College in 2012. Student engagement activities have been conducted by 100% of full-time Sociology and History faculty and by the vast majority of part-time faculty in those disciplines. Seventy-five percent of Political Science faculty have conducted QEP activities as well. This strong commitment to the College's QEP initiative makes these programs role models in the Liberal Arts Department and in the College as a whole. HSS faculty also participate in a wide range of activities, including the New Faculty Academy, a year-long training academy involving collaboration between new faculty and senior faculty and staff instituted in the fall 2013 semester, Brown Bag presentations and discussions, and in-service training. Three full-time HSS faculty members are also enrolled in doctoral programs, which provide access to best practices in their fields.

The HSS faculty is also quite visible in other areas of academic life at PSCC. The Sociology faculty is participating in the service learning program and is in the process of integrating service learning into all Sociology courses. Philosophy faculty members participate in the Tennessee Philosophical Association, maintain its website, and sponsor a student philosophy organization at PSCC. Philosophy faculty members are also active participants in the TnCIS program, having taught courses in Greece and France. History and Sociology faculty are also deeply involved in TnCIS. History faculty members have taught World Civilization and US History courses in Eastern Europe, India, Peru, Scotland, and South Africa; Sociology faculty have taught Introduction to Sociology in Greece and South Africa. Not only have these courses provided a more global perspective to the students, but they have also given faculty participants the opportunity to reflect upon their study abroad pedagogical experience and implement new course strategies to help integrate the curriculum with the opportunities available through foreign travel. In addition to TnCIS, the History faculty strongly participates in the Faculty Lecture Series, as well as in Women's History and Black History Month celebrations, where they provide programming every year.

The HSS Program ensures quality in numerous ways. All full-time faculty members participate in the College's robust self-evaluation system. Faculty members reflect on their own performance and set goals for the upcoming year. The dean of Liberal Arts and the vice president of Academic Affairs then review these self-evaluations, which also make up a critical part of the promotion and tenure system at PSCC. Students also evaluate all full- and part-time faculty via the Student Perception survey, which contains a core set of questions asked in all disciplines and classes (with some modifications for online courses). Beginning in the fall 2014 semester, a new digital instrument will give faculty the flexibility to ask individualized questions. Moreover, all full- and part-time faculty are observed annually in the classroom by the dean of Liberal Arts, their program coordinator, or a peer, to ensure that what is being taught matches the syllabus, and that there is some consistency between sections of the same course. Lamentably, there is no self-evaluation process at the College for part-time faculty, which omits a key means of self-improvement, reflection, and program cohesion.

All HSS courses are based on a master syllabus, which explicitly outlines learning objectives, requirements, and outcomes reflecting the general education goals set by the Tennessee Board of Regents. These syllabi are available on the College's website and are disseminated to all faculty members. The master syllabi also inform the content of faculty member's individual course syllabi. The dean of Liberal Arts and the program coordinators review all course syllabi for consistency and adherence to department and college policies.

The HSS Program is committed to providing wide access to the program's courses. Courses are taught in a variety of formats, including dual enrollment, lecture, cohort, hybrid, online, fast track, TWAV, night and late afternoon classes. The expansion of online learning is particularly notable. Several online sections of Philosophy, Sociology and History are taught each semester. History is currently expanding its online offerings by developing new sections of World Civilization and fast track Western Civilization for students who require a staggered course load. Additionally, all HSS faculty use the online course management system (Desire to Learn/D2L) to upload key course documents, which makes those documents always available to students.

Furthermore, specific activities are undertaken in the major HSS disciplines to address specific needs. Sociology and History faculty consult with University of Tennessee faculty to address curriculum issues. As a result of this collaboration, for example, PSCC students studying Social Work are encouraged to participate in service learning or to volunteer with an agency, which is a requirement to be admitted to the University of Tennessee. Likewise, it is a requirement in History courses that at least 50% of the course grade be composed of writing assignments. Sociology students are required to write a research paper. These collaborations guarantee a smooth transition when the students matriculate to the baccalaureate institution.

In order to accommodate a faculty located at five separate campuses, the HSS Program seeks to find innovative ways to connect. History and Political Science have instituted a listserv for sharing ideas. Program coordinators and interested full-time faculty meet with adjunct faculty at the beginning of each semester in a combined social and in-service event to share information and program initiatives. Full-time faculty continue this process throughout the academic year in both formal and informal settings, including meetings to discuss program issues and textbook selection.

The HSS Program is committed to the quality of its faculty and its courses. While the strengths are abundant, there are weaknesses that should be addressed. While master syllabi are available for all courses, a consistent policy of review and discussion of these key documents has

been lacking. All master syllabi should be updated for every fall semester after consultation and discussion with all faculty members and the department dean. In this way the syllabi will better reflect program and course goals and will provide a further means of collaboration between full- and part-time faculty.

HSS faculty are fully committed to PSCC's Quality Enhancement Plan. In order to make this a regular and permanent part of HSS coursework, all faculty members should complete a QEP activity. So that these activities can be a springboard for useful discussion and collaboration, the activity summaries should be made available to all faculty members and a discussion of these activities should become a consistent part of program meetings.

Student learning assessments should be strengthened. The college has several resources that program faculty should use with greater frequency. Both the Quality Enhancement student survey and the CBASE (College Basic Academic Subjects Examination) data are available but have not been a consistent part of HSS quality initiatives. These resources should be actively employed in the future. Likewise, pre- and post-testing of students has been used irregularly. Full- and part-time faculty should initiate discussions about implementing this testing in specifically targeted classes.

Finally, college growth has provided both new opportunities and challenges in the HSS Program. The addition of the Strawberry Plains campus coupled with an enlarged Blount County facility has led to additional sections and the hiring of additional full- and part-time faculty. With these opportunities, however, comes the real possibility that institutional sprawl will inhibit faculty collaboration. This challenge should be addressed through the addition of active listservs in each program discipline and with the implementation of teaching cafés available through the online course management system. In this way, HSS faculty can carry out meaningful dialogue, discuss program goals, and continue to play an active role in the development of the HSS program.

Learning Objectives

Fifteen of the 21 courses offered in the HSS Program serve general education core requirements. Courses that count towards fulfilling the general education course requirements have to satisfy the Tennessee Board of Regents area-specific requirements in both content and learning objectives and must also be specifically approved by and designated by the Tennessee Board of Regents as doing so. All TBR institutions must accept TBR-approved general education courses for transfer and for fulfilling their own general education core requirements. Thus, a major function of the College is to provide introductory-level general education courses for students seeking degrees and/or planning to transfer to four-year institutions.

HSS courses have master syllabi that clearly outline learning objectives, requirements, and outcomes. Master syllabi are located on the PSCC web page; individual course syllabi are kept on file in the Liberal Arts Department office and are posted on the class D2L web site. HSS faculty members discuss the learning objectives with students during the first week of classes. The dean of Liberal Arts and the program coordinators review individual syllabi to be sure that they are in compliance with the master syllabi. The learning objectives match the general education competency requirements laid out by TBR and SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools). The faculty works collaboratively to determine the goals and outcomes for each course. In the past, the master syllabi have not been updated on a regular basis. The master syllabi should be updated every year, and at that time the goals and outcomes should be reviewed and updated as needed by all full-time faculty.

The learning objectives in the disciplines are both general and specific and are clearly stated on the course syllabi.

History:
- develop the students' awareness of major political, cultural, social, and economic developments
- promote students' ability to think critically about the past
- prepare students for life in an increasingly global world
- expand students' knowledge of how the past has shaped the present

Sociology:
- enhance students' knowledge of the sociological imagination and the difference between personal troubles and social conditions
- enhance students' understanding of major sociological paradigms (structural-functional, social-conflict, and symbolic interaction)
- build students' skills to understand the scientific methods used by sociologists and how they gather information about the social world
- develop the students' awareness of culture and the role of language in the transmission of culture, and enhance the students' understanding of socialization as the process of creating social beings

Philosophy:
- expand students' awareness and basic understanding of philosophy and its various branches

- expand the students' knowledge of the questions/problems that have occupied philosophers during the last twenty-five centuries
- develop the students' ability to think critically about traditional philosophical questions and problems
- foster students' enhanced ability to think critically about various other philosophical issues
- build students' academic skills to articulate ideas about philosophical issues

Political Science:
- develop students' understanding of the key concepts and ideas upon which different systems of government are based
- develop students' understanding of how the political process works in different systems
- participate in a global world

Social Work:
- develop students' understanding of the evolution of the social work profession and its relationship with the social welfare institution
- develop students' understanding of the interaction between the person in all of his/her diversity and environmental situations as the focus of professional practice,
- foster students' enhanced ability to understand a solution-seeking or generalist approach to social work practice and the competencies to utilize this problem-solving approach
- develop the students' ability to understand the realities of social work generalist practice in both urban and rural areas

In order to be up to date about developments in the disciplines, HSS faculty members are encouraged to attend academic conferences centered on their disciplines. HSS faculty have served as program contributors and/or as officers in professional associations, which commonly focus on ways to improve teaching and learning as well as working to advance the discipline. The HSS faculty also believes that it must listen to its students and adapt its practices to students' varied circumstances and needs. To this general end, faculty members attend professional development programs and conferences where peers share their experiences and adaptations. The HSS faculty also participate in on-campus professional development opportunities, such as in-service sessions, Brown Bag presentations and discussions, and the Faculty Lecture Series, to learn about best practices. From the Quality Enhancement student survey, it was determined that students wanted more engagement in the classroom. All full-time faculty and many adjuncts are now conducting a QEP activity in their classes. Also, Sociology and Social Work faculty are now participating in service learning programs. HSS faculty members also benefit from PSCC's membership in National Institute for Staff & Organizational Development (NISOD), a national organization dedicated to the professional development of faculty, administrators, and staff, as well as to the continued improvement of teaching and learning, with the ultimate goal of improving student success. NISOD is a continuing valuable resource for information that allows the HSS Program to benefit from knowledge gained at peer institutions throughout the United States.

Curriculum and Co-Curriculum

The HSS program fulfills a key role in the general education curriculum at PSCC. The program greatly impacts degree-seeking and transfer students as well as many non-degree seeking students. All Tennessee Board of Regents institutions require 41 credit hours of general education for baccalaureate degrees and for the Associate of Arts and the Associate of Science degrees. Six of these credit hours must be a History sequence. In addition, students can complete their Social/Behavioral Science general education requirements by taking six credit hours of Sociology courses; students can fulfill their Humanities general education requirements by taking six credit hours of Philosophy courses. In sum, students can use courses in the HSS Program to complete 18 of the 41 credit hours of the general education requirements.

Curriculum design varies among HSS disciplines. Sociology faculty agreed to require their students to write a research paper and to give a speech in class presenting their research results. All History faculty assign at least 50% of the course grade via writing assignments. The exact approach to teaching the course content, as well as the types of writing assignments, is left to the discretion of the individual History faculty members. History and Sociology faculty meet at the beginning of each semester to discuss curriculum. Because both History and Sociology faculty use the same textbook in their disciplines, they actively collaborate as a program during the textbook review process to determine a basic rubric of course content. For History textbook review, an adjunct representative participates in the discussion of curriculum but does not vote on the selection of a textbook. HSS is currently discussing ways to increase the involvement of adjunct faculty in curriculum and textbook selection.

All courses in the HSS Program have master syllabi explicitly outlining learning objectives, requirements, and outcomes. The faculty discuss these components with students in detail when they review the course syllabus on the first day of class. The learning objectives match the general education competency requirements laid out by TBR and SACS. HSS faculty work collaboratively within their disciplines to determine resources and resource materials for their courses. The HSS Program is discussing ways to improve its oversight of master syllabi, which are currently not reviewed on an annual basis.

The Quality Enhancement Plan developed by PSCC during its process of reaccreditation in 2010-2012 derived, in part, from surveys taken by students revealing that they desire more interaction and engagement with faculty and other students in the classroom. Consequently, the History faculty began implementing QEP activities in their courses in the spring 2013 semester; the Sociology faculty are doing so in fall 2013.

As part of the History faculty's growing emphasis on teaching History in a global context, HSS has noticeably increased its World Civilization course offerings. In the fall 2011 semester there were three sections of World Civilization I and two sections of World Civilization II; in the spring 2012 semester there were three sections each of World Civ I and II. By contrast, in fall 2013 there were eight sections of World Civ I and three sections of World Civ II; in spring 2014 there are two and six sections, respectively. The History faculty plans to further increase the number of World Civilization offerings by 20% and 30% for fall 2015 and spring 2016, making them comparable in number to the Western Civilization course offerings.

Online courses play a key role in the HSS Program, which offers several online sections of Philosophy, Sociology, and History. Sociology 2010, Marriage and Family, a required course for students pursuing a degree in Sociology, is offered exclusively online. Philosophy currently offers multiple sections of Introduction to Philosophy and Survey of World Religions online. History currently offers multiple online sections of US History and Western Civilization. Full-

time History faculty will develop an online World Civilization course in the spring 2014 semester and will teach one section each of World Civilization I and World Civilization II in fall 2014. The History faculty expects to expand the offerings to two sections for both halves in fall 2015.

The HSS Program consciously considers how its course design relates to other courses at PSCC. A History sequence is required for students participating in the Associate of Science in Teaching cohort and in the Business cohort, programs of study in which a select group of students take the same evening courses over the course of two years to earn their degree. Furthermore, in the spring 2014 semester, students will be able to enroll in both Western Civilization II and Macro Economics (ECON 2010) as part of a "linked" course in which the History and Economics professors will collaborate on course content, teaching strategy, and evaluation methods. Additionally, several Sociology and History faculty members incorporate into their courses the annual Common Book, a book which is required reading for freshman in English Composition I (ENGL 1010) courses.

Best practice is a key component of HSS at PSCC. Each fall semester includes a pre-semester in-service in which several professional development opportunities focusing on teaching are offered by various PSCC faculty. Such opportunities and practices continue during the course of the academic year via professional development and Brown Bag presentations and discussions in which faculty spend their lunch hour presenting and discussing best teaching practices. History, Sociology, and Philosophy faculty have been actively involved in the college's Faculty Lecture Series, a series of monthly lectures during fall and spring semesters given by PSCC faculty that are open to all PSCC faculty, staff, and students, and are open and free to the general public.

The HSS Program does a reasonable job of investigating curricula of comparable departments at other institutions. Sociology and History faculty consult with University of Tennessee faculty to ensure that students studying Sociology and History at PSCC will have their courses count towards their major at UT. As a result, Pellissippi students studying Sociology are required to write a research paper in their Marriage and Family course; History students are required to have writing assignments comprise at least 50% of their course grade. Moreover, many History faculty at PSCC completed their graduate studies at UT with an emphasis on Teaching World History and continue to interact with UT's History Department to discuss best practices.

The HSS Program also integrates out-of-classroom activities into its curriculum. History, Philosophy, and Sociology faculty actively encourage students to attend campus events that comprise an important cultural atmosphere and are sponsored by one or more of the vibrant student clubs at PSCC. Some examples of campus events include the International Film Festival, the Mediterranean Cultural Festival, the Chinese Cultural Festival, and the Music Concert Series. Numerous faculty members offer extra credit for their students to attend these campus events. Furthermore, HSS faculty strongly encourage students to participate in the TnCIS study abroad program. Faculty members in the HSS Program have taught Introduction to Sociology, US History, Introduction to World Civilization, Survey of World Religions, Introduction to Philosophy, and Introduction to Ethics courses in Eastern Europe, China, France, Greece, India, Peru, and South Africa for TnCIS.

Teaching and Learning

The HSS Program strives to continuously critique and improve teaching and learning methods. From the individual teacher to campus-wide initiatives, faculty are involved in both formal and informal practices and activities to learn from best practice to analyze and evaluate current and possible future methods of teaching and learning processes. The Liberal Arts Department meets collectively at the beginning of each fall semester during faculty in-service to discuss larger issues of teaching and learning within both the department and the greater college community. HSS faculty do not meet as a whole group, but the individual disciplines each have their own processes for designing teaching and learning methods.

PSCC carries out several activities designed to encourage discussions of teaching and learning methods. At the beginning of each academic year, all full-time faculty are expected to, and adjuncts are encouraged to, attend PSCC's faculty in-service. During this three-day event, there are numerous workshops, presentations, and discussions devoted to a range of issues pertaining to teaching and learning, ranging from specific ideas for the individual classroom to campus-wide opportunities, such as service learning and study abroad. Professional development opportunities focused on teaching and learning continue throughout the academic year with several activities, such as the Faculty Lecture Series and the New Faculty Academy. PSCC has also implemented the Quality Enhancement Program to improve student learning outcomes. As part of the QEP, faculty are invited to participate in Brown Bag presentations and discussions focusing on important pedagogical themes, including QEP and Technology and QEP and Teaching Techniques.

PSCC strives to enhance both traditional classroom settings and alternative formats such as RODP (Regents Online Degree Program) and online courses to stimulate student engagement. Many of the courses within the HSS Program are core classes required for a majority of students. Because of the high demand, many courses have at least one class available online. PSCC and Educational Technology Services (ETS) offer many different avenues for both faculty and students looking for support with online courses. Each specific discipline within the HSS Program works to ensure coherence in the educational processes with all of its courses.

Each discipline within the HSS Program develops and enacts practices of designing and evaluating teaching and learning methods unique to the specific discipline. Because each discipline is unique in subject matter, there cannot be a uniform prescription for designing teaching and learning methods for HSS as a whole. Therefore, each discipline has autonomy in determining which methods are best suited to expose students to material, engage the students in learning, and evaluate the teaching and learning processes.

History and Political Science work closely together. History has eight full-time faculty members and 11 adjuncts, and Political Science has 4 adjuncts. Both History and Political Science have a formal meeting at least once during the semester and several informal lunch meetings throughout the semester. All faculty in both History and Political Science have access to the disciplines' listserv to discuss teaching and learning issues specific to their disciplines. History faculty utilize a mixture of teaching methods, including lecture, PowerPoint, and question and answer activities. The History faculty has found that, for the most part, group work is not conducive to the discipline because of the breadth of material faculty needs to cover via lectures and discussions. At the same time, the History faculty has found that the question and answer format engages the students effectively. All courses in History require a written component of at least 50% of all graded material, i.e. in-class essay exams, identifications, and take-home papers. Each faculty member is able to choose how to comply with this requirement,

but each course must have this written component. In addition, the vast majority of History and Political Science faculty have begun incorporating a QEP activity in their classes.

The Sociology faculty is composed of four full-time faculty members, one temporary full-time faculty person, and nine part-time faculty members, whereas Social Work has two part-time faculty members. Because of its size, Social Work usually meets formally only during in-service. All Sociology faculty meet formally at least once during each semester, and the full-time faculty often have several formal meetings. Informally, the faculty meets and discusses issues on a weekly basis during the fall and spring semesters. Sociology faculty use a wide variety of teaching methods based on the plethora of issues covered in introductory Sociology courses. PowerPoint, lectures, group work, games, and films are all popular delivery methods used by Sociology faculty. All Sociology courses use the same textbooks to maintain a fair degree of coherence within the curriculum. The textbooks are chosen each year by the full-time faculty. As of the fall 2013 semester, Sociology is in the process of designing and implementing the QEP program, adding a service learning component for each course, and developing a required research paper for all sections.

Because of the nature of the discipline, the four full-time faculty and eleven adjuncts in Philosophy have more independence in their courses than faculty in the other disciplines within the HSS Program. The offices of the majority of full-time faculty in Philosophy are located in close proximity to one another. As a result, formal meetings are not common, but informal discussions and meetings among full-time faculty occur regularly, whereas meetings with adjuncts are organized as needed. Philosophy faculty most often employ the Socratic Method in their classrooms to discuss reading materials and engage students. By contrast, Philosophy faculty do not use PowerPoint on a regular basis as they have found that the use of PowerPoint often discourages and obstructs the organic progression of discussions. The Philosophy faculty are given considerable autonomy in choosing their textbooks and other learning materials, but they are encouraged to include primary source documents and to use these as the foundation for class dialogue.

For all disciplines in the HSS Program, student evaluations are used as a tool to evaluate teaching and learning methods. Additionally, as the majority of courses in HSS satisfy core requirements, the QEP recommendations and strategies are being used to develop and enhance many of the courses within the disciplines.

Student Learning Assessment

The various disciplines in the HSS Program use multiple measures to assess student learning. All of these disciplines place a heavy emphasis on writing in the form of short answer and/or essay exams, short papers, and/or final research papers. For example, all History classes are required to have at least 50% of students' grades come from writing assignments. Faculty have agency in regard to assignment format, but the History program as a whole is committed to developing students' writing skills while expanding their knowledge of History. Also, Philosophy incorporates writing via short answer exam questions and/or content abstracts and summaries; Sociology students are required to complete a final research paper; and Social Work students complete a number of short papers throughout the semester reflecting upon course content.

Further assessment techniques include, but are not limited to, multiple choice quizzes and exams, oral presentations, and classroom participation. In addition to emphasizing writing, Philosophy faculty allocate part of students' grades to classroom participation, and Sociology courses involve a number of in-class activities to actively engage the students and assess their understanding of the material.

These assessment methodologies have been selected based upon the stated learning objectives of the various disciplines within HSS. For example, Sociology students are expected to understand the sociological imagination concept and be able to apply this concept to their everyday lives upon completing a Sociology course. To assess this objective, students are asked to complete a final research paper and presentation involving using the sociological imagination concept to identify and evaluate a social problem. Additionally, Social Work is an applied program in which its students are asked to research various agencies, as well as complete a specific number of volunteer hours at a chosen local agency.

Student learning is assessed throughout the semester in the form of quizzes, exams, short papers, research papers and presentations, classroom participation, and/or other methodologies that HSS faculty deem appropriate. For instance, Sociology courses involve multiple examinations throughout the semester instead of only a single, comprehensive final exam, and Social Work students are evaluated throughout the semester via journal entries and reflection papers.

While a level of agency is given to and creativity is encouraged among faculty in the HSS Program, each discipline works collaboratively on assessment design, implementation, and analysis. For instance, each of the disciplines utilize a common textbook for at least some of their courses. The History faculty chooses the common textbooks after collaboration between the full-time faculty, a part-time faculty member, and a representative from disability services. The Philosophy faculty utilizes common textbooks that all faculty members teaching each particular course agree upon. In addition, full-time Sociology faculty selects that discipline's common textbooks, while the adjuncts in Political Science and Social Work choose the common textbooks in their courses, which are only taught by adjuncts.

In addition to collaborating within their respective programs, there are a number of opportunities to identify, learn from, and evaluate assessment practices of comparable departments at PSCC and other institutions. The HSS program is part of the Liberal Arts Department, which is home to a number of other programs and disciplines. As a department, all Liberal Arts faculty meet at the beginning of each fall and spring semester to work in partnership on planning the upcoming semester. Outside of departmental meetings, the College offers a number of venues allowing for full- and part-time faculty to work together on assessment practices. Examples include the faculty in-service at the beginning of each fall semester, adjunct in-services at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters, and Brown Bag presentations and discussions on various topics, including student learning assessment. PSCC also works closely with a number of other institutions, like the four-year institutions that the College partners with via Tennessee Transfer Pathways and articulation agreements. As part of the Tennessee Transfer Pathways program, each HSS discipline works with the comparable discipline at the other institutions to ensure course content, including student learning assessment, is appropriate.

Quality Assurance

The HSS Program engages in a variety of activities to assure quality. The quality of the classes in HSS begins with a quality faculty. Before any faculty member, full- or part-time, is hired, the individual's qualifications are carefully scrutinized. The dean of Liberal Arts ensures that all faculty members meet the degree and graduate coursework requirements. All new faculty, whether being employed as full- or part-time, also go through a screening process involving interviews with search committees (for full-time positions) or program coordinators (for part-time positions) and reference checks. This is an important part of quality assurance because it provides a foundation of similarly qualified individuals who will both teach classes and shape curriculum.

Faculty quality continues to be assessed regularly after hiring. The dean of Liberal Arts, their program coordinator, or a peer observes all teaching faculty in the classroom at least yearly. The classroom observation instrument, which includes an examination of graded work and class documents, is filled out by the observer, signed by the faculty member, and then kept on file with the dean of Liberal Arts. In this way, faculty can ensure that what is being taught matches the master and individual syllabi and that there is some consistency between sections taught by different faculty.

Moreover, all full-time faculty members engage in self-evaluations yearly. The self-evaluation (see Appendix A for the faculty evaluation form), written by the faculty member and assessed by the dean of Liberal Arts, is an important means by which faculty members reflect on their performance during the past year. As part of this yearly self-evaluation, faculty members reflect on the outcomes of the goals established in the past evaluation cycle and develop goals for the upcoming year. HSS faculty members discuss their performance and their goals with the dean as part of the evaluation process. The yearly self-evaluation also serves to reinforce program goals and objectives.

Unfortunately, the HSS Program does not have a formal yearly self-evaluation process for part-time faculty. The College itself has not established an evaluation process beyond classroom observations and informal discussions between faculty members. Part-time faculty members who have taught for six semesters may develop a portfolio of their teaching and other academic work to earn a 15% salary increase, but they are not required to do so. Since part-time faculty teach approximately 59% of HSS classes, this means that a significant means of self-improvement, reflection, and program cohesion in HSS is being lost.

Student evaluations are also an essential part of the evaluation process for all faculty. Faculty members are encouraged to use student evaluations (called Student Perceptions at Pellisippi State) for reflection and improvement. The dean of Liberal Arts and the program coordinators review Student Perceptions as part of their quality control initiatives. Because PSCC still utilizes a paper-generated instrument, it has not historically been as useful as it could be. Although questions were developed specifically for online sections, for all other classes, the instrument had been static for a decade. In 2012, however, a committee with representatives from every academic department across the College and other stakeholders (office of Institutional Effectiveness, vice president of Academic Affairs, dean of Instructional Services) was appointed by the president to review the student perception instrument and delivery method. Their work produced significant changes to the student perception system. Beginning in the fall 2014 semester, a digital instrument will be introduced which will have a new set of core questions and the flexibility to allow for specific questions about programs, courses, and even

individual assignments. In this way, student perceptions will now have the potential to be a much more dynamic way to assess quality of programs, courses and individual instructors.

Furthermore, course syllabi are an important way to ensure quality and consistency across specific classes and programs. Every HSS course has a master syllabus agreed upon by faculty and available on the College's website. Contained in all master syllabi are course goals that reflect the general education goals established by TBR and expected learning outcomes that correspond with those course goals. The master syllabi are reflected in faculty members' individual course syllabi. To ensure consistency of curriculum and classroom policies, all HSS faculty are required to submit course syllabi to the department and make them available on the College's online course management system.

In addition to observations, self-evaluations, and uniform syllabi, the HSS Program is also heavily involved in PSCC's Quality Enhancement Plan, which was undertaken to incorporate active learning strategies into core courses to increase student engagement and thereby improve student performance (see appendix B for examples of QEP strategies). Though Public Speaking (SPCH 2100) was the only Liberal Arts course initially targeted by the QEP, in the spring 2013 semester, QEP activities began to be incorporated into all History and Political Science courses. In History and Political Science, 100 % of full-time faculty and 75% of part-time faculty participated in the initiative during the 2013 spring and fall semesters. Although adequate assessment of effectiveness has not been undertaken yet, anecdotal evidence suggests that these activities have increased both student classroom engagement and engagement among the History faculty, the latter through informal discussions of the activities and their anticipated outcomes. All Sociology faculty participated in the QEP during the fall 2013 semester, and Philosophy faculty members will implement the QEP in the spring 2014 semester.

While all disciplines in the HSS Program address quality by the methods discussed above, there are other quality initiatives undertaken in specific disciplines. In History and Political Science, all faculty meet formally at least once a semester to discuss programs goals and initiatives. In between, informal lunches are arranged to further these discussions. Because of the difficulty in scheduling, the History and Political Science programs have also recently implemented a history listserv as a forum for discussion outside of regularly scheduled meetings. All faculty members who teach History and Political Science courses are enrolled in the listserv. Several important initiatives have resulted from these discussions. A desire to promote learning to a broad range of diverse students has led to History courses being offered in numerous formats including, lecture, hybrid, online, TWAV, and more recently as part of the College's newly emerging cohort programs. In History, a mentoring program pairing full-time faculty members with adjuncts has been implemented. This has been especially effective at the Blount County, Division Street, Magnolia Avenue, and Strawberry Plains campuses, where casual contact between faculty teaching in the same program is not as easily available. Finally, discussion among History faculty led to a recognition of the need for PSCC students to have a greater global perspective. World Civilization sections were dramatically increased, and two full-time World Civilization specialists were hired as a result.

The History faculty is also actively involved in professional development activities to enhance their teaching abilities. History faculty members have been selected three times as featured speakers for the Faculty Lecture Series, are routinely asked to participate as panelists for college-wide in-service programs, are enrolled in graduate degree programs (one full-time faculty member just received his PhD and another will receive his in the spring of 2014), and

provide programming for Women's History and Black History Months yearly to the College and the community.

Although the History program does an admirable job of assuring the quality of its faculty and maintaining cohesive curriculum, the record is mixed when looking at how it addresses the quality of instruction. Beyond the global tools listed above, assessment tools such as pre- and post-tests have only been instituted sporadically. Although faculty has access to mandated exit exams results (CBASE—College Basic Academic Subjects Examination), they are not generally used in improvement initiatives. For example, while the CBASE means for History from 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 show an upward trend, this data has not been used in a meaningful way to understand why improvements are occurring.

Sociology has undergone much change during the last academic year. Because of increased enrollment in Sociology classes, two new full-time faculty members were hired beginning in the fall 2013 semester, doubling the size of the full-time faculty. These faculty members have joined their full- and part-time colleagues in participating in QEP, which the Sociology program implemented in fall 2013 with 100% faculty participation. Both new full-time faculty members are also continuing their education in doctoral programs. Sociology is also heavily involved in the College's new service learning initiatives, adding a service learning component to their classes. While it is too early to assess these changes, they will clearly have a substantial impact in the coming years.

The Philosophy program has also seen the number of its full-time faculty double during the last few years. Philosophy faculty represent a wide diversity of educational experience. The Philosophy program coordinator is in charge of the Tennessee Philosophical Association's website, and People in Philosophy sponsors a philosophy student club on campus.

Quality assessment is an ongoing process. While a commitment exists to assure faculty quality, more should be done to extend this commitment to student learning and to share results with program and department faculty. HSS should make a greater effort to assess quality through program discussions of the efficacy of pre- and post-testing and by making use of available quality assessment resources, such as CBASE and the Quality Enhancement student survey. Finally, the HSS Program should see the implementation of the QEP as an opportunity for reflection and discussion of how its members may assure that students at PSCC are receiving an education that reflects the quality of faculty who teach them.

Potential Recommendations and Associated Initiatives:

1.   Update the Master syllabi for each course every fall semester. All faculty members in each program will meet and review the course goals and expected student learning outcomes.

2.   Each semester, have 100% of HSS faculty complete at least one activity based on the College's quality enhancement plan.

3. Initiate active discussion among faculty in each program about implementing pre-test and post-test assessments in specifically targeted classes.

4. Institute more collaboration with adjunct faculty by having active listservs for each program and D2L teaching cafes.

Matrix of Improvement Initiatives

Proposed Initiative	Objective	Who	Performance Indicator	When
1. Institute annual program meetings to review course goals and expected student learning outcomes for the purpose of updating master syllabi.	To promote quality and consistency across the department in course delivery.	Dean and program coordinators will take lead with input from all full-time faculty.	minutes of meetings, electronic files of each master syllabus posted to PSCC website	AY 2014-15 and on-going
2. Each semester, have 100% of HSS faculty complete at least one activity based on the college's quality enhancement plan.	To promote student engagement in the classroom.	Dean, program coordinators, QEP committee, and HSS faculty.	QEP Database	AY 2014-15 and on-going (This process started Fall 2013)
3. Review implementation of assessment pre- and post-tests with a view to expand their use to targeted classes in every discipline within the HSS Program	To assess the degree to which students are meeting course learning outcomes	Coordinators and program faculty, assisted by the dean and the office of Institutional Effectiveness	CBASE, QEP Student Surveys, development of new departmental assessment tests	AY 2014-15 and on-going
4. Establish email 'listservs' for each program and create internet teaching cafés (by way of D2L) for the program as a whole..	To improve communication, discussion, and collaboration between teaching faculty.	Educational Technology Services, program coordinators, faculty	D2L webpages and email records	AY 2014-15 and on-going

Appendix A: Full-Time Faculty Evaluation Form

PELLISSIPPI STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
FACULTY EVALUATION

(Explanatory text under categories should be eliminated prior to submission.)

Faculty Member's Name_____ Department Dean_____

Department_____ Evaluation Period_____

The Academic Department Dean will indicate the faculty member's level of performance for the year in each category with accompanying narrative comments. Suggestions for improvement must be included where indicated. The overall final ranking will be acceptable or unacceptable with summary comments required.

I have read this document and discussed it with my Academic Department Dean.

Faculty Member Signature _____ Date _____

Department Dean Signature _____ Date_____

_____ Date_____

Vice President of Academic Affairs

Overall Job Performance:

Summary Comments: Provide comments which address the overall job performance. Provide an overview of performance—strengths and challenges—and, where appropriate, suggest strategies for improvement. In writing summary comments, consider every component of the Evaluation Portfolio.

Rating: _____ Acceptable _____ Unacceptable

COMMENTS (REQUIRED)

Category A: Teaching (65%)

Teaching applies to any manner in which information is imparted so that others may learn, and may include, but is not limited to, a variety of techniques including instruction, development of course materials and courseware, and development of innovative approaches to teaching.

Five distinct elements to be considered are

1. Curriculum and or program development—creating effective course materials and courseware either on the classroom, discipline, or institutional level, organizing subject matter in a logical way to motivate students, and generally stimulating creativity in students within the discipline area.

2. Development and application of current instructional techniques—employing innovative techniques that might include online and computer-assisted course development. Many possibilities might be applicable to this category such as use of multimedia stations, visual aids, and other enrichment techniques.

3. Use of diverse teaching methodologies—being mindful of developing approaches that result in outstanding student products and/or student learning. A variety of methodologies might be appropriate including group work, student created projects, discussion, etc.

4. Staying current in his/her field or discipline/specialization—while this category may most often suggest traditional professional development, other possibilities exist such as reading relevant publications, doing research through various avenues for material to incorporate in the classroom, and regularly revising all elements used in the individual teaching environment.

5. Student perception of instructor—the faculty member summarizes the data and responds to the students' perceptions, if deemed necessary by the faculty member. Responses may include explanation, agreement, disagreement, plans for revision or improvement, etc.

Mark the appropriate blank. Provide comments which explain ratings. If appropriate, suggest strategies for improvement.

Rating: _____ Exceptional; _____ Good; _____ Needs Improvement; _____Unsatisfactory

Category B: Service/Outreach (20%)

The college benefits from faculty interaction with students outside the bounds of the classroom; from faculty participation in departmental, college, or state committees and other initiatives; and from faculty contributions to the community at large.

1: Student Interaction

This component of the faculty member's service might include activities such as advising, mentoring, offering help sessions, holding conferences, sponsoring student organizations and/or participating in student-oriented events, writing letters of reference for students, etc.

Rating: _____ Exceptional; _____ Good; _____ Needs Improvement; _____ Unsatisfactory

Comments:

2: College and Community Service*

a. The faculty member may serve the college in a variety of ways. Chairing or participating in departmental, program, or college-wide committees or undertaking special projects or assignments are examples of college service.

b. Community service involves the faculty member giving of his/her time and professional expertise outside the college to the community at large; professional service involves contributions to organizations related to the faculty member's discipline or to the teaching profession generally. Examples might be working with area K-12 schools, consulting, providing professional expertise, supporting charitable organizations or causes, serving on statewide or TBR committees, guest lecturing on other campuses and other appropriate activities.

Rating: _____ Exceptional; _____ Good; _____ Needs Improvement; _____ Unsatisfactory

* Community service does not take the place of college service

Category C: Scholarship/Creative Activities/Research (15%)

Professional Development

This category contains typical professional development activities such as presentations at a professional meeting, journal editorship, article and grant proposal review, performances, exhibitions, creative activities, as well as completing books, journal articles or monographs, and other appropriate activities. Taking classes, attending workshops, and professional conferences are also included.

Rating: _____ Exceptional; _____Good; _____ Needs Improvement; _____ Unsatisfactory

Comments:

Category D: Goals

Provide comments about the instructor's goals. Individual faculty member's goals should lead to self-improvement, furtherance of the department and/or college goals, and higher levels of student achievement as measured by academic program goals.

Appendix B: Sample QEP Activity Reports for History and Political Science Fall 2013

1. <u>Learning Activity Objective</u>: To help students develop new ways of learning, through group activities versus standard lecture techniques.

Preparation: The students were divided into groups and each student assigned a section of the chapter. They prepared for a class presentation and group discussion. The remainder of the students read the chapter in order to be prepared for discussion. After the three groups presented their chapters, the examination was administered.

Activity: There were three groups of five, each group presented the information from their chapter to the class, students did not stand and present, the class sat in a circle, in order to promote conversation. While the individuals presented their information, students politely interrupted with any questions or additional information. If the students presenting glossed over important information or neglected to present information, the instructor interjected important facts. After the presentation, the students discussed the information in a completely informal manner. The instructor sat amongst the students and participated in the conversation without using standard lecture techniques.

Results-Engagement: The students were asked to complete the QEP in-class activity survey upon completion of all three groups' presentations.

Quality Education Plan (QEP) In-class Activity Survey

Engaging __6_:__1_:___:__2_:___:___:___boring

Useless ___:___:___:__2_:___:__2_:_5__beneficial

Easy __3_:___:_2__:_3__:_1__:___:___difficult

Dull ___:___:___:_2__:_1__:_2__:__4_exciting

Valuable _5__:_1__:_2__:___:_1__:___:___worthless

Complex ___:___:_1__:__3_:_3__:___:_2__simple

Comments: I think the groups were really helpful. In the chapter where I had to read I feel like I learned more than when I didn't have to read and just take notes from others. The activity definitely helped me to understand the course material a lot better. It was beneficial to be challenged by sharing with the group. Often time's teachers teach from the book, not being lectured for 3 consecutive hours proved more beneficial. The activity was very engaging and fun! The groups are a good way to get everyone involved. The group sessions allowed for leadership development and better communication amongst the class.

Results-Outcomes: Although different study habits often determine the outcome of an exam, the students did better on this exam then on the previous exam. It is difficult to determine if the activity caused better test scores or if the information covered during the activity was more interesting to the class. The activity did achieve one outcome, which as an instructor, I feel is significant, and that is the engagement of students to the information, to the other students, and to the instructor. I was quite happy with the activity and will try it again in smaller classes. However, I can see that difficulties could occur doing this activity in a larger class.\

2. Learning Activity Objective: To help students learn to write an introductory paragraph in a history essay to facilitate clarity of expression and critical thought.

Activity:

Students were divided into small groups of three or four. Each group was assigned one essay question from the upcoming in-class exam study guide. Each group had twenty minutes to write an introductory paragraph. When completed, each group designated one member to write the group's intro on the whiteboard to present to the class for review. Under the instructor's direction, the class used the remainder of the class period to critically analyze the strengths and weaknesses of as many of the introductions as the class could reasonably cover (the class discussed four of the seven intro paragraphs). For each paragraph discussed, the process went as follows: the instructor asked any non-group member to explain the strengths of the intro; the instructor then asked the class to describe what could be improved upon, what was missing, and/or what wasn't necessary in the intro. Then, the instructor asked the group members who wrote the paragraph to comment and respond to their classmates' observations, and to discuss what they learned from the exercise moving forward to prepare for the exam. The instructor then summarized the main points learned from the class discussion.

Results-Engagement:

The students were asked to complete the QEP In-Class Activity Survey one week after completing the first in-class essay exam. The responses are given below.

Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) In-Class Activity Survey

engaging _4_:_11:_4_:_2_:_1_:_0_:_0_boring

useless_0_:_0_:_0_:__:_1_:_7:_14 beneficial

easy_4_:_6_:_2_:_8:_2_:_0_:_0_difficult

dull_0_:_0_:_0_:_7_:_8:_5_:_1_exciting

valuable_10:_10:_2_:_0_:_0_:_0_:_0_worthless

complex_0_:_2_:_4:_3_:_4_:_5_:_4_simple

Comments:

I like the way of students teaching other students in class with the instructor's help.

Helped me get an outline together, really think about the questions, and know what was expected.

If we didn't do this exercise, I know I would have done a whole lot worse on the exam. It helped a lot with forming my thesis and getting the grip on exactly what I needed to write about.

Excellent review.

I like doing the practice paragraphs because we can see what you are looking for as far as the essays. We also get examples on all the questions.

I thought it very helpful in letting us know what you were looking for, especially in the first paragraph. It let us know how detailed you wanted us to be.

It's a good thing, gives me ideas on how to do something.

I found the exercise very helpful.

Working on introductions for each question was very helpful in trying to organize information for the exam.

It was a good thing to do.

Found it valuable because it allowed me to look at the questions in ways I normally wouldn't.

It was a good example to understand how his grading was going to go. Great usage of time.

The in-class activity was helpful and gave me insight on what the professor expected on the exam.

I think it would have been a lot easier to write a paragraph if my partners contributed more.

Results-Outcomes:

The ability to write introductory paragraphs is essential in college-level history classes. A student needs to effectively introduce the topic to be discussed and write a clear thesis statement. One of the most important outcomes of the group activity was that many students realized the amount of preparation needed to succeed on an in-class essay exam. The exam study guide contained four questions. Since the groups completed their introduction in fifteen-to-twenty minutes, many students realized that preparing to write four full essays, any of which could appear as the exam question, would take several hours of hard work outside of class. Moreover,

it was clear that the vast majority of the class was extremely appreciative of their classmates offering them honest and constructive criticism.

Although cause and effect cannot be conclusively asserted, two observations can be made: First, the quality of the in-class essays improved from those written in previous semesters. Most of the students had well-written introductions, which helped them write much more organized, structured, and clearly developed essays than those from past semesters. Second, the grades did improve, as the average essay grade was 82.5%, a low B. During my eight years teaching at PSCC, a typical in-class essay average ranges from 75 to 78% (C to C+). I especially liked that the grade distribution for this essay exam was as follows: A (8), B (18), C (7), D (0), F (2).

Based on students' comments and my own observations, I plan to expand the group activity in spring 2014 by conducting a second exercise in which students will form small groups and write body paragraphs in addition to the intro paragraph group activity.

3. <u>Learning Activity Objective</u>: To help students learn the dynamic relationship between historical events and the ensuing documents and to challenge their analytical skills.

Activity: The Treasure Hunt

Preparation: This activity centered on three items: U.S. Historical events of 1750-1787, The Declaration of Independence, and The U.S. Constitution – common to most U.S. Survey classes. All three of these were contained within the course textbook.

In this project students were first asked to choose ten grievances that were stated in The Declaration of Independence. The students then located the specific historical event that led to that grievance. Second, each student was asked to find and identify the specific Article and Section in The U.S. Constitution that protected citizens from a recurrence of that problem or violation of rights. In their completed essay, the students were then required to provide specific information. This was designed to encourage students to exhibit basic and analytical knowledge of both the historical event and the ensuing documents. As a result, students became familiar with the language and intent of both The Declaration of Independence and The Constitution. As this "treasure hunt" progressed, it built awareness of the relationship of daily history and official documents, as well as the consequences and significance of historical events.

The proposed activity was conducted during the two week period of study of the Revolutionary period. In the QEP engagement activity, students initially worked on their own. When the assignment was completed, the students arranged into groups to discuss and evaluate their responses. Each group will presented their findings to the class for review. The class discussed the accuracy of the directed findings.

Results-Engagement:

After the activity, the students were asked to complete the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) In-class Activity Survey. The results are shown below.

Quality Enhancement Plan In-Class Survey:

engaging ___:_4__:__8_:__1__:___:___:___boring

useless___:___:___:__1__:__8__:_3__:_1__beneficial

easy___:____:__1__:___5__:__6_:__1_:___difficult

dull___:___:___:__1___:_2__:__10___:____exciting

valuable__2_:__7_:_4__:___:___:___:____worthless

complex___:_4__:_2__:__6__:__1_:___:___simple

4. Learning Activity Objective Split-room debate

In a split-room debate, the instructor makes a brief presentation about a controversial topic (or any topic that has opposing points of view) and divides the room in half with each side representing one of the major points of view on the issue. Students are then asked to sit on the side of the room that corresponds to their position on the issue. The instructor moderates the discussion as each of the groups presents the arguments for its side of the debate. Students are encouraged to move to the other side of the room if their view changes as the debate continues. The split-room debate provides a framework for students to carefully develop their arguments and points of view. It also helps students recognize a range of perspectives that are inherent to complex topics and realize how their own opinions and the opinions of others can change as understanding of each side of the debate continues.

Although many learning outcomes can be improved through use of the split-room debate, the targeted student learning outcome of the split-room debate will be the students' ability to analyze and critique historical issues. This exercise will allow the students to debate with minimal prompts from the instructor, and the strategy will be implemented in order to get the students to discuss the material with one another in the hopes of creating better analytical and critical skills through student to peer and student to content engagement.

Following a lecture on the United States Constitution, the class was asked to research material concerning the ratification of the constitution. The class was then instructed to take a position concerning the ratification of the constitution mirroring the debate between the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists. The students were then asked to debate the ratification of the constitution

using historical documentation and to make arguments for the ratification or denunciation of the proposed constitution. As the debate evolved, the students were allowed to change their position based on the arguments. After the debate ended, students were asked which way they would have voted and why.

After the debate concluded, students took an engagement survey regarding the exercise, and they were also tested on how well they were able to synthesize and analyze the information on the final exam. A rubric was created in order to determine an overall score for their final exam essay. This metric also served as an indicator of how well they grasped the ratification process.

Engagement Results

Quality Education Plan (QEP) In-class Activity Survey

Based on information gathered from students and faculty in focus groups, Pellissippi's QEP team has designed a variety of activities to improve student learning. We would like your opinion of the activity in which you participated so that we may further design, improve, and test these kinds of activities. We appreciate your responding to the following and offering any comments that you may have.

Instructions: Make your ratings by checking the appropriate space. For example,

engaging _12__:_11__:_7__:___:___:___:___ boring

useless _1__:___:_2__:___:__6_:_11__:_10__ beneficial

easy __1_:___:_4__:_11__:_5__:_6__:_3__ challenging

dull ___:___:___:_6__:_9__:__8_:__7_ exciting

valuable _10__:_12__:__5_:_2__:___:___:___ worthless

complex _4__:_4__:_8__:_12__:__1_:__1_:___ simple

Comments:

Was an effective way to get involved with my classmates.

I really liked the debate. I feel like it helps us as students form our opinions.

Very engaging and very useful.

I think it was a good idea because you are hearing the information from a peer.

I think we should do more debates.

I think it is effective was to learn more about the subject.

Summative results

Each exam and corresponding ratification section was scored using the following rubric scale: 1= below average, 2 = average, 3 = good 4 = excellent. After each paper and section was scored using this scale, the means were compared. For the essay portion of final exam the student mean was a 2.69, while the mean for the section on the ratification process was 2.81. The results indicated that although there was a slight increase in the mean for the section that centered on the ratification section, most students who did well on the total exam did well on the ratification section. Though the results did not vary greatly, the results of the engagement survey were most positive.

5. Learning Activity Objective: To teach students to write a directed paragraph on an historical identification to facilitate clarity of expression and prepare students for their upcoming final exam.

Activity:

At the conclusion of the lecture, students were each given a short identification term covered in class and instructed to spend the next ten to fifteen minutes writing a directed paragraph on that topic of six to eight sentences in length. When completed, students were then invited to write their answers on the whiteboard. Once all the answers were collected, the class then spent the next thirty minutes critically analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of each response. For each paragraph, the process was as follows: the instructor asked the other students to offer their observations on the strengths of each short identification; then the instructor asked the class to provide suggestions that could improve the answer – what information was missing, what information was useful but non-essential, was the response clear and concise in its execution, and whether the response addressed the question of each terms' historical significance. The instructor then summarized the main points from the discussion and invited students to share their observations on what they learned from the exercise and how it can help them prepare for their upcoming final exam.

Results-Engagement:

Students were asked to complete the QEP In-Class Activity Survey immediately after the exercise. The results are tallied below:

engaging_2_:___:___:__ _:___:___:___boring

useless___:___:___:___:___:_1_:_1_¬beneficial

easy___:___:_1_:___:_1_:___:___difficult

dull___:___:___:___:_1_:_1_:___exciting

valuable_2_:___:___:___:___:___:___worthless

complex___:_1_:___:___:___:___:___simple

• No student comments were included with the returned QEP surveys

Results-Outcomes:

The ability to effectively write directed short identification paragraphs is essential in any college-level history class. A student needs to clearly and concisely demonstrate to the instructor both a basic knowledge of the concept, event, or person and the historical significance of the term. One of the most important outcomes of the class activity was that students came to understand what is expected of them on their exams and the amount of preparation that is necessary to achieve those expectations. Students also understood that short identification terms cannot be addressed narrowly; the terms are related to other course material and that it is vital they explicitly make these connections both as they study for their exams and ultimately write their short identification paragraphs during the test.

Although cause and effect cannot be conclusively asserted, two important observations can be made. First, students appeared to gain more from this activity, which required them to engage directly with their classmates and effectively "self-grade" exam material, than standard test review. Second, grades on short identification material over the course of the semester have trended upward from a base of F (2) and C- (1) to C-(1) and A (2) on the midterm and A (2) on the final reading check. While the compressed time-frame of the course and the freshness of the QEP Activity cannot be discounted as a factor contributing to the marked improvement in student performance on short identification answers, the gains are nonetheless considerable, as quiz grades tend to fluctuate the most over the course of any semester.