Write REASON
A Quality Enhancement Plan for Aquinas College
©
“Just as it is better to enlighten others than merely to shine, it is better to give the fruits of our contemplation to others than merely to contemplate.”

St. Thomas Aquinas,
Summa Theologica II-II, 188, 6
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DEFINITION

*Write* REASON is the effective expression of clear, organized, and accurate ideas that are stated convincingly according to the objective standards of truth and reality, as established in the Trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, which is the foundation of a liberal arts education.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The process for establishing a Quality Enhancement Plan for improving student learning at Aquinas College began in August 2008 with the establishment of a QEP Committee. Membership in the committee consisted of members from student, faculty, staff and administrative components of the College. The committee began its work by conducting a series of surveys to identify the major academic needs of our students as perceived by faculty, staff, students, alumni, administration and the Board of Directors. The committee also reviewed departmental data in an attempt to identify areas of academic need. Of the three areas identified, educational information technology, critical thinking and writing, the constituent groups of the College agreed that the top two areas of greatest need were critical thinking and writing. During this time the committee established subcommittees that reviewed relevant institutional documents and records that also indicated areas of need. Although the information regarding student academic performance varied by program, the evidence did support the committee’s decision that improvement in student writing and critical thinking skills were important areas of need that included all student academic populations. Subcommittees evaluated these two areas as potential topics for our QEP. After reviewing the findings and consulting the various constituency groups of the College, a combined approach emphasizing student learning outcomes in the three parts of the Trivium (grammar, logic and rhetoric) was determined to be the most appropriate to the mission and strategic goals of the College. It is the essential, timeless core educational model and praxis of any liberal arts education, instilling measurable, demonstrative success in the ability to think accurately and communicate persuasively to a wide range of audiences. The Trivium makes up the foundation of these liberal arts in that they are not only prerequisite to learning, but also impart the form of the ideas upon the mind as they are being assimilated into the developing student.

The goal of our plan, entitled *Write* REASON, is that graduates of Aquinas College will be able to express effectively through writing clear, organized, and accurate ideas that are stated convincingly according to the standards set forth in the *Write* REASON rubric.

The QEP goal, student learning outcomes and objectives, use the Trivium (grammar, logic, rhetoric) as expressed through writing as a vehicle to assess and form reason according to truth. Truth as described by St. Thomas Aquinas is both logical and ontological. Logical truth is that which conforms to fact and objective reality. Ontological truth is that which fulfills its proper end for which it was made by God (Aquinas, *Disputed*, 1,2,c,reply; Aquinas, *Summa*, 16,1,c). A student who can integrally communicate truth in both senses comprehends truth in its deepest meaning.

The plan will be implemented in three phases that follow a period of preliminary assessment beginning in the summer of 2010. **During the developmental phase,** Aquinas College is utilizing the nationally-normed Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) critical thinking and writing essay tests to establish the ability levels of incoming students. Second, we will pilot course modifications to the interdisciplinary
course *College Learning in the Dominican Tradition* (IDS 106). These changes include the addition of the International Critical Thinking Essay Test and an introduction of logical thinking skills to the curriculum. Third, the preliminary assessment phase will include a modification of the application essay that prospective students submit with their application. This personal statement will help determine incoming student writing ability, understanding of how reason is informed by truth, and educational goals.

**The first phase** (Year 1) of the plan calls for the renovation of dedicated space within the College for a *Write REASON* Center that will centralize the institutional efforts to foster improvements in student writing that are both logical and persuasive. A director and program coordinator/tutor will be hired to staff the center, develop academic profiles of our students, and identify and assist in the mentoring of students with identified weaknesses as determined by preliminary assessment data. The Curriculum Committee will be petitioned to redefine the student population required to take the IDS 106 course to include all first-time, full-time freshmen. The Committee also will be asked to approve a new laboratory for entering freshmen with writing deficiencies: ENG 111 Writing Lab, that when taken together with ENG 111, will enhance student writing skills with mandatory tutoring sessions. Both curricular changes will be implemented in the Fall of Year 2. The rubric developed for the *Write REASON* plan and refined in workshops with the faculty will be implemented in core courses (taken in the first two years of their curriculum), as identified by our faculty, that currently include research-based essays that require student reasoning informed by truth in a thesis-based manner. Additional workshops will develop faculty skills in using the rubric in a consistent and comparable manner. These workshops will continue in the subsequent phases of the plan as additional courses include the use of the rubric. The transfer placement essay currently used to place transfer students according to their writing skills will be adapted to the *Write REASON* rubric.

**In the second phase** (Years 2 and 3), mid-level core courses in each academic program will be identified to include a research essay that meets course needs and can be evaluated using the *Write REASON* rubric. Starting in Year 2, the CAAP Writing Essay will be replaced by the current transfer placement essay as an initial writing assessment for all incoming students. The director and plan coordinator/tutor will use this and other preliminary assessment data to identify and work individually with students who have demonstrated weakness in logical reasoning and writing skills. Students who demonstrate writing deficiency will be placed in our ENG 111 Writing Lab and work closely with the director and plan coordinator/tutor to develop their writing skills. In Year 3 of the plan, capstone courses of the associate level programs will be designated, and students will be asked to prepare an essay reinforcing ideas in the Trivium on their discipline-specific philosophical statement as a requirement of that course. These essays will be assessed using the *Write REASON* rubric and will serve as the endpoint of on-campus assessment for *Write REASON* for associate degree students. Baccalaureate degree students take the CAAP Critical Thinking assessment at the end of their sophomore year, and the results of that assessment will be compared with the CAAP entry score in Critical Thinking. The end of Years 2 and 3 will include plan evaluation strategies to determine how our student populations are performing, identify areas of weakness or omission in the plan, and formulate strategies for addressing those elements.

**The third phase** (Years 4 and 5) will involve the identification and implementation of the *Write REASON* discipline-specific philosophical statement within
capstone courses in the baccalaureate programs and the continued evaluation of the plan and its success. A post-graduation survey will be implemented at both one and three years following graduation to determine the success of our graduates in the workplace and to ask if their Trivium-based education prepared them for life beyond college.

A Write REASON Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from each academic discipline as well as the Directors of Student Affairs, Student Learning Services, and Admissions will meet with the Write REASON director as needed to report on departmental initiatives, needs and concerns, and to discuss strategies for achieving overall Write REASON student learning outcomes.
HISTORY, HERITAGE AND DESCRIPTION OF AQUINAS COLLEGE

“Rooted in Catholic heritage, Aquinas College has a history founded on Dominican Tradition. [The Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia Congregation, who own and operate the College, were established as a religious community] in 1860 at the request of Nashville’s second bishop, James Whelan, O.P. The College first began at the Motherhouse of the Sisters in 1928 as Saint Cecilia Normal School for the education of the Sisters to prepare them for their teaching apostolate. The school was affiliated with the Catholic University of America in 1929” (Aquinas College, 2009b).

The College offers an academically challenging liberal arts and sciences curriculum. Major academic programs include baccalaureate level programs in liberal arts, business, teacher education, and nursing (RN to BSN), and associate degree programs in liberal arts and nursing. As of Fall 2010, over 730 students are enrolled at Aquinas College. Although the majority of students in the Teacher Education, Liberal Arts, and Business Programs have full-time status, 80% of nursing students are part-time. The majority of our students are female. Over 80% of the nursing students are also female. The percentage of female education students is even higher, partly due to the high number of Dominican Sisters enrolled. Students range in age from 16 to 60+, and they are from several states adjacent to Tennessee as well as from the Nashville metropolitan area. Thirty percent of the student body is Roman Catholic. In the fall of 2010, 186 new students were admitted to the College: 15% were first-time freshmen and 85% were transfers from other colleges. The student-faculty ratio averages 14:1.

Aquinas College faculty number just under 100, 25% of whom are full-time with terminal degrees from as close as Vanderbilt University to as far as The Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome (Catalog, pp. 143-160). The Aquinas College family also includes 100 staff members and 3,000 Aquinas College alumni. Many of the local nursing alumni work at area hospitals which serve as clinical sites for the ASN program.

Aquinas College students are challenged academically in a faith-filled environment. The College programs and curricula are designed to stimulate the growth of the student spiritually and morally as well as intellectually and professionally. Every major, therefore, requires at least three credits each in philosophy (such as Logic or Ethics) and in theology (such as Moral Theology), the latter of which includes an array of topics from the doctrinal and Scriptural teaching of the Catholic Church. Formation of the student continues in many major core courses by examining how the professional area of study integrates with the student’s faith and values (Catalog, pp. 55-80). The mission of the College explicitly reflects these efforts to develop the whole person through Christian principles and values.

MISSION STATEMENT AND STRATEGIC PLAN

The primary mission of Aquinas College is to provide an atmosphere of learning permeated with faith, directed to the intellectual, moral and professional formation of the human person. Aquinas seeks to foster intellectual achievement and personal growth in a socially and economically diverse population. The Christian principles and values they learn enrich students. Faculty and staff seek to make students aware that a relationship exists between human culture and the message of salvation. Thus, the mission of Aquinas College is to bring this message of salvation to bear on ethical, social, political, religious, and cultural issues (“Aquinas Mission Statement,” Catalog, p. 5).
In light of this Mission Statement, the Strategic Plan articulates ten core values which touch upon the essential beliefs of Aquinas College. These beliefs are considered guiding principles that reflect the reality of the current life of the College (New horizons 2015 strategic plan, 2006, p. 4). Of these ten, the core values that most directly relate to the QEP topic are the unity of faith and reason, love for the truth, fidelity to Church teachings, evangelization, and high educational standards.

The Strategic plan (2006), further condensed these guiding principles into a single Core Purpose designed to endure over time: “We transform lives and culture through truth and charity” (p. 4). In order to carry out the Mission according to the Core Purpose, the Strategic plan developed specific strategic goals in seven key Strategic Areas in the life of Aquinas College. In the key Strategic Area of Academics, Programs, Integration of Truth/Disciplines, and Enrollment Standards, the first Strategic Goal is:

Ensure that the academic programs of Aquinas College exemplify the integration of Truth in each of its disciplines, as characteristic of a liberal arts education in the Dominican Tradition. Such integration will be accomplished through a review of every program and course including Adult Studies, and of each new program before its implementation. An assessment of student outcomes will also be included (p. 8).

The “Dominican Tradition” referred to in this Strategic Goal centers on truth and charity. Study and prayer are essential to learn the truth. Once learned and accepted, truth transforms the student’s life into a lived charity through which the message of salvation is brought to all aspects of human culture. Seeking, comprehending, accepting, and communicating truth in its fullness are core to the Mission and the Strategic Goals of Aquinas College. Truth, therefore, must be the essential foundation of the QEP topic. Truth as described by St. Thomas Aquinas according to the Dominican Tradition is both logical and ontological. Logical truth is that which conforms to fact and objective reality. Ontological truth is that which fulfills its proper end for which it was made by God. A student who can integrally communicate truth in both senses comprehends truth in its deepest meaning, which is what we are striving for at Aquinas College.

**BROAD-BASED INSTITUTIONAL PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING THE PLAN TOPIC AND DEVELOPING THE PLAN**

From the beginning, the QEP Committee has tried to include all constituent groups of the College in crafting a QEP which reflects the mission and vision of Aquinas College. The timeline below describes the QEP Committee’s search for a viable topic and the steps taken to insure inclusion of all constituent groups in the process.

August, 2008
- The QEP Committee was chosen by the Administrative Team of the College with input from Sr. Teresa Benedicta, O.P., Director of Institutional Research. The committee including both past and current members consists of the following members of the Aquinas College community:
  - Frank Hatcher, PhD, Biology, Associate Professor, Liberal Arts Program, Chair
  - Sr. Mary Albert, O.P., PhD, Institutional Research Assistant, Secretary
  - Sr. Matthew Marie, O.P., EdD, Associate Professor, Teacher Education & Technology Instructor
  - Katherine Haynes, PhD, Instructor, Liberal Arts Program
The QEP Committee met for the first time as a group with Sr. Teresa Benedicta explaining the QEP process. The committee was asked to look at other QEPs online and bring examples to the next meeting.

September 26, 2008
• Sr. Matthew Marie and Maria Brocato presented a QEP idea related to technology and communication.
• Sr. Mary Albert presented a QEP idea based on the “Teaching of Truth” to our students.
• Frank Hatcher cautioned the group not to get the “cart before the horse.” The committee was divided into the following sub-committees to look at existing quantitative data:
  o Adult Studies – RN-BSN & Business Programs
  o ASN
  o Liberal Arts
  o College & Student Resources
  o Teacher Education

October 3, 2008
• The committee decided to craft a survey for students, faculty, staff, and alumni to solicit input on the needs of the College.

October 17, 2008
• A paper/pencil version of a needs survey was distributed and collected at a monthly faculty/staff meeting.

November 7, 2008
• The QEP Committee received the results of the survey which included responses from 48 faculty/staff members. Five possible topic areas were identified by the survey:
  o Technology
  o Faith-related issues
  o Critical Thinking
  o Student Support Development
  o Communication Skills
• The committee discussed what would fit the definition of a “broad-based” survey. It was decided to craft a similar Survey Monkey survey for students and alumni.
November 21, 2008
- The results of the faculty/staff survey were presented at the monthly faculty/staff meeting. See Appendix I

December 5, 2008
- A survey link was emailed to students and alumni and posted on student portals. Technology, Faith-related Issues, and Critical Thinking were identified as areas of need by students and alumni. See Appendix II

December 9, 2008
- The QEP Committee discussed both surveys. Faculty/Staff survey results were now up to 61. Writing Skills, Critical Thinking, and Technology emerged as the top three needs.
- The committee discussed ways to engage students in the discussion. It was decided to hold a town hall style discussion following the St. Thomas Aquinas Feast Day Luncheon in January. This meeting was cancelled because the crowd cleared out thirty minutes prior to the suggested discussion time.

February 6, 2009
- Lindsey Hinds-Brown presented a summary of free response questions from the Student/Alumni survey to the QEP Committee.
- Suzette Telli voiced a concern that the survey may not have reached Adult Studies students.
- Maria Brocato reported that only four of 600 alumni who were sent the initial survey link responded. (By the end of the process, eight alumni had responded.)

March 6, 2009
- The heading, “Adult Studies Student” was added to the student/alumni survey.
- Marilyn Musacchio requested hard copies of the surveys for completion during RN-BSN classes.
- A link to the student/alumni survey was posted on the Aquinas College website with a completion deadline of Spring Break.
- Adult Studies staff members were asked to put up signs about the survey on the East Campus and make classroom announcements.
- The survey link was emailed to Adult Studies students.

April 3, 2009
- Marilyn Musacchio reported a 98% response rate from RN-BSN students on the student/alumni survey.
- Sub-committees reported on their findings related to perceived needs from existing quantitative data:
  o College & Student Resources – Math & English Skills
  o ASN – Critical Thinking
  o Teacher Education – No needs noted
  o Liberal Arts – N/A
  o Adult Studies/Business – N/A

May 1, 2009
- More sub-committee reports
  o ASN – no new information
  o Teacher Education – Math & Critical Thinking (low compared to national average but not compared to non-TEP Aquinas students)
  o College & Student Resources – Looked at the number of students taking remedial math (82% pass rate,) and remedial English (73% pass rate.)
  o Adult Studies/Business – N/A
  o Liberal Arts – N/A
June 5, 2009
- Continued sub-committee reports
  - Liberal Arts – Critical Thinking
  - Adult Studies/Business – N/A

September 4, 2009
- Announced loss of student QEP Committee member Jennifer Walters due to acceptance into the ASN program. Committee members were asked to look for a suitable replacement.
- There was discussion about a possible Writing QEP topic.
- Dr. Katherine Haynes described the ENG 111, 112, and 113 courses for the group.
- It was decided that we should narrow the choice of topics from three to two using a new survey. There was discussion about who would complete the survey and when.

September 18, 2009
- Separate surveys were distributed to faculty, staff and administration (see Appendix IV), as well as to on-campus students, alumni, and Adult Studies student populations (see Appendix III). This instrument sought opinions and comments of the various constituencies for ranking the top three areas of need that had been identified. These surveys were available as written documents as well as through on-line links.

October 2, 2009
- QEP update to SACS Leadership team

October 9, 2009
- Survey results presented to the QEP Committee. Critical Thinking and Writing were the top two choices of both faculty/staff and students/alumni.
- Two sub-committees were assigned to research possible Critical Thinking or Writing QEPs. They were asked to specify how the topic would be defined, how it was to be measured, and how implemented.

October 13, 2009
- A survey was sent to the Board of Directors membership seeking the opinion and comments of members regarding the three areas of need identified. The document asked that the members identify the two that represented in their opinion the most important needs.
- The results were clear that a majority of the members of the Board of Directors believed critical thinking was the top priority and writing the second priority need for student learning improvement. (See Appendix V)

October 16, 2009
- QEP update to Faculty and Staff

November 4, 2009
- Several members of the QEP Committee along with members of the QEP Leadership Team met with Sr. Mary Diana, a member of the Board of Directors, to discuss her concerns about our QEP topic selection. We assured her that the QEP proposal would be mission and strategic goal-centered, but the process of surveying various constituencies was to identify the conceptions and opinions of those people regarding the greatest need: Critical Thinking or Writing.

November 6, 2009
- The full QEP Committee discussed the meeting with Sr. Mary Diana and her concerns. All committee members agreed the mission and vision of the College should be included in any future topic discussions.
• The results of the Board of Directors survey were announced: Writing (1) and Critical Thinking (2).

November 20, 2009
• QEP update to Faculty and Staff

December 4, 2009
• Presentations were given by the Writing and Critical Thinking subcommittees to the QEP Committee.
  o The Writing committee stressed the widely held error that composition instruction is essentially mechanics proficiency. Who would grade essays and rubric creation were seen as challenges.
  o The Critical Thinking committee saw challenges with defining the term and external measures to judge improvement.

December 30, 2009
• Several committee members met with the QEP Leadership Team to discuss our progress. The result of this discussion was the suggestion to combine the two topics into one.

January 8, 2010
• Sandy Laszewski, a junior majoring in Business Administration, was presented as the new student member of the QEP Committee.
• The title, "Write REASON" was presented to the committee for approval. The Write REASON plan would draw from the medieval concept of the Trivium for higher education: Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric. Sr. Mary Peter, President of Aquinas College, confirmed that budget allotments for the preliminary aspects of the plan were in place for the current academic year (2009-2010)
• The definition, objectives, goals, and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for the plan were discussed
• Material was prepared for the meeting with the Long-Range Planning committee of the Board

January 13, 2010
• The plan concept and rationale were presented to the Long Range Planning Committee of the Board of Directors which gave its approval.

January 15, 2010
• The QEP title and concept were presented to the faculty and staff by members of the QEP Committee at the monthly faculty/staff meeting.

February 5, 2010
• Summarized Board of Directors Long-Range Planning committee presentation for QEP Committee members.
• Discussed preliminary timeline of the plan into a developmental phase and three additional phases during the five year plan.
• Discussed using the CAAP Critical Thinking and Writing assessments to provide baseline information on new students and the budget amounts needed to support this activity in the Spring and Summer of 2010 as part of the developmental phase. The committee supported the proposal pending availability of funds.
• The committee also discussed proposing changes to the Personal Statement in the application form to one that is directed toward an applicant’s “philosophy of education”. Possible modifications to the IDS 106 course to emphasize more logical reasoning were discussed.
• Various options for organizing the components of the plan were discussed.

February 19, 2010 Faculty Staff meeting
• QEP update to Faculty and Staff
March 5, 2010
- The wording of the application essay for incoming students was agreed upon as the following: “Please briefly explain your educational interests, aspirations, and values and how Aquinas College would help meet your goals.” The use of the phrase “philosophy of education” was changed for the Personal Statement because those words could be confusing to applicants. The use of the philosophy of education concept for capstone assessment of students in the plan was discussed and seen as important for consistency to compare with the application essay.
- The role of the book, Being logical: A guide to good thinking by D. Q. McInerny (2005) was discussed. The book was a recommendation from a member of the Philosophy faculty (Dr. Peter Pagan). Committee members were given copies of the book for review and we discussed how this book (or another like it) might best be used to encourage new students to develop sound reasoning skills.
- The committee discussed and adopted the definition of Write REASON proposed by Dr. Katherine Haynes, as: “Write REASON is the effective expression of clear, organized, and accurate ideas that are stated convincingly according to the objective standards of truth and reality, as established in the Trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, which is the basis of a liberal arts education”.

March 12, 2010
- The Committee continued to discuss the role of the book by McInerny (2005), titled Being logical, in our plan with options to include it as a summer reading for new students, as a part of the IDS 106 course, as a college-wide study by faculty and staff, as a text that would be required reading by all students, or as a recommended text to all instructors of courses in which the text would contribute to student learning. No decisions were made but the group leaned toward the IDS 106 course as an introduction to logical thinking.
- The possibility of a 1-credit hour course in logic for ASN nursing students was discussed. The biggest problem to this was the tightness of the curriculum for the course and when it would best be offered in that curriculum
- The development of goals, objectives, and SLOs for the plan were discussed. A subcommittee was created to formulate and present them to the Committee.
- The Committee decided that in the plan all new students would be required to take the CAAP Critical Thinking and Essay subtests during ACCESS New Student Orientation/Registration. The Committee also discussed the criteria for evaluating plan success in terms of CAAP scores achieved during the sophomore year of students.
- The qualifications of acceptable individuals for the SACS Lead Evaluator for the plan were discussed
- Dr. Katherine Haynes indicated that she would present the draft of the literature review and best practices sections to the committee before the next meeting.

March 26, 2010 – Faculty Staff meeting
- Progress in the plan being developed by the committee was presented to the faculty and staff. Faculty members were asked to submit grading rubrics they currently use to be used by the QEP Committee in developing a draft Write REASON rubric.

April 9, 2010
- The use of McInerny’s (2005), Being logical, and The International Critical Thinking Essay Test in the IDS 106 course were discussed as modifications to
that course reflective of the developing plan. Pursuing changes in the student population taking that course to all incoming freshman students was discussed.

- Dr. Katherine Haynes presented the progress made on the Literature Review and Best Practices component of the plan. The committee discussed emphasizing the importance of the plan being grounded in truth and avoiding relativism and its associated problems.
- The Committee discussed the qualifications needed in the QEP Lead Evaluator for the SACS site-visit. The top candidates discussed were Dr. Paul Voss, Fr. Michael Keating, and Dr. Don Briel.
- The progress in determining the goals, objectives and SLOs for the plan was discussed and reviewed by the committee.
- The results of faculty rubrics submitted to Dr. Hatcher were discussed and members were assigned the task of designing an interdisciplinary rubric for the plan that reflected currently used rubrics.

April 16, 2010 – QEP meeting

- A subcommittee was formed to review potential SACS site-visit QEP Lead Evaluators for recommendation to Sr. Teresa Benedicta and the SACS Commissioner.
- Results of the review of current faculty rubrics were discussed
- Assignments were made among committee members for preparing drafts of the various components of the plan. Dr. Katherine Haynes agreed to serve as the editor of the plan. A deadline for content drafts of the components was set for May 18, 2010.

April 23, 2010 – Faculty Staff meeting

- QEP update to Faculty and Staff

May 7, 2010

- The arrangements for a visit by Dr. Steve Sheeley, SACS Commissioner for May 26-27 were discussed. Various questions he was to be asked at that meeting were discussed and formulated.
- The changes to the admission application’s Personal Statement were approved by Sr. Elizabeth Anne, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and will go into effect for the online and printed versions of the application for Spring 2011. Permission to fund the CAAP Critical Thinking and Writing Essay assessments for the ACCESS New Student Orientation/Registration events for new students in the Fall of 2010 was given. Members of the philosophy faculty will be asked to review the Critical Thinking assessment for compatibility issues with the Aquinas mission of truth and charity.
- The use of data from the internal writing essay for transfer students (students with prior credit for English Composition courses) along with the data from the CAAP essay was discussed. Discussed the possibility of adopting the internal essay (pass/fail) to the CAAP-essay 6-point evaluation format.
- The progress of the subcommittee efforts on the plan component drafts were discussed including the director position of the proposed Write REASON Center and plan.
- The availability of members for working on the plan during the summer months was discussed
- Components of the plan were assembled for transmittal to Dr. Sheeley before the meeting.
May 26, 2010: Meeting with Dr. Sheeley

- Various issues pertaining to the plan were discussed. Among them were the following:
  - The appropriateness of the plan topic combining both writing and reasoning. Dr. Sheeley believed the combination was a good one but that the plan needed to articulate it in a more focused manner. The focus of the plan on truth is what makes the plan unique and reflective of the mission of the College. Students will need help in understanding the importance of truth in assignments especially in courses that are not theological or philosophical.
  - The use of post-graduate surveys during the plan would be an important part of plan evaluation.
  - Clarification of the timing and implementation of the various phases of the plan was given.
  - Dr. Sheeley emphasized that the best approach to the plan is that it is a “living” plan which can and should be modified as the need arises; strategies can change without changing the goal.
  - A list with biographical information on the candidates for SACS site-visit QEP Lead Evaluator was given to Dr. Sheeley.

June 4, 2010

- Discussions occurred concerning the upcoming Board meeting and preliminary conversations between Dr. Hatcher and the school administration regarding budgetary matters of the QEP.
- Dr. Hatcher shared a preliminary discussion he had with the Curriculum Committee updating them regarding the modifications to the IDS 106 course and the possibility of a Write REASON oriented ENG 111 (English Composition I) section, which are components of the plan.
- The impressions of the committee members present for the SACS Commissioner’s visit were shared with committee members unable to attend the visit.
- The position descriptions of the Director and Coordinator/Tutor were discussed and adjusted. The committee determined that the director position must be filled by a person with a PhD in English, who has experience in teaching composition to students and at least a master’s degree in philosophy or theology.

July 9, 2010

- A preliminary analysis of the results of the CAAP Critical Thinking (CT) and Essay assessments administered in May and June were discussed. The data indicated that the CT scores of our new students had a mean that was below that of the 50th percentile nationally among the four ACCESS sessions given during these two months. Data from the July and August sessions were unavailable so firm conclusions on this baseline data were not possible. (The data are discussed in the Assessment section of the plan).
- The discussions then addressed the development of the plan description of the draft Write REASON rubric, the topics and timing of faculty workshops for Phase 1 of the plan to include the rubric content, advising for the plan, and standardizing how faculty use the rubric.
- The committee also discussed the types of courses that could serve as mid-level or capstone courses in the various academic programs that could include a Write REASON assessment instrument. One of the issues discussed is that the assessment is not at the level of a grade for student performance but will instead
be used to assess student capability in the aspects of the Trivium: grammar, rhetoric, and logic.

July 14-15, 2010: Visit to the campus of Dr. Aaron Urbancyzk
- Dr. Urbancyzk has applied for the position of director of the Write REASON plan and center and the visit served as his first visit in the candidacy process. The search and interview schedules were determined by Sr. Elizabeth Anne and Sr. Mary Peter in consultation with the QEP Committee chair. During that meeting both Dr. Hatcher and Dr. Bill Smart (now SACS Liaison,) met with Dr. Urbancyzk.

July, 2010
- Publication of the admission application containing the revised Personal Statement to reflect the QEP assessment plan.

August 6, 2010
- The Committee discussed what was known about the candidacy of Dr. Aaron Urbancyzk for the Director of Write REASON position, the search for which was ongoing
- The description of the ENG 111 – Write REASON course was modified to include a new laboratory section ENG 111 – Writing Lab, that would be taken by students in the ENG 111 course who demonstrated unacceptable levels of writing skills through information obtained during registration as well as from the application statement.
- Several versions of the draft plan rubric were discussed, with the final draft version submitted in the plan presented in Appendix XI. The first version was modified slightly after the faculty in-service on August 13, 2010.
- Concerning student assessment, the committee decided that students who perform at less than the 33rd percentile on the CAAP CT assessment and scored at unacceptable levels (below a score of 3 on the CAAP Essay) would be considered at risk. The plan calls for the director to devise an individual plan for academic development that will help the student improve his/her writing and reasoning skills.
- The Committee discussed what successful outcomes would be in the plan for CAAP Critical Thinking which will be given to all students as they enter the College and again to baccalaureate students when they are sophomores. The committee based its decision on an analysis of CAAP CT data from the May – July ACCESS dates and the scores of College sophomore students from 2008-2009. (See Assessment and Evaluation section)
- The Committee also discussed marketing strategies for marketing the plan to students. The plan for those strategies was incorporated into the plan Timeline and Actions description. A great deal of excitement was generated over the discussion of a journal of the best student Write REASON essays with a panel of judges, awards ceremony, and journal publication on a yearly basis.

August 13, 2010
- Faculty and Staff In-service Presentation – overview of the plan and rubric
- The complete plan was presented by the committee membership and was well-received by faculty and staff. There were good discussions of the timeline, nature of the courses modified by the plan, director position, and the rubric. (See Appendix XI)

August 18, 2010
- A draft version of the plan was submitted for review by Committee members, members of the administration, SACS Leadership Team, and selected internal and external reviewers. Among those who reviewed the plan are the following:
The deadline for reviewer comments was August 25th. A second meeting of the committee was called for August 27 to go over the reviews of the plan and produce a final version for submission to Dr. Smart and the SACS Leadership team.

August 27, 2010
- Discussed reviewer comments and reviewed plan draft as a group
- Re-numbered Appendices to follow development of the plan.

GOING FORWARD
- Student communication about QEP process and plan should be a priority. Students should be made aware of the plan’s content through emails and portal announcements. A comprehensive marketing campaign will be needed when students return in the fall to include them more fully in the process.

RATIONALE OF THE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN
The QEP Goal, Student Learning Outcomes, and Objectives use the Trivium through written expression as a vehicle to assess and form reason according to truth. Truth as described by St. Thomas Aquinas, a key figure in shaping Dominican Tradition and patron of the College, is both logical and ontological. Logical truth is that which conforms to fact and objective reality. Ontological truth is that which fulfills its proper end for which it was made by God (Aquinas, *Disputed*, trans. 1952, 1,2,c, reply; Aquinas, *Summa*, trans. 1920, 16,1,c). A student who can integrally communicate truth in both senses comprehends truth in its deepest meaning. The three components of the Trivium (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) have of necessity endured in practice at the heart of higher education, even when overlooked as a vibrant and practical pedagogical model. The explicit argument of this QEP is the value to student learning that results from restoring its prestige as more than a workhorse in its disparate parts to its rightful placement as the formative instructional model in a liberal arts education.

Furthermore, defining Truth as the essential foundation of Write REASON links it with the College Mission Statement and Strategic Goals. Adherence to the truths of each discipline through sound reasoning and logic all ultimately lead to that divine Truth, which is God Himself.

The College acknowledges the intrinsic relationship between reason and conscience and the pursuit of truth (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, 1996). According to John Paul II’s Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (1996), a Catholic institution of higher learning “. . . has to be a ‘living union’ of individual organisms dedicated to the search for truth. . . . It is necessary to work toward a higher synthesis of knowledge, in which alone lies the possibility of satisfying that thirst for truth which is profoundly inscribed on the heart of the human person” (p.16). With this perspective in mind, the Goal, SLOs, and Objectives of the Write REASON plan will contribute to “an atmosphere of learning permeated with faith, directed to the intellectual, moral and professional formation of the human person” (*Catalog*, p. 5).
QEP GOAL, STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES, AND OBJECTIVES

Goal
Graduates of Aquinas College will be able to express effectively through writing clear, organized and accurate ideas that are stated convincingly according to the objective standards of truth and reality as established in the Trivium of grammar, logic and rhetoric, which is the foundation of a liberal arts education.

Student Learning Outcomes
There are three major components to our stated goal that correspond to the three fundamental elements of the Trivium.

Grammar
Students will construct a written work using standard conventions of grammar.

Logic
Students will construct an accurate and well organized written work that is firmly rooted in the objective standards of truth and reality.

Rhetoric
Students will construct a written work stated convincingly and clearly.

Objectives
To achieve each student learning outcome we have designed specific objectives to facilitate student mastery of the essentials of Write REASON.

Grammar
- When using the ideas or words of an author, document the source using discipline-specific citation standards.
- Compose effective and varied sentences using the eight basic parts of speech.
- Utilize proper punctuation in all written assignments.
- Apply rules of capitalization, numbering and abbreviation.
- Edit for punctuation, grammar and style.

Logic
- Uphold ontological truth illustrating how well the subject fulfills its proper end as determined by God.
- Incorporate critical, analytical and thesis-based arguments.
- Adhere to logical truth that conforms fact with reality within the context of a given course through correct reasoning that is free from inconsistencies or contradictions.
- Articulate thesis, relevant supporting evidence and conclusions.
- Distinguish between true and false theological and moral statements by applying the teaching of the Church to theological or moral problems.
- Identify moral principles and make them known through the written word.
- Identify the ideals, values and philosophical stance of a text.
- Apply ethical principles to discipline specific content, providing evidence of how Christian moral principles influence decision making.
- Articulate how the Aquinas College mission statement and Catholic and Dominican traditions inform an argument.
- Demonstrate understanding of academic honesty and integrity by upholding the academic honesty policy.
- Identify the differences between fact and opinion.
Rhetoric

- Incorporate all aspects of the rhetorical triangle for the purpose of discovering the means by which communication is conveyed successfully. (For the purposes of written work, we define the rhetorical triangle as writer, text and reader)
- Generate ideas for substantial writing assignments and demonstrate the development of an idea through the drafting sequence, from pre-writing exercises through revision to the final version.
- Effectively vary sentence structure and length throughout assignments.
- Choose vocabulary and diction appropriate to assignment and discipline.
- Exhibit ethical, legal and Christian behavior in all written works.
- Model respect and reverence for the dignity of human life through the written word.

The tasks associated with the Goal and desired SLOs appear in the Assessment Grid. (See Appendix X)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND BEST PRACTICES

Literature on the rationale for including sustained college composition across the curriculum is well documented. Such a requirement serves multiple functions, including that of assessing college level analytic ability via academic prose in edited standard written English. The college essay remains a staple for assessing student learning outcomes in the form of communicating sustained complex and self-aware analysis that should be elegant, accurate, logical, fair, and persuasive. The Aquinas college catalog for 2009-2010 indicates that course descriptions in most disciplines require a research essay or sustained formal writing assignment. Despite a culture that has required formal writing across the curriculum at the College, writing skills and critical thinking skills do not fulfill expectations but continue to rank highly as a perceived need for improvement by students, faculty, staff, administration, and community. Moreover, the QEP Committee recognizes that these needs should be addressed as a single plan for improvement because academic writing is a stable means by which thinking is communicated and assessed and because academic writing has consistently remained the normative means of communication for scholarship.

The success of the College’s ability to produce well-educated graduates who are articulate and reasoned flows from the College’s mission statement and motto. Aquinas’s mission statement declares:

Aquinas College is a private Catholic institution of higher education. The College offers an academically challenging liberal arts and sciences curriculum.

The primary mission of Aquinas College is to provide an atmosphere of learning permeated with faith, directed to the intellectual, moral and professional formation of the human person. Aquinas seeks to foster intellectual achievement and personal growth in a socially and economically diverse population. The Christian principles and values they learn enrich students.

Faculty and staff seek to make students aware that a relationship exists between human culture and the message of salvation. Thus, the mission
of Aquinas College is to bring this message of salvation to bear on ethical, social, political, religious and cultural issues (Catalog 2009-10, p. 5).

In concert with the mission, the College motto, “Veritas et Caritas”, found on the College seal, makes explicit the complex relationship between knowing and acknowledging objective truth in such a way that it is communicated accurately and as compellingly as possible. Furthermore, the College’s New horizons 2015 strategic plan (2006) identifies the core purpose of the College by incorporating the Latin motto into the English declarative statement: “We transform lives and culture through truth and charity” (p. 4). Thus, written communication and critical thinking at Aquinas cannot be understood as entirely separate roles but need to be improved together as a logical necessity and as a means to fulfilling the mission of the College.

As a Catholic institution, the College seeks to fulfill its mission in accordance with Vatican II’s “Declaration on Christian education” (Gravissimum educationis, trans. 1975), especially in its call to institutions of higher-level education, such that “the convergence of faith and reason in the one truth may be seen more clearly” (para. 10). The Declaration explicitly ties this desired synthesis (through careful analysis proper to the various disciplines) to the method followed by the tradition of the doctors of the Church, especially St. Thomas Aquinas” (Gravissimum educationis, trans. 1975). The Declaration explains that by doing so, certain desired results will occur:

Thus, the Christian outlook should acquire, as it were, a public, stable, and universal influence in the whole process of the promotion of higher culture. The graduates of these institutes should be outstanding in learning, ready to undertake the more responsible duties of society, and to be witnesses in the world to the true faith (Gravissimum educationis, trans. 1975.)

In order to fulfill its mission as a Catholic institution of higher learning in accord with the teachings of the Catholic Church, the College is charged to teach its students the skills they need to be rhetorically effective and to become personally invested in the promotion of the moral health of society. A central role of undergraduate liberal arts education has always been the conveyance onto each succeeding generation a body of knowledge that fits them for confronting the challenges of their milieu in the not-too-distant future via the collective wisdom of the past and with hope for the future (cf., John of Salisbury’s Metalogicon, cited in Gamble (2007), pp. 281-85); Newman (1996), pp. 124-25). Newman’s model for undergraduate education in particular, first stated in the nineteenth century, remains formative for us today in its insistence upon the intellectually generative relationship between the student and the teacher via intellectual virtues. Nor are these virtues esoteric or remote from the modern world. Indeed, as argued by Pelikan (1992) in his own reflections on Newman’s Idea of a university, they provide society with a vital, electric “charge” (p. 67) of discovering truth, but within an appropriate scope that is accessible and practicable.

At the beginning of the new millennium, the Vatican has on several formal occasions directed its attention to guiding Catholic institutions to remain faithful to their central purpose. For example, in his Apostolic Constitution “On Catholic Universities” (Ex Corde Ecclesiae), Pope John Paul II stressed every Catholic university’s responsibility for furthering the communication of truth, even “uncomfortable truths [that] do not please
public opinion, but which are necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society” (I.B.1.32). Furthermore, the Constitution recognizes the Catholic university’s role in fostering “fruitful dialogue between the Gospel and culture” (I.B.3.43, italics original). Ex Corde explains this role as “the privileged task . . . to unite existentially by intellectual effort two orders of reality . . . the search for truth, and the certainty of already knowing the fount of truth”, once “so precious to Saint Augustine” (1), a doctor of the Church who was himself a former teacher of rhetoric. Similarly, in April 2008, in his address to Catholic educators in America, Pope Benedict XVI further emphasized the significant role of imparting an ability to communicate the truth in love in order to offer society Christ as the reason for hope for the future: “Set against personal struggles, moral confusion and fragmentation of knowledge, the noble goals of scholarship and education, founded on the unity of truth and in service of the person and the community, become an especially powerful instrument of hope” (Benedict XVI, para. 3). These two documents point to the inherently rhetorical form in which dialogue is to proceed in the life of the Catholic academy and underscores the necessity of preparing our graduates to engage culture through effective communication in language arts.

What form this education takes is crucial so that the philosophy supports the greater mission of the institution. Three key concepts seem to be constant in the charge given by the Church to the Catholic institutions of higher learning to teach: The objective reality of truth, the means and reality of effective rhetoric, and the responsible communication of truth in love. The search for truth as a worthy goal in itself and as an aid to society is of course, not exclusive to Catholic colleges and universities. Using writing to measure the aptitude of students to apprehend, comprehend, evaluate, and even develop new solutions based on truth in an ethical and socially conscious way has been chosen recently by several secular colleges and universities in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) as forming the basis of their Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), as discovered by the Aquinas QEP Committee in the fall of 2009. After reviewing the results from early internal reviews and surveys, the Aquinas QEP identified Critical Thinking and Writing as two possible areas for developing a QEP. Two subcommittees were charged with separately pursuing feasibility research on each one of these plans, initially by reviewing on-line recent plans by sister institutions.

One plan in particular, that of Georgia State University’s (2006) “Critical Thinking through Writing” was singled out by both subcommittees as of particular interest relative to our own survey results. Its recognition of viewing critical thinking as both generic and embedded skill sets, both of which are evidenced in the practice of writing, is of particular usefulness (pg. 8). Although Georgia State’s plan is admittedly developed on a much grander scale and measured against critical thinking standards that are philosophically derived from cognitive psychology and the social sciences, our QEP Committee saw in it a clear reference point for developing our unique response to the SACS reaffirmation process. After further committee discussion and consultation with the SACS Leadership Team, the Board, and other entities within the College, the QEP Committee realized that the plan, now named “Write REASON”, would best describe our College’s goal of using academic writing to develop and measure student learning outcomes commensurate with our broadly based identified needs and in concert with our mission and strategic plan.

Moreover, all three of the concepts identified above, the objective reality of truth, the means and reality of effective rhetoric, and the responsible communication of truth in love, are intrinsically tied to the transmission of the verbal arts known as the Trivium in
the traditional liberal arts curriculum, which dates from classical cultures of ancient Greece and Rome and developed with modifications and variances throughout medieval, renaissance, early modern and modern formulations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Trivium is historically the foundation of undergraduate education in a traditional liberal arts curriculum (Wagner, 1983). Although the subjects of the Trivium, grammar, logic, and rhetoric are taught, for example, in freshman composition, their continued practice and refinement throughout the curriculum and across the disciplines is necessary in order to form a well-educated adult. Although the parts of the Trivium may be studied separately, they truly are interrelated at the college level such that proficiency in one area usually can be seen to impact all three (Wagner, 1983, “Trivium,” 2001).

Although Aquinas College has already endorsed the concept of writing across the curriculum, and indeed, has included a major essay requirement in many catalog course descriptions (Catalog 2009-10), these essay assignments are individually designed by their respective instructors and are course section specific. Additionally, these essay assignments have not been united in a way that can readily assess student progress or weakness as a part of any overall academic development of a broadly-based institutional plan for remediation, support and learning.

Over the past fifty years or so in American institutions of higher education, the teaching of each of the three parts of the Trivium has fared variously in the wake of the general trend toward an ever-increasing science curriculum, the de-centering of universities from a liberal arts core, and the rise of postmodern theories of language. Recent scholarship in the teaching of entrance level grammar, logic, and rhetoric in the American college and university has centered on the history of the English department and the transformation of rhetoric particularly as primarily a form of written communication (e.g., Berlin, 1996, and Crowley, 1998). However, these texts and others like them, result from the general reluctance of colleges and universities either to recognize in any form the possibility of an objective reality of absolute, abstract virtue, or to recognize their responsibility to impart a moral ground for such values (H. Lewis, 2007).

Instead, in response to the understood goal of promoting an increasingly democratic and diverse academy whose values are governed by principles that encourage specialization in professional vocational training, the teaching of writing in the last twenty years has focused increasingly on developing the individual voice of the writer and away from articulation of truth that was the purpose of the Trivium throughout the first two millennia of Western higher education. Since the 1980s, college composition specialists have encouraged the refocusing of college writing to embed the practice within specific disciplines and so foster the idea that each discipline best knows how to teach its own rhetorically effective writing. Implementing Writing Across the Curriculum Programs (WACs) was seen as a way to enhance the critical thinking of students within each academic discipline (c.f., Berlin, 1987, McLeod, 1989, and Britton, 1993). In addition to, perhaps a corollary of the rise of the WACs, as they both emerged from the increasing democratizing of student populations, is the influential composition theory “dominated by political and social concerns, often to the exclusion of all aspects of pedagogy” referred to as “the social turn” that has interpreted writing evaluation “as more ideological than academic, linguistic, or literary” (Durst, 2009, pg. 1657). Although itself recognized as contributing to a sense of academic and disciplinary fragmentation (Durst 2009), the continued influence of social epistemic composition theory that led to this
social turn had made itself an integral part of the argument of increased social literacy campaigns of regionally and nationally directed educational projects in the last decades of the twentieth century in its efforts to be as widely inclusive as possible (Hobbs and Berlin, 2001).

Unfortunately, one result of de-centered and professionally-oriented writing across the curriculum practice and the writing theory efforts of social epistemic theory may be the lack of proper grounding in an acknowledged way to write or otherwise communicate essential ethical values that bind society together (Reuben, 1996). In the last decade, numerous texts have been published decrying the dearth of meaning that has resulted from colleges and universities abdicating their responsibility as role models to their students (Kronman, 2008, H. Lewis, 2007). Solutions to this trend in colleges and universities have once again pointed to the necessary role of the Liberal Arts in the education of young adults (c.f, Kronman, 2008, and Kiss and Euben, Eds., 2009). Thus, the growing consensus is that undergraduate instruction in the ability to formulate and communicate the meaning of life at a personal level as well as a societal one still has a crucial role to play in the college curriculum.

Over the past thirty years or so, English faculty and Writing Center theorists have increasingly taught grammar as a function of practical adherence to standard conventions of composition usage, steering away from teaching abstract rules and terms because evidence indicates this strategy is the more effective (Halasek and Highberg, Eds., 2001). When in 1985, Hartwell (2003) published “Grammar, grammars, and the teaching of grammar,” to point out the five definitions for the term grammar (knowledge use and acquisition of rules of language, science of linguistics, actual usage, school grammar texts, and style), the argument for teaching grammar as a separate subject appeared to be wasteful, except possibly in cases of providing vocabulary for style and pedagogical shorthand in the context of actual writing, such as argued for by Kolln, Christensen (pg. 225). Hartwell’s (2003) hypothesis that “any form of active involvement with language would be preferable to instruction in rules or definitions” (pg. 226) appeared to be justified by the past hundred years of intense study, concluding that current learner-centered teaching methodologies have shifted the focus away from grammar instruction per se (pg. 228). Educators who teach grammar primarily as style (e.g., Kolln and Gray (2009), Weaver (1996, 2008)), recommend teaching grammar as a contextual tool in actual writing, rather than as abstract concepts to be memorized and applied.

They argue that the functional approach of teaching composition without sufficient understanding of grammar, while effective for basic writers and for freshman level composition students who require short essay practice and the training in the basics of research methodology, does not encourage analysis of the inherent logic behind syntax. Once students are ready to contemplate sophisticated rhetorical options at the sentence level, they may find that they are at a loss for understanding why one sentence or clause is more rhetorically effective than another. Instead, writers at every level are encouraged to find the grammatical tools they need through practice and wide critical reading without becoming encumbered with the scientific model of grammatical instruction that was the staple of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. J Rodby and Winterowd (2005), for example, two highly respected academics in the areas of composition, rhetoric, and literacy, base their grammar text on the need to tie the subject directly to use, by way of “form and function”, incorporating what they argue are the best aspects of traditional (prescriptive), structural (descriptive), and
transformational (innate) grammars (1-13). Standard undergraduate handbooks, such as *The Hodges harbrace* (Glen and Gray, 2009) and the *St. Martin’s handbook* (A. Lunsford, 2009b) and their more contemporary cousins, with rough-and-ready practical usage titles (e.g., Hacker (2010), *Rules for writers*; Lunsford (2009a), *The everyday writer*; and Ruszkiewicz (2010), *How to write anything*, have responded to the research findings by refocusing grammar, style, and usage as practical descriptive matters within a context of “real” writing, whether academic or not, even while they have striven to acknowledge the need to incorporate multiple registers, purposes, and delivery systems.

Research from the Stanford Study of Writing under the direction of Lunsford et al. (2008) on the effects of internet writing on college students from its institution shows that students write or otherwise communicate prolific prose for a variety of uses. They write traditionally academic formal writing to create and express new knowledge, but they also write to increase the power of individual agency in shaping events on a potentially global scale through newer literacies developed through on-line delivery systems, such as weblogs, social networking sites, or global videos. A recent dissertation by Rogers (2008) on this five-year longitudinal study made explicit the following key findings. Freshmen who are most aware of their intended audience show the greatest level of growth in their subsequent college experience; progress in discipline-related writing may incur some temporary slippage in grammatical function; conversations about writing generally boosted confidence, but constructive criticism had greater effect on improving subsequent writing, especially in early stages of the writing process (as cited in Lunsford et al, 2008, Explore Research section, “What is Student Writing Development?”). Thus, Stanford’s study, while generating new insights into the increasingly complex construction of writing that anticipates virtually instantaneous audience feedback from around the world, also supports composition theory regarding the importance of peer and instructional evaluation, especially at the formative stages.

Modern classical rhetoric theorists such as Corbett and Connors (1999) have continued to encourage students to incorporate all three parts of the Trivium in their writing practice and analyze for just such improvement. Vickers (1998) a leading scholar in the history of rhetoric and its recent resurgence of interest in undergraduate education, has pointed out the need for renewed education in classical rhetoric and the weaknesses in twentieth-century treatments of the subject. Similarly, Kennedy (1999) has provided a recent historical and critical overview on the continued usefulness of classical rhetoric, including also in close proximity a comparison with other twentieth century rhetorical schools, such as the “New Rhetoric” and post-modern rhetoric. Basic knowledge of the rich heritage of the Western rhetorical tradition is an extremely important aspect of the continuation of the liberal arts as a conduit for making meaning in society and imparting a language of meaning to the next generation. The models of great writing from the past provide more than information about past cultures and ways of viewing reality, as important as these are; they also impart models of communication, rhetorical skills in syntax, vocabulary, and critical thinking that form the fabric of our common heritage (C.S. Lewis, 1946). The student population at Aquinas College is largely made up of first generation college students whose intended career choice is in the health care industry. Thus, it would seem useful for the Aquinas plan to encourage a blended approach to grammar instruction (cf., Rodby and Winterowd, 2005), which accommodates students at every level of formal grammar instruction preparedness and encourages wide reading, including a healthy respect for models, but is not exclusively built on them.
Furthermore, rhetoric that is steeped in the intellectual and moral virtues of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas is a reflection of the mission of the College to speak the truth in love. MacIntyre (2007), has, in his most recent update of an influential text on the importance of understanding the moral virtues of Aristotle, drawn an even closer relation between them and Thomas Aquinas’s scholastic interpretation. Developing rhetorical effectiveness for the purpose of communicating the virtues that our society needs requires a basis in reason and logic that goes beyond current “critical thinking” practices. Thus, reason grounded in logic and not merely critical thinking is a more accurate representation of the action that results from successful implementation of the skills enjoined in this QEP. From a tradition steeped in the neoclassical rhetoric of John Locke, historian Kennedy (2004) has argued for a return to the centrality of “reasonableness” to offset the gridlock that has occurred from the fragmentation of communication of infinite discourses without a ground upon which to agree. Aquinas College, steeped as it is in the Dominican tradition, would go further back than the empirically based eighteenth-century system of reasoned thought espoused by Locke and his contemporaries, to the Thomistic synthesis of patristic and medieval Christian and Aristotelian philosophical systems. Classical rhetoric treats logic both as an “ancillary, but distinct discipline” to rhetoric (Corbett and Connors 1999) and as a method of persuasion in modern academic writing that recognizes the value of a variety of formal and informal logical appeals as appropriate to the context.

The desire of colleges and universities to enhance students’ ability to think critically as opposed to reason rightly has profound implications on a society that has found relativism to be problematic to its ability to find meaning. Among recent applied critical thinking research which offers a convenient framework on which to develop a rubric, the modified Bloom taxonomy of higher critical thinking skills (Anderson et al, 2000) would be most flexible. Moreover, the critical thinking push in institutions of higher learning has resulted in part from developmental approaches to college teaching such as defined by the influential cognitive theorist. Perry (1981), who, for example, ranks attitude toward a college student’s knowledge in four categories from “dualism”, to “multiplicity”, to “relativism”, and ultimately “commitment to relativism”. Reasoning logically, however, does not end in contextualization and relativism, as taught by Western philosophy throughout what Richard M. Gamble (2007) calls “the great tradition” in his edited anthology of that title. Logic continues to provide training in clear thinking and communication, as well as a means for beginning to think philosophically (e.g., Gensler, 2010).

As a liberal arts college in the Dominican tradition, the decision to impart the rich scholastic heritage of formal logic as well as recognizing more recent cognitive theories provides students an opportunity to discover the means to understanding objective reality, which is at the core of our mission. College pedagogical theory regarding rhetoric and logic, both springing from the medieval concept of the Trivium in the seven liberal arts, are historically dependent on classical Greek philosophy, particularly Aristotle. According to Elias (1995), this longstanding educational philosophy lies at the crux of the recent heated debate over the idea of liberal arts education in America having and imparting intrinsic value (cf., A. Bloom, 1987). A return to the core of the medieval formula for university education, the Trivium of the liberal arts, grammar, logic, and rhetoric, in which logic provides a firm basis for rhetoric, which in turn, serves as the process as well as the product by which the three are communicated, ensures that the argument is both sound and persuasive (Mchnerny, 2004).
Evaluating the quality of logic in a college composition necessarily involves an ideological perspective. In response to some earlier attempts to provide a value neutral college writing environment, Meyers (2003, originally published in 1986) chided Elbow for forgetting that the concept of authority symbolized by a writing instructor also exists in society outside the classroom, and indeed, one cannot escape in society from attempts to shape events by power politics (pp. 454-455). Aquinas College offers its students an education in the Dominican tradition. It adheres faithfully to Catholic social teaching, which recognizes the inherent dignity of the individual. The College distinguishes between the recognition of Catholic teaching and acceptance. As Aquinas students are largely not Catholic, this distinction, grounded as it is in Catholic social teaching, allows for personal growth in an environment that is permeated with justice and charity.

The Write REASON QEP calls for a director who is well-versed in Thomistic, Aristotelian philosophy, Catholic theology, and writing in order to promote student writing that can clearly articulate positive responses to real life issues. The challenge of rhetorical control may be in flux at the moment, as suggested by Lunsford et al. (2008), but the gap between the highly literate in print and web literacies and those who are less so will prove, perhaps, to be the greatest new challenge for college educators across the United States in the coming decade. Given the finding from the Stanford study that constructive faculty criticism at early stages of writing assignments can have a lasting effect on student writing ability, the plan seeks to help students to articulate accurately Catholic teaching in discipline-related writing, current writing conventions of grammar and style, and the logical results that flow from actual real world situations. Write REASON will support, not supersede, decisions by individual course instructors, by providing methodology training based on sound educational practices that are student centered. It does not supersede the instructor’s control of his or her course, but respects the principle of subsidiarity by creating an environment that thoroughly supports academic writing inside and outside the classroom and promotes a greater level of awareness about writing’s necessary conditions for success. The role of the Director will provide the necessary focus to keep the QEP on track within and outside the classroom. This position, the support staff, and the Center’s physical character together will help to make real the importance of the College’s investment in academic writing and the value of measuring its success instrumentally within the plan, and also philosophically.

The significance of a strong Aristotelian philosophical grounding for the plan as embodied in the use of the Trivium, the development of the writing rubric, and in the qualifications of the Director are profound. According to Corbett (2009, originally published in 1985), rhetoric theory in the first third of the twentieth century sprang from a struggle between American pragmatic and progressive higher education theories that sought to be developed from scientific models of linguistics and the emerging social sciences and a classicizing prejudice toward liberal arts. However, similar tendencies were still current in the WAC developments of the 1970s and 80s, according to Russell (2009, originally published in 1992, pp. 162-166), and current rhetorical interest in the potential destabilizing of political and social power structures by those with sophisticated web literacy (c.f., Lunsford et al, 2008; Selfe, Hawisher, Lashore, & Song, 2009). This relationship with distinctions can be understood using Berlin’s (2003) definitions of schools of rhetoric: Corbett’s classical rhetoric theory adhered to the Aristotelian theory, while WAC developments often were based on linguistic data derived from cognitive psychology (pg. 264). It remains to be seen whether the power of web literacy, for example, remains in the hands of individual, original thinkers with the pioneering genius for democratizing agency as described by Stanford’s recent study, or whether it will
become yet another agent for larger global structures, such as competing commercial enterprise and governmental communication control. The power of modern systems of potentially instantaneous global communication makes training in Write REASON with its application for practical, logical and compelling articulation of truth in love very relevant for our students and society, in keeping with Aquinas’s larger mission “to transform lives and culture through truth and love” (Strategic plan).

As Meyers (2003) warned at the beginning of the compositional effort to be a catalyst for social change back in 1986, “we should not let our enthusiasm for this social view [i.e., writing as a social process, a theory linked to the social turn of composition theory] lead us to accepting social construction of knowledge as something good in itself . . . the changes we propose may finally support an existing consensus and a conception of reality that supports those now in power” (pg. 456). Conversely, the values of Catholic liberal arts education, taught in a logically coherent philosophy, provides a healthy alternative to either relativistic scenario, by promoting a society that protects the authentic freedom that is due to each individual and which the world seeks. To quote another important theorist of the eighties, Berlin (2003):

Rhetorical theories differ from each other in the way writer, reality, audience, and language are conceived – both as separate units and in the way the units relate to each other. In the case of distinct pedagogical approaches, these four elements are likewise defined and related so as to describe a different composing process, which is to say a different world with different rules about what can be known, how it can be known, and how it can be communicated. To teach writing is to argue for a version of reality, and the best way of knowing and communicating it to deal, as Kameen has pointed out [see Kameen (1980)], in the metarhetorical realm of epistemology and linguistics.

The Write REASON QEP gives students the means to weigh competing philosophies logically and the tools through writing reasonably to create new knowledge and become a catalyst for renewing a more just and free global society.

In addition to enhancing the Writing Across the Curriculum thrust that has already been a part of the Catalog’s description of courses at Aquinas College by creating a flexible rubric based on the Trivium, training faculty in the Trivium and techniques for incorporating the QEP in their respective courses, the Write REASON QEP also recognizes the need to create a designated, inviting space for writers to come for assistance and encouragement throughout the writing process. Primarily designed to assist with formal academic writing assignments from enrolled courses at Aquinas, the Write REASON Center can also provide assistance with other forms of college related writing, such as resumes, applications for scholarships, multimedia presentations, professional portfolios, and college approved associations and activities. Just as Rogers’s (2009) dissertation based on the Stanford Study by Lunsford et al. (2008) verified in its most recent assessment of its longitudinal study of student writing, college level writing is enhanced by a wide variety of writing experiences, frequent practice among these that includes formal and informal assessment and feedback from peers and professional mentors and instructors. The Write REASON Center would make available an environment and support system of peer tutors, a professional non-faculty tutor and English faculty assistance, under the guidance of the Write REASON Director, who will hold an advanced or terminal degree in philosophy and English, and understand
and support the Dominican tradition of reasoning logically and teaching in a rhetorically
effective manner. The Write REASON QEP and the Center itself will be student centered
and student writer driven in its outreach. It will encourage student writers to become
more aware that writing is both a process and a product, as well as post-product in the
sense that the rhetorical triangle works continually and in a multifaceted way. It will offer
feedback at a variety of levels of formality, but without direct formal (graded)
assessment. It will encourage student writers to recognize the interrelationship of the
rhetorical triangle in the roles of writer, text, reader (intended, ideal, and real) in a
delimited context that is a complex of not only historical, philosophical, and socio-
economic environmental variables (cf. Ede and Lunsford, 1984) but also of necessity
natural and supernatural realities.

Despite the not inconsiderable philosophical differences between rhetorical
theories noted above, the College welcomes current research on best practices, which
form the basic framework for the implementation of the Write REASON plan, as writing
does indeed offer measurable and normative samples of student progress. Implementing
Write REASON will promote in our students the skills necessary to recognize and
address real world situations and allow assessment of their development of these skills.
By focusing on writing as the measurable product of communicating sound reasoning, it
provides the College with a mechanism to improve broad-based, student learning
outcomes that go right to the heart of College-wide surveys for significant improvement
and our central mission. While acknowledging the value of current research in
composition practices, the QEP would seek to avoid the overall fragmentation that
results from a philosophy of relativism and deconstructive linguistic theory which is
ultimately counterproductive to the College’s mission.

In short, Write REASON provides a measurable, broadly-based, student-
centered educational initiative that augments the existing mission, purpose and strategic
plan of the College that is elegantly simple and coherent in its focus, economic in its
infrastructure, and practical in its implementation. Building upon the existing writing-
across-the-curriculum model already in place at Aquinas, the QEP strengthens it by
promoting meta-consciousness of the writing experience by creating a flexible,
measurable rubric based on the Trivium and by creating a designated Write REASON
Center with infrastructure and support staff to administer and assess the plan. Thus, it
would seem beneficial for the QEP to recommend the following actions:

1. Establish a permanent Write REASON Center to promote the quality of academic
   prose in an academic environment that is supported by significant formal writing
   assignments in every discipline.
2. Implement the Write REASON rubric for assessing student performance and
   tracking development of Write REASON skill sets.
3. Actively promote the Write REASON Center college–wide so that students of
   every level of ability and in both upper and lower division courses would
   recognize the benefit of attending consultation and revision sessions for
   individual assignments.
4. Provide tutorial assistance for basic writing skills for those students who need it.
5. Provide advanced revision and rhetorical strategies that enhance understanding
   of grammar’s rhetorical and logical function through actual formal writing
   assignments in enrolled courses for students with more advanced writing
   experience.
6. Provide faculty training for creating and enriching writing intensive assignments with suggested rubrics.
7. Adequately staff, furnish, and support the Center.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The personnel and facility needs for successful implementation of the Write REASON plan include a dedicated Write REASON Center that is designed to promote learning and be inviting, in a quiet, comfortable environment, well-stocked with reference materials, with adequate space and furnishings for small group and one-to-one study, and composition tools that include designated computers with up-to-date writing software and printer. The Center will be administered by a Director credentialed with advanced degrees in philosophy and English and a support staff member who will serve as Assessment Coordinator/Tutor with at least a BA in English and academic training in English composition, although an MA in English with emphasis in composition is preferred. In the Center, students may meet with English faculty or peer tutors for weekly tutoring or assistance with individual writing assignments. Position descriptions for these new positions appear in Appendix VI.

The Write REASON Advisory Committee, comprised of faculty representatives from each academic discipline as well as the directors of Student Affairs, Student Learning Services and Admissions, will meet as needed, either in full committee or separately, with the Write REASON Director to provide oversight of the implementation of the plan (see Appendix VII). This committee will report on program initiatives, needs and concerns regarding the plan, evaluate the effectiveness of the plan, recommend actions to implement or improve the plan, and discuss strategies for achieving overall Write REASON student learning outcomes. During the first year of the plan the Committee will be composed of the current QEP Committee membership. After that time the Committee membership will be determined by the College administration and recommendations from each of the academic program directors.
TIMELINE FOR *Write REASON* PLAN ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The timeline for the actions to be implemented and activities that are described in the plan are outlined in the following pages.

### QEP Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-<em>Write REASON</em> – Spring 2010-Summer 2010</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Begin CAAP Critical Thinking and Writing assessments of all incoming students with the exception of RN-BSN students. Analyze CAAP data obtained to determine acceptable performance level baseline. Develop draft <em>Write REASON</em> rubric based on the Trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, as well as rubrics currently used by faculty at Aquinas College.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Modify Personal Statement in the admission application to be used as part of the baseline assessment of student writing competency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Define and begin the search for applicants for the director position for the <em>Write REASON</em> Center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify space for the <em>Write REASON</em> Center. Tentative space has been identified in the current ASN clinical lab.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Phase I – Year 1</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2010</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Begin various marketing strategies of the plan to students to include acceptance letter promotion to applicants and a <em>Write REASON</em> page on the College’s website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recruit the QEP Director. During this period the <em>Write REASON</em> Advisory Committee will direct the activities of the plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Renovation of space dedicated to the <em>Write REASON</em> Center.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Begin use of revised application essay to reflect educational interests, aspirations and values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conduct a workshop for faculty on the draft <em>Write REASON</em> rubric. Solicit faculty to pilot the use of the rubric in courses</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Spring – Summer 2011</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Brown Bag Logic sessions begin once or twice a semester.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Request curriculum committee approval to require all first time, full-time students to register for IDS 106 course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Request curriculum committee approval of a new non-credit <em>Write REASON</em> writing laboratory required for all new students taking English Composition I who perform below acceptable levels on intake assessment instruments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Provide a workshop for faculty and staff on advising for <em>Write REASON</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Present a second workshop on standardizing use of the rubric in courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pilot use of the rubric in courses, e.g., Microbiology (BIO 220 essay “What is Life”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• CAAP Critical Thinking assessment given to sophomore students in Years 1 and 2 are pre-<em>Write REASON</em> and will be assessed as part of the baseline performance level for the plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assessment of program activities and modifications as necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Phase II – Year 2**

### Fall 2011
- Initiate competition for naming the *Write REASON* journal
- Begin *Write REASON* movie night activities
- Replace the CAAP- Essay with the Aquinas transfer essay for all new students.
- *Write REASON* workshop for new faculty and staff. This activity will occur as needed throughout the plan timeline.
- Begin individual plans for academic development for all incoming students found to be at risk for academic difficulties in critical thinking and writing.
- Begin required IDS 106 course for all first time, full-time students.
- Implement *Write REASON* laboratory for English Composition I (ENG 111)
- Analyze use of rubric in pilot courses. Conduct training and/or workshops for course faculty and use of the rubric.
- Request that academic programs recommend capstone courses for the use of the *Write REASON* rubric
- Solicit faculty teaching mid-level courses (200-300) to use rubric
- *Write REASON* Center begins mentoring and remediating students with identified weaknesses in writing and critical thinking
- Pilot rubric in course/s (e.g., Microbiology).

### Spring – Summer 2012
- Review essays submitted for the *Write REASON* journal. Writers Night Awards event with publication in late Spring or Summer. Occurs annually.
- Implement use of the rubric in identified mid-level and capstone courses as they become available and faculty are trained in its use. Continue to solicit faculty use of rubric in courses.
- Continue to pilot writing rubric in the selected courses.
- Assessment of program activities and modifications as necessary

### Phase II – Year 3

#### Fall 2012
- Continue *Write REASON* activities: mentoring, tutoring, use of rubric, CAAP CT assessments of new students, etc.
- Implement writing rubric in identified capstone and mid-level core courses
- Provide workshops for faculty use of the rubric as needed.
- Modify *Write REASON* rubric as required for the specific discipline courses.

#### Spring – Summer 2013
- Conduct CAAP Critical Thinking assessments on sophomore baccalaureate students who began in year 2 – first group of students to have full 2 years within the plan activities and course modifications.
- Continue plan activities
- Assessment of program activities and modifications as necessary

### Phase III – Years 4 and 5

#### Fall 2013 – Summer 2015
- Year 4 should witness implementation of mid-level and capstone course use of the *Write REASON* rubric in all programs in the College. Implement capstone rubric in new courses as they are identified.
- Assessment of program activities and modifications as necessary
- Compare application essay to senior writing in mid-level and capstone courses. Prepare 5 year report to SACS on plan activities and success.
ACTIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED
Developmental phase – Spring and Summer 2010

In the initial phase, the College will implement CAAP assessment of incoming students using the Critical Thinking and Writing essays. The purpose of this activity is multifaceted. First, it addresses the need to establish baseline data for students in the areas for which this plan is focused. There data will be included with other intake information including the application essay to identify initial levels of ability and to track changes that occur during residency in the academic programs and Write REASON activities. Second, it will help identify those students who arrive with significant weakness in these areas so that the plan can direct them into courses and activities that can strengthen these skills. A preliminary analysis of data from new students registering during late Spring and Summer is found in the Assessment section.

CAAP testing for critical thinking skills will continue in the following academic sessions. It is our belief that the transfer essay prepared by our English faculty for incoming transfer students will serve as the assessment for all students for all semesters after Phase I of the plan. The transfer essay is administered in a 45 minute block during ACCESS Orientation and Registration, and provides students with a choice of three topics. Essays are administered by the Liberal Arts program and graded by English faculty. The Director and the English faculty will adapt the campus assessment to a six-point scale using the criteria described for the CAAP Writing essay and each essay will be scored using that value system during the first year. This assessment will be administered to all students during ACCESS and scored by the Write REASON Director, Tutor, and English faculty.

A second activity has been the development of a preliminary rubric for courses which adopt the Write REASON assessment. This rubric will be refined in specific workshop activities with faculty, especially those faculty who will employ the rubric in their courses. The draft rubric is discussed in the Assessment section of the plan.

A third activity began in early Spring 2010 to modify the topic of the Personal Statement required of potential students in the Application for Admission. Responses from students to this Personal Statement will be assessed using the Write REASON rubric with the results of the evaluation to be reviewed by the Director. The results of the assessment of the Personal Statement will be compared to a similar statement the students will prepare at the end of their academic career at Aquinas College.

A fourth activity has been to develop the position descriptions and duties of the Director position and that of the Coordinator and Tutor for the Write REASON Center. Details of those descriptions are provided in Appendix VI. The Director position is crucial to the success of the plan and will require an individual who combines academic strength and advanced degrees in English and philosophy. Furthermore, ideally this person should have experience working with students, developing plans for improving skills in writing effectively, assessing student progress and evaluating the success of the instructional plan that was implemented. The College has identified a potential candidate for that position.

Phase I: Year 1 (2010 –2011) Fall 2010

The College will continue the search for the Director of the plan and the Write REASON Center if necessary. This position has been described in the section entitled “Organizational Structure.” It is hoped that this position will be filled by the end of the Fall
semester in order for rubric development to continue and recruitment of courses to implement the Write REASON rubric. During this initial period the Advisory Committee for the plan, composed of the current members of the QEP Committee, will direct the activities of the plan.

The plan proposes several marketing strategies to increase student awareness, acceptance and enthusiasm for the Write REASON plan, its objectives and goal. The primary purpose of this effort is to increase student buy-in to the plan. Part of this effort includes the distribution of promotional items to students beginning in Fall 2010. Other parts of the strategy include a description of the plan in acceptance letters to new students and placement of information about the Write REASON Center on the Aquinas College website (beginning Spring 2011). In the Fall of 2011, the Director of the Write REASON Center will visit classes that have included the Write REASON rubric assessment to explain not only the purpose and advantages of using the Center but also how the rubric is used (not as a grading instrument but to track student progress in developing the skills of the Trivium.) This activity will occur at the beginning of each semester for the duration of the plan. Beginning in Spring 2011, a Brown Bag Logic session will occur once or twice a semester, with either faculty or guest speakers for informal presentations and student discussions over the noon hour on topics that illustrate the need for truth and reason in the discussion of ideas and issues involving ethics, Christian principles and morality, and moral decision making. An additional venue to approach students will be a Write REASON movie night beginning in Spring 2011 featuring a movie which exemplifies the need to communicate truth and moral values (e.g., Glenville (1964) Becket, Zinnemann (1966) A man for all seasons, Capra (1939) Mr. Smith goes to Washington). Finally, we propose to establish a Write REASON journal in which outstanding student papers submitted in various courses using the Write REASON rubric will be published. Prizes for the top papers will include cash prizes or tuition credit. A contest will be held to name the journal and an awards event will occur every April. This activity will begin Spring 2012 (Year 2).

Space has been identified on the second floor of the main building for the Write REASON Center and renovations will begin in Fall 2010 and be completed by the beginning of the Spring semester. This space will house the office of the Director as well as the plan coordinator positions and provide the space from which the plan tutor will provide services to students. In addition to office space, the Center will have at least four study carrels with computers, printers and training software available, as well as lounge chairs and tables for casual use. A conference table will be included in the space for group sessions and meetings with faculty and staff. The plan for the Center can be found in Appendix VII.

The first phase of the plan will include piloting modifications to the introductory course, College Learning in the Dominican Tradition (IDS 106). This one-hour course has been used as a mandatory learning and study skill development course for students who are accepted but enter the College on academic probation. To enhance student performance in the areas of rhetoric and logic, we recommend revisions to the curriculum of IDS 106: College Learning in the Dominican Tradition. Pending approval of the Curriculum Committee, we will require IDS 106 for all first-time, full-time freshmen. The course objectives have been modified to emphasize logical reasoning as it is applied to academic pursuits and personal decision making. In addition to providing an introduction to Aquinas College, the Dominican Tradition, and essential college study skills, the course will now offer writing workshops designed to enhance performance on
the International Critical Thinking Essay Test and discussions of McInerny’s (2005) text, *Being logical*. We expect that these enhancements will provide students the opportunity to develop their skills in constructing a logical argument and refining their rhetorical writing style and prepare them for success as they proceed through their program of study at Aquinas College. The inclusion of the International Critical Thinking Essay Test will provide further baseline data for students with identified weaknesses. These modifications to the course will be piloted during the first year of the plan. Our intention is that by expanding the student population taking this course, we will raise the status and perception of this course beyond that for remediation.

There are two curricular issues the plan proposes to support students in their efforts to improve reasoning and writing skills. The first, as mentioned above, is a request to the Curriculum Committee to approve the expansion of required student participation in the IDS 106 course to include all first-time, full-time freshmen. Second, we are requesting that the Curriculum Committee approve the creation of a new writing laboratory, English 111 Writing Lab, that taken together with English Composition I, will replace the current remediation course, Fundamentals of English (ENG 012).

At present the writing skills of first-time students are identified using ACT assessment scores and an Aquinas College placement essay. If the score is unacceptable, students are registered into Fundamentals of English (ENG 012) which is a non-credit bearing course. Our plan proposes to change this approach for students identified with significant weaknesses in writing skills. The initial formulation of our plan included a new composition course with attached workshops and tutorial sessions. This course was designed to contain the same objectives as the English Composition I course (ENG 111) first-time students would take. However, our modification included an additional one hour of workshop experience with the course instructor and a 1 hour session with the Write REASON Center tutor. There were however, some practical difficulties with this formulation. Foremost among them was that the assessment results for students who register in the 2- to 4-week period prior to the beginning of their first semester would not be available until after registration and the beginning of classes. For new students who register early this would not be a problem. However, a student who performed at a lower level in these assessments would have to change courses to the Write REASON ENG 111 course. Our current plan, therefore, calls for a non-credit bearing writing laboratory (e.g., ENG 111 Writing Lab) that can be added to the course when the assessment results become available. The concept for this new approach is a modification of the SWW Composition Program at SUNY New Paltz in New York (Rigolino, nd.). The student enrolled in ENG 111 Writing Lab would meet each week in a one hour workshop with the Write REASON Center tutor, addressing those issues identified by the course instructor. The time in these workshop sessions could also be used to focus on particular skills that continue to be a problem for a student, or to address issues that came up during the week’s session. We will seek approval for this lab to begin in the Fall of the second year of the plan. The writing lab option will be open to all students but will be required for any student who demonstrates significant weakness in writing through the CAAP.

The Aquinas College Write REASON Committee and/or Director will sponsor three faculty development workshops during the 2010-2011 academic year. Each workshop will be designed to offer faculty information regarding best practices in instruction and provide opportunities for faculty input into the ongoing development of Write REASON activities and student learning enrichment services. The workshops will
be videotaped for use by new and veteran faculty members. Each workshop will include post workshop surveys of participant responses to content and suggestions for improvement and future workshop topics.

The topic for the first faculty workshop will be the refinement of the *Write REASON* rubric. The QEP Committee will present faculty with a draft rubric and solicit feedback and recommendations for its revision. Faculty also will be provided with a rationale for the various components of the rubric and the anticipated framework for its use (ie. voluntary section-by-section basis, evaluated by instructors). This workshop is tentatively scheduled for September 2010. It is likely that a second workshop on the rubric will be needed in the Spring semester under the direction of the Director.

The second workshop, tentatively titled “Advising for *Write REASON,*” will provide faculty with an overview of the various services and interventions available to all students, but particularly those at risk for poor academic performance. Topics to be presented include the *Write REASON* Center, tutoring, PASS workshops (formerly study skills), College Learning in the Dominican Tradition (emphasizing college readiness and introduction to the Dominican tradition/education), English 111 Writing Lab (Fall 2011), and *Write REASON* Brown Bag Lunches. The workshop could be part of a larger advising orientation for all faculty members in November 2010.

The RN-BSN program is for students who have an associate degree in Nursing and desire to enter an academic program for a baccalaureate degree. The Dean of Nursing at Aquinas College is Brother Ignatius Perkins, O.P., a well-respected teacher and administrator in nursing programs who recently joined the faculty. We believe the best approach to implementing *Write REASON* in this program would occur in consultation with Brother Ignatius, seeking his advice for the best approach to develop and assess reasoning and writing skills within the students in that program. We will begin discussions with him in Fall 2010 to determine the best way to include *Write REASON* in that program.

**Spring 2011**

We expect that the Director of the *Write REASON* Center will begin her or his duties in the early part of Spring 2011. The activities that will occur during this semester will be jointly directed by the new Director and the Committee as needed.

The third *Write REASON* plan workshop for phase 1 will occur in Spring 2011 and will focus on norming the *Write REASON* rubric. The formal rubric will be presented, and faculty will discuss its proper use. Reliability and consistency across disciplines and among faculty members will be emphasized. Faculty will have the opportunity to view sample writings and practice evaluating student work using the *Write REASON* rubric. The committee recommends scheduling the workshop for Spring 2011 to allow the newly appointed *Write REASON* Director to preside at the meeting.

Trial *Write REASON* assessment instruments will be implemented in selected courses. For example, the Microbiology course (BIO 222) contains two essay assignments, one of which is tentatively entitled, “What is Life?” In that essay the student will be asked to discuss the essential features of living agents from a biological perspective and from the perspective of vitalism versus the perspective that a living thing is merely a collection of parts (e.g., a machine).
Evaluation of program activities will occur each year of the plan and will most likely occur in the summer months when academic course loads are decreased. Evaluation activities include:

- Evaluation of baseline assessment data from the CAAP writing essay and the transfer essay with the goal of using the transfer essay in future ACCESS sessions for new students. (This activity should begin in Spring 2011 semester so that the decision could be implemented for Fall 2011 ACCESS which begins in May 2011.)
- Evaluation of the results of HESI assessments for entering ASN students (only the results from pre-nursing HESI will be available, post-nursing HESI data will begin in year 2 of the plan)
- Review of data for current students and completion of Write REASON Center records.
- Summary of activities of the year and report with evaluation and recommendations to the Write REASON Advisory Committee for discussion
- Implement or make modifications to the plan as determined by the Committee and the Director. These changes may be the result of unanticipated difficulties in plan implementation, use or design of the rubric and critical thinking portion of the CAAP assessment, and recruitment of faculty participation.

**Phase II: Year 2 (2011 – 2012)**

Several activities from the first year will be continued for the duration of the plan. These activities include CAAP testing for critical thinking for all incoming students and the assessment of writing skills using the transfer essay. We anticipate changes to the IDS 106 course to have been approved by the Curriculum Committee and in Fall 2011 the course will be offered for all students but required for all first-time, full-time freshmen. In addition, the new English Composition I writing lab should be offered for this and each succeeding semester for those new students with identified weaknesses in writing skills. The English 113 course will be retained for new transfer students who have already taken English Composition I and II at other institutions and perform poorly on the writing assessment.

New activities for the plan are the mentoring and tutoring of students by the Director and Tutor of the Write REASON Center. Although this activity may have already begun in the preceding Spring semester if the Director position is filled in the Fall and renovations for the Center are completed early, we expect this will begin in earnest in Fall 2011.

The Write REASON Director and staff will begin creating an individual plan for academic development for every incoming student identified as at risk for academic difficulty in critical thinking and/or writing. Each plan will consist of four components referred to as APPS, (Assessment scores, Plan for academic development, Plan for specific measurements, and Student counseling.) These activities will include individual conferences with students discussing assessment results, course recommendations, and the development of an individual plan for addressing those weaknesses to include tutoring sessions, review of course essay assignments, and the use of software found in the Center to develop writing and reasoning skills. Conferences with new students should occur within the first month of the semester with records kept of discussion points and the Write REASON plan for each student. A record of all activities by the student in
compliance with the plan will need to be maintained in the Director’s office to provide information for future discussions with the student, documentation of effort and plan evaluation purposes. While all incoming students indentified as at risk due to poor assessment results will be required to participate in APPS, all Aquinas College students will be encouraged to participate in the program.

Three of the four baccalaureate programs at Aquinas College (Teacher Education, Business, and Liberal Arts) require students to take CAAP objective assessments at the end of their sophomore year. Those tests include the subtest for Critical Thinking. The scores our students achieve on this test will be compared to the scores achieved when they first registered for Aquinas College to determine the development of their reasoning skills during the first two years of attendance. Our expectations for performance levels are described in the Student and Plan Assessment Sections. To determine student performance in effective writing and reasoning at the end of the baccalaureate program, the Director and Write REASON Advisory Committee will request that academic programs recommend a capstone course which can adopt a student philosophy of education essay into its activities using the Write REASON rubric. The implementation of the rubric in these capstone courses will begin in Year 3. The results from evaluating these capstone essays will be used in comparison to the incoming student data (writing essay and application essay scores). It is desirable that approval for these capstone activities be completed early enough in the second year that implementation can begin in Fall 2012 (Year 3).

In Spring 2010, students enrolled in the Associate Degree in Nursing (ASN) program began taking a HESI pre-nursing assessment which they are required to pass before acceptance into the program. At the end of the program these ASN students will take the post-HESI. Both assessments, though different in content and expectations, contain a critical thinking component. The plan calls for using the results of those assessments to measure ASN student performance levels. Students who tested for the ASN program in Spring 2010 will be graduating in Year 3 of the plan. We are currently awaiting the data from the results of the pre-nursing HESI assessments. We hope to use the results of these assessments to determine current performance levels and anticipated outcomes for students who enter the ASN program during the Write REASON plan.

Write REASON workshops for new faculty will be conducted each semester to acquaint them with the plan’s activities, objectives, and to solicit their involvement and input in the plan. Additional workshops for the faculty will be provided by the Director to review the progress of the plan, convey important findings and solicit faculty feedback and suggestions for the plan. These presentations will continue on an as needed basis for each year of the plan.

In addition to assessing student abilities to write truth effectively at the beginning and end of their academic career, it is important for the plan to monitor student skills as they progress through their curriculum. To that end, several of the workshops in the first year include discussions of the plan with faculty and recruitment of faculty to include Write REASON assessments into their course. This objective of the plan will involve mid-level courses in the various curricula. The Microbiology course mentioned earlier could serve as such a course as part of the Associate Degree in Nursing (ASN) program as it is a co-requisite for that program. Students can take that course either before or after admission to the ASN program. However, some students are admitted to the program
having already taken Microbiology at another institution. Another mid-level course that could serve the ends of several programs is Ethics (PHI 215) or Moral Theology (THE 210). These two courses are required for all students in the ASN and Liberal Arts programs. They are elective courses for all other programs. The challenge for us is that usually various faculty teach these courses in either a standard semester format or an accelerated format and to be effective for all students, each would have to agree to use the rubric for an essay assignment in their course. Thus, it is likely that a course that is specifically part of each academic program might better serve the assessment and evaluation purposes of the plan.

Summer Year 2

Evaluation of plan activities in the second year will continue with new streams of data from student assessments in courses which are piloting the Write REASON rubric starting in Spring 2011 and continuing through Spring 2012. Student scores will be added to individual student files in the Center and individual plans of action will be updated for conferences in the Fall. It is unlikely that any of the students who entered in Fall 2010 will graduate in this time period, but a number of students may have taken a core course that uses the Write REASON assessment and interim data may provide evidence of individual progress as well as data for comparison of student populations for plan evaluation. One of the major concerns is the reliability and consistency of rubric use by individual faculty. One way to approach this potential problem is for the Director to perform a second rubric evaluation of selected student essays for each of the courses providing data, comparing his/her results with those of the faculty to determine if there are detectable patterns of misinterpretation of the rubric for each faculty member. A second approach will involve a rubric use evaluation from each faculty member.

Phase II: Year 3 (2012-2013)

Year 3 of the Write REASON plan will continue those assessment activities already described in Phases 1 and 2. The new activities that will begin in Year 3 will be the incorporation of the Write REASON rubric in capstone courses in each of the academic programs at Aquinas College that identified a course and whose teaching faculty participated in rubric training with the Director in workshops during the second year. The plan calls for an essay from the senior student describing his/her personal statement of philosophy of education as it has developed during their academic experience at Aquinas College. An example of this approach currently occurs within the Teacher Education program in which students write a philosophy of education essay in the Foundations of Education course (EDU 240) and then later another essay in an upper level course, Philosophy of Education (PHI 330). The results from evaluating these essays using our rubric will be used in comparison with the results obtained using the application statement and ACCESS essays to determine each graduating student’s performance levels in logic, rhetoric and grammar. Changes in those performance levels will be used to measure skills improvement and plan success. It may be that some programs will be unable to identify a capstone course in the second year of the plan. The plan will continue to solicit a decision from those programs and train course faculty on the use of the Write REASON rubric. It is the intention of the plan that all programs have identified capstone courses by the end of Year 3.

Summer Year 3

Activities of the Director and staff of the Write REASON Center will continue with the assessment of incoming students, students who are continuing in their educational track during the academic year, and of the other plan activities. The first students in the
ASN program who entered Aquinas during the full plan implementation of Write REASON will graduate during the 2012-2013 academic year. The data from those students will be analyzed for evaluation of the plan and its impact on writing effectively, logically, and convincingly.

**Phase III: (Years 4 and 5) (Fall 2013 – Spring /Summer 2015)**

By the beginning of Year 4 the Write REASON plan should be fully implemented. All prior activities will continue during these years. At the end of Year 4, the first students to enter Aquinas College during the plan will graduate from baccalaureate programs and the data from analyzing the performance of those students are important turning points in plan evaluation. Year 5 will continue those efforts which began in earlier years but will be the year in which the data will be crucial for the construction of the five year Impact Report on the QEP activities at Aquinas College.

**ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF THE PLAN**

**Overview of Assessment**

Aquinas College is at a tremendous advantage in being of a size and nature that the faculty and staff know each student personally. The size of the College facilitates the collection of student data. Assessment is a critical piece of the Write REASON plan. A Write REASON Tracking Sheet is included in Appendix XII.

Assessment of student learning objectives will be implemented in phases. In the initial phase, a baseline of incoming student writing knowledge and skills will be established through the CAAP, the International Critical Thinking Essay Test, the admission application essay for entering students, and transfer essay for transfer students. The baseline results of these standardized tests will provide the Write REASON Director with data by which to assess current student population ability and establish knowledge and skills goals for a rubric to be developed with faculty in core courses. Student learning objectives will be stated as student competencies to be met and, while strategies for meeting those student learning objectives may change during the plan’s lifespan, the competencies will not change. These competencies, based on the definition of Write REASON, will demonstrate the student writer’s understanding of each of the three components of the Trivium as evaluated by the Write REASON Rubric, which by definition of each part of the Trivium includes compliance with objective truth in reality.

1. Grammar: conforms to conventions of edited standard written English
2. Logic: maintains accurate, clear and well-organized communication
3. Rhetoric: maintains controlled and persuasive communication

Faculty development will include a workshop on the Write REASON Rubric, developed by the QEP Committee and other faculty, which will be implemented across the curriculum in courses with research papers on a voluntary section-by-section basis by the faculty who teach those courses.
Student Assessment

Based on the definition of Write REASON, writing is the normative expression of logical thought. Through standardized objective testing and institutional evaluations of student written work using the Write REASON Rubric, student learning objectives will be assessed in the following ways:

- **Standardized Assessments**: CAAP Writing and Critical Thinking entrance exam, International Critical Thinking Essay Test, CAAP Critical Thinking sophomore exam, HESI entrance exam, HESI exit exam
- **Institutional Evaluations using the Write REASON Rubric**: admission essay, entrance and transfer essays, research papers produced in courses requiring such work, philosophy of academic discipline essay, tracking of the use of the Write REASON Center
- **Indirect measures**: student self-assessment surveys regarding their improvement in Write REASON, graduate and employer surveys evaluating graduates’ ability to express themselves critically and logically

Current findings from CAAP assessments given on four occasions during ACCESS New Student Orientation and Registration during Spring and Summer 2010 sessions provide preliminary data which lend support the use of this strategy. Preliminary analysis of results from assessments to incoming students attending ACCESS in May and June are summarized below:

- 97 students have participated in the registration process in 4 ACCESS sessions during this time period
- **CAAP Critical thinking mean scores (national average = 62 +/- 5.4)** in
  - May ACCESS = 61.3 +/- 4.8 (44 students)
  - June ACCESS = 58.7 +/- 5.2 (37 students)
  - July ACCESS = 60.1 +/- 4.2 (16 students)
  - Number of students equal to or greater than 1 standard deviation below national mean (score of 56 or below) = 27 (27.8 %)
- **Writing Assessment**
  - CAAP Writing Essay
    - 57 of 97 students participated
    - Number of students scoring below acceptable score of 3 = 12 (12 %); as a percentage of CAAP-Writing Essay takers = 21.1%
  - Aquinas transfer student writing essay (required for acceptance of English Composition course credits earned at other institutions. Students who do not pass are required to take a refresher English Composition course ENG 113
    - 40 of 97 students participated
    - Number of students not passing the assessment = 18 (18.6 %); as a percentage of those taking the College Essay = 45%
- **Number of students who were below in both critical thinking and writing (Aquinas or CAAP)** = 9

We believe these data will provide the information necessary to identify students who should participate in the courses recommended for improving skills in writing effectively with reason. Additionally, these data will provide important documentation of skill levels at the beginning of enrollment at Aquinas College and serve as a benchmark for evaluating student progress through the curriculum and how well our plan is meeting their need for improvement in these two critical areas.
Beginning in Year 2 of the plan, entering student competencies will be evaluated and monitored by the Write REASON Director. Students who perform poorly on the admission or transfer essay, or the CAAP Writing or Critical Thinking entrance exam (below a score as yet to be determined) will be monitored by the Write REASON Director during their first semester at Aquinas College. Should they achieve high academic marks in all their first semester coursework (grades of C or better), no remediation will be deemed necessary. Should the student perform poorly in their first semester coursework (grades below C), the Write REASON Director will meet with the student to determine the appropriate remediation plan. Options for remediation in reasoning skills include:

- Enrollment in IDS 106: College Learning in the Dominican Tradition
- Write REASON and discipline specific tutoring
- PASS (Personalized Academic Success Strategies) workshops
- APPS (Individualized plan of Academic Development)

Also beginning in Year 2 of the plan, the faculty-developed Write REASON Rubric will be employed in individual core courses that include research-based essays that demand student reasoning informed by truth in a thesis-based manner. Enrolled student competency in courses that require a research paper will be assessed by the instructor. Student progress will also be assessed by using the CAAP Critical Thinking sophomore exam, the HESI entrance and exit exam, and the philosophy of academic discipline statement for graduating seniors. Student competency on these assessments will be assessed by the Write REASON Director and/or faculty from the student’s major academic discipline.

Beginning in Year 3 of the plan, surveys will be sent out to enrolled students asking them to self-assess their improvement in the various components of Write REASON. Graduating students and employers of alumni also will be surveyed about the evaluated graduate’s ability to express themselves critically and logically. The Write REASON Director will review the data collected from all surveys to ascertain perceived student improvement and overall plan success.

**Plan Assessment**

Assessment of the success or failure of improving student learning in the area of writing with reason will evolve throughout the phases of the Write REASON plan.

**Phase I**

1. Once data from all baseline assessments have been complied, competency levels and anticipated rates of improvement on the CAAP Critical Thinking assessment by the end of the sophomore year and the HESI exit exam for all graduating nursing students should be established above the national performance average and reevaluated throughout the plan’s duration.

For example, we have examined the results from the CAAP Critical Thinking assessment from incoming students (described above) and results from the 2008 – 09 administration of the CAAP Critical Thinking (CT) assessment to sophomore students in the baccalaureate programs: Business, Teacher Education, and Liberal Arts. If one makes the assumption that incoming CAAP CT scores for new students in the Fall 2010 semester at Aquinas College are generally comparable, a mean score of 60 (the 38th percentile nationally) could be compared to the average score of the sophomore student population of the past
two years to estimate current performance levels. If that is indeed the case we could postulate that currently our incoming students average a score of 60 and improve that score after two years of current academic activity to a mean score of 65 (71st percentile nationally). We would propose that if Write REASON is fully implemented the Critical Thinking assessment mean scores of sophomores would increase to at least 67 (83rd percentile nationally).

2. The Critical Thinking portion of the CAAP assessment will be evaluated in consultation with the Director and faculty for compatibility with the plan’s goal and the College’s mission. The Write REASON Advisory Committee together with the Write REASON staff will be responsible for the evaluation of the Write REASON plan.

3. For written assignments, including baseline assessments, data regarding each substantive component of the Trivium, as defined by the Write REASON Rubric guidelines, may be culled out and evaluated to determine student progress and therefore the extent of the plan’s success.

Phase II: (Years 2 and 3)
1. Data from standardized and institutional assessments will be evaluated annually to determine overall student and thus program success.

2. Modifications and additions to the various services and interventions offered to improve student learning in the area of critical (logical) thought must be provided if competency levels do not improve at the rate articulated in Year 1.

Phase III: (Years 4 and 5)
1. Data from standardized and institutional assessments should be compared from the various phases of the plan and in light of any modifications to the original plan.

2. Prepare Impact Report for submission to SACS.
## BUDGET

### Proposed Five Year Budget for QEP—Write REASON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
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</tr>
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<td>* CAAP Critical Thinking and Writing subtest (prices include test licensing and evaluation)</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
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<td>International Critical Thinking and Writing Test for students enrolled in College Learning in the Dominican Tradition</td>
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<td><strong>Personnel</strong></td>
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<td>Search for Director</td>
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<td>Write REASON Director</td>
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<td>Write REASON Assessment Coordinator</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Write REASON Center (renovating current Nursing Skills Labs, internet access for 6 computers and telephone lines)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Equipment/Furnishings</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Computers (Year 1 - computers and printers for Director and Coordinator; Year 2–4 student computers)</td>
<td>1,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Printer networked</td>
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<td>Writing software for computers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephones (Director and Coordinator)</td>
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<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Furnishings (4 computer carrels, 3 large tables, 16 chairs, lamps, 2 file cabinets, 2 bookcases, clock, and office furnishings for Director and Assessment Coordinator)</td>
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<td>7,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most if not all of these furnishings will come from the closing of the East Campus – if not the estimate is $7000 for all furniture.</td>
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<td><strong>Office Supplies</strong></td>
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Aquinas College

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<th>750</th>
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<td>Books and Materials for Write REASON Center</td>
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<td>Promotional Materials</td>
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**Faculty Development**

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<td>Refreshment/Food</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conferences for Director</td>
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| Travel                             | 1,000 | 1,000| 1,000| 1,000| 1,000|

**TOTALS (not including Salaries)**

|                        | $34,100| $19,600| $15,600| $15,600| $15,600|

This proposed budget will be reviewed annually. The appropriate administrative officers will determine the actual budget amounts. Fiscal year is July to June.

*Approximately $2,700 was spent in the Developmental Phase of the plan for CAAP Writing and Critical Thinking test instruments and scoring. This amount is not reflected in the plan totals.
### Appendix I: AQUINAS COLLEGE: FACULTY/STAFF QEP NEEDS SURVEY FALL 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Need</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Adjunct</th>
<th>Not Identified</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiential approach to improving post-grad success: academic-career experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading skills improvement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing skills improvement</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Math skills improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking development</td>
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<td>Technology for improving academic learning/career skills</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information competency (student skills in information technology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>On-line learning skills (distance learning)</td>
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<td>Retention improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty development – usually found as a component of a plan rather than as the issue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing the student as a whole person</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop students as seekers of truth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical thinking in the pursuit of truth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Across program involvement in student understanding of ethics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve student understanding and applicability of Catholic values and Moral principles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time management skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Across curriculum integration of Christian principles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>English language development</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruiting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer hardware/software updating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentor-tutor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grad program in Adult Studies</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL – Adult Studies</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>General curriculum program development (integration?)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved sense of community and respect for students as well as for faculty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adult Studies course length increase</td>
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<td>Adult Studies general studies associate degree</td>
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<td>Area of Need</td>
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<td>Staff</td>
<td>Adjunct</td>
<td>Not Identified</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Moral and spiritual development of students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral communication skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>On-line academic resource for students</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty governance improvement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inculcate merger of faith and reason</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve student responsibility and accountability/negotiating skills</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase faculty role in academic decisions</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve the order and consistency of coursework – skill level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase learning skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entry level exams to demonstrate basic skill and knowledge levels</td>
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### Tally of Aquinas College Faculty/Staff QEP Needs Survey

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<tr>
<th>Area of need</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Adjunct</th>
<th>Not Identified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Communication skills (Writing, oral, English development, writing center, ESOL)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology needs</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student support development (Retention, whole person, seeker of truth, time management, job placement, mentor-tutor, improve community)</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Math</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith (Whole person, integrate Christian beliefs, faith and reason, Catholic values, principles, morals)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic program/curriculum development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty governance and role in academic decision making</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix II: QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN INITIAL STUDENT SURVEY – SPRING 2009

1. I am a/an

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Studies Student</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Campus Student</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question

2. Under the topic, "Improve personal communication skills," rate the following categories in order of importance to you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>First Choice</th>
<th>Second Choice</th>
<th>Third Choice</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language as a second language</td>
<td>-48.8% (42)</td>
<td>7.0% (6)</td>
<td>44.2% (38)</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve oral communication skills</td>
<td>32.2% (56)</td>
<td>35.1% (61)</td>
<td>32.8% (57)</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve reading and comprehension skills</td>
<td>29.3% (54)</td>
<td>41.3% (76)</td>
<td>29.3% (54)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve writing skills</td>
<td>32.8% (57)</td>
<td>34.5% (60)</td>
<td>32.8% (57)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question

skipped question
3. Under the topic, "Improve computer technology skills and infrastructure," please rate the following in order of importance to you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Choice</th>
<th>Second Choice</th>
<th>Third Choice</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Update computer hardware &amp; software on campus</td>
<td>42.7% (50)</td>
<td>31.6% (37)</td>
<td>25.6% (30)</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve skills in use of information technology for academic/career development</td>
<td>16.8% (28)</td>
<td>29.3% (49)</td>
<td>53.9% (90)</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an on-line academic resource for campus courses</td>
<td>25.8% (48)</td>
<td>47.3% (88)</td>
<td>26.9% (50)</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop resources for distance learning (on-line courses)</td>
<td>55.2% (79)</td>
<td>22.4% (32)</td>
<td>22.4% (32)</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 208

skipped question 3

4. Under the topic, "Improve critical thinking skills," please rate the following in order of importance to you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Choice</th>
<th>Second Choice</th>
<th>Third Choice</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve problem solving skills</td>
<td>55.5% (101)</td>
<td>24.7% (45)</td>
<td>19.8% (36)</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop students as seekers of truth in all areas of learning</td>
<td>35.8% (59)</td>
<td>29.7% (49)</td>
<td>34.5% (57)</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve understanding and application of ethics</td>
<td>12.5% (18)</td>
<td>45.1% (65)</td>
<td>42.4% (61)</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve math skills</td>
<td>23.1% (28)</td>
<td>37.2% (45)</td>
<td>39.7% (48)</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 207

skipped question 4
5. Under the topic, "Deepen understanding of faith and morals," please rate the following in order of importance to you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Choice</th>
<th>Second Choice</th>
<th>Third Choice</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integration of Christian principles across the curriculum</td>
<td>39.6% (42)</td>
<td>27.4% (29)</td>
<td>33.0% (35)</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop the student as a whole person</td>
<td>56.2% (95)</td>
<td>23.1% (39)</td>
<td>20.7% (35)</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve student understanding and applicability of Catholic values and moral principles</td>
<td>19.2% (15)</td>
<td>25.6% (20)</td>
<td>55.1% (43)</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop moral and spiritual growth</td>
<td>22.8% (33)</td>
<td>49.7% (72)</td>
<td>27.6% (40)</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help students gain an understanding of the merger of faith and reason</td>
<td>18.8% (22)</td>
<td>38.1% (45)</td>
<td>43.2% (51)</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 207 skipped question 4

6. Other areas that have been suggested as possible QEP topics are listed below. Please rate the following in order of importance to you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Choice</th>
<th>Second Choice</th>
<th>Third Choice</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve time management skills</td>
<td>50.9% (83)</td>
<td>29.4% (48)</td>
<td>19.6% (32)</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop mentor-tutor relationship for students</td>
<td>33.6% (37)</td>
<td>40.0% (44)</td>
<td>26.4% (29)</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop job placement skills</td>
<td>26.1% (31)</td>
<td>31.9% (38)</td>
<td>42.0% (50)</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop student responsibility and accountability</td>
<td>20.2% (23)</td>
<td>40.4% (46)</td>
<td>39.5% (45)</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop experiential learning as a part of academic training</td>
<td>31.5% (35)</td>
<td>27.0% (30)</td>
<td>41.4% (46)</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 209 skipped question 2
7. Of the potential topics that you rated above, which do you feel is the most pressing need of Aquinas College?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>answered question</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Considering your experience at Aquinas College, please list any other broad-based need (not previously mentioned in this survey) that you think would be appropriate for our QEP to address.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>answered question</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. If you would like to be included in a drawing for a free 2G memory stick, please enter your email address here. Your survey answers will remain anonymous.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Email Address:</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answered question</td>
<td>104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix III: QEP TOPIC SELECTION STUDENT/ALUMNI SURVEY, FALL 2009

### 1. I am a/an

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Student</td>
<td>79.9%</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Studies Student</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumnus</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 308

### 2. Please rank the topics below into the top two with a 1 for most important need and 2 for second most important need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Choice</th>
<th>Second Choice</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve student writing skills across the curriculum in a writing intensive learning environment.</td>
<td>Improve the college's technology integration by improving how computers are being used in the service of classroom learning.</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.0% (28)</td>
<td>59.7% (120)</td>
<td></td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve student critical thinking by improving student ability to analyze data, synthesize information, and solve problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.5% (160)</td>
<td>35.5% (88)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 308

skipped question 0
3. Comments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>answered question</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. If you would like to enter a drawing for a 2 gig memory stick, please enter your email address here. Your responses will remain confidential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>answered question</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix IV: QEP TOPIC SELECTION SURVEY FACULTY/STAFF FALL 2009

1. I am a/an

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Faculty Member</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjunct Faculty Member</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend of the Campus</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 77

skipped question 1

2. Please rank the topics below into the top two with a 1 for most important need and 2 for second most important need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Choice</th>
<th>Second Choice</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve student writing skills across the curriculum in a writing intensive learning environment.</td>
<td>38.7% (24)</td>
<td>61.3% (38)</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the college's technology integration by improving how computers are being used in the service of classroom learning.</td>
<td>56.7% (17)</td>
<td>43.3% (13)</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve student critical thinking by improving student ability to analyze data, synthesize information, and solve problems.</td>
<td>59.0% (36)</td>
<td>41.0% (25)</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 77

skipped question 1

3. Comments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 22

skipped question 56
Appendix V: QEP TOPIC SELECTION SURVEY BOARD OF DIRECTORS FALL 2009

Board of Trustee’s Survey Data – Fall 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1st Choice</th>
<th>2nd Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvement in Writing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement in Academic Technology Infrastructure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement in Critical Thinking</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of Board members strongly supported the need for improved critical thinking with commentaries. Among the concerns were that the plan must integrate the mission of the College and the pursuit of Truth.

From A-Team SACS Leadership Team presentation 12-30-09
Appendix VI: Write REASON POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

DIRECTOR, Write REASON CENTER

Required Qualifications: A PhD in English with specialization in Writing Center Administration or Composition, Master’s in Philosophy or Theology, with preference for background in Aristotelian logic. Minimum three years’ successful teaching experience in college composition, writing program tutoring, demonstrated success in coordinating Writing Center and Writing across the Curriculum programs. Familiarity with education in the Dominican Tradition.

Preferred qualifications sought: experience in professional publishing, editing, grant writing, faculty development. This is a full-time, administrative faculty position.

Job Description: The Write REASON Director will administer the Write REASON Center; supervise the Assessment Coordinator/Tutor; identify and procure resources for the center; develop and coordinate faculty development; organize and schedule student workshops; train Write REASON peer tutors in consultation with English faculty; advise individual students; and oversee the reporting mechanism for monitoring student achievement, teach 1-6 hours during the academic year.

The Director will:

1. Be the administrator responsible for directing the Write REASON Center on the Aquinas campus and to achieve the goals and objectives of the Write REASON plan and the mission of the College.
2. Be responsible for managing the Write REASON Center’s budget and continuing operations.
3. Serve as the supervisor for the individual who is the Write REASON Assessment Coordinator/Tutor.
4. Serve as a faculty member in the Liberal Arts program.
5. Supervise the collection and evaluation of all incoming student performance on the entry documents and tests which include: the CAAP Critical Thinking and CAAP Writing Essay assessments; International Critical Thinking Essay Test assessments; application essays; and other information to determine the level of writing and reasoning skills at entry. This determination will allow identification of students who need additional assistance (tutoring) to develop skill levels adequate for college-level courses. The Director will be assisted in this task by the Coordinator/Tutor.
6. Oversee the tutoring of incoming students who have identified weaknesses, as well as other students who require assistance in further skill development or course-related activities that are related to the activities of the Write REASON plan.
7. Monitor student progress through his/her academic curriculum for skill set improvement as determined by Write REASON course assignments and rubrics.
8. Coordinate the development and implementation of Write REASON rubrics in specific courses that are considered to be core courses, mid-level program specific courses, and program capstone courses. This activity will be done in cooperation with course faculty and the Write REASON Advisory Committee.
9. Consult with English faculty for development of coherent writing center tutorial policies.
10. Analyze the data of student populations to determine how well students are improving their writing and reasoning skills and are meeting the \textit{Write} \textit{REASON} plan goals. This activity is an important aspect in plan evaluation and monitoring.

11. Recommend changes or modifications in the plan activities to meet perceived new needs, correct deficiencies, or otherwise improve the implementation of the plan. This reporting function will be to the \textit{Write} \textit{REASON} Advisory Committee and any changes/modifications/etc. will be done only with the approval of that committee.

12. Plan and conduct workshops for faculty and students for the implementation of the plan within the curriculum and facilitate student understanding and buy-in to the goals of the plan.

13. Consult with Director of Institutional Research regarding collection and evaluation of the Center’s assessment data.

14. Teach 1-6 credit hours during academic year.

15. Serve as editor of the \textit{Write} \textit{REASON} journal.

16. Be responsible for writing the five year Impact Report.

The Director will report to 1) Vice President of Academic Affairs, 2) \textit{Write} \textit{REASON} Advisory Committee for activities related to the plan, and 3) the Liberal Arts Program Director as a faculty member in the program.

**COORDINATOR AND TUTOR POSITION(S)**

Two Part-Time Staff Positions for the \textit{Write} \textit{REASON} Center may take the place of one full-time staff position, contingent upon budgetary and employee considerations.

1. **Position Title:** \textit{Write} \textit{REASON} Assessment Coordinator

Required qualifications: Bachelor’s degree, demonstrated office management skills, demonstrated work experience in a high-volume, multi-task office, and experience with spreadsheet applications.

Preferred qualifications: familiarity with Catholic liberal arts education and the Dominican Tradition. This is a part-time administrative assistant position.

Job Description: Under the supervision of the \textit{Write} \textit{REASON} Director, the \textit{Write} \textit{REASON} Assessment Coordinator will oversee the assessment of student learning outcomes as measured by CAAP and the institutional rubric, assist the \textit{Write} \textit{REASON} Director in analyzing evaluations of student learning outcomes and preparing annual progress reports on \textit{Write} \textit{REASON} goals and objectives. The Coordinator will maintain the Center’s and Director’s calendar of appointments, maintain records, and manage the office.

The Assessment Coordinator will:

1. Collect and maintain Center records, especially student performance documents and tests which include: the CAAP Critical Thinking and CAAP Writing Essay assessments; International Critical Thinking Essay Test assessments; admission application essays; and other information to determine the level of writing and reasoning skills at entry to allow identification of students who need additional assistance (tutoring) to develop skill levels adequate for college-level courses.
2. Maintain Center and Director’s calendar of appointments and walk-in clients.
3. Maintain records of the Center, including those that record student progress through his/her academic curriculum for skill set improvement as determined by Write REASON course assignments and rubrics and budget.
4. Provide office management for the Center.
5. Assist Director in organizing workshops for faculty and students for the implementation of the plan within the curriculum and facilitate student understanding and buy-in to the goals of the plan.
6. Assist Director in creating and maintain inviting Write REASON Center learning environment.
7. Fulfill other duties as assigned.

The Assessment Coordinator reports to the Write REASON Director.

2. Position Title: Write REASON Staff Tutor

Required qualifications: BA in English, demonstrated strength in academic writing and familiarity with Catholic liberal arts education and the Dominican tradition.

Preferred qualifications: MA in English with Writing Center or composition specialization. This is a part-time administrative assistant position.

Job Description: Under the supervision of the Write REASON Director, the Staff Tutor will oversee the tutoring needs of students, will create and maintain tutorial records, provide short and long term tutoring, supervise student tutors, and assist the Director in providing English writing academic support services to the college.

The Staff Tutor will:

1. Arrange for tutoring of students who have identified weaknesses, as well as other students who require assistance in further skill development or course related activities that are related to the activities of the Write REASON plan (grammar, logic, rhetoric).
2. Record student progress through his/her academic curriculum for skill set improvement as determined by Write REASON course assignments and rubrics.
3. Direct student tutors in day-to-day operations.
4. Assist English faculty in their performance as faculty tutors.
5. Assist Director in organizing workshops for faculty and students for the implementation of the plan within the curriculum and facilitate student understanding and enthusiastic support of the goals of the plan.
6. Assist the Director in creating and maintaining inviting Write REASON Center learning environment.
7. Fulfill other duties as assigned.

The Staff Tutor reports to the Director of the Write REASON Center.
Appendix VII: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Below is a description of additional personnel and specific facility needs for successful implementation of Write REASON.

Write REASON English Faculty
English faculty members will continue to assist students with writing assignments. English faculty will be able to meet with students during their designated Write REASON Center hours in the Write REASON Center.

Write REASON Student Tutors
Write REASON student tutors will be selected and trained by the Write REASON Director in consultation with English faculty and other appropriate college personnel. Areas of tutoring may include writing assistance or familiarizing students with Write REASON software and print resources. Peer tutors for the Write REASON Center may be paid through federal work study funds.

Write REASON Advisory Committee
A Write REASON Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from each academic discipline as well as the Directors of Student Affairs, Student Learning Services, and Admissions will meet with the Write REASON director as needed to report on departmental initiatives, needs and concerns, and to discuss strategies for achieving overall Write REASON student learning outcomes. This committee performs an advisory function only and members will report any actionable information to their respective program directors or staff members. Membership in Phase I of the plan will consist of the current membership of the QEP Committee.

Write REASON Center
The Write REASON Center will house the offices of the Write REASON Director and Write REASON Assessment Coordinator/Tutor as well as an area for students to consult with English faculty and tutors. The center will be sufficiently quiet to promote learning and will be well-stocked with reference materials, adequate space and furnishings for study and composition tools including designated computers with up-to-date writing software and printer. Students may visit the Center for regular tutoring in Write REASON or individual assistance with specific written assignments. Students may also consult with Write REASON staff regarding academic progress and development in Write REASON. Once established, the Write REASON Center will post regular hours of operation and services available to students.
Appendix VIII:
TIMEFRAME FOR ACTIONS OF THE _Write_ REASON QEP BY CATEGORY

**Write REASON Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Phase</th>
<th>Phase I 2010-11</th>
<th>Phase II 2011-13</th>
<th>Phase III 2013-15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAAP-CT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAAP-Writing Essay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify Application Statement</td>
<td>Implement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At-risk student IPAD</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-going CAAP-CT assessment for Baccalaureate programs</td>
<td>WR Sophomore CAAP-CT</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Draft Write Reason Rubric Pilot Rubric</td>
<td>Implement Rubric in mid-level &amp; Capstone courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write REASON marketing strategy for students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown Bag Logic (1-2 per semester)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write REASON movie series</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write REASON Student Journal Competition @ year</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Rubric Workshop. Rubric Workshop. as needed</td>
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<td>Advising Workshop once per year or as needed</td>
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<td>Write REASON Workshop - new faculty @ Fall</td>
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<td>Pilot modified IDS 106</td>
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<td>Seek approval - implement IDS 106 for all full-time first time students</td>
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<td>Seek approval for ENG 111 – Writing Lab Implement Fall Year 2</td>
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<td>Identify center space Renovation Center in use</td>
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<td>Search for director Director on campus</td>
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<td>Director/Adv. Comm assessment/evaluation of plan Summer @ year</td>
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<td>5 year Impact report</td>
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- Student Assessment Activities
- Student focused marketing strategies
- Faculty workshops
- Curricular Actions
- _Write_ REASON Center activities and plan evaluation
Appendix IX: PROPOSED COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR ENG 111WR & ENG 112WR

INITIAL PROPOSAL

ENG 111WR  ENGLISH COMPOSITION I ENHANCED
3 Credit Hours
English Composition I Enhanced is an introduction to the principles of effective writing through the rhetorical and critical analysis of the essay and the short story. Students will write personal, expository and critical essays while working to improve their grammar, punctuation, mechanics skills, usage and writing style. The course will emphasize writing from invention to revision. In addition to traditional class meeting times, students will meet each week in a one-hour workshop with the faculty instructor. This extra contact time provides additional dedicated time to improve writing skills and focus on problem areas. Students must earn a final grade of “C” or better to pass ENG 111 ENHANCED.

REVISED PROPOSAL

ENG 111 WRITING LAB
0 Credit Hours
If required, this course must be taken together with ENG 111
The Writing Lab is required for students who need additional reinforcement in English composition skills as determined by the English placement essay administered during ACCESS New Student Orientation/Registration. ENG 111 course content is reinforced with a weekly one-hour tutorial with a Write REASON Center staff member, which provides dedicated time to improve writing skills and focus on problem areas. If required, this course must be taken together with ENG 111 and attendance is mandatory.

INITIAL PROPOSAL

ENG 112WR  ENGLISH COMPOSITION II ENHANCED
3 Credit Hours
Prerequisite: ENG 111 or ENG 111 ENHANCED
A further study of the principles of effective writing through rhetorical and critical analysis, the second semester stresses competency in critical reading, argumentative strategies, research skills and the literary analysis of poetry and drama. Students will write persuasive essays, a research paper, and literary analysis based on readings in drama and poetry. In addition to traditional class meeting times, students will meet each week in a one-hour workshop with the faculty instructor. This extra contact time provides additional dedicated time to improve writing skills and focus on problem areas. Students must earn a final grade of “C” or better to pass ENG 112. ENG 112 must be completed prior to beginning the second year of study.

REVISED PROPOSAL

After much discussion, the Committee decided that further remediation in ENG 112 would be unnecessary if the ENG 111 Writing Lab was successful.
Appendix X: Write REASON GOAL ASSESSMENT

Rationale

The QEP Goal, SLOs, and Objectives use the Trivium through written expression as a vehicle to assess and form critical thinking according to truth. Truth as described by St. Thomas Aquinas according to the Dominican Tradition is both logical and ontological. Logical truth is that which conforms to fact and objective reality. Ontological truth is that which fulfills its proper end for which it was made by God. A student who can integrally communicate truth in both senses comprehends truth in its deepest meaning, which is what we are striving for at Aquinas College.

Truth is what links the description of Write REASON with the College Mission Statement and Strategic Goals. Indeed, one of the Strategic Goals is to “[e]nsure that the academic programs …exemplify the integration of Truth in each of its disciplines, as characteristic of a liberal arts education in the Dominican Tradition.” This means that adherence to the truths of each discipline through sound reasoning and logic all ultimately lead to that divine “Truth,” which is God Himself.

The College acknowledges the intrinsic relation between reason and conscience and the pursuit of truth (Ex Corde Ecclesiae). According to Ex Corde Ecclesiae, a Catholic institution of higher learning “has to be a living union of individual organisms dedicated to the search for truth. . . . It is necessary to work toward a higher synthesis of knowledge, in which alone lies the possibility of satisfying that thirst for truth which is profoundly inscribed on the heart of the human person” (Ex Corde Ecclesiae #16). With this perspective in mind, the Goal, SLOs, and Objectives of the Write REASON plan will contribute to “an atmosphere of learning permeated with faith, directed to the intellectual, moral and professional formation of the human person” (Mission statement).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
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| Graduates of Aquinas College will be able to effectively express through writing clear, organized and accurate ideas that are stated convincingly according to the objective standards of truth and reality as established in the Trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, which is the basis of a liberal arts education. | Grammar
Students will construct a written work using proper conventions of grammar. | Grammar
1) When using the ideas or words of an author, document the source using discipline-specific citation standards.
2) Compose effective and varied sentences using the eight basic parts of speech.
3) Utilize proper punctuation in all written assignments.
4) Apply rules of capitalization, numbering and abbreviation.
5) Edit for punctuation, grammar and style. | Grammar
1) Develop a Write REASON center that offers student remediation through educational software, tutoring, and individual academic enhancement consultations.
2) Use interdisciplinary rubric to both model elements of exceptional writing and evaluate student performance.
3) Measure improvement in student writing through CAAP writing assessment. |
Logic
Students will construct an accurate and well-organized written work that is firmly rooted in the objective standards of truth and reality.

Logic
1) Uphold ontological truth illustrating how well the subject fulfills its proper end as determined by God.
2) Incorporate critical, analytical and thesis-based arguments.
3) Adhere to logical truth that conforms fact with reality within the context of a given course through correct reasoning that is free from inconsistencies or contradictions.
4) Articulate thesis, relevant supporting evidence and conclusions.
5) Distinguish between true and false theological and moral statements by applying the teaching of the Church to theological or moral problems.
6) Identify moral principles and make them known through the written word.
7) Identify the ideals, values and philosophical stance of a text.
8) Apply ethical principles to discipline specific content, providing evidence of how Christian moral principles influence decision making.
9) Articulate how the Aquinas College mission statement and Catholic and Dominican traditions inform an argument.
10) Demonstrate understanding of academic honesty and integrity by upholding the academic honesty policy.
11) Identify the differences between fact and opinion.

Logic
1) Incorporate basic logic concepts into *College Learning in the Dominican Tradition* course.
2) Develop one hour logic seminars for the Associate Nursing program.
3) Offer "Brown Bag Logic Seminars" to entire student body to introduce and develop logic skills across curricula.
4) Encourage academic advisors to recommend enrollment in logic as an elective choice.
5) Designate or design capstone courses for all academic programs where students can develop a philosophy statement of their particular discipline.
6) Develop a *Write REASON Center* that offers student remediation through educational software, tutoring, and individual academic enhancement consultations.
7) Use interdisciplinary rubric to both model elements of exceptional reasoning skills and evaluate student performance.
8) Evaluate progress in developing and articulating an argument of students enrolled in *College Learning in the Dominican Tradition* by using the *International Critical Thinking Essay Test*.
9) Measure improvement in reasoning skills through CAAP Critical Thinking Assessment.
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<tr>
<th>Rhetoric</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students will construct a written work stated convincingly and clearly.</td>
<td>1) Incorporate all aspects of the rhetorical triangle for the purpose of discovering the means by which communication is conveyed successfully. (For the purposes of written work, we define the rhetorical triangle as writer, text and reader) 2) Generate ideas for substantial writing assignments and demonstrate the development of an idea through the drafting sequence, from pre-writing exercises through revision to the final version. 3) Effectively vary sentence structure and length throughout assignments. 4) Choose vocabulary and diction appropriate to assignment and discipline. 5) Exhibit ethical, legal and Christian behavior in all written works. 6) Model respect and reverence for the dignity of human life through the written word.</td>
<td>1) Develop a <em>Write</em> REASON Center that offers student remediation through educational software, tutoring, and individual academic enhancement consultations. 2) Designate or design capstone courses for all academic programs where students can develop a philosophy statement of their particular discipline.</td>
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Appendix XI: Write REASON RUBRIC BASED ON THE TRIVIUM

Definition: Write REASON is the effective expression of clear, organized, and accurate ideas that are stated convincingly according to the objective standards of truth and reality, as established in the Trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, which is the foundation of a liberal arts education.

How to use the tally on the reverse: Developed along with the rise of universities in the middle ages, the liberal arts curriculum is based upon the fundamental recognition that all that is comes from God, and that humans can and should seek objective, ontological truth. Studying the seven liberal arts shapes the mind of students as they cooperate with and assimilate an ever more thorough understanding of ontological truth. The Trivium makes up the foundation of these liberal arts in that they are not only prerequisite to learning, but also impart the form of the ideas upon the mind as they are being assimilated into the developing student.

When evaluating anything, in this case, the logic, grammar, and rhetoric of a written work, it is not enough to rely on subjective opinion or factual data apart from the Person and Will of the One who is Truth. The following considerations should inform and guide the reader to a correct measurement of the logic, grammar, and rhetoric of the individual writing sample.

Under Logic, ask, does the work:
- Exemplify valid reasoning.
- Uphold ontological truth illustrating how well the subject fulfills its proper end as determined by God.
- Distinguish between true and false theological and moral statements by applying the teaching of the Church to theological or moral problems.
- Identify moral principles and make them known through the written word.
- Identify the ideals, values and philosophical stance of a text.
- Apply ethical principles to discipline-specific content, providing evidence of how Christian moral principles influence decision making.
- Articulate how the Aquinas College mission statement and Catholic and Dominican traditions inform an argument.
- Demonstrate understanding of academic honesty and integrity by upholding the academic honesty policy.
- Identify the differences between fact and opinion.

Under Rhetoric, ask, does the work:
- Exhibit ethical, legal and Christian behavior in all written works.
- Model respect and reverence for the dignity of human life through the written word.

If any of these are answered in the negative, then by definition, the work is not conforming to Write REASON.
Logic: (40%)

6 Exceptionally Strong (meets all categories)

Follows assignment prompt 5 Strong (meets five categories)
Makes sense 4 Above Average (meets four categories)
Is tightly organized 3 Average (meets three categories)
Is accurate 2 Below Average (meets two categories)
Is balanced 1 Needs Work (meets one category)
Coheres as a unit of thought 0 Off-topic entirely or otherwise clearly does not understand

Instructor’s comments: ____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Grammar: (20%)

6 Exceptionally Strong (meets all categories with 0-1 error per page)
Follows standards of edited standard written English for Grammar 5 Strong (meets all categories, averaging 1 isolated error per page)
Follows standard of edited standard written English for Mechanics 4 Above Average (meets all categories, averaging 2 isolated errors per page)
Follows approved citation style 3 Average (meets citation style requirements and averages 1-2 errors, some of which may be repetitive errors per page)
2 Below Average (meets citation requirements, but otherwise demonstrates multiple, 3-4, and repetitive errors in grammar or mechanics)
1 Needs Work (does not meet citation requirements and/or demonstrates more than 5 errors in grammar and mechanics per page, clearly not understanding conventions of grammar and mechanics)
0 Off-topic or otherwise clearly does not know how to write edited standard written English

Instructor’s comments: ____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Rhetoric: (40%)

6 Exceptionally Strong (meets all categories)
Is thesis-based 5 Strong (meets five categories)
Understands intended audience 4 Above Average (meets four categories)
Demonstrates effective use of research 3 Average (meets three categories)
Maintains controlled, elegant diction for subject 2 Below Average (meets two categories)
Is purposeful 1 Needs Work (meets one category)
Is persuasive 0 Off-topic or otherwise clearly does not understand

Instructor’s comments: ____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Logic Score: _______ X .40 = ____________
Grammar Score: _______ X .20 = ____________
Rhetoric Score: _______ X .40 = ____________ (add all scores together)
Total Score = _______________
## Write REASON Tracking Sheet

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<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Prog of Study</th>
<th>Entry Term</th>
<th>Admiss Essay</th>
<th>CAAP C.T. Entrance</th>
<th>CAAP Writing Entrance / ENG 113 Essay</th>
<th>ENG 111 WR Lab</th>
<th>PHI 105 Lab</th>
<th>HESI Ent. (ASN)</th>
<th>HESI Exit (ASN)</th>
<th>Discipline &quot;Phil. of&quot; Essay</th>
<th>Grad/Withdrawal Term</th>
<th>Post-Grad. Survey (Yr. 1)</th>
<th>Post-Grad. Survey (Yr. 3)</th>
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Appendix XIII: Write REASON MARKETING IDEAS

Student Publicity
- “Teasers” or WR Tips (Beginning Fall 2010)
  o Portal News
  o Hallway Signs
- WR Center Hours Posted (Beginning Spring 2011)
  o Portal News
  o Hallway signs
  o Center Door
  o 2011 Student Handbook
  o 2011 Course Catalog
- Write REASON Center Logo Items (Beginning Fall 2010 or Spring 2011)
  o Bookmarks with WR tips or WR Center Hours
  o Mugs, Cups
  o Buttons
  o Magnets
  o Pens/Pencils
  o Mind Games & Puzzles
- Write REASON Center Page on Aquinas Website
- Letter in the Admissions cycle to newly accepted students (Beginning Spring 2011)

Presentations
- QEP Director or Tutor visiting classes during first week to say advertise the Write REASON Center
  o Beginning Spring 2011 or Fall 2011
- WR Workshops for specific courses/assignments by request (15-20 minutes)
- Brown Bag Logic
  o Lunch-time lecture series featuring faculty guest speakers from different departments to discuss how WR fits in their discipline
  o Recommend 1-2 per semester beginning Spring 2011
- Annual student conference or forum on current events and our responsibility to speak the truth
  o Papers/presentations could be used for assessment purposes
- WR Director responsible for faculty development presentations (1-2 per semester) at monthly faculty/staff meetings next year (2011-2012) and continuing throughout the plan
- WR Director to speak at ACCESS Orientation beginning in May 2011
- WR Sponsored events
  o Movie night with discussion following about individuals’ responsibility to speak (communicate) truth to the world
    1. Mr. Smith goes to Washington (Capra, 1939)
    2. A man for all seasons (Zinnemann, 1966)
    3. Becket (Glenville, 1964)
    4. Others?

Journal
- Annual non-fiction journal to include class essays submitted by students at the recommendation of their instructor
  o Contest to name journal
  o Bound copies of journal for distribution
  o Website Publication (on Write REASON Center page of the Aquinas website)
  o Prize for participants
    - Awarded to the best essay from each discipline
    - Cash prize or tuition credit of a substantial amount for all winners
All submitted essays will be considered for publication

- Writers Night
  - April of each year
  - Prize winners will be asked to read their essays
  - Refreshments served

- Submission process to begin Fall 2011 with first publication in Spring 2012

The Write REASON logo symbolizes the main purpose and definition of Aquinas College QEP plan. The script font of the word “Write” is meant to convey that “effective expression of clear, organized, and accurate ideas” (quoted from the Write REASON definition) are to be evaluated in written form. The capital block font of the word “REASON” implies the unchanging nature of truth, which derives its boldness and strength from fact and objective reality. The cross is on the right side as the target or goal to which a liberal arts education based on the Trivium is aiming. It represents God as the final end for which all true human intellectual striving is directed. The name “Aquinas College” and the Dominican shield placed at the bottom of the logo represent the foundation of the QEP plan--it is the mission and strategic plan of the college, born in the Dominican tradition of St. Thomas Aquinas, that support the entire proposal.
References


