

POTENTIAL QEP TOPICS: ABSTRACTS

1. CITIZEN SCHOLARS

While the Radford University Core Curriculum includes instruction in national and international perspectives, the focus is largely upon the conveyance of information. The adoption of the “Citizen Scholars” theme would add a focus on the *synthesis and application* of that knowledge toward complex and multifaceted public issues, a public scholarship, so that RU graduates would be prepared for responsible citizenship and civic leadership in their local, national, and global communities. A Citizen Scholars theme would also provide cohesion and synergy to numerous existing RU efforts that already involve public scholarship.

2. COLLABORATION BETWEEN FACULTY/STAFF AND STUDENTS

There is a considerable body of research that indicates that student-faculty interaction is an important predictor of student satisfaction and retention. Radford University has emphasized such collaboration informally for at least the past decade, with dozens of students currently engaged in professional activities alongside faculty and/or working with Student Affairs professionals in co-curricular organizations. Formalizing and publicizing this theme, the implementation of which would involve multiple divisions at the University, has the potential to give the University a special “niche” in student and faculty recruitment and enhance the University’s academic reputation. More important, it has the potential to make our students into well-rounded graduates who are more marketable to employers and graduate schools.

3. CRITICAL READING

The proposed theme would rejuvenate and re-focus our attention on critical reading skills, which are integral to critically thinking not only about the texts specific to our fields, but about the world outside our classes. This focus is consistent with RU’s 7-17 Strategic Plan. The infrastructure is currently in place on both University and department levels to support this initiative. Adoption of this theme could easily showcase community partnerships already in existence (Beans and Rice, Wesley Foundation), and lead the way for even more literacy initiatives. Student-engaged learning, faculty-student collaboration, and public service seem natural extensions of the theme.

4. CULTURAL AWARENESS

Humans fear what they do not understand, and this lack of understanding, awareness, and respect of other cultures has, throughout human history, been the flashpoint that has inevitably led to conflict. It would be beneficial for the personal and intellectual growth of our students (and, in fact, to the future of our society) to provide them with a fundamental understanding of the genuine diversity of the human experience. Our genetics show that people are all pretty much the same. Their distinguishing characteristics reside in how they spend the days of their lives: which is to say, their culture. It is hard to imagine a QEP topic that would have a more

important and lasting effect than diminishing this lack of awareness, lack of understanding, and often, lack of respect that is still prevalent in the 21st century.

5. CYBER CITIZENRY

One of the more effective ways to define Cyber Citizenry is by analogy. Like computing, driving can be extraordinarily beneficial and extremely dangerous. We spend years modeling both driving and vehicular maintenance behavior for children before sending them off to driver education, followed by an apprenticeship with a learner's permit before allowing them to join us on the highways as licensed drivers who respect the rules, responsibilities and etiquette of sharing the road. Unfortunately, the same is not true for our introduction to cyber infrastructure and cyber behavior. Despite the best efforts of computer security professionals, all it takes is one user clicking on the wrong link or downloading the wrong file and the entire cyber infrastructure of an organization can be at risk. Even simple little things like forwarding an e-mail Christmas card can bring the computing power of an organization to a halt if the file is too large or contains a virus. Further, hard to detect activities such as indulging in piracy (e.g., downloading illegally obtained movies) make an organization vulnerable to legal risks and may foster an environment where unethical behavior runs rampant. It is ironic that every faculty and staff member at Radford University is required to take online cyber security training every year, but our students are not exposed to the same topics. Radford University graduates should enter the world beyond equipped to be good Cyber Citizens by being able to recognize and avoid risky cyber behaviors, by understanding and practicing safe, ethical and productive cyber behaviors, and by being aware enough of how cyber infrastructure works to understand their role in it and to adapt to and adopt technologies that emerge in their lifetimes.

6. PROFESSIONALISM

College graduates across the nation are often criticized for engaging in behaviors that are not appropriate in the work of work. At Radford University, there are a variety of ongoing curricular and co-curricular activities designed to turn our students into competent and mature professionals. Selecting "Professionalism" as our QEP would give RU the opportunity to formalize and enhance those efforts across campus. This emphasis has the potential to enhance the reputation of RU, to attract more qualified and "serious" students, and to yield graduates who are well-prepared to take their place in society.

7. SUSTAINABILITY LITERACY

Sustainability programs represent one of the fastest growing curricular areas across the country. During the past few years, RU has done much to bring sustainability issues to the forefront of thinking and action across the University, so there is a growing curricular and co-curricular foundation upon which a QEP in sustainability literacy might build. Implementation of sustainability literacy as our QEP theme has the potential to increase our visibility as a "green" institution and attract students with an interest in the welfare of our environment and our common future. Promoting the sustainability literacy of RU students will result in graduates who are better informed about environmental challenges our world will face in the years ahead.

8. WELLNESS

Students at Radford University are not immune from the temptations that lead them to neglect their well-being; indeed, there is unfortunate evidence that RU students are more prone than their peers to make unwise and potentially fatal decisions about the use of alcohol. Thus, RU continues to struggle with an undeserved “party school” reputation, even in the face of formal and informal efforts on campus to promote mature behaviors that will lead to wellness. The adoption of wellness as a formal QEP theme among all at the University has the potential to change that reputation, enhance student learning, and encourage everyone at RU to make healthy decisions.