

Proposed Quality Enhancement Plan Focus Topic

Proposal due date: Monday, November 15, 2004

Submit electronically to dgoforth@loyno.edu

Or, if you prefer, submit a paper copy to David Estes, 242 Marquette, Box 7

View proposed topics at the QEP Web site—<http://www.loyno.edu/sacs/qep/>

Title and brief description of QEP topic: Enhancement of an Interdisciplinary Learning Environment - Build bridges within and among the Divisions and Colleges by creating new and enhancing active interdisciplinary programs, courses, and course modules. One of the primary goals of the Common Curriculum is to "provide a broad multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary core of liberal education to students in every major program in the university." The QEP will focus on enhancing this aspect of the Common Curriculum. Also, the QEP will work to enrich already established interdisciplinary programs including African Studies, American Studies, Latin American Studies, Catholic Studies, Environmental Studies, and Women Studies to name a few. In addition, the QEP would build on interdisciplinary aspects of programs in place such as the FYE where a particular theme is addressed in classes from a number of disciplines during the students' freshman year along with the PIES initiative. A current focus of the PIES initiative in the Natural Sciences is enhancement of interdisciplinary teaching in the core math and sciences.

Proposal submitted by [optional]: Don Hauber

Brief explanation of how the topic is “creative and vital to the long-term improvement of student learning” at Loyola: Many of us teach in the Common Curriculum but probably only consider our courses marginally interdisciplinary. The type of interdisciplinary course envisioned here would be co-sponsored across departments, divisions or even colleges. For instance, getting non-science majors engaged in science has always been a challenge due mainly to an inherent fear of science, and all things associated with it. Developing a team-taught, multidisciplinary course such as "Planet Earth" that is part biology, part sociology, and part political science would create an environment that would draw the non-science major in as well as present sociology in a more palatable form for the science major. Also, another approach would be to develop common themes (or case studies) that are taught in a variety of courses that learning groups are taking simultaneously. This is partly the goals of the PIES initiative and would require concerted interaction among the faculty. There has been recent discussion to evaluate and potentially revise the Common Curriculum. A QEP interdisciplinary initiative would be timely in this respect.

Last year, an interdisciplinary group of faculty from the Natural Sciences and administrators submitted a \$1.2 million grant to the Howard Hughes Medical Institute to enhance interdisciplinary science in teaching and research at Loyola. This was, in part, a response to the National Research Council's publication, "BIO2010: Transforming Undergraduate Education for Future Research Biologists." This book highlights the importance for successful research scientists in today's world to have a strong working knowledge of the various scientific disciplines in addressing complex research questions. These skills are difficult to achieve when science is taught in the traditional fashion, each course separately. The Loyola team put together an excellent proposal that received very good reviews, but

was unfortunately not funded. A QEP to enhance the interdisciplinary learning environment is timely for positioning Loyola for the next HHMI cycle (2008) and pushing our institution closer towards national preeminence.

Evidence (or potential sources of evidence) suggesting the need to address this topic [optional]:

Current and planned activities at Loyola related to this topic [optional]: