

PRISM: Purposeful Reasoning, Inquiry and Scholarship at Meredith

Quality Enhancement Plan
for

Meredith College, Raleigh, NC

February, 2010

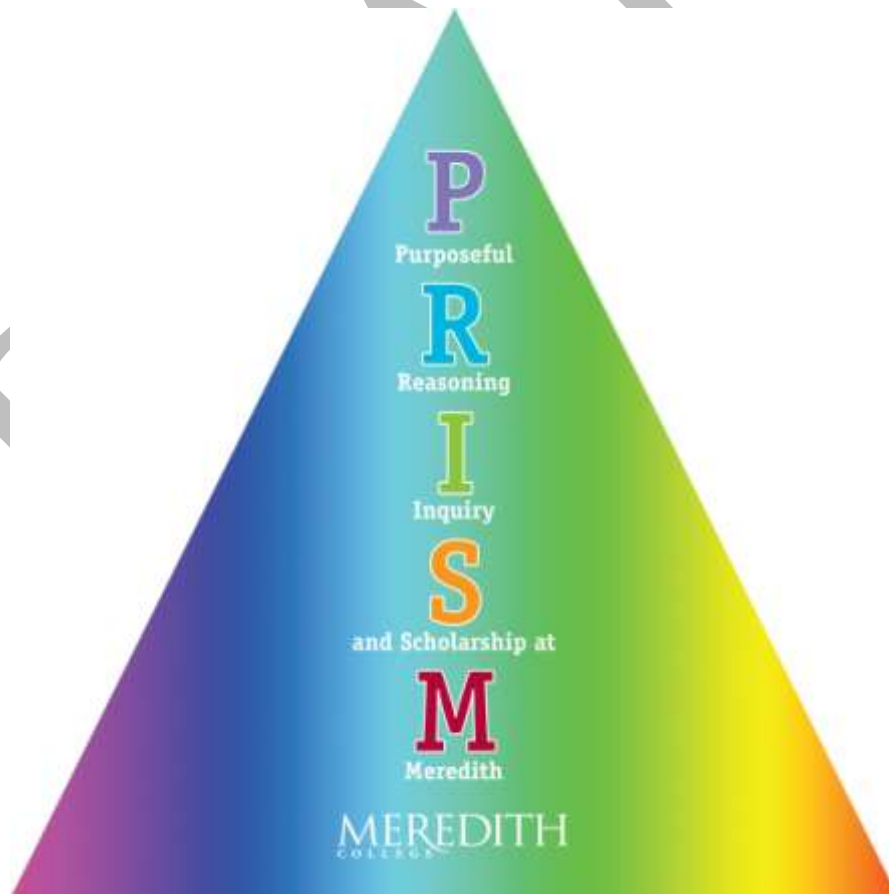
Dr. Maureen Hartford, President

Dr. Pam Steinke, Meredith College Accreditation Liaison

Dr. Marsal Stoll, SACS-COC Accreditation Liaison

FINAL DRAFT REPORT

November 7, 2009



QEP COMMITTEE MEMBERS

“Purposeful Reasoning, Inquiry, and Scholarship at Meredith”

QEP Committee Members 2008 – 2009:

- *Ann Gleason, *Dean of Students, Co-Chair*
- *Mark O’Dekirk, *Psychology, Co-Chair*
- *Tim Hendrix, *Mathematics & Computer Science, QEP Director*
 - *Erin Lindquist, *Biology*
 - *Toni Parker, *Education*
 - *Kelly Roberts, *English*
- *Pam Steinke, *Research, Planning & Assessment*
- *Marie Sumerel, *Academic and Career Planning*
- *Deborah Tippet, *Human Environmental Sciences*
 - *Jill Triana, *Counseling Services*

Student Members:

- *Jessica Brittain, *Class of 2011*
- Chelsea McGlaughlin, *Class of 2011*
- *MaryCraven Poteat, *Class of 2011*

Honored Additions:

- *Steven Benko, *Religion & Philosophy*
- *Edna Collins, *Human Environmental Sciences*
- *Clyde Frazier, *History & Political Sciences*
- Bob Vance, *Religion & Philosophy*

Additional Thanks to:

- Chrissie Bumgardner, *First Year Experiences*
- Rebecca Duncan, *English*
- Vanessa Harris, *Marketing*
- Tara Hudson, *Intern in Research, Planning & Assessment*
- Stephanie Hurt, *Business*

*—Indicates member of the PRISM Implementation Team 2009 - 2010

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Summary of Feedback from Fall 2009 Department MeetingsTBD

Summary Results of FYE Student Survey.....TBD

Summary Results of Spring 2009 Faculty & Staff Focus Groups.....TBD

Summary Results of Spring 2009 Student Focus GroupsTBD

QEP Director Position DescriptionTBD

Minutes from SACS Leadership Team Meetings.....TBD

Link to Minutes from QEP Committee Meetings.....TBD

Matrix of Assessment Strategies.....TBD

NOTE: The list of items in the Appendices needs to be updated and clarified. The references will entail approximately 8 pages of bibliography and the common readings will take one or two pages at most. So, we have approximately 36 pages to work with for appendices, including the Assessment tables, and other documents.

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1 — Executive Summary

“Purposeful Reasoning, Inquiry, and Scholarship at Meredith”

The mission of the Meredith College Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is to equip students with the intellectual skills and traits that encourage critical thinking and active engagement in the learning process. It will integrate critical thinking through a variety of courses and will enable students to excel in life-long learning careers, leadership roles, and service.

Building on its strong tradition and mission of equipping women to excel, Meredith’s Quality Enhancement Plan is named the *PRISM Experience*, an acronym for the type of critical thinking this plan seeks to strengthen—Purposeful Reasoning, Inquiry, and Scholarship at Meredith.

After gathering input from students, faculty, and staff, the QEP Steering Committee sought consensus through written and oral feedback on both the QEP topic and possible initiatives to strengthen critical thinking in our students. Grounded in current research and crafted with the unique strengths and potentials of our student body in mind, we formulated a definition of critical thinking for our campus:

We define critical thinking as a purposeful, self-directed process in which we take charge of knowledge, use reason to propel our scholarship and solve problems, and integrate these essential skills in intellectual endeavors and actions.

To address critical thinking in this vein, we will undertake three campus-wide initiatives:

Initiative 1: To implement a first-year, discipline-based PRISM seminar designed to promote critical thinking by introducing strategies and encouraging practice.

Initiative 2: To infuse the teaching of critical thinking throughout a student’s undergraduate career through Critical Thinking (CT)-designated courses, through co-curricular activities, and through departmental initiatives to promote deeper levels of critical thinking in existing coursework and capstone experiences.

Initiative 3: To scaffold student growth in critical thinking abilities by providing faculty and staff professional development in critical thinking research and best practice.

To support these initiatives, we will work closely with the Office of Research, Planning and Assessment to engage in continuous assessment of PRISM learning outcomes and of the process itself. This assessment will guide professional development and course and program improvements throughout the implementation process and beyond. Through this process, we will seek intentional and effective avenues to create a campus culture committed to improving critical thinking skills in the most transformative of ways.

2 — Description of Meredith College

Meredith College Mission Statement

In educating women to excel, Meredith College fosters in students integrity, independence, scholarship, and personal growth. Grounded in the liberal arts, the College values freedom and openness in the pursuit of truth and, in keeping with its Christian heritage, seeks to nurture justice and compassion.

Meredith endeavors to create a supportive and diverse community in which undergraduate and graduate students learn from the past, prepare for the future, and grow in their understanding of self, others, and community. To these ends, Meredith strives to develop in students the knowledge, skills, values, and global awareness necessary to pursue careers, to assume leadership roles, to continue their education, and to lead responsible lives of work, citizenship, leisure, learning, and service.

Meredith College Overview

Chartered in 1891, Meredith College came into being when higher education for women was still considered a luxury. The current strength of the institution at a time when many women's colleges are closing or going co-ed speaks to the College's ability to adapt, thus ensuring its continued relevance.

Founded by North Carolina Baptists, today Meredith affirms all faiths even as its Christian heritage continues to inform its underlying values. Campus life is shaped by more than 2,200 students from 27 states and 37 countries, though the majority of students come from North Carolina. Total enrollment for 2008-09 included 2,001 undergraduate students and 249 graduate-level students; the undergraduate class of 2014 is the largest in the history of the College, with more than 480 students enrolled. A focus on improved student diversity has led to 43 percent growth in the multicultural population since 2003.

With 47 majors, Meredith's academic program is comprehensive and grounded in the liberal arts. In recent years Meredith's curriculum has had an increased emphasis on science and mathematics—traditionally male-dominated areas of study. Biology is the fastest growing major; others with high enrollment include psychology, business administration and interior design. Meredith's reputation for outstanding teacher education programs continues to grow, both on an undergraduate and graduate level. The student/faculty ratio is 10:1; average class size is 16. Ninety percent of Meredith faculty hold terminal degrees, and no classes are taught by teaching assistants.

The College's mission of *educating women to excel* guides all that takes place here. Students benefit from a college-wide emphasis on international education, leadership development and hands-on learning. Eighty-eight percent of Meredith students participate in internships, undergraduate research or some other form of hands-on learning, while 30 percent study abroad. All find themselves both challenged and supported by Meredith's exceptionally strong community, one of the hallmarks of the College.

3 — Identification of the Topic

The development of the QEP began during academic year 2007-2008 with campus-wide discussions involving faculty, staff and students in a variety of venues. In fall 2007, the SACS Leadership team invited guests from Faculty Council to their meetings and met with Associate Vice Presidents and Deans of Academic Programs to discuss possible QEP topics and plans for engaging the community in discussions about QEP topics. A QEP discussion strategy was created for spring 2008. From February to April 2008, discussions were held to identify areas of interest at lunch tables in the dining hall, in faculty meetings, in student forums and in campus-wide forums. Participants were provided a list of possible QEP topics as well as examples from other institutions that had gone through reaffirmation in 2006-2007. From these discussions, the SACS Leadership Team identified four topics to present to the community for a vote via online survey in April 2008.

The first survey was administered April 7-9, 2008 to all students, faculty and staff. Respondents were asked to rank the following four choices for a QEP topic:

1. Deepening the intellectual involvement of freshmen
2. Expanding the international understanding and experience of students
3. Creating an infrastructure for academic success; and
4. Increasing engaged citizen leadership.

Out of the 190 responses, the two top first-ranked choices were those relating to an infrastructure for academic success (34%) and international understanding (29%). These top two choices were discussed at a faculty meeting on April 11, 2008 and plans were made to do a second survey of faculty, staff and students that focused on these two topics.

The second survey was administered April 18-23, 2008. Students, faculty and staff were asked to state which of two topics they preferred for the QEP: 1) "Strengthen the support system for academic success"; or 2) "Expand the international and cultural understanding and experience of students." Of the 501 respondents, 69.5% chose strengthen the support system for academic success. Respondents also provided comments and suggestions for the topic selected.

The SACS Leadership Team discussed the possibilities suggested by the top topic and decided to focus the topic on enhancing academic challenge and support in order to present it to a QEP committee. In May 2008, the SACS Leadership Team met to select and appoint the Co-Chairs and members of the QEP Committee. Important factors in selecting members were to reinforce the goals of creating a QEP that was tied to the College's Vision 2010 strategic plan and to enhance student learning experiences across campus. Co-Chairs and members who were selected represented many areas across the campus and divisions. The SACS Leadership Team intentionally selected team members who were proven collaborators and able to work with faculty and staff educators and students from across campus. Dean of Students Ann Gleason and Associate Professor of Psychology Mark O'Dekirk were invited to serve as QEP Committee Co-Chairs and 8 other faculty and staff members from a number of academic and college programs departments were invited to serve as committee members. In fall 2008, three Meredith College students were invited to serve on the QEP Committee.

(Add list of members of the QEP committee)

After members of the QEP committee were identified, the SACS Leadership Team met with the newly formed QEP Committee on June 25, 2008 to discuss their charge. The SACS Leadership Team presented the QEP committee with the charge of developing a QEP program that will “improve students’ readiness for college work with a focus on research, writing and critical thinking.”

The QEP Committee spent fall 2008 reviewing institutional data indicating strengths and weaknesses in Meredith students’ learning and gathering input from the Meredith community about improving student learning in order to narrow the topic.

Institutional Data Used to Inform Topic

Institutional data that were reviewed in fall 2008 included findings from the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP), the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL).

- Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP). The incoming freshmen at Meredith College have consistently performed low in the critical thinking section of the MAPP with 85% scoring as Not Proficient in. An examination of the MAPP scores of incoming freshmen from 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007 & 2008 revealed that first year Meredith students exhibited the lowest skill scores in the area of critical thinking. According to the Educational Testing Service (ETS), students who are proficient in critical thinking as measured by the MAPP can evaluate causal explanations and hypotheses for consistency with known facts, hypotheses or methods; determine the relevance of information for supporting an argument or conclusion including artistic information; and recognize flaws and inconsistencies in an argument.
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). When students were asked how often they have engaged in certain academic and intellectual activities in the past year on the NSSE, their responses to items specific to integrating diverse ideas and concepts, thinking critically and analytically, engaging in self-analysis and regulation of learning, and solving complex real-world problems indicated that they had not exhibited much change from freshman to seniors (especially in examining their own views and solving real-world problems) and that the institution had shown little growth over the last ten years. The scores of freshmen and seniors and the differences between the two groups are comparable to other institutions, but are still a concern given the importance of these activities to the growth of the student and to the mission of the College. For example, typically, over 30 % of seniors report that they engaged in only some or very little complex real-world problem solving or examination of the strengths and weaknesses of their views. The importance of these activities can be seen through the results of correlations between these items and the engagement scales: Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational Experiences, and Supportive Campus Environment. An analysis of the 2008 data revealed that all of these items showed positive, significant and moderately strong correlations (.3 to .6) with at least some of the engagement scales (note: none of the items was part of the engagement scales). In addition, NSSE results revealed that both Meredith first-year and senior students’ ratings of the College’s contribution to their ability

to think critically and analytically as well as their ability to solve complex real-world problems were comparable or lower than students' ratings at other women's colleges (except for 2008).

- Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL). The MSL asks a number of questions that are relevant to the QEP. Specifically, students are asked how much they have grown in college in their ability to put together ideas, their ability to learn on their own and their ability to critically analyze ideas. 2006 results broken down by class standing, reveal that typically less than 15% of first and second year students report that they have grown very much and only 50% or less of seniors report that they have grown very much in these areas.

The QEP Committee discussed these results and noted that students are often coming to Meredith needing work in areas related to critical thinking skills including integration, self-analysis and problem solving, and that they are not consistently and dramatically growing in these areas. While these data do not suggest student scores are alarmingly low in comparison to other institutions, these skills are crucial intellectual skills when educating and equipping women to excel.

Forums and Focus Groups

In addition to institutional data, the QEP Committee sought feedback and insights from Meredith faculty and students. These qualitative findings from forums and focus groups were often consistent with the institutional findings. QEP Committee members attended 26 departmental and student organization meetings to gather information about students' strengths, areas of student learning that could be improved, and ways to enhance student learning by capitalizing on strengths and skills development. Common themes that emerged from these conversations were that there was a need for students to develop their critical thinking skills; their reading, writing and oral communication skills; and their independence, engagement and self-confidence, especially in the early years of a student's college experience.

In addition to committee members attending meetings across campus, specific program directors were invited to the QEP meetings to provide additional input. During one of these meetings, the Director of General Education noted that in his recent review of academic program outcomes that 70% of departments list critical thinking as a major outcome. During this same time period, QEP committee members were also reading numerous articles that were informing their conversations (see reference list).

At a December 2008 retreat, the QEP Committee reviewed institutional data and information gathered from campus conversations and narrowed the QEP topic to focus on critical thinking skills, agreeing on the QEP title, *Educating and Equipping Women to Excel: Improving Critical Thinking*. This narrowed topic and QEP title were introduced to the SACS Leadership Team and then to the Meredith community in January 2009 and the QEP Committee sought campus input throughout spring semester 2009 on QEP student learning outcomes and possible strategies.

4 — Process Used to Develop the QEP

With the QEP topic narrowed to improving students' critical thinking, the QEP committee then focused on generating strategies to develop the QEP. In spring 2009, the QEP committee reviewed practices at other institutions, looked at relevant institutional data and held campus discussions to inform the development of the plan.

Programs at Other Institutions

QEP members reviewed the strategies used at over 40 other institutions including specific characteristics of first year seminars. The data were compiled on a spreadsheet of relevant factors for committee members to review and discuss. Common elements included discipline or topic focused seminars, experiential components and student mentors/assistants. (see spreadsheet summary)

Institutional Data

NSSE data were reviewed in spring 2009 to help with the development of strategies. A review of NSSE data revealed several areas that could be improved through QEP programming:

- Students' ratings of their relationships with other students, faculty and staff as well as perceptions of academic and social support, while generally comparable to or above students' ratings at other women's colleges, have been lower among first-year students in the last two years.
- Students' ratings of how often they prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in were lower than ratings from students at other women's colleges, except for in 2007 and 2008.
- Students' ratings of the College's contribution to their ability to speak clearly and effectively were comparable to or lower than students' ratings at other women's colleges, except for in 2008.

These data suggested to the QEP Committee that there is a need for programming strategies to be introduced early in students' college careers that provide increased support and interaction with faculty and staff, and that strategies should focus more on actively developing skills essential for success including written and oral communication.

Campus Involvement

The QEP Committee also facilitated a number of focus groups for faculty, staff and students through campus-wide forums and dining hall discussion tables in April 2009. These focus groups were designed to gather input and ideas concerning QEP strategies to enhance Meredith students' critical thinking skills in the classroom and in co-curricular settings. Meredith community members offered input on proposed QEP critical thinking strategies –

1. A topical-driven, discipline-based freshman seminar,
2. Infusion of critical thinking tools and skills into existing upper-division courses, and
3. Professional development for faculty and staff.

Faculty and staff who participated in focus groups in spring 2009 suggested that professional development opportunities on how to promote critical thinking skills were

needed, that the College should consider using some College programs that already exist as a context for intellectual engagement and critical thinking opportunities, and that the campus needed a common set of learning outcomes for implementing critical thinking. Students who participated in focus groups offered that class participation is important for exposing and discussing ideas, that “hands on” experiences enhance critical thinking, and that while upper-division courses help with critical thinking development, it is difficult to think critically without previously being taught how to do so. Students also offered examples of how faculty had successfully engaged them as active learners in their classes.

Throughout the planning process, the Meredith College community was invited to participate in defining the topic, and identifying learning outcomes, and strategies for improving student learning. QEP updates and articles were included in the faculty/staff online newsletter, *In a Nutshell*; the student newspaper, the *Meredith Herald*; on e-news, Meredith’s electronic announcement board; and through campus-wide emails. QEP Co-Chairs presented updates at fall 2008 and spring 2009 faculty meetings, College Programs full staff meetings, academic department meetings, student life forums, Student Government Association Executive Board meetings, and academic dean meetings. Campus community members were also invited to participate on the QEP blog found on Meredith’s QEP web site, to attend weekly QEP Committee meetings, and to email feedback and ideas to QEP Committee members.

Critical Thinking Framework

In early May 2009, the QEP Committee further refined Meredith’s definition of critical thinking and agreed upon a common framework for Meredith’s work on critical thinking as presented by Linda Paul and Richard Elder. The committee also selected strategies to be detailed to achieve student learning outcomes for critical thinking - including the first year seminar, the infusion of existing courses over four years, and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff. (See Matrix of Strategies for the first year seminar)

Faculty and staff were invited to participate in a unique professional development opportunity in mid-May to begin developing tools for teaching critical thinking. On May 12, 2009 Dr. Terry Roberts of the National Paideia Center held a campus workshop on *Critical Thinking: Tools for the Classroom*. Thirty-five faculty and staff attended the all-day event, which introduced the Paideia seminar concept and provided a simulation of the seminar experience for participants. In addition to gaining information about the Paideia seminar approach as one tool for teaching critical thinking, participants also offered input on the refined Meredith definition of critical thinking and student learning outcomes. Following the workshop, QEP Committee members finalized the following definition of critical thinking for Meredith:

Definition of Critical Thinking for Meredith College

“We define critical thinking as a purposeful, self-directed process in which we take charge of knowledge, use reason to propel our scholarship and solve problems, and integrate these essential skills to intellectual endeavors and actions.”

Emergence of PRISM

In late May 2009, a QEP Director, Associate Professor of Mathematics Tim Hendrix, was selected to bridge planning and implementation efforts (see QEP Director position description). The QEP Director worked with the QEP Co-Chairs in summer and fall 2009, providing leadership for finalizing the components of Meredith's QEP and starting to draft the QEP report.

During the summer of 2009, the QEP Committee met with other interested Meredith College community members to detail critical thinking strategies for the first year seminar as well as critical thinking infused courses and co-curricular activities, the action timeline, the professional development plan, the assessment plan, the budget, and other resources. The committee also established a name for the program that would capture its essence and having meaning at Meredith (**Purposeful Reasoning, Inquiry and Scholarship at Meredith or PRISM**) and worked with marketing to develop initial ideas for sharing the QEP with the campus community.

In mid-August during the College's planning week for faculty, staff and student leaders, the QEP team unveiled the PRISM program, definition, learning outcomes, strategies and future plans in a general session for the campus. The general session was introduced and concluded with video clips of a number of Meredith students, faculty and staff who reflected on what critical thinking is and why it is important. The general session was then followed by breakout sessions on *Critical Thinking 101*, PRISM freshman seminar development, infusion of critical thinking skills into existing courses and curricula, and critical thinking strategies for co-curricular programs. Copies of *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools* by Richard Paul and Linda Elder were distributed to faculty and staff who participated in the breakout sessions.

The QEP committee received much positive feedback about the presentation to the community. In the August faculty meeting a faculty member summed up the development of the PRISM experience in the following way, "I want to thank the QEP committee for its work. The presentation yesterday was great – PRISM is an exciting approach to critical thinking – for us and for our students. As I reflected last night, I realized that the committee has done a wonderful job of taking in and incorporating feedback from lots of different people. It shows, and I want to congratulate the group on that process and hold it up for all of us as an example – awesome."

Possible appendices for the above:

- Spreadsheet of institutions reviewed (or just a list/summary if this would count toward the 100 page limit)
- QEP Director Position Description
- Matrix of critical thinking strategies for the first year seminar

5 — Review of Literature and Best Practices

General Literature Review: Introduction to Critical Thinking

“I think therefore I am.”
-Rene Descartes

What is generally regarded as the characteristic that separates humans from all other animals is the ability to think. Thinking involves the process of interpreting the information we gather from our senses. It involves the storage of the information for retrieval and the manipulation of this information through reasoning, decision-making, problem solving and our use of language. Virtually any other cognitive activity must, at some level, involve thinking. Institutions of higher education recognize and indeed stress the importance of critical thinking (National Council on Education Standards and Testing, 1992; Paul, Elder, & Bartell, 1997), and the research data from employers stress that critical thinking is one of the most important skills that they look for in college graduates today (AACU, 2008). Nevertheless, research continues to argue that today's college students and adults are not demonstrating the critical thinking skills that we would expect (McKinnon, 1976; Meyers, 1986; Murray, 1997; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Oblinger, 2003).

“We are least open to precise knowledge concerning the things we are most vehement about.”
-Eric Hoffer

While definitions and terminologies of exactly what we mean by *critical thinking* can vary widely (e.g., Bransford & Stein, 1993; Brookfield, 1987; Chaffee, 1999; Elder & Paul, 1994; Ennis, 1985; Facione, 1990; Halonen, 1986; Halpern, 1996; Mayer & Goodchild, 1990; Norris, 1985; Paul & Elder, 2008, 2009; Wade and Tavis, 1990), there is consensus that very little of it seems to be taking place in the typical college classroom. Many students argue that they think a good deal in their courses and that they study very hard for their exams. However, while they may be focusing on the important concepts or specific information and facts they need to know for a test, relatively few are actually thinking about their own thinking. In other words, few people ever practice metacognition, a critical analysis of their own process of thinking (Levy, 1997). Perhaps as a characteristic of their millennial generation, Twenge (2006) in fact characterizes today's college cohort as egocentric, narcissistic, and entitled. As a result, even though the act of thinking may at first seem organic and natural, it is often manifested on college campuses as biased, prejudiced, incomplete, unsubstantiated, or flawed. Many students only engage passively with the material—a passivity that leads to egocentric views, esoteric examination of concepts, and over-reliance on opinion (Duron, Limbach, & Waugh, 2006; Levy, 1997). Students see ambiguity or uncertainty as something to be avoided, so they limit their opportunities for examining issues, explanations, or solutions with open minds, relying rather on preconceptions and assumptions to justify their views (Smith, 2002). Ironically, while many faculty members argue that developing critical thinking skills is one of the strengths of their courses and certainly a skill that is vitally important to their students, research has shown that the same faculty does not have a consistent explanation of what critical thinking actually is or how exactly it should be taught (Paul, Elder, & Bartell, 1997).

In the 21st century, students are dealing with information at a speed that necessitates advanced critical thinking and the subsequent habits of mind these skills nurture. Students' collective knowledge base is accumulating faster than at any other time in history. Estimates are that new information has a half-life of about 4-5 years (Facione, 2009; Wurman, 1989). For this reason, 21st century students must learn how to learn and synthesize new knowledge and ways of knowing continuously and to adjust and adapt to a rapidly changing world (Tapscott, 2009). Critical thinking skills will allow these students not only to adapt but to create and to excel.

Since mounting evidence indicates that the American educational system is lagging behind those of other countries in teaching its students to be good thinkers (Smith, 2002), little doubt exists that critical thinking should be an important component of higher education. Likewise research indicates that critical thinking can be taught (e.g., Duron, Limbach, & Waugh, 2006; Grossman, 2009; Halpern, 2001; Li & Lal, 2005; Loy, Gelula, & Vontver, 2004; Ozturk, Muslu, & Dicle, 2008; Pastirik, 2006; Quitadamo, Faiola, Johnson, & Kurtz, 2008; Tiwari, Lai, So, & Yuen, 2006; Van Gelder, 2005; Wheeler & Collins, 2003; Yuan, Kunaviktikul, Klunklin, & Williams, 2008) Beginning with the seminal research of Benjamin Bloom in the mid-1950's, educational psychologists have established the importance of certain types of cognitive skills in the process of learning.



Figure A

Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) was recently revised (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; see figure A above, Overbaugh & Schultz, 2009) to better reflect the learning objectives of the 21st century student. However, the emphasis remains the same: good thinkers must go beyond simply memorizing facts or understanding concepts. They must have opportunities to explore and analyze complex problems, discuss and debate issues, assess each other's reasoning, communicate their reasoning in multiple ways, and make experiential connections with the content. Equally as important, students must analyze and reflect on their own thinking in order to recognize and evaluate their own biases and then open their minds to alternative explanations, viewpoints, and possibilities.

***“Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man,
and writing an exact man.”
-Sir Francis Bacon***

Much of what we know about how students utilize critical thinking through such analysis and reflection comes through their academic reading and writing. Indeed, the research of the last decade in both writing and in critical reading focuses heavily on the cognitive processes of each, on the metacognition required to do both, and on the impact on resultant, potentially transformative learning.

For our review on critical reading, we focus on “higher order skills with text” (Luke & Walton, 1994, p. 1195). Many models for this type of critical reading infuse thinking and problem-solving skills to reading and writing (e.g., Hatcher & Spencer, 2000; Langan, 2004; Shanahan & Tierney, 1990). . Strategies that improve critical reading have been tested and researched extensively in the last decade, and the list of effective strategies and aims considered for our project range from

- making semantic predictions,
- inferring and constructing alternate outcomes,
- recognizing propaganda and bias,
- self-correction and assessment,
- invoking knowledge of content and text form,
- content and/or process mapping,
- distinguishing fact from opinion,
- altering reader response based on multiple points of view, to
- adding complexity and constructing new formulations

(see Alvarado, 2008; Chall, 1996; Langan, 2004; Luke & Walton, 1994; McClendon, 2008; Murray 2006; Resnick, 1990; Scevak, Moore, & Kirby, 1993; Tierney & Pearson, 1983; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991).

Likewise, research on writing during the last three decades in particular has solidified a distinctly critical and cognitive view of learning to write and of the writing process. As Flower and Hayes (1981) assert, “the process of writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes which writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing” (p. 366). Research in this area emphasizes the “cognitive and socio-cultural perspectives on writing and learning to write” (Sperling & Freedman, 2001, p. 371) and explores the “critical relationships. . . between writing and other language processes” (Sperling & Freedman, 2001, p. 371). One model for teaching such serves as an example: building on the work of Peter Elbow (1973) and other process-oriented theorists, the seminal research of Flower and Hayes (1981) frames writing in terms of a recursive cognitive and meta-cognitive process of planning ideas and goals; translating those plans into writing; and then reviewing for audience, rhetorical considerations, and other varied contexts. This model emphasizes writing as goal-directed, focused on guided problem-solving, and meta-cognitive, emphasizing points at which writers make key decisions throughout the process. Notable developments in this process-oriented pedagogy for our project involve the contributions of Lev Vygotsky (1978), Jerome Bruner (1978), and Mikhail Bakhtin (1986), all of whom speak to the idea of scaffolding student writing by exposing students to dominant discourses and providing concrete strategies for finding their own voices within and around these discourses. This scaffolding process can foster students’ awareness of and sensitivity to audience

(Nystrand, 1986; Pearson & Tierney, 1984; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991) and students' skill with peer response and self-assessment (Alvarado, 2008), all of which teach students to think more critically. In addition, research in writing supports two important ideas for our project. First among these is the idea that writing fosters text-based or content learning (see Applebee, 1984; Langer & Applebee, 1987; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991). Secondly, research supports that, as Paul and Elder (2006) point out, often critical thinking naturally leads to writing, enabling "the author to take ownership of ideas worth understanding" (p. 34). Thus, we know that writing does indeed carry cultural and personal values and that writing practices can thus enable students to explore such values more effectively (see also Newell, 1998; Nystrand et al, 1993; Gee, 1990).

No discussion of critical thinking and the results of thinking deeply and well for Meredith students would be complete without attention paid to understanding the importance of critical thinking for today's college students; we also need to understand how the college student of today has changed from just a few years ago. Their needs and expectations are part of what is driving a significant change in the approach that college instructors and staff take when working with students. Millennials, according to Howe and Strauss (2007), are smarter and have higher expectations with a record number of high school students taking AP tests. Data at Meredith College support this conclusion, where in 2008 88% of Meredith freshmen had taken either an honors or AP course in high school. DeBard (2004) argues that CIRP data revealed freshmen exhibit a decline on time spent on homework but more time working in jobs. This trend leads today's students to study less, to work more, and to exhibit more unrealistic expectations regarding their academic success and their professional preparation. Murray (1997) suggests that many Millennials have completed elementary and secondary learning that focused on rote learning and may lack skills to be critical thinkers or demonstrate introspection and self-reflection. Oblinger (2003) compares learning for Millennials as the "logic of Nintendo," (i.e., a trial and error approach to solving problems.) For Millennials, multi-tasking is a preferred style of learning which may lead to simplistic solutions to problems as a way to respond to information overload (Tapscott, 2009; Oblinger, 2003).

Current research offers many keys to optimal learning environments for Millennials, learning environments we seek to create as part of Meredith's PRISM experience. Tapscott (2009) argues that a professor can no longer be the "sage on the stage" and advises educators to focus on the learner, to interact with students and help them discover, to encourage collaboration, to focus on lifelong learning, and to use technology to get to know the students. Wilson (2004) suggests that education should encourage connections, active learning, and respect diversity in learners. Current learning preferences should "tend toward teamwork, experiential activities, structure, and the use of technology" (Oblinger, 2003, p. 38). These findings certainly support Meredith College's goal to transform undergraduate education through a deliberate focus on critical thinking. In recognizing that the typical Meredith College student now requires a different approach than students in the past, the College seeks to find ways to support faculty and staff in creating a different type of learning environment and set higher expectations for deeper learning among students.

***“The ancestor of every action is a thought.”
-Ralph Waldo Emerson***

Research Arenas of Import to the PRISM Experience

As the previous paragraphs on critical thinking serve as a general backdrop for our project, five key arenas of research and theory in these fields are of particular import to the formation of our seminars, our critical thinking infusion through curricular and co-curricular efforts, and our faculty development emphases.

Critical Thinking and the Importance of Student-Centered Pedagogy

Many theorists and researchers link student-centered pedagogies with positive gains in student learning (e.g., Dewey, 1916, 1933; Daniels, 2002; Dyson & Freedman, 1991; Elbow, 1973; 1984; Rosenblatt, 1938, 1985; Schrag, 1992). For our critical thinking emphasis, the research contributions seem to fall into three strategies. First, instructors of critical thinking need to model critical thinking and discuss it purposefully with students (Dyson & Freedman, 1991; Fawcett, 2004; McClendon, 2008; Nystrand et al., 1993; Resnick, 1990; Sperling, 1996; Sperling & Freedman, 2001). Building on the Vygotskian theory of learning through social interaction, instructors are urged to “demonstrate desirable ways of attacking problems, analyzing texts, [and] constructing arguments” (Resnick, 1990, p. 703), either in small group discussions or more effectively in student conferences. This advice follows Bruner’s (1978) notion of teachers of writing working one-on-one with students and thus providing a scaffold to propel student writing and thinking. Perhaps just as important is a second strategy, providing ample time for students to practice critical thinking with peers and instructors present. Many researchers define both reading and writing as dialogic processes; consequently, they are processes much more effectively taught in a classroom with a great deal of time devoted to juxtaposing texts and responding to both published and student-produced texts (Daniels, 2002; Purves & Rogers, 1995; Sperling & Freedman, 2001). Forums for this discussion could include Socratic seminars, literature circles, presentations, or synchronous/asynchronous blogs. Through these and many other venues, research indicates that having students practice their critical thinking through their reading, writing, and dialogue produces an atmosphere of meaning-making for students through the kinds of social interactions that both Vygotsky and Bakhtin acknowledge (see also Daniels, 2002; Meyers, 1986; Roberts, 1998). Such an atmosphere likewise acknowledges their dispositions as Millennials, who, as Tapscott (2009) and Oblinger (2003) assert, prefer multi-tasking that leads to simple solutions but who, as a result, must be trained to discipline their multi-tasking and harness their penchant for multi-modal forms of discourse in order to think deeply about the information that is coming at them without proper filter or frame in many cases. Integrating this discipline not only acknowledges the type of learner the students are but also contributes to a multiplicity of voices that serve only to make discussion and practice much more thought-provoking and, as a result, more potentially transformative.

Critical Thinking and the Reading and Writing Connection

Equally important to creating a student-centered classroom to promote growth in critical thinking is an intentionality in maintaining a strong connection between the reading and writing processes utilized to promote such critical thinking skills. Although many correctly point out that reading, writing, and even speaking are “distinct though

sometimes comparable modes” (Sperling & Freedman, 2001), the parallels of skills needed for both reading and writing have become an increasingly powerful pedagogical tool (Chall, 1996; Greene & Ackerman, 1995; McGinley & Tierney, 1989; Naumen, 1990; Resnick, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1938, 1985; Shanahan, 1984, 1992, 1997; Shanahan & Tierney, 1990). Both Nauman (1990) and Shanahan (1984) conclude that integrating reading and writing instruction seems to be mutually beneficial; they also show that experimentation with writing and specific critical skills such as organization tends to impact reading comprehension positively. Martino, Norris, and Hoffman (2001) likewise have conducted experiments with college freshmen to find that a purposeful reading strategy approach (in this case, the Communicative Reading Strategies Approach) combined with writing instruction resulted in gains in reading test scores. Fawcett (2004) further links both reading and writing to thinking. Much like the famous line by writer Anne Morrow Lindbergh that, “I think best with a pen in my hand,” so Fawcett assumes that critical thinking is an essential part of both writing and reading; she purposefully delineates activities such as organizing, categorizing, differentiating specifics from generalizations, and thesis and topic sentence formation in terms of their critical thinking attributes and stresses the importance of teaching these skills directly as such. Fawcett’s (2004) text is used in McClendon’s (2008) research study of the effects of teaching critical thinking and reading comprehension in a developmental college writing class. McClendon finds that “the teaching of critical thinking strategies, along with [writing instruction] improves students’ writing” (p. 121; see also St. Clair, 1994/1995). Such positive effects from linking critical thinking with and through reading, writing, and even speaking encourage our own direction in the seminar and content-area courses.

Critical Thinking and Critical Consciousness

A fourth research arena that informs our project is the definition of critical reading as more than a value-neutral phenomenon involving only skill-building of higher-order thinking abilities and generalized problem-solving. Indeed, many current critical reading theorists frame critical reading as a call toward “critical consciousness” (Friere & Macedo, 1987, p. xiii) that reads with an eye toward social and socio-cultural values. As Luke and Walton (1994) summarize, these theorists view reading as a tool for understanding “the forces and ideologies that shape one’s life; writing is a means for clarification, articulation, and liberation of the oppressed’s voice, position, interests, and possibilities for action” (p. 1195). This stance issues in a discussion of discourse analysis, and although it is not particularly germane to our purposes, the Bakhtinian ideas of reading texts against and with each other and the promotion of student-centered debate and discussion of text and how a text works are of import to our project, and we will promote such close reading of texts in our freshman seminars (see Luke & Walton, 1994, p. 1196; Sperling & Freedman, 2001, p. 375-376). For these theorists, critical reading “requires awareness of and facility with techniques by which texts and discourses construct and position human subjects and social reality” (p. 1195-1196). One end of this awareness and facility is to change minds and realities, those of the students and of the people around them. This aim of critical reading --and the critical thinking integrated into it—forces a call to action, a “deciding what to believe or do, given one of several texts” (Schrag, 1992; see also Ennis, 1989). This heightening of critical consciousness through critical thinking gives direction to our ideas for both the seminar and the critical thinking courses and co-curricular activities; we see it as both a goal and a natural by-product of an effective critical thinking program.

Critical Thinking and Teaching in the Disciplines

A related arena of research involves our emphasis on teaching critical thinking through reading and writing inside a content or discipline, as opposed to a more general freshman seminar not necessarily immersed in a disciplinary or inter-disciplinary stance. The research on critical reading in particular comes into play here, where several have found that instructors' providing solid content, relevant background knowledge, and integration of new knowledge within a discipline increases comprehension (DeWitz, Carr, & Patberg, 1987; Dole et al, 1991; Martino, Norris, & Hoffman, 2001; Resnick, 1990). As Resnick (1990) summarizes, efforts to teach critical thinking directly "should be accompanied by efforts to embed such skills within the traditional school disciplines. Such discipline-embedding has the advantage of providing a knowledge environment in which to practice thinking skills . . . [and] providing criteria from within a disciplinary tradition for what constitutes good thinking and reasoning" (p. 705). This research informs our decision to embed these skills across our campus and inside our areas of expertise, in hopes that, as Resnick (1990) asserts, "such efforts can transform the whole of the curriculum in fundamental ways" (p. 705).

Promoting Critical Thinking in First-Year Seminar Courses

Just as an emphasis on critical thinking being taught in a disciplinary or inter-disciplinary content course informs our decisions on critical thinking in first year seminar courses, a plethora of research exists on the idea of teaching these seminars in the first year of a student's college experience. The National Resource Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition publishes research about the relevance of a First Year Seminar in promoting academic success, transition to college, and the development of essential skills such as critical thinking. Many have discussed the value of incorporating active learning in courses and asserted that active learning may help students develop critical thinking skills. Seminars have been identified as the most effective forum for teaching critical thinking skills because of their ability to include active learning (Tsui & Gao, 2006). In seminars, skill-building is valued over factual recall (Tsui & Gao, 2006), an important distinction in light of our review of the literature on Millennials and the unique information literacy challenges of 21st century learners (Oblinger, 2003; Tapscott, 2009). Critical thinking development also leads the way to independent thinking (Daly, 1995), and educators may modify instructional strategies to include more opportunities for students to practice independent and higher order thinking (Erickson, Peters & Strommer, 2006).

The research on first year experiences is likewise clear that critical thinking needs to be developmentally appropriate (Roderick & Carusetta, 2006); Shepelak, Moore & Curry-Jackson, 1992), intentional (Friedman & Marsh, 2009), and explicit (Shepelak, Moore & Curry-Jackson, 1992) in order to yield learning gains. The developmental approach to critical thinking instruction gradually builds students' skills. For this reason, research about the number of weekly number of contact hours for a first year seminar indicates that a three hour contact course is more likely than a one hour contact course to produce the desired learning outcomes in critical thinking or academic skills (Swing, 2002). In addition, class sections in which instructors explicitly teach the meaning and process of critical thinking and then structure assignments to allow students to apply those skills show significant increases in students' critical thinking skills (Dyson & Freedman, 1991; Fawcett, 2004; McClendon, 2008; Nystrand et al, 1993; Resnick, 1990; Shepelak, Moore & Curry-Jackson, 1992; Sperling, 1996; Sperling & Freedman, 2001). First-year students may need extra support and a gradual easing into active learning to avoid overwhelming

them and possibly negating or diminishing potential gains (Barefoot et al, 2005; Roderick & Carusetta, 2006).

Summary of the Literature and Best Practices

Current findings suggest that traditional educational practices are at an important crossroad. With the Millennial generation entering college and bringing a different set of skills and expectations for their college experience, faculty, staff, and administrators must modify their approaches and adapt their learning environments in order to effectively reach the diverse learning needs of today's college students. In addition, the importance of molding a new generation of college graduates who are able to go beyond the rote memorization of facts and can demonstrate more depth and flexibility in their thinking leads us to conclude that we cannot underestimate the role of excellent skills in reading, speaking, and writing in this rapidly changing world. Critical thinking is an area that has been shown to be lacking as students enter college; likewise, it is an area that shows little improvement during their time in college. In order to address these challenges, today's educational practices must be active, engaging, student-centered and transformative. To offer anything different is to deny the very reason most of us chose a profession in higher education in the first place. While the challenge of establishing this campus culture of critical thinking at Meredith College will be significant, the Meredith College community is committed to educating and equipping women to excel. We accept this challenge with the steadfast determination that a Meredith degree will signify a student who is prepared to think about, to think within, and to think beyond in her 21st century world.

6 — Desired Student Learning Outcomes

From the review of the literature on critical thinking and on specific research arenas of import to the program, the QEP Committee worked closely with the campus' Office of Research Planning and Assessment to develop learning outcomes for the PRISM Experience. The QEP presented these outcomes to our faculty in February 2009, and revised these outcomes based on feedback from faculty, staff, and students. These learning outcomes will be used throughout the integration of the PRISM program in the students' undergraduate education at Meredith. Along with their specific objectives within each course, they will be stated on the syllabi for each seminar or CT (Critical Thinking)-Infused course, and learning outcomes will be assessed inside the course/co-curricular infusion as well as on the programmatic level.

PRISM Learning Outcomes

As a result of the QEP, students at Meredith will

- Apply skills of reason, critique, and creative thought
- Utilize and communicate critical thinking skills through reading, writing, and speaking
- Integrate and evaluate knowledge from a variety of sources and disciplines
- Raise important questions and formulate solutions to complex problems
- Develop intellectual curiosity by thinking independently and being active in the learning process
- Practice metacognition by analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing their ways of thinking.
- Exercise open-mindedness to new ideas or ways of thinking.

1. **Apply skills of reason, critique, and creative thought.**

By studying and practicing models for thinking and problem-solving, students will learn how to think like a disciplinarian in a given field of study. Students will learn how to apply these frames and modes of thinking to new situations and contexts. In this vein, they will practice specific skills of reason, critique, and creative thought such as listening carefully, detecting bias, evaluating generalizations, recognizing contradictions, and assimilating disparate ideas into new forms of expression.

2. **Utilize and communicate critical thinking skills through reading, writing, and speaking.**

Students will apply and articulate their reasoning skills by reading texts both provided by the instructor and discovered through student inquiry and interest. In ways consistent with best practices in critical reading, they will clarify, critique, and dialogue about those texts. Students will be challenged to speak in both informal discussions and more formal venues regarding the content and ideas of the subjects under study, and they will write extensively in the PRISM courses both to learn and to exhibit learning of new concepts. Writing, reading, and

speaking will be integrated, and students will be encouraged to show such integration in work products, exhibits, and performances.

3. Integrate and evaluate knowledge from a variety of sources and disciplines.

Because we acknowledge that all knowledge is connected and that our students will be increasingly asked to sort through vast amounts of information from both vetted and unvetted sources, PRISM instructors will ask students to gather and evaluate the credibility of multiple sources of information. Students will also be encouraged to seek and explore connections within content, ideas, and disciplines. These skills will reinforce our efforts in information literacy instruction. Students will integrate credible sources in their written and spoken discussions and in their work products, and they will use this integration to recognize the interdependence and complexity of knowledge.

4. Raise important questions and formulate solutions to complex problems.

An important part of critical thinking is the ability to frame situations and ideas and then to articulate the questions that both challenge and strengthen that frame, with an end toward thinking more clearly and questioning more precisely. From such framing, students will have the tools they need to come to well-reasoned conclusions about real world problems, which are often ill-defined. They will be equipped first to recognize the complexity of a scenario or problem and then to test solutions to complex problems against relevant values and standards. They will be encouraged to value both the framing and articulation of questions and the complexity and intrinsic satisfaction of intellectual integrity.

5. Develop intellectual curiosity by thinking independently and being active in the learning process.

The literature on the Millennial student and critical thinking, and on student-centered pedagogy is clear that students must be in the center of classroom discussions, presentations, and research processes. Complex, independent thinking is a skill, and as such it can be nurtured only through practice and focused attention, the type of attention students exhibit when they are active learners. Whether through Socratic discussions, experiential activities, case study analyses, or creative performances, students will work actively to question, clarify, refine, and re-evaluate. In this way, independent thought and active learning will be the hallmark of the PRISM experience.

6. Practice metacognition by analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing their ways of thinking.

Students will practice tools and strategies of critical thinking in order to recognize the weakness of their own conclusions. They will critique, question, and create their own theories and points of view as a result of reading, writing, and speaking about the ideas of a discipline or situation. They will explore the implications and consequences of their past and future actions with the goal of improving their intellectual virtues and skills as they have come to define these virtues and skills for themselves. As a result, students will become aware of their own thinking and the frames they use to create and validate knowledge, and they will become

more reflective on the way their mental processes shape their worldviews and their subsequent actions.

7. Exercise open-mindedness to new ideas or ways of thinking.

As students become more aware of their own metacognitive processes, they will learn to both question and support how knowledge is transmitted, formed, and connected to their actions and attitudes. As a result, they will be encouraged to value new and/or different ideas or ways of thinking. In addition, they will practice framing, defending, and supporting opposing sides of an academic discourse both as an intellectual exercise and as an opportunity to re-examine their own frames and ways of thinking about an issue. In this way, students will open up intellectual space for hesitation and doubt and, more importantly, come to value careful critique and purposeful open-mindedness as a sign of intellectual confidence and maturity.

DRAFT

7 — Action Plan & Timeline: The PRISM Experience

Based on the synthesis of the literature in both research and best practices, examination of other schools' campus-wide initiatives, and our own community-wide cycle of input and feedback, the QEP Committee began in earnest in January 2009 to develop program strategies that addressed the need for *critical thinking* that had been identified on our campus.

Sections III and IV of this report provide details about the chronological identification and development of the QEP focus topic—*critical thinking*—and our initial articulation of student learning outcomes, as described in Section VI. It is important to note that the evolution of our definition of critical thinking and of the student learning outcomes continued iteratively as the committee considered program initiatives that would best meet the student learning outcomes and address the need for critical thinking among our campus community. As the committee examined and pondered potential program strategies, the committee clarified student learning outcomes, which, in turn, helped to sharpen and focus the definition—in essence, operationalizing critical thinking for our campus.

Meredith College's definition of critical thinking and the desired student learning outcomes are re-presented below:

Definition of Critical Thinking for Meredith College

"We define critical thinking as a purposeful, self-directed process in which we take charge of knowledge, use reason to propel our scholarship and solve problems, and integrate these essential skills in intellectual endeavors and actions."

PRISM Learning Outcomes

As a result of the QEP, students at Meredith will

- Apply skills of reason, critique, and creative thought
- Utilize and communicate critical thinking skills through reading, writing, and speaking
- Integrate and evaluate knowledge from a variety of sources and disciplines
- Raise important questions and formulate solutions to complex problems
- Develop intellectual curiosity by thinking independently and being active in the learning process
- Practice metacognition by analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing their ways of thinking
- Exercise open-mindedness to new ideas or ways of thinking

Several factors were considered in the development of program strategies. First, the program strategies must be multi-faceted to address (a) the developmental needs of students learning skills of critical thinking, (b) the further development and application of those skills situated within the disciplines of their majors, (c) the synthesis of those skills throughout their curricular and co-curricular college experience, and (d) the culminating

demonstration of critical thinking skills as students complete their undergraduate studies. Secondly, the committee was sensitive to the unique opportunities for integrative learning on the Meredith College campus. Students arrive at Meredith College wanting “to make a difference.” Typically, they are involved extensively in co-curricular experiences and other activities outside the classroom. As our program initiatives evolved, it became clear that the committee and the campus wanted our focus on critical thinking to reach beyond the classroom, permeating the entire campus culture. Thirdly, the QEP committee recognized that program strategies must address seemingly competing purposes. Program strategies should:

- (1) Establish both a common framework or lens across campus through which we view critical thinking and a common language, which we can use to communicate concepts and skills about critical thinking with our students and with each other
- (2) Respect that critical thinking, as applied, often looks quite different within the different disciplines and within the context of particular co-curricular or non-curricular activities and experiences. Different aspects and skills of critical thinking are relevant to the context in which they are situated, and often, discipline-specific terminology is used to communicate those skills in context.

From these perspectives, the QEP committee moved toward strategies that provide an initial experience for first-time freshmen, an experience that will establish a common framework for critical thinking and introduce students to critical thinking skills and intellectual habits of mind. Upper level courses infused with critical thinking will provide students the opportunity to develop further their critical thinking skills and apply them within the context of their major discipline. Experiential components and opportunities to infuse critical thinking will be integrated into the entire college experience and become part of the campus culture at Meredith College. Assessment strategies will not only provide the campus with information about how students’ development of critical thinking progresses but will also serve as means of formative feedback that will allow students, faculty and staff to improve critical thinking skills and experiences. Students’ development of metacognition—their reflective understanding of their own thinking—will develop and improve as the college provides students both with the tools for self-evaluation and reflection as well as effective models of practice. Faculty and staff development strategies are crucial (1) to ensure common understandings, (2) to provide resources and support for changing instructional needs and teaching practices, and (3) to create a campus-wide culture of critical thinking and reflective decision-making to model for our students.

Throughout the course of the QEP development, as we have solicited feedback by our campus community about possibilities for quality enhancement, the QEP Committee has operated within several guiding principles. The QEP Committee articulated these guiding principles; the following principles establish a campus-wide trust as the committee moves forward in implementing strategies responsibly, involving campus-wide participation in this initiative:



1. **Intentionality** – First and foremost, the committee has worked within the principle of intentionality. In this vein, PRISM activities for both students and faculty/staff will be intentional and crafted to support a deeper level of critical thinking through the course of the five-year QEP implementation process. Transformation and the creation of a campus culture that supports critical thinking depend on our intentionality.
2. **Evidence-Based Decision Making**—We will assess the program continually and systematically, allowing decisions to be informed by both informal and formal measures, the value we see added to students' learning experiences, and commitment to learning outcomes.
3. **Flexibility**—Because the entire process should be evidence-based, we understand that this plan is our best guess, and we will exhibit flexibility and good stewardship in our planning and implementation.
4. **Consensus-Seeking**—Because we rely on the expertise and the experience of our faculty in their disciplines and in their departments, we will seek to build consensus inside academic departments as to how to accomplish and give evidence of critical thinking outcomes inside their disciplines and with their upper-level students. In that same vein, we will encourage and support every department on campus to create courses that explicitly teach critical thinking skills inside their disciplines. Finally, our committee structure will reflect our desire to involve as much of the campus as possible.
5. **Continuous Improvement**—We are committed to faculty and staff development and wish to build a community of critical thinking fellows/scholars committed to studying, teaching, and presenting their experiences on teaching and learning through critical thinking.
6. **Transformation**—We will actively seek ways to encourage and support critical thinking in both curricular and co-curricular endeavors, with a goal of creating a campus culture of students, staff, and faculty committed to improving their critical thinking skills in the most transformative of ways.

The PRISM Experience

The official seal of Meredith College bears the motto *lux*, which is translated as “light.” Many popular images of critical thinking bear a symbol of light to convey its meaning and purpose. At Meredith College (where every four years, the faculty and staff present a staged production of *Alice in Wonderland* for the students and college community), it is suitable to view critical thinking “*through the looking glass.*” Based on these unique aspects of Meredith College’s campus culture and tradition, it was agreed that our perspective of critical thinking shared many similar characteristics with a *prism*. Critical thinking involves an awareness of how knowledge can be focused and filtered through a specific lens. Specific disciplines can be magnified and appreciated through critical thinking, recognizing a diversity of perspectives. At Meredith College, critical thinking can be an appropriate learning focus through which a student’s education should be both illuminating and multi-faceted.

In the summer months of 2009, the QEP committee established the name and logo of our QEP project as the **PRISM Experience**. PRISM is more than a reference to light and its many associations with critical thinking. PRISM has come to represent the unique perspective and approach to critical thinking that the QEP committee feels will meet the needs of the Meredith College community. Our logo is a simple triangular prism, designed with certain edges outlining an “M” in white, to represent Meredith College.



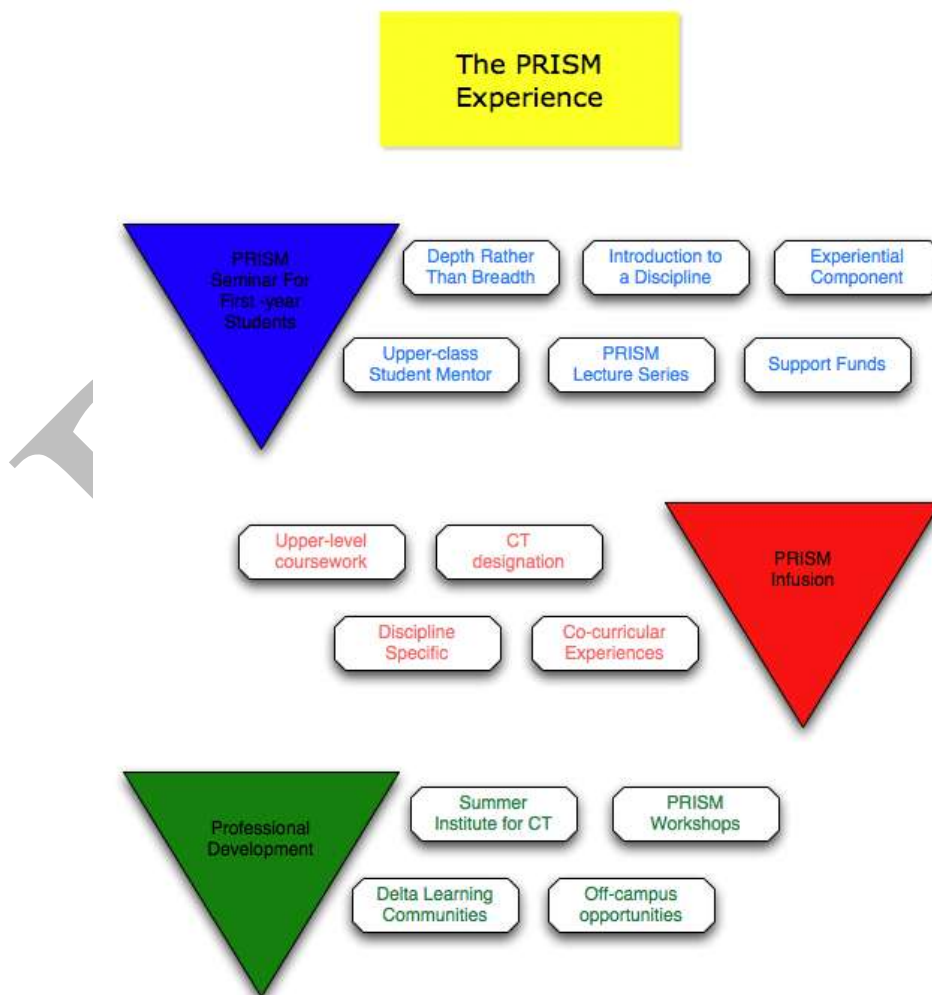
Figure B

Purposeful Reasoning, Inquiry, and Scholarship at Meredith is what we now define as the **PRISM Experience**, an integrated program of strategies focusing on critical thinking throughout a student’s college experience. We chose a triangular prism indeed because a triangular prism is often used as a medium through which beams of light are refracted. However, it is also in concert with a triptych that guided our development of relevant critical thinking strategies: *Thinking about...thinking within...thinking beyond*. As the QEP committee developed strategies, this triptych guided the committee’s work in two ways.

First, from the perspective of an individual student’s development, a student is introduced to critical thinking in the context of thinking about an issue, a problem, a topic of some depth. As students apply and build upon critical thinking skills within their major, they move to more independent inquiry, scholarship and the development of creative thought. Beyond the classroom and the college undergraduate experience, we want our students to leave prepared to be more than carriers of light, but by utilizing critical thinking, to be creators of light.

Secondly, from the perspective of the college, the triptych reminds us of our institutional responsibility to provide opportunities for our students. In the first-year seminar, structured around thinking about a topic or an issue situated in a disciplinary context, students will begin to develop essential critical thinking skills, with a common model and language across disciplines. Armed with developing skills in thinking critically, a common framework, a common vocabulary, and common self-assessment rubrics, students will move into their major degree programs, where they have the opportunity to apply and expand their critical thinking skills within their chosen discipline. Beyond the classroom, critical thinking opportunities in co-curricular experiences are a necessity if we are serious about infusing critical thinking throughout our campus, lest our triangular kaleidoscope be “lopsided.”

In the sections that follow, we articulate the various facets of the **PRISM Experience**—strategies that the college will implement over the course of five years to improve the quality of critical thinking across our campus culture. The graphic below summarizes those strategies. These facets include the **PRISM Seminar** for first-time freshmen, the **PRISM Infusion** that addresses both upper-level coursework and co-curricular experiences, the **PRISM Assessment Plan** that provides both formative and summative feedback, and the **PRISM Faculty and Staff Professional Development Plan**, which is designed to build human capacity for implementing the strategies.



The PRISM Seminar for Freshmen

The college will develop and implement a discipline-based, topic-driven seminar course for first-year freshmen, named the PRISM Seminar, which will focus on the introduction and development of critical thinking concepts and skills situated in the context of an issue or problem.

Based on review of the literature about critical thinking (See Section V), we believe that the development of critical thinking skills at the college level must begin early in a student's career. Successful freshmen-level seminars are rigorously academic in nature and are situated in the context of a specific discipline or topic. Such seminars provide explicit opportunities to learn critical thinking concepts and skills, promote active learning, and incorporate experiential components. Our seminar will help create a community of scholars at Meredith College, modeling for our students the expectations for engaged learning and scholarship we desire to create throughout one's college experience. [\(See link to list or Spreadsheet of First Year Seminars at Other IHE's\).](#)

Sections of the PRISM Seminar will be developed and offered as an elective for first-year freshmen in the fall and spring semesters each academic year. Course sections will be identified both by their home discipline and by their connection to the PRISM Experience (e.g., BIO-PRISM 965), using a common numbering system. Seminars will be offered for 3 credit hours and the enrollment would have a maximum of 20 students per section.

While PRISM Seminars will carry elective credit, individual departments may choose to develop seminars that also meet General Education requirements and will be encouraged and supported in doing so.

The PRISM Seminar will meet student-learning program outcomes at an introductory level. While having a disciplinary focus, PRISM Seminars will incorporate a set of common strategies that will help ensure a focus on introductory critical thinking concepts and skills. The following strategies will be common across all sections of the PRISM Seminar.



Features of the PRISM Seminar

PRISM Seminars will bear certain unique features that will render them both appealing and academically rewarding for students and faculty.

- **Depth rather than breadth**—Many first-year collegiate courses are survey courses or courses that lay a pre-requisite foundation for subsequent coursework. *PRISM Seminars will offer both the faculty and the students the opportunity to study a topic or issue in depth, focusing on the development of critical thinking skills such as asking and exploring questions, identifying assumptions, analyzing arguments, and devising solution paths to complex problems.*
- **Introduction to a discipline**—*Students will have the opportunity to be introduced to the ways of thinking that are indicative of an individual discipline. Even in seminars with a more interdisciplinary topic, the course will offer the students a perspective of scholarship that is of interest to the faculty member.*
- **Experiential component**—*All sections will include some form of experiential learning; this component could include service learning, class project, class trip, connection to larger freshman service project, simulations in class, case studies, connection with a local organization or other such experiences. From the beginning of the student's college career, we want to establish the climate that critical thinking is a skill that guides meaningful decision-making.*
- **Support funds for experiential component**—*Each PRISM Seminar section will have a designated amount of funds to support and carry out the experiential component of the course. In addition, there will be an additional pool of funds to which a section may choose to apply (e.g., if the experiential component of the course involved a more involved component—such as an off-campus trip to complete lab work in a specific geographic field site—that section could apply for additional funds).*
- **Upper-class student mentor**—*Faculty will have the option of inviting an upper division student to serve as a course assistant—a student mentor. The student mentor will help plan and carry out the experiential component of the course, and provide support to first-year students acclimating to the academic life of the college.*
- **PRISM Lecture Series**—*Students in the PRISM Seminar will attend campus-wide lectures during the semester presented by major campus guest speakers or distinguished faculty. PRISM Seminar students will have opportunities for a more focused reception with speaker and other faculty before or after the main lecture, where they may interact more personally, ask additional individual questions, and have a more focused conversation about the lecture topic. Annually, the college hosts the Blue Cross Blue Shield Presidential Lecture Series, inviting an array of campus speakers nationally and internationally that address the campus-wide theme for the academic year. (The 2010 – 2011 college theme will be *Critical Thinking for Critical Times* and the current 2009 – 2010 academic year's theme is *Catalysts for Change*.) In addition, distinguished faculty members across campus will offer talks that again give students a glimpse into the modes of thinking, inquiry and scholarship within various disciplines.*

Action Plan for the PRISM Seminar

The opportunity to study in a discipline-based, topical seminar will help students establish an academic climate early in their college careers, emphasizing what the college values. After examining **models of first-year seminars at other institutions**, the QEP committee made the decision to offer the PRISM Seminar initially as an elective course. This approach affords us the opportunity to pilot the seminar first, gather data about its effectiveness, and make recommendations based on evidence about wider-scale implementation. The college will phase the seminar into the curriculum, offering 3 sections during the pilot year of the project, 2010 – 2011. The initial plan is to offer 3 sections in the fall semester. Each subsequent year, there will be staggered increases of sections until Year 5:

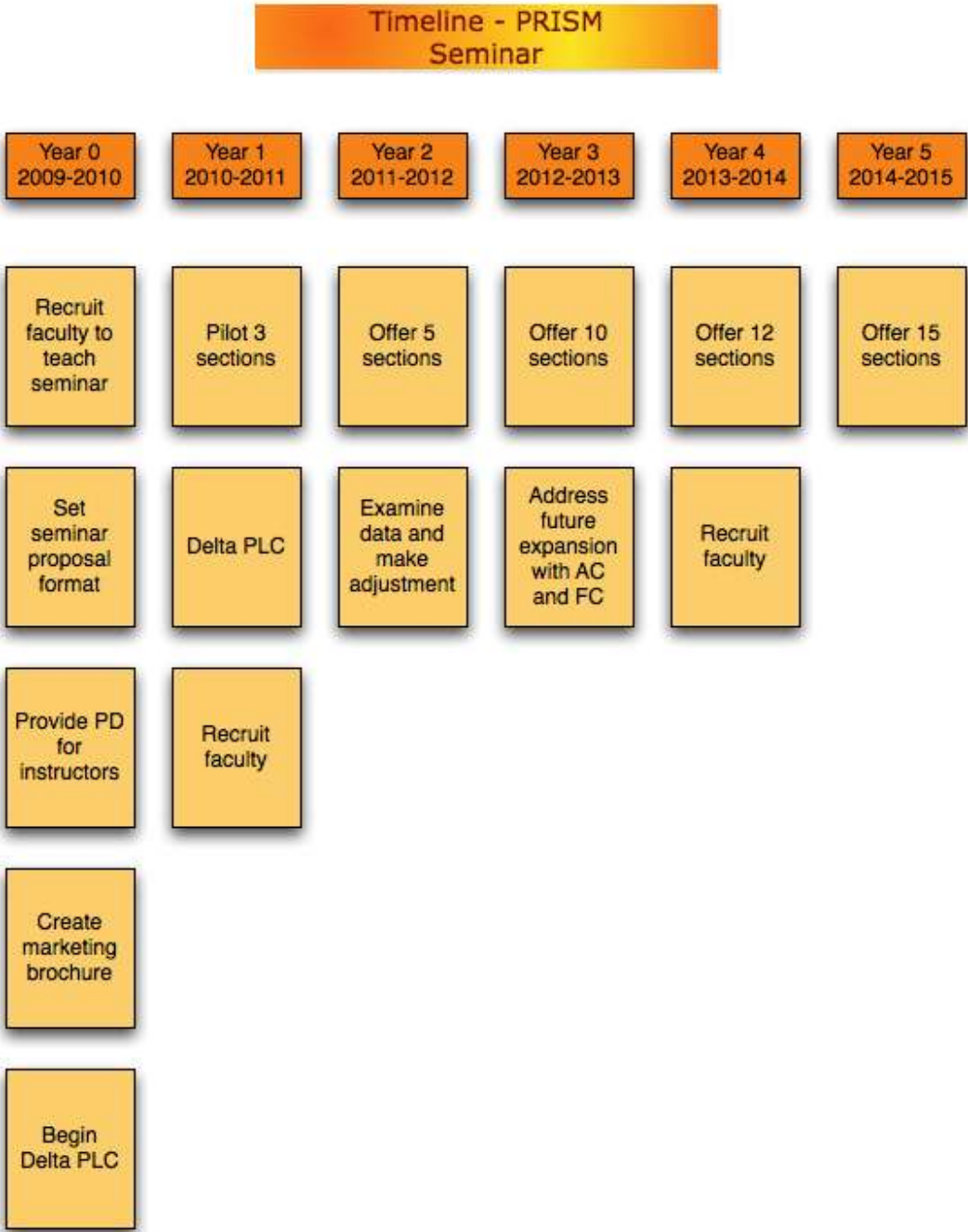
- 2010-2011 3 sections
- 2011-2012 5 sections
- 2012-2013 10 sections
- 2013-2014 12 sections
- 2014-2015 15 sections

During the first two years of the project, the college will collect assessment data and track students' development of critical thinking skills. After the first two years of the program, the PRISM Advisory Committee will look at the assessment measures and make a recommendation to the college about a wider-scale implementation of the seminar. That recommendation would go through the normal academic governance channels of Faculty Council, the Academic Council and a campus-wide approval of the faculty.

With a phased implementation of a seminar that is elective in credit initially, the college, under the leadership of the PRISM Advisory Committee, will recruit faculty with records of outstanding teaching for the initial offerings. Faculty will be recruited from across the five schools of the college and across disciplines to develop a wide variety of topics and interests. Intentional efforts will be made to recruit qualified faculty and staff with strong teaching records in the initial years of the seminar. In order to support PRISM Seminar faculty in meeting the common critical thinking learning outcomes of the course and to imbed those outcomes in the context of their seminar topic, faculty will participate in targeted professional development workshops addressing critical thinking, instructional strategies, and active learning.

In the summer prior to offering a PRISM Seminar the first time, faculty will receive a stipend to support the development of the seminar course and its experiential component. Books and other media resources will be available for instructors as they develop those courses. During the academic year, PRISM Seminar instructors will participate in a DELTA (Δ) professional learning community, designed to provide collegial support in achieving the goals of the course.

Below is a timeline mapping the implementation of the PRISM Seminar. This timeline is followed by a program mapping worksheet for the PRISM Seminar that indicates where instructional strategies will address the program-wide critical thinking learning outcomes (at an introductory level) in the seminar.



NOTE: We are still making modifications to this timeline—a replaced timeline will be substituted this week.

Program Mapping Worksheet for the PRISM Seminar

Outcome Statements: What students will be able to do or know as a result of the QEP	Planning: Instructional Strategies/Programming					
	Strategy 1: Employ pedagogies that are active and engaging in nature	Strategy 2: Integral role of reading, writing, and speaking	Strategy 3: Apply experiential component that integrates course content with experience	Strategy 4: Discuss and debate issues, examining multiple points of view using a variety of credible sources	Strategy 5: Provide opportunities to identify and assess the characteristics of the students' own reasoning processes as well as those of others	Strategy 6: Explore important questions and analyze complex problems
Outcome 1: Apply skills of reason, critique and creative thought by communicating through reading, writing, and speaking	X	X			X	
Outcome 2: Integrate and evaluate knowledge from a variety of sources and disciplines				X		
Outcome 3: Raise important questions and formulate solutions to complex problems	X		X	X		X
Outcome 4: Develop intellectual curiosity by thinking independently and being active in the learning process	X	X	X	X		X
Outcome 5: Analyze, assess, and reconstruct their ways of thinking				X	X	
Outcome 6: Exercise open-mindedness to new ideas or ways of thinking	X		X	X	X	X

The PRISM Infusion

The first-year PRISM Seminar is designed as a program strategy to lay a common foundation for critical thinking. Over time, with successful implementation, students will complete their first year of college with a common framework for critical thinking—using common language about components of critical thinking and intellectual traits—and will possess a common set of developing critical thinking skills. They will have had an opportunity to experience first hand how critical thinking can be applied in the context of a discipline—promoting inquiry, scholarship, and creative thought. It is the desire of the PRISM Experience that students complete the PRISM Seminar with a different set of expectations about learning and engagement, and will take those expectations with them into their upper level major programs as well into the fabric of their total college experience.

The PRISM Seminar is only the first step in a comprehensive strategy to infuse critical thinking into the culture of the college; but, if implemented successfully, the Seminar has the potential for students to become *catalysts for change* in more pervasive ways. Students will expect that curriculum will challenge them and that classrooms will be centers of active, engaged learning. They will expect that their major program of study will involve asking questions, identifying assumptions, evaluating information, exercising creative thought, applying skills of reason, and reflecting on decisions made. In turn, the campus will model that these same critical thinking skills and dispositions are applicable in co-curricular and non-curricular activities across campus. *Slowly, with intentionality, with professional development for all faculty and staff, and with communication across units, critical thinking will become infused into the Meredith way of doing and being.*

Towards those ends, the PRISM Experience will establish specific strategies to promote the continued development of critical thinking throughout the curriculum, into the upper level course work and major degree programs of the various disciplines, and into the co-curricular activities of our college. These strategies will all involve professional development for faculty and staff, support of appropriate resources, and opportunities to support each other's efforts in professional learning communities.

Critical Thinking in the Disciplines

The First Year Seminar will provide an introduction to critical thinking for Meredith students, but critical thinking is a complex skill and research shows that the acquisition of complex skills requires extensive practice (Ericsson, K.A., and N. Charness. 1994.). As a result, a key part of the **PRISM Experience** at Meredith will be to promote the teaching of critical thinking in courses in the disciplines. These courses will complement and continue the critical thinking instruction begun in the PRISM Seminar. They will provide an opportunity for students to practice and develop the critical thinking skills they acquired in the PRISM Seminar and, in many cases, they will focus on the particular critical thinking strategies which are most appropriate to the student's major.

The student learning outcomes of CT courses will be the same as those of the overall QEP.

As a result of the QEP, students at Meredith will

- Apply skills of reason, critique, and creative thought
- Utilize and communicate critical thinking skills through reading, writing, and speaking
- Integrate and evaluate knowledge from a variety of sources and disciplines
- Raise important questions and formulate solutions to complex problems
- Develop intellectual curiosity by thinking independently and being active in the learning process
- Practice metacognition by analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing their ways of thinking.
- Exercise open-mindedness to new ideas or ways of thinking.

The CT designation for courses will provide formal certification and recognition of the efforts of both the faculty who offer extensive critical thinking instruction and of the students who take those courses. This recognition will encourage faculty to increase the level of instruction they provide in critical thinking and it will encourage students to take courses that provide such instruction. While the First Year Seminar is the most prominent part of the QEP, CT courses are likely to be the most significant over the long run. Students will take only one First Year Seminar, but they will have the opportunity to take many CT courses, they will take those courses when they have achieved greater cognitive maturity, and they will take CT courses in their major field of study.

We will use three primary mechanisms to encourage faculty to offer CT courses: (1) We will provide training for faculty so that they can more effectively incorporate instruction in critical thinking into their courses and (2) we will seek approval for a Critical Thinking (CT) designation for courses which promote the critical thinking goals of the PRISM program. This designation will become part of the course description in the catalogue and will also be included on the student's academic transcript. (3) We will require that faculty who teach first year seminars will also be required to submit one of their other courses for CT designation.

Designating courses as CT and recording that designation on the transcript will require approval from the Academic Council. The PRISM Advisory Committee will seek that initial approval during the Spring 2010 semester, and will begin working with departments and faculty in the 2010 – 2011 academic year to identify courses appropriate for such designation. If assessment indicates that CT courses are effective at improving students' critical thinking skills, we plan to propose that a requirement that every student take a number of CT courses be added to the list of General Education requirements.

In order to receive CT designation for a course, an instructor would have to submit an application for approval to the Curriculum Team of the PRISM Advisory Committee. The instructor would need to show evidence of training in CT instruction. Requests for funding of further, discipline-focused training would also be part of the application.

The core of the application for CT course designation is an explanation of the instructional strategies that will be used to promote the learning outcomes of the PRISM program and the methods for assessing their effectiveness. An individual CT course is not required or expected to promote all of those learning outcomes, but it is expected to

promote more than one such outcome. At least 25% of the course, including both in-class and out-of-class time, should be spent in activities that promote critical thinking.

We know that many Meredith faculty members already make concerted and effective efforts to teach critical thinking. This type of program will identify and recognize the efforts those who are critical thinking leaders on campus. In many cases, minor changes in existing courses will be required. Our goal is to have 15% of the courses at Meredith receive CT certification by the end of the 5 year QEP cycle, including at least one required course in every discipline.

Providing faculty with professional development in effective methods for teaching critical thinking will obviously be crucial to the success of the PRISM Experience. Many instructors already recognize the importance of critical thinking and devote considerable time and effort to teaching it. Specific professional development will provide these instructors with common frameworks and language upon which to develop those skills further in their students. This will lead to becoming more effective teachers of critical thinking and will introduce faculty to the most effective ways to assess the impact of their efforts. These types of professional development will be open to the entire faculty and will also serve to promote the teaching of critical thinking by instructors who do not currently devote much effort to it, introducing them to both the concepts and skills of critical thinking as well as best instructional practices for doing so.

In many cases faculty will also require or benefit from training more specifically focused on their individual discipline. We will encourage all faculty who offer CT courses to pursue professional development opportunities on teaching critical thinking in their disciplines and will provide funding both for attendance at off campus workshops by individual faculty and for on-campus critical thinking workshops sponsored by departments. Faculty who plan to submit applications for CT course designation can request funding for discipline specific training which will prepare them to do so.

To a significant extent, the professional development to prepare faculty to teach critical thinking effectively in upper level courses will overlap the training which prepares instructors to teach the PRISM Seminar and with professional development opportunities which focus primarily on co-curricular activities.

Co-curricular Experiences and Critical Thinking

According to The Association of American Colleges and Universities, beliefs about the role of the co-curricular experience as it relates to student learning have shifted over time. Currently, there is an emphasis on an “all college” or integrative curriculum which marks a recent shift in higher education (Eames, 2006).

This philosophy assumes that general education curriculum, major coursework, and co-curricular experiences are no longer separate entities. Instead, it encourages an “integrated, cumulative, and progressive four-year curriculum in which courses inside and outside the major mutually reinforce each other; lower-level courses provide the foundation for upper-level courses; and co-curricular experiences are recognized as valuable learning opportunities” (Eames, 2006). An integrated curriculum represents the notion that all information, insight, realizations, wisdom and experiences are interconnected. The integrated curriculum also recognizes the charge to develop the complete person rather than a specialist with limited expertise. This is accomplished by providing an array of courses and experiences that synthesize the learning process for

the student, thus supporting a transformative learning experience. As such, co-curricular experiences are essential to the learning process as they afford students the “opportunity to learn through action, contemplation, reflection and emotional management as well as information acquisition” (NASPA, 2004).

Historically, the Meredith College culture has emphasized the connection between academic and co-curricular experiences as a way to encourage student engagement. As stated in Vision 2010, Meredith’s strategic plan for the College, “Meredith College seeks to create academic programs and a campus culture that prepare students for their lives as engaged global citizens and leaders.” This plan is evident in several unique experiences.

- Faculty and staff facilitate reflective and integrated learning through the Summer Reading Program book discussion.
- Recognized leaders are invited to campus through the Wallace Lectures, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina lecture series to engage students in thoughtful dialogue on a variety of global issues.
- Leadership Circles, a series of leadership discussions that focus on understanding one’s self in relationship to broader leadership opportunities through small group discussions.

As we have conducted research on the use of critical thinking components in co-curricular experiences, we have discovered that faculty and staff foster the basic components in a variety of ways. Several examples are evident: strategies used by career counselors to encourage deliberate and reflective thought with students as they create resumes and letters of application; the intentionality built into the Sophie Lanneau program as students develop a portfolio; group discussions following community volunteer experiences; papers assigned to students who have committed an honor code violation requiring the student to give thoughtful analysis of their behavior; and coaching provided by counselors and advisors that help students gain insight into their communication with faculty and ability to respond in a manner that result in positive academic and interpersonal interactions. Through these experiences and others, Meredith faculty and staff strive to create intentional learners who can adapt to new environments, integrate knowledge from different sources and continue learning through their lives.

Meredith College has a core basis upon which to build and incorporate critical thinking into students’ curricular and co-curricular experiences. The PRISM experience, particularly its emphasis on infusing critical thinking into students’ curricular and co-curricular experiences, will provide scaffolding to facilitate the development of numerous transferrable skills, including critical thinking (Eames 2006). Through the PRISM experience, faculty and staff will benefit from organized and focused professional development, PRISM learning communities, and the creation of student learning outcomes as critical thinking strategies are further incorporated co-curricular programs.

On the next page is a timeline that shows the progressive implementation of PRISM Infusion strategies into the curricular and co-curricular learning experiences for all students.

Timeline - PRISM Infusion

Year 0 2009-2010	Year 1 2010-2011	Year 2 2011-2012	Year 3 2012-2013	Year 4 2013-2014	Year 5 2014-2015
Establish criteria for CT designat	Issue RFP for Course Enhance Stipends	Issue RFP for Course Enhance Stipends	Issue RFP for Course Enhance Stipends	Issue RFP for Course Enhance Stipends	15% of courses receive CT designat
Publicize across campus	Issue RFP for Dept Infusion Funds	Issue RFP for Dept Infusion Funds	Issue RFP for Dept Infusion Funds	Issue RFP for Dept Infusion Funds	Delta PLC form nexus of center to support teaching/ learning
Establish criteria for Infusion Fund	Issue RFP for PRISM Infusion Grant Funds	Issue RFP for PRISM Infusion Grant Funds	Issue RFP for PRISM Infusion Grant Funds	Issue RFP for PRISM Infusion Grant Funds	CT is infused and highlighted in co-curric arenas
Develop student initiatives to roll out PRISM	Continue Delta PLC	Continue Delta PLC	Continue Delta PLC	Continue Delta PLC	Assess of program objectives



NOTE: This timeline is a preliminary one built before budgeting decisions were finalized. It needs to be updated in light of those decisions.

PRISM Faculty and Staff Professional Development

While enhancing student learning is at the very heart of the **PRISM Experience** at Meredith, the QEP committee is keenly aware that the culture change we seek on our campus cannot be fully realized without a strong foundation of professional development. The college must seek out opportunities to support our campus community with programs that can demonstrate the variety of techniques for incorporating critical thinking into our existing programs, courses, and campus activities. In addition, those faculty and staff who intend to build a brand new program or course must receive the knowledge, the skills, and the support required for a strong foundation to their endeavors. To this end, the PRISM program will establish the following support structures:

The PRISM Summer Institute for Critical Thinking

The Summer Institute will be a 2-day workshop, offered in the summers of Years One, Two, and Four that will be open to any faculty and staff member wishing to learn more about critical thinking and how to implement it in their own area, both curricular and co-curricular. This type of institute will play an important role in building a common framework, language and understanding across campus. In Year One of the project, the campus-wide theme for the academic year will be "*Critical Thinking for Critical Times.*" To set the foundation for this theme, two days around the annual faculty and staff planning week in 2010 will be dedicated to a campus-wide institute. In Years Three and Five, instead of summer institutes, other summer professional development opportunities will be targeted towards more focused populations based on faculty and staff needs. In Years Two and Four, the College will open the Summer Institute to outside participants from other colleges and schools within the local and regional area.

PRISM Workshops

During the academic year, the college will offer up to two half-day workshops for faculty and staff each semester. Continuing professional development will allow faculty and staff to learn and discuss more focused strategies for implementing critical thinking on campus. Seminars during the academic year will target a more specific topic related to critical thinking. Limited funds are budgeted for both regional speakers (with specific expertise) or for colleagues from the Meredith community who can provide insights from their own expertise and experience.

The Delta (Δ) Learning Communities

Those familiar with mathematics and the sciences will recognize the Δ sign as signifying **change**. That is certainly our expectation from this QEP. We look for a significant change in our students as well as a significant evolution to our approach in our classrooms and programs. The name "delta community" is intentional and will be established to provide professional development support to any and all on our campus who are working to incorporate critical thinking into the campus culture. It will be an expectation that any faculty or staff teaching the PRISM Seminar or a CT-infused course participate in the appropriate Δ Learning Community for their course or program.

Off-campus opportunities

In anticipation that the specific needs of faculty and staff will be evolving continuously as the PRISM program evolves, we also intend to offer limited funding to support those

faculty and staff who may identify off-campus opportunities that can enhance and enrich their use of critical thinking in their teaching and other learning experiences with students. While we expect to bring engaging and enlightening speakers to our campus to provide support and professional development, we also recognize that we cannot be myopic in the opportunities we provide. Should faculty or staff identify an off-campus conference, presentation, or program that can support their needs for their specific discipline or program, then we want to be able to help them take advantage of those opportunities, and perhaps, encourage them to return to campus armed with new knowledge that they could then share with the community through the above-mentioned venues.

NOTE: Insert a timeline here that is similar to the Seminar and the Infusion Timelines

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8 — *Timeline*

In Section VII, a timeline is included for each of the three major categories of PRISM Experience initiatives. For convenience, all of the timelines of the report are listed here with links to each one:

- ◆ [Timeline of the college-wide identification of a QEP topic](#)
- ◆ [Timeline for phased implementation of the PRISM Seminar](#)
- ◆ [Timeline for progressive implementation of the PRISM Infusion](#)
- ◆ [Timeline for the comprehensive PRISM Professional Development Plan](#)

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9 — Assessment

PRISM assessment will include assessment of both the PRISM student learning outcomes as well as the PRISM programmatic implementation outcomes. These assessments will inform changes in the development of the PRISM program as we seek continuous improvement using evidence-based decision-making.

Assessment of PRISM Student Learning Outcomes

The PRISM Assessment Team with help from the Office of Research, Planning and Assessment (RPA) will assess the PRISM outcomes using multiple measures, measures that are both direct and indirect ([link to Measures to Outcomes Matrix](#)). Not all assessments will take place each year ([link to Timeline of Assessments](#)), but all outcomes will be assessed each year. Students will be treated as participants in assessment rather than simply subjects of assessment. Whenever possible, students will be engaged in self-assessment and reflection and will get feedback on assessments. When this engagement is not possible, we will share aggregate assessment results with students across campus.

- The PRISM Assessment Team will adapt the AAC&U Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubrics in order to score random samples of student works from the PRISM seminar, the CT infused courses, and capstone courses from departments that include critical thinking in their student learning outcomes. Specifically, the PRISM Assessment Team will adapt the VALUE rubrics for Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Integrative Learning, Inquiry and Analysis, and Problem Solving. A group of six faculty scorers will score samples from fall and spring semester; this group will meet during the summer and will receive stipends for their work. Each sample will be reviewed by three scorers. The group will review written samples the first year, and the group will add assessment of oral samples in subsequent years. RPA will help to facilitate the scoring sessions. In addition, in Years 1 and 3 we will provide faculty and staff development facilitated through RPA on how to use the VALUE rubrics for assessment.
- The PRISM Assessment Team will facilitate the administration of the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA) online to assess critical thinking and problem solving. The test takes 35 minutes and will be completed during class in PRISM seminars as well as upper division CT infused and capstone courses. During Year 1, 50 first year and 50 upper division students will take the WGCTA. In Years 2-5, 100 first year and 100 upper division students will take the WGCTA. After they complete the test, students will receive their scores; instructors will use the test to share information on components of critical thinking and normative occupational scores as they apply to the discipline. Through this information sharing and through making instructional decisions based on this evidence, the WGCTA data will be an integral component in the instruction and implementation of the course. We will compare student scores to norms provided by WGCTA, and we will further compare scores of first year students with those of upper class students. We will analyze scores of upper class students in a quasi-

experimental design that compares those who took a PRISM seminar with those who did not. Finally, we will analyze trends from scores of Meredith students across years. RPA will prepare the reports.

- Through on-campus workshops to help staff and faculty integrate critical thinking into both co-curricular as well as curricular student learning activities, the PRISM Assessment Team will introduce reflection strategies for students. We will assess student products of these reflections as they relate to critical thinking and problem solving across campus. In years 2 and 4, we will provide faculty and staff development, facilitated through RPA, on assessing these products, including how to use established rubrics such as the rubric associated with the DEAL (Describe, Examine, Articulate Learning) model of critical reflection (Ash & Clayton, 2004; Ash, Clayton & Atkinson, 2005) or with the P-SAP (Problem-Solving Analysis Protocol) assessment of critical thinking and problem solving (Steinke & Fitch, 2003, 2007). RPA will help to compile the results of these assessments, and the PRISM Assessment Team will prepare a summary report.
- RPA will develop an institutional assessment using a number of published scales that measure cognitive complexity, metacognition and openness as they relate to PRISM learning outcomes. The instrument will be part of an institutional assessment that also includes scales on other institutional priorities such as global perspectives and commitment to sustainability. This institutional assessment will begin in spring 2011 and will be administered online to all students every three years. [\(link to Institutional Measures Timetable\)](#) RPA will prepare the reports.
- The PRISM Assessment Team will utilize qualitative assessments in the form of interviews and focus groups. Beginning in Year 2, we will interview a small, random sample of 20 first-year students—stratified to ensure that 10 completed a PRISM seminar and 10 did not—each year these students are at Meredith. Likewise, we will conduct focus groups for students in the PRISM seminars, in CT infused courses and in co-curricular programs focusing on critical thinking. Students involved in the interviews and focus groups will receive incentives for their participation. The interviews may also include video segments, and the focus groups may also include a blog. The PRISM Assessment Team with help from RPA will facilitate the interviews and focus groups and will review the transcripts for themes and prepare a summary report. The interviews will ask students to reflect on where they are in relationship to each of the outcomes including examples to support their judgments. We will also ask questions adapted from the Reflective Judgment Interview (King & Kitchener, 1994) to get a direct measure of development of cognitive skills. RPA will help to compile the responses, and the PRISM Assessment Team will prepare a summary report.
- Departments or programs with critical thinking outcomes will also use their assessments to gather evidence for the PRISM initiative and assessments of its learning outcomes. A review of departmental outcomes revealed that over 70% of Meredith academic programs have outcomes related to critical thinking. Both academic and co-curricular programs will be encouraged to further develop

critical thinking outcomes. When departments and programs assess these outcomes, the PRISM Assessment Team will review the results in each departmental or program Continuous Improvement Reports and prepare a summary report. We anticipate that, as more faculty members are introduced to the critical thinking rubrics that are part of PRISM assessment, faculty will use these rubrics more in their own departmental assessments.

- The PRISM Assessment Team will analyze student answers to questions on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) that are relevant to the PRISM outcomes. We will analyze these answers in a variety of ways, allowing for cross sectional, trend, longitudinal and group comparison analyses. We will connect our institutional data to students' NSSE and BCSSE scores to allow for longitudinal analyses. We will also compare these scores between comparable groups of students who did and did not take a PRISM seminar. Finally, we will make comparisons of the scores between comparable students who did and did not take CT infused courses. The Dean of Students in collaboration with RPA is already administering these surveys and, based on recommendations from the PRISM Assessment Team, RPA will run the analyses and prepare the reports.
- Students enrolled in the PRISM seminar, the CT infused courses, capstone courses that focus on critical thinking, and co-curricular programs that emphasize critical thinking will also do written self-assessments of how well they are meeting each of the outcomes. Students will include examples and justifications for their responses; they will also analyze their own strengths and weaknesses. Students will complete these self-assessments online, and students will have the chance to review their past responses before graduation. The PRISM Assessment Team will review the assessments and will help RPA to prepare a summary report.
- Students will also be surveyed annually to report on the extent to which they feel each of the PRISM learning outcomes is being met; they will also provide feedback on how the PRISM program can better meet these outcomes. General education already administers an annual survey to students in 400 level courses, and the PRISM Assessment Team will integrate items into this general education survey. We will also integrate items into the alumnae survey, the employer survey, and the faculty/staff surveys, each of which survey is to be administered every three years. [\(link to Institutional Measures Timetable\)](#) RPA will prepare the reports based on recommendations of the PRISM Assessment Team.

Assessment of PRISM Programmatic Outcomes

In addition to student learning outcome assessment data, the PRISM Advisory Committee will review other data to assess the following three programmatic outcomes:

- Faculty and staff involved in co-curricular programming will be competent at teaching critical thinking.
- Faculty and staff involved in co-curricular programming will be competent at assessing critical thinking.

- Enhancing critical thinking will be a strategic priority across the College. Assessments include distribution and enrollment of PRISM seminars and Critical Thinking (CT) infused courses, faculty and staff workshop participation and evaluations, co-curricular participation, reviews of Continuous Improvement Reports (CIRs) and faculty and staff surveys. ([link to Plan for Programmatic Outcome Assessment](#))

Process of Continuous Improvement

Both student learning outcome assessment and programmatic assessment are designed for the purpose of continuous improvement of the PRISM program. In order to ensure that assessment is informing decisions related to PRISM across campus, the following processes will be put in place:

Monthly	The PRISM Assessment Team meets and reviews and discusses data including plans for analysis and dissemination.
Each Semester	<p>The PRISM Assessment Team, in conjunction with RPA, shares current assessment results with the PRISM Advisory Committee as well as other relevant campus committees and groups such as Academic Council and the General Education Committee.</p> <p>The PRISM Director updates the Senior Management Team (SMT) and prepares reports to SMT as needed to address strategic priorities of the College relevant to PRISM initiatives.</p> <p>The PRISM Assessment Team participates in a retreat to engage in more extensive discussions about the implications of the assessment data.</p>
Yearly	<p>The PRISM Advisory Committee uses assessment data to inform annual changes in the PRISM program as well as changes to and creation of the content in both faculty and staff development workshops and the course review process.</p> <p>The PRISM director prepares annual Continuous Improvement Reports based on the assessment data.</p>
Periodically	<p>In Year 3 of the PRISM initiative (Academic Year 2012-2013), the PRISM Director in conjunction with the PRISM Assessment Team and the PRISM Advisory Committee conducts an intense assessment of whether systemic changes are needed to the program, including whether to continue the First Year Experience course, whether the PRISM seminar should be mandatory, whether there is a need to strengthen the experiential component of the seminar and/or the co-curricular components of the program, and where there are additional needs for seminars or CT infused courses across disciplines.</p> <p>In Year 5 of the PRISM initiative (Academic Year 2014-2015), the program undergoes program review including feedback from an outside evaluator.</p>

Assessment Budget

Additional funds needed for assessment have been outlined in the QEP budget and are reproduced below.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Faculty Stipends for Rubric Training and Scoring	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$15,000
Assessment Resources and Tools— WGCTA reduced to cost share This would reduce the budget slightly but we need to decide how many we want to administer. This is assuming 50 first year and 50 upper division the first year and 100 of each in subsequent years at \$19 per test. If we want all seminar students to take it, obviously it will be more.		\$1,900	\$1,900	\$1,900	\$1,900	\$7,600
	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$25,000

In addition, Research, Planning and Assessment will focus more of its efforts and resources on QEP assessment which translates into the following additional costs devoted to the QEP.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Additional costs of WGCTA formerly used to fund MAPP	\$1,900	\$1,900	\$1,900	\$1,900	\$1,900	\$9,500
NSSE	\$3,675.00	\$3,675.00	\$3,675.00	\$3,675.00	\$3,675.00	\$18,375.00
BCSSE (costs shared between RPA and Dean of students)	\$1,487.50		\$1,487.50		\$1,487.50	\$4,462.50
Incentives for NSSE, Focus Groups and Interviews	\$400.00	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$2,800.00
RPA Staff time- approximately 50% of one position- total based on estimated combination of Director, Institutional Research Analyst and assistant time.	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$125,000.00
Workshops on rubrics in years 1 & 3 and on reflection tools in years 2 & 4; year 5 TBD	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$2,500.00
Total	\$32,962.50	\$31,675.00	\$33,162.50	\$31,675.00	\$33,162.50	\$162,637.50

Links/appendices

Measures to Outcomes Matrix (1 page)

Timeline of PRISM Assessments (1 page)

Institutional Measures Timetable (1 page)

Plan for Programmatic Outcome Assessment (1 page)

10 — Organizational Structure

The QEP Committee is committed that the organizational structure of PRISM should be robust enough to support its many facets, yet remain in concert with established program administrative structures in place at Meredith College.

An effective organizational structure must demonstrate clear lines of communication between the senior levels of administration, the program director and team leaders, and the many faculty, staff, and student leaders who will carry out the program initiatives. This type of woven web speaks to the desired outcome of a campus culture infused with critical thinking initiatives that are part of the fabric of campus.

(ORGANIZATIONAL CHART SHOULD GO HERE—GRAPHIC)

The PRISM Experience is similar to other special academic programs on the campus of Meredith College, including our General Education program, the Honors program, the Undergraduate Research program, Faculty Development, and Service Learning. Similar to these existing academic initiatives on campus, the PRISM Experience will be housed administratively within the Academic Programs division of the college and will report to Associate Vice-President for Academic Programs and to the Vice-President for Academic Programs. In addition, because the program is truly intentional about infusing its strategies across all campus units, the project will also report and maintain close communication with the Vice-President for College Programs.

All of the special academic programs in existence have a part-time director—in four of the five cases, a member of the teaching faculty with release time—and some small amount of administrative assistance that varies by program. The College simultaneously recognizes the role of teaching faculty to provide leadership in these programs and, yet, is loathe to reassign faculty from the classroom. One by-product of this project is an opportunity for the college to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach and suggest a more unified approach to staffing and supporting special academic programs across campus. The College has appointed a member of the teaching faculty as the initial PRISM Director. Similar to other programs, the College will provide the Director with course release time and some administrative assistance support.

The initial QEP Steering Committee has remained intact and continues its work into the 2009 – 2010 academic year, now known as the **PRISM Implementation Team**. The commitment of the original committee members to the implementation of the project speaks to its broad-based development. Dr. Mark O’Dekirk and Dean Ann Gleason continue as Co-Chairs of the PRISM Implementation Team and Dr. Timothy Hendrix was appointed in Summer 2009 as the initial QEP Director, now the PRISM Director. Dr. Marie Sumerel, Director of Academic and Career Planning, filled a vacancy on the committee previously held by an academic advising staff member. Three additional faculty members not on the original committee are among a small number of faculty who have given freely of their time, interested in the development of the project, and now join the PRISM Implementation Team. Two of the three original student members will also continue on the Implementation Team. The Implementation Team represents faculty across college divisions and administrative staff who work with students in both academic and college programs.

As the project prepares in the 2009 – 2010 year for implementation in the pilot year and following, the final organizational structure will evolve. Current plans are for a steering

committee—the **PRISM Advisory Committee**—that will include the current team members with any replacements or additions as occur naturally over the course of five years. The PRISM Advisory Committee will have the major responsibility, under the guidance of its Co-Chairs and the PRISM Director, to monitor the activities and progress of the PRISM Experience. Current practice on campus is that committee assignments rotate on a three-year cycle. Initially, PRISM Advisory Committee will operate with standing members, and then transition into a committee with a rotation cycle to be determined.

Small sub-teams (each of a size appropriate to the task—2 to 5) will be formed to address different components of the project. Additional personnel that have expertise, interest and willingness to serve will work on the sub-teams guided by PRISM Advisory Committee Members, who will serve as team directors. Each sub-team will report recommendations, actions, and findings back to the PRISM Advisory Committee. We anticipate the following sub-teams that, initially, will monitor aspects of the project:

- **PRISM Seminar Team** – This team will establish criteria for seminar proposals and selection, identify needs and resources for the seminar, and monitor quality of implementation as well as effectiveness of the DELTA (Δ) Professional Learning Communities associated with the seminar.
- **PRISM Curricular Infusion Team** – This team will establish criteria for CT designated courses throughout the college curriculum, establish criteria and make selections for course enhancement stipends, make recommendations about resources and needs, and monitor the success of infusing critical thinking in the mid- and upper-levels of the curriculum, including the effectiveness of the DELTA (Δ) Professional Learning Communities associated with infusion.
- **PRISM Co-Curricular Infusion Team** – This team will help generate and establish mechanisms for infusing critical thinking experiences in college programs across campus, identify areas where connections can be built across the curricular and co-curricular aspects of campus life, and establish criteria for and make selections of proposals for the PRISM Infusion Fund.
- **PRISM Professional Development Team** – This team will maintain communication with the other implementation teams and the campus at large to identify needed areas of professional development to meet the needs of the program. They will make recommendations to the PRISM Advisory Committee about possible professional development sessions, help support the implementation of professional development activities along with the PRISM Director, and monitor the effectiveness of professional development opportunities.
- **PRISM Assessment Team** – This team will work with the Director of Research, Planning & Assessment to monitor the implementation of assessment activities and strategies, recruit and work with faculty and staff to implement rubrics for critical thinking across campus, and make recommendations to the PRISM Advisory Committee based on the evidence collected throughout the project.

The PRISM Advisory Committee and its sub-teams are not intended to operate in isolation nor in a vacuum separate from the established means of faculty and academic governance on our campus. Any recommendations of academic curricular initiatives will be submitted through the proper channels, and professional development initiatives will be coordinated with the campus' Director of Faculty Development and committee. By the end of the initial five years of PRISM, depending on the direction of its initiatives, it is very possible that some functions of the sub-teams could be absorbed into existing college committees. If PRISM is successful in meeting a college-wide need to infuse critical thinking across campus, then many of the initiatives will be integrated into the academic, co-curricular, and faculty development structure of campus. At that point, the PRISM Advisory Committee will be structured to focus on more unique aspects of the PRISM program.

The PRISM Implementation Team and subsequent PRISM Advisory Committee will consider other campus-wide mechanisms to increase communication and participation. One suggestion is to identify a faculty/staff representative from each school and from each campus unit to serve as a PRISM Ambassador. The PRISM Ambassador would serve as a more "localized" liaison between the Project and the actual campus unit, sharing information, encouraging participation, and soliciting feedback from his/her colleagues.

The PRISM Seminar and the PRISM Infusion accommodate the capacity for collegial support, known as the Delta (Δ) Professional Learning Communities. Delta (Δ) is an intentionally selected name for this structure of ongoing faculty and staff support in critical thinking teaching and learning. In most disciplines, the Greek letter "*delta* (Δ)" is used to represent "*change*" in a quantity. To meet its ambitious goals, PRISM must become a catalyst for change on our campus—change in the ways we teach, change in the ways we learn (and model learning for our students), change in the ways we make decisions instructionally and programmatically, change in the expectation levels we set, and change in the level of responsibility we wish to instill in all students.

Many faculty and staff across campus have expressed the need for a central, or unified, location to support innovative teaching both in and out of the classroom. A DELTA (Δ) is also a geographic entity, usually at the mouth of a river. The QEP Committee hopes the DELTA (Δ) could become a such centralized location for our campus, at the mouth of our many tributaries, to provide an organized support mechanism for faculty and staff to make the changes that we see as needs on our campus in how we all learn.

Through normal administrative channels, the PRISM Director will work with the Co-Chairs and the PRISM Advisory Committee to implement, monitor, and evaluate the strategies of the PRISM Experience—embedded within the currently established faculty governance and administrative structure of the College.

11 — Institutional Capacity and Resources

Institutional Capacity

The implementation of any new campus-wide initiative requires sufficient resources to achieve the goals of the project, the leadership to organize and carry out the program's initiatives, broad-based participation across the community to build institutional investment in the program, thoughtful reflective practices to inform decision-making throughout the project, and the flexibility to respond to change that is needed along the way. The synergy of these components is much more than a financial budget—it is the institutional capacity for Meredith College to undertake and actualize the potential of great ideas.

Administrative support is the first component that demonstrates institutional capacity to bring about change. Throughout the development process of the PRISM Experience—Meredith College's QEP Project—the Senior Management Team of the college and the SACS Accreditation Leadership Team have been actively interested, informed, and involved in the work of the QEP Committee. As described in Sections III and IV of this document, the SACS Leadership Team, under the direction of the President of the College, guided the identification of the QEP topic and appointed the QEP Steering Committee directly. While no senior administrator sat on the QEP Committee itself, the Leadership Team intentionally selected a broadly composed committee of faculty and administrative staff from across the campus community. Throughout the work of the committee, the SACS Leadership Team remained in close contact, having designated a member of its team, Dr. Deborah Tippett, as the SACS LT Liaison to the QEP Committee. In addition, Dr. Pam Steinke, as Director of Research, Planning & Assessment, has also been a member of both committees. The plans of the QEP Steering Committee have been vetted and endorsed by the SACS Leadership Team. Their feedback has been invaluable in shaping the direction, scope, and boldness of the QEP project and their enthusiastic response to the PRISM Experience has been encouraging. As the PRISM Experience moves beyond the initial review and into the implementation phase, the continued administrative support by Senior Management is crucial. The integrative nature of the PRISM Experience means that every aspect of the college community and culture will be impacted and involved. With administrative support and under the direction of the PRISM Advisory Committee and the PRISM Director, the college will maintain integrity to the guiding principles articulated in Section VII while thoughtfully moving forward with evidence-based decision-making to infuse a culture of critical thinking in the life and fabric of Meredith College.

(See the attached statement of support for the PRISM Experience by members of the Senior Management Team—the President of the College, the Vice-President for Academic Programs, the Vice-President for College Programs, and the Vice-President for Business and Finance.)

(NOTE to SACS LT: Please review the content and substance of the above paragraph—we believe that individual letters of support from the SMT will be a strong demonstration of institutional capacity. We would like your feedback on this request.)

The PRISM report has indicated the broad-based participation of the campus in the development of our QEP topic and program strategies. The original QEP Steering

Committee has evolved into the PRISM Implementation Team, with needed additions that have complemented the original members' contributions. The committee chairs continue in their roles and the PRISM Director was a member of the original team. Under guidance from the Office of Research, Planning & Assessment, the PRISM Experience has planned meaningful assessment strategies that will inform the project formatively and will provide summative evidence for long-range decision-making. The PRISM Implementation Team is committed to the guiding principles of building consensus, exercising flexibility, and intentionally seeking modes of integrative learning. Now, we turn to describing the financial resources of the college that are necessary to provide a truly transformative experience in the longitudinal life of Meredith College.

In the development of the initial budget, the entire QEP Steering Committee worked in sub-teams to research and estimate necessary financial resources to carry out and support the successful implementation of the PRISM Experience. Maintaining integrity to the guiding principles articulated in our Action Plan, the committee has worked to be good stewards of the college's resources. Being a good steward entails two aspects of budget planning: (1) Considering carefully the activities and associated resource needs for the project to succeed and thoughtfully recommending the resources to accomplish those goals; and (2) Considering carefully the scope of the project as a whole within the mission and strategic plan of the college, and making recommendations judiciously for resources that are in concert with the college's operations and priorities.

The PRISM Implementation Team presented a preliminary budget to the campus-wide SACS Leadership Team on September 4 with the initial draft of the QEP Report. Multiple discussions were held between the PRISM Team leadership and the SACS Leadership Team over the months of September and October in light of program initiatives, campus-wide priorities, and the college's budget situation. The final budget was submitted for approval on November 4, in time for planning in the college's annual budget process.

The QEP Committee has set its expectations high for the PRISM Experience—to *achieve a transformation in the ways we teach, learn, and interact in our community through critical thinking*. The resources needed to achieve these goals are significant, yet reasonable. Undertaking a project of this scope is impossible without providing the resources in infrastructure, professional development, physical materials, supplies, forward-thinking technologies, and human capacity.

The estimated PRISM budget is presented in spreadsheet format on the following pages, and a budget narrative is given after the budget.

BUDGET SPREADSHEET

Budget Detail by Category:

	Year 0 2009 - 10	Year 1 2010-11	Year 2 2011-12	Year 3 2012-13	Year 4 2013-14	Year 5 2014-15	Total
PRISM Seminar for Freshmen:							
Course Instructor @ \$3800 per section (0,3,5,10,12,15)	\$0	\$11,400	\$19,000	\$38,000	\$45,600	\$57,000	\$171,000
Stipends @ \$1000 per new course section (3,3,5,5,5,5)	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$26,000
FICA and FUTA calculated @ 10% or \$380 per section (0,3,5,10,12,15)	\$0	\$1,140	\$1,900	\$3,800	\$4,560	\$5,700	\$17,100
Experiential Component & Student Assistants (A total of \$500 per section)	\$0	\$1,500	\$2,500	\$5,000	\$6,000	\$7,500	\$22,500
Book Resources for instructors of PRISM seminars (\$200 per new instructor)	\$600	\$600	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$5,200
PRISM Lecture Series Reception/Discussions	\$0	\$750	\$1,250	\$1,750	\$2,250	\$2,750	\$8,750
DELTA (Δ) Faculty Learning Communities Support	\$0	\$200	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$4,200
<i>Subtotal Seminar Costs</i>	\$3,600	\$18,590	\$31,650	\$55,550	\$65,410	\$79,950	\$254,750
PRISM Infusion:							
Course Enhancement Stipends @ \$500 per course (Goal: 15% of the courses achieve infusion or CT designation)	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$2,500	\$18,500
Book and other media resources for PRISM infusion	\$0	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$5,000
PRISM Infusion Fund through grant requests	\$0	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$3,500	\$4,000	\$13,500
DELTA (Δ) Professional Learning Communities Support	\$500	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$5,500
<i>Subtotal Infusion Support</i>	\$500	\$8,000	\$9,000	\$8,000	\$8,500	\$8,500	\$42,500

Budget Detail by Category:

	Year 0 2009 - 10	Year 1 2010-11	Year 2 2011-12	Year 3 2012-13	Year 4 2013-14	Year 5 2014-15	Total
Faculty and Staff Development Plan:							
Faculty Stipends for Summer Institute @ 2 full days @ \$100 per person (0,campus wide, 30,**,20,**)--**No SI in Years 3 and 5 but stipends for targeted PD are allotted	\$0	\$0	\$9,000	\$2,000	\$6,000	\$2,000	\$19,000
Professional Development Providers	\$0	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$21,000
Programming (Food, Snacks, etc.)	\$0	\$2,500	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$10,500
<i>Subtotal Faculty Development</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$8,500</i>	<i>\$17,000</i>	<i>\$7,000</i>	<i>\$11,000</i>	<i>\$7,000</i>	<i>\$50,500</i>
Administrative Costs:							
PRISM Director: Course releases + summer stipend	\$8,800	\$12,600	\$12,600	\$12,600	\$12,600	\$12,600	\$71,800
FICA and FUDA(?) calculated @ 10% or \$380 per course release	\$380	\$760	\$760	\$760	\$760	\$760	\$4,180
Administrative Assistant @ 50% time after first year—starting at the mid-range of Level II	\$2,300	\$13,500	\$13,390	\$13,792	\$14,206	\$14,632	\$71,820
Fringe for Admin Asst @ 25% of full-time or 10% for FICA/FUDA if half-time status	\$500	\$3,375	\$3,348	\$3,448	\$3,552	\$3,658	\$17,880
<i>Subtotal Administrative Costs</i>	<i>\$11,980</i>	<i>\$30,235</i>	<i>\$30,098</i>	<i>\$30,600</i>	<i>\$31,118</i>	<i>\$31,650</i>	<i>\$165,680</i>
Supplies and Materials:							
Office Supplies, Materials, Printing & Copying	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$18,000
<i>Subtotal Supplies and Materials</i>	<i>\$3,000</i>	<i>\$3,000</i>	<i>\$3,000</i>	<i>\$3,000</i>	<i>\$3,000</i>	<i>\$3,000</i>	<i>\$18,000</i>

Budget Detail by Category:

	Year 0 2009 - 10	Year 1 2010-11	Year 2 2011-12	Year 3 2012-13	Year 4 2013-14	Year 5 2014-15	Total
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Marketing:

Executive Summary, Brochures, Giveaways (Eliminated after Year 2)	\$3,250	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,750
PRISM Seminar Faculty and Course Descriptions (Maintained as seminar grows)	\$1,750	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$11,750
Flyers, Banners, Posters, Etc. (Again, eliminated after Year 2)	\$1,500	\$500	\$500	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,500
<i>Subtotal Marketing</i>	<i>\$6,500</i>	<i>\$4,000</i>	<i>\$3,500</i>	<i>\$2,000</i>	<i>\$2,000</i>	<i>\$2,000</i>	<i>\$20,000</i>

Travel:

Conference Attendance for Critical Thinking Leadership	\$0	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$15,000
Faculty Travel to Disciplinary or CT Conferences	\$3,000	\$6,000	\$7,000	\$8,000	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$42,000
Professional Development Provider Travel	\$0	\$2,500	\$1,000	\$2,500	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$8,000
<i>Subtotal Travel</i>	<i>\$3,000</i>	<i>\$11,500</i>	<i>\$11,000</i>	<i>\$13,500</i>	<i>\$13,000</i>	<i>\$13,000</i>	<i>\$65,000</i>

Assessment:

Faculty Stipends for Rubric Training and Scoring	\$0	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$15,000
Assessment Resources and Tools—In addition to cost share	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$10,000
<i>Subtotal Assessment</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$5,000</i>	<i>\$5,000</i>	<i>\$5,000</i>	<i>\$5,000</i>	<i>\$5,000</i>	<i>\$25,000</i>

Technology:

Hardware & software	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$8,000
<i>Subtotal Other</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$2,000</i>	<i>\$2,000</i>	<i>\$2,000</i>	<i>\$2,000</i>	<i>\$8,000</i>

TOTAL BUDGET by YEAR:

TOTAL OF ALL CATEGORIES	\$28,580	\$88,825	\$112,248	\$126,650	\$141,028	\$152,100	\$649,430
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Budget Narrative

The preceding PRISM budget spreadsheet is organized by program initiatives of the PRISM Experience rather than only by traditional budget line categories. The current organization will facilitate discussion about project costs. Upon completion, the current lines can be mapped to a more traditional accounting categorization.

The PRISM Seminar:

- Costs are projected based on a phased progression of sections being offered over the five-year period (0, 3, 5, 10, 12, 15).
- Each section is currently marked at the cost of an adjunct faculty to replace the faculty line teaching a PRISM Seminar section. However, we acknowledge that this may not be the most realistic way of accounting for the distribution of faculty teaching PRISM sections.
- Based on the same numbers as above, we calculated a maximum of 10% FICA and FUTA as the fringe costs.
- For each faculty member preparing to teach a PRISM Seminar the first time, the budget includes a summer stipend for development of an interdisciplinary course consistent with the established practice of our Faculty Development. The number of stipends assumes that there will be some sections being repeated each year as well as some new sections being offered (3, 3, 5, 5, 5, 5).
- For each faculty member preparing to teach a PRISM Seminar the first time, the budget includes a \$200 fund for book and other media resources.
- For each section of the PRISM Seminar, the budget includes a fund of \$500 per section to support the experiential component of the course and the possible use of upper-level student assistants. These figures represent modified figures from the original budget based on the college's current budget situation. Each section would receive \$200 and the remaining funds would be placed in a general fund to which sections may apply for additional support funds based on individual section needs.
- For each year, the budget includes an amount to support programming for special PRISM receptions for the PRISM Lecture Series, which will overlap with the campus lecture series already in place.
- For each year, the budget includes funds to support programming needs for the DELTA (Δ) Faculty Learning Communities, which will operate similarly to the current teaching circle model.

The PRISM Infusion:

- The program will encourage faculty to enhance the mid-level and upper-level courses that they teach to emphasize aspects of critical thinking. The budget, beginning in the first full year of implementation, includes funding to support stipend awards for course enhancement. The amount is consistent with the established Faculty Development practices on campus. The PRISM Advisory Committee will work with Faculty Development to administer the awarding of these stipends. There is a goal that 15% of courses will be infused and achieve CT designation by the end of the five years.

- Similarly to the PRISM Seminar instructors, each faculty member receiving a course enhancement stipend would also receive a \$200 fund for books, and other media resources.
- Beginning in Year One of the implementation, the budget includes a PRISM Infusion Fund—a competitive grant fund to which faculty and staff could apply for funds to support innovative ideas to infuse critical thinking into the life of the college in unique and creative ways. This fund is similar to the Creative Ideas Fund—a popular support grant fund from earlier in Meredith College’s history.
- The budget includes funds to support DELTA (Δ) Professional Learning Communities, which will support faculty engaged in course enhancement, and faculty & staff who are exploring ways to infuse critical thinking in co- and non-curricular activities on campus.

PRISM Faculty and Staff Development:

The budget accommodates a comprehensive series of professional development for both faculty and staff to support a transformation of the culture on our campus. Research and best practices indicate that a campus community needs grounding in critical thinking to establish a common framework and common language across campus units. Learning more about critical thinking, professional development of how to infuse critical thinking skills in and out of the classroom, and support for new teaching and learning paradigms that support higher order thinking are all necessary components. Contrapositively, research and best practices also show that institutions that attempt sweeping initiatives without planning for and providing such support are not as successful. It is incumbent upon this new initiative to provide such resources, building a sense of trust among the campus community as we ask them to join us on the PRISM Experience journey. Towards these ends:

- Based on the Paul and Elder model for critical thinking and recommendations for higher education institutions establishing critical thinking as a campus-wide goal, the budget includes a series of intensive summer multi-day workshops supported throughout the academic year by targeted half-day workshops on specific strategies or concepts.
- The budget assumes that the entire campus will participate in 2 days of professional development targeted to critical thinking around the faculty and staff planning week during August 2010, connected to the academic theme “Critical Thinking for Critical Times.” In Years 2 and 4, the budget supports similar summer institutes, including faculty stipends for professional development time outside the academic contract year. The college will open those institutes to colleagues at other local and regional institutions.
- Faculty stipends are included in the budget for Years 3 and 5 for targeted professional development on specific strategies, but there is no plan for larger summer institutes those summers.
- Costs for professional development providers are estimates based on professional development providers’ typical rates per day. The budget provides for at least one nationally recognized provider per institute year, as well as for providers that are more regionally located. The budget also anticipates the utilization of Meredith faculty and staff who have developed expertise in these areas, including stipend support.

- Meals, snacks, and other programming costs are estimated and follow a pattern that reflects the number of anticipated participants per year.

Administrative Costs:

- Most institutions have made a practice of hiring a QEP Project Director. At recent SACS Institutes, informal survey of QEP Directors reveal that most are hired in full-time positions, and at some schools, 2 to 3 years in advance of the project implementation.
- Consistent with the Meredith established tradition of program directors also being teaching faculty with reassigned time, we propose a similar position for the PRISM Director with a summer stipend of \$5000 per year in addition to 2 course releases per year. The number of course releases was based on the
- A maximum 10% for FICA and FUTA has been calculated for each course release indicated above.
- Initially, \$2300 in stipend salary has been set aside for administrative assistance in Year 0 of the project. We include a salary line for a 50% Administrative Assistant based on Level II of the Human Resource Salary Model. We anticipate the need for someone who has administrative, organizational, and web development skills. We increased the salary amount each year by 3.0%.
- Fringe calculated at 25% for the Administrative Assistant is included for each year, with an assumption that the Administrative Assistant would also have an additional assignment on campus, requiring full fringe benefit calculations rather than FICA and FUTA only.

Supplies and Materials, Printing and Copying:

- The budget includes typical funds for supplies, materials, printing and copying. The estimated budget was made based on comparison with General Education, Honors, Faculty Development and Undergraduate Research programs on campus. The budget figures represent what an estimated “middle ground” between the other programs’ past budgets.

Marketing:

- The PRISM Team Leadership met with the Marketing Team to discuss marketing needs and strategies, both for the initial year of roll-out and for ongoing costs.
- The budget include printing costs for Executive Summaries and PRISM Experience Brochures that describe the college-wide initiative to the larger community, alumnae, Board members, and prospective students and their families
- The budget includes advertising and marketing for the PRISM Seminar that will entail an extensive brochure and advising “wrap-around” that will be sent to all incoming freshmen in their advising and planning materials. Initial estimates are \$1000 per year for the brochure and \$750 per year for a wrap-around. In subsequent years, we increased the amount to a rounded \$2000.
- In preparation for the rollout and the implementation year, the budget reflects that marketing anticipates creating table displays, banners (similar to ones that adorn Jones

Auditorium) and posters for an estimated cost of at least \$1300. This amount was included as \$1500 as well as a nominal amount of \$500 per year for Years 1 and 2.

Travel:

- The budget includes travel for the PRISM leadership team members to be engaged in the professional development community of critical thinking, attending conferences on the regional and national levels.
- Beginning in Year 0, budget funds are established for the travel of PRISM faculty to attend critical thinking seminars or conferences, either in their own discipline or critical thinking conferences/workshops. Funds are graduated to match new instructors teaching in the seminar, but the funds can be stretched to accommodate as many as possible.
- The budget includes travel costs (airfare and/or mileage, lodging, meals) for professional development providers throughout the five years of the project.

Assessment:

- Many assessment needs are part of cost-sharing across the institution as General Education and other campus units will benefit and participate in assessment strategies. The estimated costs of assessment efforts for PRISM absorbed into the general college budget are detailed in Section IX of the report.
- The PRISM budget includes funding to train and include faculty members in the assessment of student learning outcomes by scoring common rubrics of student work products and portfolio artifacts. This effort will help build a cadre of faculty who understand the appropriate use of rubrics in providing formative feedback to students about their development.
- Many assessment instruments and resources will increase in cost for the College over the five years, and will be cost-shared across campus units. The budget includes funds to support PRISM's participation in the use of these campus-wide assessment tools.

Technology:

- Examination of best practices of institutions promoting critical and creative thought, marked by higher order modes of thinking, recognize the need to change the ways in which we engage today's student in the classroom. The PRISM Experience will seek to partner with Technology Services to cost-share wherever possible and still move the college forward in technology resources.
- Technology is an integral component of moving our teaching and learning paradigms forward. Hence, the project must include support for developing innovations using these tools that will bring added value. Faculty teaching PRISM seminars and infusing critical thinking deserve the best possible tools for increased media, internet and technology support in the course. The budget includes a nominal amount to support some initial exploration of hardware and software tools for the program's participants.

APPENDICES

DRAFT

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