

7 — Action Plan & Timeline: Part D—PRISM Professional Development

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.

