

## Davidson College Quality Enhancement Plan

### Refining Rigor: Learning in Breadth and Depth at Davidson College

The Davidson QEP builds upon the college's rigorous curriculum, which demands that each student study and value the academic disciplines that define the liberal arts, and that each student declare one discipline as a major area for in-depth study. Moreover, the college faculty expects that each student, regardless of academic interest or potential vocation, will learn to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing. Thus, this QEP, which springs directly from Davidson's mission, should lead to an enhanced student academic experience.

Addressing the issues raised in the QEP is particularly timely for Davidson College. Like other highly selective liberal arts colleges, Davidson faces the competitive tension between doing more for its students in their first two years and enhancing the experience of the major. On the one hand, we want our first-year students to experience a seminar-like classroom environment with no more than 16 students, as in writing courses and the Humanities Program. Offering an adequate number of these courses strains faculty resources. On the other hand, we strive to provide an in-depth experience within the major, with students doing individual research projects. This effort also requires a significant commitment of faculty resources.

Developing this QEP offered the opportunity to assess these competing demands, as we endeavor to improve the academic experience for students in their first year and to develop enhanced opportunities for students pursuing their major field of study.

**First-year Writing (or W-course) Program.** Upon the recommendation of the Composition Committee, and with the endorsement of the faculty and the SACS Steering Committee, the W-Course Program Quality Enhancement Working Group was formed in May 2006. This campus team will lead the process of analyzing the current writing program and suggesting the changes necessary to enhance the quality of writing instruction.

**Humanities Program.** The Humanities Quality Enhancement Plan calls for a faculty development seminar for professors interested in teaching in the Humanities Program. This will afford those who teach in the program, in both the traditional and the new tracks, as well as other interested faculty who may in the future hope to participate in the program, an opportunity to revisit those goals and to reformulate them for another generation of Davidson students.

**Opportunities for optional depth-study.** The plan recommends that the college institute and support a two-pronged system for students to receive support for collaborative research with a faculty member—a standard model operated through existing FS&R procedures and an enhanced model supported by funds marked for the Davidson College Research Initiative. The enhanced model, to be developed under the direction of its own oversight committee, will require additional student initiative to procure funds.

For information on the development and implementation of the QEP, please contact:

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