

Parker University
Advancing Critical Thinking

Advancing Critical Thinking, Parker University's Quality Enhancement Plan, is designed to improve critical thinking skills essential to the needs of students as they progress in the health care delivery programs offered at the school. The QEP calls for the development and improvement of critical thinking skills for both faculty and students, and includes the development of a Center for Teaching and Learning to support faculty as they strive to enhance student learning and the quality of teaching at all levels within the institution.

With the success of our QEP, students will graduate better equipped to attend to those they serve in a variety of health care settings. The selection of the topic for our QEP was the result of a broadly inclusive and collaborative multi-year process of planning and development.

The goals of the **Advancing Critical Thinking** plan are as follows:

- 1. Develop, improve, and assess student critical thinking skills.**
- 2. Develop, improve, and evaluate faculty knowledge and skills in the implementation of instructional techniques and assessment strategies that encourage critical thinking.**

Parker University initiated a data collection process to establish a baseline profile of students' critical thinking skills prior to the implementation of the QEP. The documentation of student performance will be a component of the evaluation process implemented for the purpose of monitoring, evaluating, and improving the QEP's effectiveness.

Using a number of common goals, university constituents have developed a plan for improving student critical thinking skills with a multiphase implementation process that involves a number of specific measures and outcomes. In the first phase of the QEP, selected faculty participate in professional development activities designed to enhance their understanding of the Paul-Elder critical thinking model and to increase their use of critical thinking strategies in the classroom. The second phase of the QEP includes the implementation of new courses with a focus on horizontally integrated and contextualized content and skills. As the five-year plan unfolds, new courses focusing on contextualized content and skills will combine with improved teaching and assessment strategies to advance critical thinking within the context of the programs offered at Parker.

Faculty development will be an integral component of the QEP. The newly created Center for Teaching and Learning will be responsible for designing and implementing professional development activities in support of the QEP's goals.

An assessment plan will evaluate each outcome and related goals on an ongoing basis during each intervention so as to ascertain affects the QEP has on student learning. In addition the findings will be used to revise and improve the plan.

For additional information on development or implementation of Advancing Critical Thinking, contact **Bill Watson, Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning and QEP Director (bwatson@parker.edu).**