RUST COLLEGE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF QEP

CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS
The Rust College Quality Enhancement Plan, "Building Communities Academically for Total Student Success: Improving First Year Math Skills," is the result of collaboration and involvement of the entire college community. From our initial college-wide focus groups in February of 2012, to the work of the Core Committee of the QEP, and with feedback from faculty, staff, students and the surrounding area, improving the academic performance of first year students became our focus. A narrowing of that focus showed that helping students become more proficient in basic math would be an appropriate goal for the QEP. The College's collaboration also suggested that through thematic contextual learning communities first year students not only could improve their math skills, but also develop a better sense of the concept of math in the real world.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE QEP INCLUDES:
Evaluation of the current admissions testing profile in order to maximize accuracy in placement includes reviewing the effectiveness of testing times, locations, atmosphere and testing environments, as well as the specific instrument(s) used for testing (TABE vs. ACCUPLACER).

Creating contextual learning communities whose activities and study modules would be designed by faculty groups (think tanks). Math competencies emanating from the learning community activities would be reinforced and assessed in basic math and math general education courses. Students who are placed in developmental Math will also be placed in a Gen Ed Math course, but will have opportunities to test out of the basic math class during the course of the module. Students' understanding of the use of math in the real world would also be assessed.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
There are two desired outcomes of the QEP following evaluation of the testing process:

(1) First year students will be able to demonstrate an increase in basic math skills through contextual learning communities.
Following exposure to math situations in the contextual learning environment, tools for assessing specific math skills (e.g., performing operations on sets, solving basic algebraic problems, representing math data appropriately, etc.) will be the post-test for the TABE or ACCUPLACER; math skills assessment in math courses; and performance on the PRAXIS I assessment test in Math.

(2) First year students will be able to describe/explain math concepts using examples from the real world.
Following exposure to math situations in the contextual learning environment, students' knowledge of real world math concepts will be assessed using rubrics for exams/tests administered in the first year math courses.

CONTEXTUAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES
Scholars define "contextual learning" as learning that occurs when learners connect information to their own frame of reference. Stated another way, students can learn better when they can relate their learning to things that they know or with which they are familiar. For example, a student can become more Math literate when he or she can learn Math "in the context" of Math situations they encounter in the real world. Math is everywhere in the real world—in politics, media, sports, government, the arts, or in any of a range of social or practical issues.

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