

EVIDENCE & ARGUMENT

THE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN FOR WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Western Kentucky University's Quality Enhancement Plan takes an intentional, cross-disciplinary approach to building students' skills and abilities in information mastery, critical analysis, and argumentation. *Evidence&Argument* is organized around a single student learning goal, namely that "WKU students will bring evidence and argument to life through written, oral, and visual means. Graduates will be prepared to apply and adapt this learning to their professional, social, and personal lives." Three student learning outcomes support this goal:

1. WKU students will demonstrate the ability to gather sound and relevant evidence to address an issue. (***Evidence-Gathering***)
2. WKU students will demonstrate the ability to analyze and synthesize the assembled evidence. (***Sense-Making***)
3. WKU students will demonstrate the ability to articulate a logical and supported argument based on this analysis. (***Argumentation***)

The QEP goal and outcomes are directly tied to the institutional needs and priorities established in WKU's institutional strategic plan, and offer a natural complement to the underlying philosophy and organization of WKU's 2014 *Colonnade Program* for general education. The *Colonnade Program* itself is aligned with statewide student learning outcomes for general education as well as the American Association of Colleges and Universities' *Liberal Education and America's Promise* (LEAP) Essential Learning Outcomes. Capstone courses within the *Colonnade Program* challenge students to integrate knowledge across disciplines and engage with significant issues at the local, national, and international level. *Evidence&Argument* reinforces learning goals in Connections and throughout the *Colonnade Program* by providing students enhanced opportunities to gather and analyze data, evaluate assumptions, and critique inferences. The focus on evidence-gathering, sense-making, and argumentation provides students with an academic toolkit to make connections across diverse courses and disciplines, and prepares them with meta-knowledge and skills essential for success in the 21st century.

Evidence&Argument employs a series of programmatic ('push') and capacity-building ('pull') initiatives. Programmatic initiatives are designed to inculcate pedagogical best practices into targeted courses and experiences within the *Colonnade Program*, and include: (1) a revised first-year writing and communication experience; (2) a comprehensive Writing in the Disciplines framework at the sophomore/junior level; and (3) assurance of mastery-level treatment of argumentation skills in Connections courses. In addition to being content-relevant and vertically-aligned, these courses also serve as the key points of accountability in terms assessing QEP student learning outcomes using LEAP VALUE rubrics. Additional courses and teaching and learning experiences will be enhanced through implementation of a sustained faculty development program in argumentation pedagogy.

Capacity-building initiatives focus on development of online activities and resources that support the teaching of argumentation by faculty across the university; rather than being targeted for integration into specific courses, these online resources will be available for general use by interested faculty members of any program. The primary thrust of capacity-building initiatives will be to develop an inventory of online materials and teaching modules that address QEP student learning outcomes within the context of different disciplines and ways of knowing.

Additional information about *Evidence&Argument* is available at www.wku.edu/gep, or by contacting:

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