

# VConnected . . . Improving Student Learning through Engagement

## **Vernon College**

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## Executive Summary

The goal of the Vernon College Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), named VConnected—Improving Student Learning through Engagement, is to increase engagement by fostering collaboration and connectivity between students, faculty, and support personnel. Engagement will be increased by transforming curriculum and instruction, by training faculty in engagement techniques through professional development opportunities, and by creating a technology-rich environment for instructional and student support services. Because Vernon College strives to provide quality instruction in spite of record enrollment increases, the aim of its QEP is to focus attention on what matters most: communication with its students both inside and outside of the classroom setting. Collaboration and connectivity serve as the foundation of this QEP.

VConnected addresses the College's mission by "integrating education with opportunity" through improved engagement with increased connectivity and communication so that "teaching, learning, and leading" becomes a life-long skill (Vernon College General Catalog, 2006, p. 9). Vernon College (VC) chose to use a collaborative approach to develop the QEP. The QEP Committees (rotating members through the Planning, Development, and Implementation Phases—see Appendix I), were charged with involving all stakeholder groups, including students, faculty, administrators, staff, alumni, Board of Trustee members, and citizens of the community, in the process. The following criteria guided the QEP Planning Committee's solicitation of a topic:

- Mission--consistent with the mission of Vernon College and SACS criteria for a QEP, improvement of student learning.
- Quality enhancement--potential to better equip students to function as scholars and citizens within the College community and beyond.
- Scope--interests of the entire College community, involves as many instructional programs and support units as possible.

- Support--broad support from students, faculty, administrators, staff, and other stakeholder groups.
- Pragmatism--feasible in terms of implementation and consistent with available resources.
- Accountability--outcomes can be measured.

Employee input and institutional effectiveness data were collected in “Shape the Future” meetings which were conducted College-wide beginning in September 2003. Findings were analyzed; and these, together with VC’s accelerated growth and expansion efforts, provided the institutional context for the development of the plan and its goal. The theme of increased engagement by fostering connectivity between students, faculty, and student support services, ultimately selected as the focus of the QEP, was one of several high priority issues supported by survey results.

To learn about best practices that might serve as models for the QEP, the QEP Development Committee reviewed published literature on engagement, technology, and education; examined web sites of leading engagement centers, sought information about engagement and communications at peer institutions; and utilized the expertise of Vernon College faculty and staff.

The QEP topic, VConnected, reflects the interests and has strong support of the College community, including both instructional and instructional-support units. The principal target is the improvement of student learning, described by SACS as “changes in students’ knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or values that may be attributable to the collegiate experience” (SACS Handbook for Reaffirmation of Accreditation, 2003, p. 19). Vernon College will improve student engagement by providing an emphasis on interaction and collaboration techniques in courses and student services areas.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction to Vernon College**

Perhaps no other time in pedagogical history has seen such variety in new trends in teaching and learning. As it copes with increasing and changing enrollments, Vernon College strives to incorporate student engagement methods for revitalization to point the direction for future educational endeavors. The Vernon College vision, mission, and objectives establish a foundation for student success and provide direction for all Vernon College programs and services.

The College will improve student learning by increasing engagement through a three-part plan: transform curriculum and instruction; provide innovative professional development opportunities, and create a technology-rich environment for instructional and student support services. Faculty and staff will be provided the necessary training for successful QEP implementation. The initial focus of professional development activities will be to create a base of new knowledge about the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and engagement as well as new technologies. The next emphasis will be placed on providing strategies for incorporating engagement into courses and services. Adjunct faculty, distance learning courses, and online courses will be treated no differently than face-to-face courses and will also incorporate engagement activities and projects to create a cohesive QEP and curriculum for Vernon College.

### **Vision, Mission, and Values**

#### ***Vision***

Vernon College will promote a culture of success for our students and communities through learner-centered quality instructional programs and exemplary services.

#### ***Mission***

The mission of Vernon College is teaching, learning, and leading. Vernon College is a comprehensive community college that integrates education with opportunity through our instructional programs and student services.

Therefore, the College will provide:

- Technical programs up to two years in length leading to associate degrees or certificates;
- Vocational programs leading directly to employment in semi-skilled and skilled occupations;
- Freshman and sophomore courses in arts and sciences, including the new core and field of study curricula leading to associate and baccalaureate degrees;
- Continuing adult education programs for occupational upgrading or personal enrichment;
- Compensatory education programs designed to fulfill the commitment of an admissions policy allowing the enrollment of disadvantaged students;
- A continuing program of counseling and guidance designed to assist students in achieving their individual educational goals;
- Workforce development programs designed to meet local and statewide needs;
- Adult literacy and other basic skills programs for adults; and
- Such other programs as may be prescribed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board or local governing boards in the best interest of postsecondary education in Texas.

*(Officially approved and adopted by the Board of Trustees on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2005.)*

**Values**

Vernon College promotes a culture of success through our shared values and commitment to:

- Accessibility
- Accountability
- Building Relationships
- Diversity
- Innovation
- Leadership
- Quality
- Student Success
- Teamwork

**Description of Institution and Community**

Wilbarger County Junior College District was created by a majority of the electorate of Wilbarger County on January 20, 1970. On April 9, 1970, the Board of Trustees selected Dr. David L. Norton as the first Vernon College (then Vernon Regional Junior College, VRJC) president. Campus construction was begun in May, 1971, including an Instructional Science Center, Administration-Fine Arts Center, Applied Arts Center, Library, and Student Center. The campus entrance was also constructed during this first phase of the building program and was donated by Dr. and Mrs. Thomas A. King of Vernon. The campus buildings are surrounded on three sides by the College farm, for a total of 100 acres.

The initial registration was held in August of 1972, and on September 5 classes met for the first time on the VC campus with a total of 608 students. On August 1, 1974, the Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Jim M. Williams as the second president of the College. In the fall semester 1974, a combined on- and off-campus enrollment exceeded 800 students. In August of 1976 the sixth major building, a Physical Education Center, was dedicated in honor of Dr. and Mrs. Thomas A. King. In August of 1980 the seventh major building, a Student Residence Center designed to house 128 students, was opened for occupancy. Further expansion of program offerings in the Wichita Falls area was accomplished through assumption of an existing proprietary school that was renamed the VRJC Technical Center and the assumption of the nursing program from the Wichita Falls Independent School District. On March 22, 1982, the Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Joe Mills as the third president of the College. In the fall of 1982, VRJC fielded its first team for intercollegiate rodeo competition. During 1983-84 the Department of Cosmetology Center and the Career Development Center (previously known as the North Texas Skills Center) were established in Wichita Falls. During 1984-85 VRJC reached a record credit enrollment of 1,863 and a record continuing education enrollment of 7,056 registrations.

In February 1987 VRJC played its first intercollegiate baseball game on the Vernon campus. During May 1987 the VRJC natatorium was opened in the King Physical Education Center. A newly constructed Athletic Dormitory was opened to house 28 athletes in August 1988. In October 1988 Trustees voted to add women's volleyball as a varsity sport, effective with the fall 1989 semester. In May 1989 VRJC moved all Wichita Falls programs to a centralized location and named the center VRJC at Wichita Falls. On September 5, 1990, the Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Wade Kirk as the fourth president of VRJC. Beginning in the fall of 1992 the College assumed ownership of Amarillo College's extended campus Associate Degree Nursing Program. During 1992-93 VRJC reached a record continuing education registration of 8,095. A record credit enrollment of 1,873 was achieved during the fall of 1993. Effective September 1995, the 74<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature passed S.B. 397 formally

recognizing community college service areas. VRJC's service area consisted of twelve counties. In February 1996 VRJC fielded its first intercollegiate women's fast pitch softball team. In the spring of 1996 the College completed the installation of the infrastructure necessary for computer networking and accessing the Internet.

Providing training for area industries, the Skills Training Center opened in Wichita Falls in January 1997. In February 1997 Wright Brand Foods presented \$40,000 to the College to help establish a distance learning classroom on the Vernon campus. The fall 1998 semester saw the College expand the use of technology throughout its operations. Instruction offered a full range of distance learning courses via interactive video (ITV), Internet, and video tape. Students were provided Internet access in libraries and resource rooms at every major instructional location. A mid-range computer system and an integrated software package were installed at VRJC to serve administrative computing functions.

On June 5, 2000, Dr. Steve Thomas was named by the Board of Trustees as the College's fifth president. On May 23, 2001, the institution's name was officially changed from Vernon Regional Junior College to Vernon College (VC). On July 13, 2004, Vernon College purchased the Century City Center complex as a permanent Wichita Falls location. The facility has 138,158 square feet, which will provide VC with space to continue to expand its workforce and instructional programs as the need arises. The \$6.5 million facility, located at 4105 Maplewood Avenue across from the mall, is in a prime location easily accessible for students. Vernon College reached a record credit enrollment of 2,803 students during the fall 2005 semester.

### **An Institution in Accelerated Growth**

The demographics of Vernon College describe a diverse student population with economic challenges in a mostly rural area. A combination of factors contributes to an ever-increasing demand for higher education. Vernon College has a responsibility and a commitment to offer comprehensive educational programs and student support services with a continued

focus on quality improvement. The QEP for Vernon College strives to add quality to an ever-increasing program of educating students in various situations. Its aim is to reinforce and redirect attention to what matters most, educating students effectively.

Vernon College enrolled 2,793 students in Fall 2006. The dual credit program for the 2005-2006 school year enrolled 471 students. This represents a 58% gain over the previous year. For the 2005-2006 school year, 27 of 36 high schools in the service area participated in the dual credit program.

The ethnic composition includes 75.3% White, 8% African American, 13.4% Hispanic, and 3.3% from other ethnic backgrounds. Sixty-four percent of the students are women while 36% are male. Forty-five percent of students are younger than 20 years of age while 51% are between the ages of 21 and 45. Four percent are 46 years old or older.

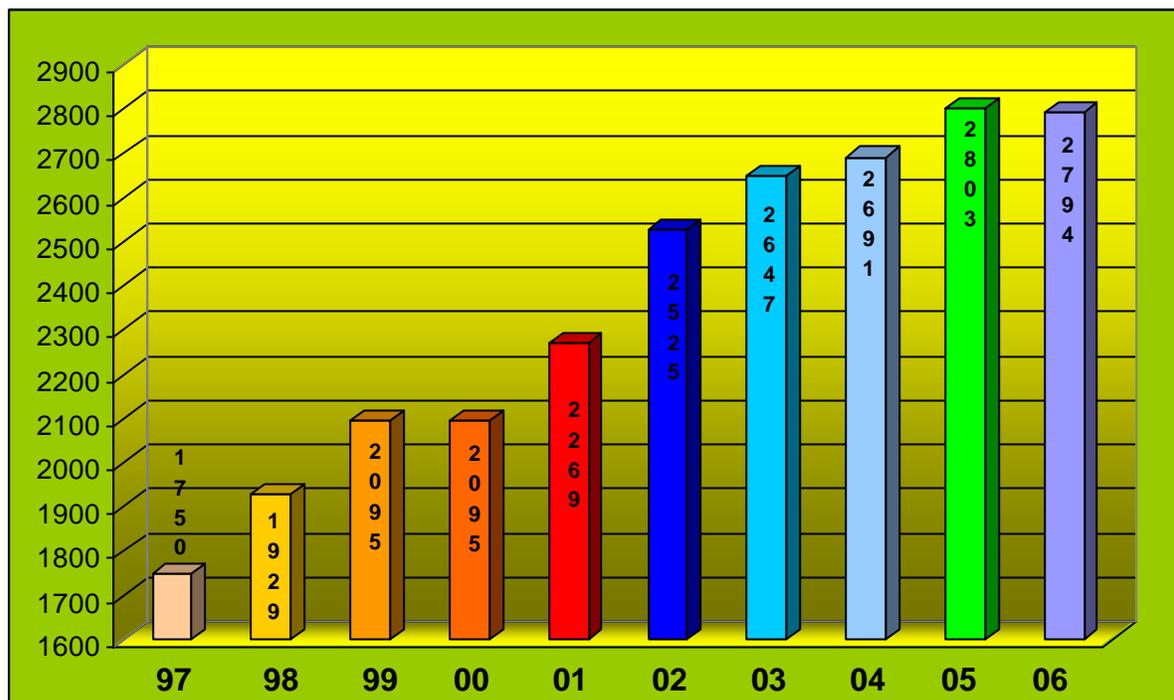
Thirty-eight percent of Vernon College students attend school full-time while 62% attend on a part-time basis. Vernon College offers courses during the day, evening, weekend, online, dual/concurrent enrollment, and via interactive television.

Vernon College students depend heavily on financial aid programs. The number of students receiving some form of financial aid in Fall 2006 was 1,069 students or 38%. PELL grant awards amounted to \$3,000,185.80.

Vernon College is a college experiencing a period of expansion. Since 1997, Vernon College has experienced a 59.6% increase in enrollment. The increase in enrollment can be traced directly to the opening of the teaching of instructional courses at the Century City location and workforce courses taught at the Skills Training Center. After restrictions were lifted for teaching instructional courses in Wichita Falls locations, dramatic increases in enrollment occurred. The Distance Learning program also accounted for increased enrollment as well. The need for collaboration and connectivity increases with each jump in enrollment. The trend toward increased distance learning enrollments is not expected to reverse itself any time soon.

The increase reflects students' lives and their desire to fit college courses into a schedule that often postpones studying until early hours of the morning. Another reason for increasing enrollments is the quality of the online courses offered by Vernon College. Vernon College prides itself in offering students the best possible experience in the online arena and strives to create courses that truly engage the students. However, it is difficult to achieve true student engagement in an online environment. Not only do faculty and students need better methods of communication, but Student Services also need increased involvement with distance learning students. Increasing engagement in each course delivery method will require professional development for every one at the College.

The increased enrollments have changed the demographics of the College as a whole. For example, in 1999 the average age of the VC student was 31. Now the average age of the VC student is 24. This is due to more "traditional-aged" students enrolling in instructional transfer courses at Century City. Vernon College wants to adapt its current systems and revitalize its curriculum to better serve its student population.



## **Strengths and Challenges**

“Shape the Future” Strategic planning sessions held during the 2003-2004 school year revealed several aspects of priorities, values, and purposes at the College. Faculty, staff, leaders, and community representatives articulated several guiding principles related to the aim and scope of VConnected.

- **Priorities**
  - Create student-centered learning environments
  - Develop creative environments conducive to learning
  - Recruit and retain students
  - Keep tuition affordable
  - Value quality over quantity
  - Manage growth
  - Maintain morale of employees
  - Ensure up-to-date facilities
  - Ensure good use of resources
  - Comply with SACS
  - Train faculty and staff
  - Develop long-term planning
  - Seek input from all levels of employees on issues of importance
- **Values**
  - Keep students first
  - Provide quality experiences
  - Maintain equality of experiences
  - Offer personal touch
  - Develop quality work environment
  - Promote planning
  - Encourage teamwork
  - Foster development of faculty and staff
  - Meet needs of business and industry
  - Encourage continuous improvement
- **Purpose**
  - Provide affordable education
  - Provide community service
  - Develop job training programs
  - Keep education as a priority

## Chapter Two

### Process Used to Develop the Quality Enhancement Plan

Vernon College began the QEP process with the SACS Leadership Team, composed of Dr. Steve Thomas, Dr. Brenda Kays, Dr. Dawn Ferrell, and Dr. Gary Don Harkey, appointing a faculty member as the QEP director, who was charged with structuring a rotating committee to see the project through three distinct phases: planning, development, and implementation. Later Joe Hite, John Hardin, and Gene Gooch, all deans, were added to the membership of the SACS Leadership Team to increase involvement.

All College employees were first educated about the QEP during staff development meetings conducted at the beginning of the fall 2005 and spring 2006 semesters. Volunteers were solicited to serve on the first phase of the QEP process, the QEP Planning Committee. The QEP Planning Committee met in spring 2006, charged with soliciting input from the entire College community for QEP topics, focusing on strengths and weaknesses as areas of interest. A proposal was made and supported by the SACS Leadership Team to pay a stipend for the three best QEP proposals.

Twelve proposals were submitted from the College community by April 2006. The QEP Planning Committee developed a rubric (see Appendix II) to evaluate the effectiveness of each proposal to the College using the following criteria: relation of topic to institutional effectiveness; ability to enhance student learning; cost and resources; ability to measure success; ability to be supported by research and best practices; importance to students; importance to College community; and ability to garner broad buy-in and support of the College community.

Members, using the rubric, selected the three proposals with the highest rankings to submit to the SACS Leadership Team for topic consideration. All proposal writers

received written feedback on their proposals from the Planning Committee. The three finalists presented their topic ideas to the SACS Leadership Team in May 2006 and received written feedback for improvement in July 2006.

The three finalists fleshed out their ideas in longer reports to the SACS Leadership Team in August 2006. The SACS Leadership Team opted to allow the entire College body to hear presentations on the three topics and to vote on the three proposals by the end of September 2006. Community-wide presentations were also held, allowing interested parties to hear the same presentations and cast votes as well. The chosen topic, VConnected, was announced by the SACS Leadership Team in October 2006.

The College-wide and community-wide balloting identified communication and collaboration as a high priority issue; however, the topic needed to be condensed and clarified by the QEP Development Committee.

Faculty representing each area of instruction were involved in the process of refining the QEP goal through representation on the QEP Development Committee. In addition, liaisons were included as members on the QEP Development Committee from Information Technology, Student Services, and Student Relations. Later in the development process, students and adjunct faculty members were added to the committee to create broader representation of the College community.

Faculty, staff, students, administrators, alumni, community members, and Board of Trustee members were given the opportunity to provide input on the selection of a QEP theme using a balloting system (see Appendix III). Information about accessing the presentation and ballot was distributed through press releases published in the *Vernon Daily Record* and the *Wichita Falls Times and Record News* (see Appendix IV) as well as through College-wide e-mail messages. In addition, committee members made

personal contacts to encourage responses from members of the Faculty Senate and Student Government Associations. Of the 175 ballots distributed, 105 were returned. VConnected received 50 votes or 47.6% of the vote while Student Success Initiative received 33 votes or 31.4 % and Mastering Mathematics received 22 votes or 20.9 %. The theme of connectivity ultimately selected as the focus of the QEP was identified as a high priority by a majority of the stakeholders in the College community.

### **Identification of the Topic**

Employee input and institutional effectiveness data had been collected in “Shape the Future” meetings which were conducted College-wide beginning in September 2003. Findings were analyzed; and these, together with VC’s accelerated growth and expansion efforts, provided the institutional context for the development of the plan and its goal. Participants in the planning process consistently voiced concerns that students need to be engaged, that faculty and staff need to better meet students’ needs, that communication between faculty/staff and students be improved, especially for distance learning students. Rapid increases in enrollment stretched all College employees’ capacities to provide quality in instruction and relationships with students. The theme of engagement through collaboration between students, faculty, and student support services, selected as the focus of the QEP, was one of several high priority issues supported by survey results. The basis of a QEP like VConnected emerges from an articulated desire to be student-centered and reflects findings from the following three areas: Community College Surveys of Student Engagement (CCSSE), the expansion and importance of Distance Learning, and Strategic Planning. To assist colleges in their efforts to reach for excellence, CCSSE has introduced national benchmarks of effective educational practice in community colleges. Research shows that the more actively engaged students are, with College faculty and staff, with other students, and with the

subject matter, the more likely they are to learn and to achieve their academic goals.

The five benchmarks of effective educational practice in community colleges are active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, and support for learners. The QEP Development Committee used these benchmarks as guides to improving engagement with its students.

### **Definitions**

In an effort to address the issues of engagement and collaboration, the QEP Development Committee either developed or adopted definitions of these terms. The committee wanted to personalize these concepts. To tie the elements of collaboration and student learning together, Vernon College adopted the following goal statement, student learning outcomes, and definitions to be the foundation for QEP development. Therefore, the focus of this QEP aims at specific aspects of student learning. First and foremost, VConnected aims to establish increased student engagement to improve learning.

#### ***Vernon College Definition of Engagement***

- The extent to which students participate in the proven educational processes that contribute to the outcomes.

#### ***Goal***

Vernon College will improve student learning by increasing engagement. In order to improve student learning by increasing engagement, Vernon College will transform curriculum and instruction, provide innovative professional development opportunities, and create a technology-rich environment for instructional and student support services.

#### ***Expectations***

Vernon College will target student learning outcomes on a project-by-project basis using established competencies from course syllabi. As engagement techniques are integrated into a course or project, specific student learning outcomes will be tracked and assessed to determine if increased learning did occur due to increased engagement techniques.

#### ***Vernon College Definition of Collaboration/Connectivity***

Vernon College has developed the following definition of Collaboration and Connectivity:

- Collaboration—a group of processes of education and communication which empower students, faculty, and staff to work as teams to facilitate a favorable change in student learning.
- Connectivity—the means or methods that empower students, faculty, and staff to communicate in different ways.

### ***Vernon College Definition of Student Learning***

Vernon College accepts SACS' definition of student learning:

- Student learning is defined as, “changes in students’ knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or values that may be attributable to the collegiate experience.”

While the overall goal of this QEP is to improve student learning by increasing engagement, Vernon College recognizes that the extensive use of technology in teaching is best justified when it is used strategically to deal with major teaching issues. Few instructional departments have a plan for implementing technology in addition to their curriculum. However, a major change in teaching strategy cannot be implemented by an individual working alone. Radical rethinking of teaching and learning centered on increasing engagement needs to occur on a College-wide level to be effective. VC's QEP strives to provide the framework for this very kind of radical restructuring.

### **Literature Review and Best Practices**

The basic principle behind VConnected is, “to create environments and experiences that bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves, to make students members of communities of learners that make discoveries and solve problems. The college aims, in fact, to create a series of ever more powerful learning environments” (Barr and Tagg, 2003, p. 3). According to Shulman, “the very act of being engaged adds to the foundation of skills and dispositions that is essential to live a productive and satisfying life after college” (2002, p. 36). That is, students who are involved in educationally productive activities in college are developing habits that enlarge their capacity for continuous learning and personal development. The growing

popularity of instruments like CCSSE underscores the need to understand the degree to which and the processes whereby student engagement contributes to more favorable outcomes for college students.

In the 1980's, higher education researchers began focusing on the necessity for increased collaboration between student affairs and instructional affairs. It has become apparent in recent years that the entire instructional community must work together to create a seamless learning environment between in- and out-of-class experiences.

Students should work together with faculty and staff while taking courses and participating in non-classroom learning activities in order to increase engagement levels (Kellogg, 1999).

One way that Vernon College strives to increase engagement is to address the College's communication process. A college, without its learners, teachers, and leaders is a series of documents and buildings. Employees divided between three or more campuses yearn for connectivity. Since we know that active collaboration is a key to student success, it only makes sense that active collaboration is also a key to a productive and positive climate in which to work. Vernon College's success in serving students depends on connectivity and collaboration among and between employees and departments as well. According to Vega and Tayler, broadening the instructor's array of tools and flexibility of approaches can bolster student learning and foster student engagement (2005, p. 83).

VConnected also provides an ability to manage the documents that fuel College actions. Through collaboration and connectivity discussions, the College's departments and divisions identify the most crucial, high-traffic items for sharing and then proceed to share their information with other offices. The responsibility and shared ownership fostered by such an arrangement will increase the communication between offices and

reduce resistance to excellent customer service (internal or external). Vernon College employees have demanded an opportunity to contribute their input, to increase their morale, and to create an environment conducive to learning.

VConnected addresses College and student accountability. State and national expectations for accountability are forcing colleges like ours to articulate their expectations. Consequently, if expectations are published, a culture of evidence must be built to support such claims about student learning. Demonstrable outcomes are presented by E-portfolios and student presentations. Colleges across the country are permitting students to develop web-pages that document their capabilities for public / employer views.

VConnected also addresses College process management. Knowledge workers, as described by Peter Drucker, convert ideas into products, services, or processes. They expect to continually learn, problem solve, manipulate symbols, take risks, and gather information for future uses (1996, p. 53). We must assume that Vernon College is motivated by its challenges; therefore, we must provide an environment that supports efficiency. Many frustrations about College processes result from miscommunication. If we are charged with engaging students, we are charged to make our processes more transparent, more connected to staff contributions, and more historically preservative. Advanced technology services permit real-time application sharing, document archiving, Internet meetings, and tracked changes to documents, but advanced technology can be effective only if instituted with relevant professional development opportunities.

Newmann defines engagement in terms of a student's psychological investment in learning. As the term implies, an engaged student feels as though he is part of the learning process. As a result, an engaged student is more likely to be intrinsically

motivated. Engagement with material increases the chances that a student's learning of the material will continue after the course is over (1992, p. 92).

Research indicates that engagement is increased when students feel a sense of control over their own learning. Different kinds of engagement exist in which it is believed that students learn more productively when they have engagement of group (social interaction) and engagement with material simultaneously (Alderman, 1999).

According to Levine's research, this transitional generation of college students are "weak in basic skills and able to learn best in ways different from how their professors teach" (1998, p. 157). The enormous change in the world in which current students will live their lives necessitates that they master "transitional skills" (1998, p. 161). The first element to meet their specific needs for these skills is in the area of communication. Today, as our society once again is being transformed, it is necessary to develop a new curriculum, an educational program that will prepare students to live simultaneously in two societies, one dying and the other being born. The change in curriculum should best be achieved by marrying the abstract with the concrete in communication and collaboration skills (1998, p. 167).

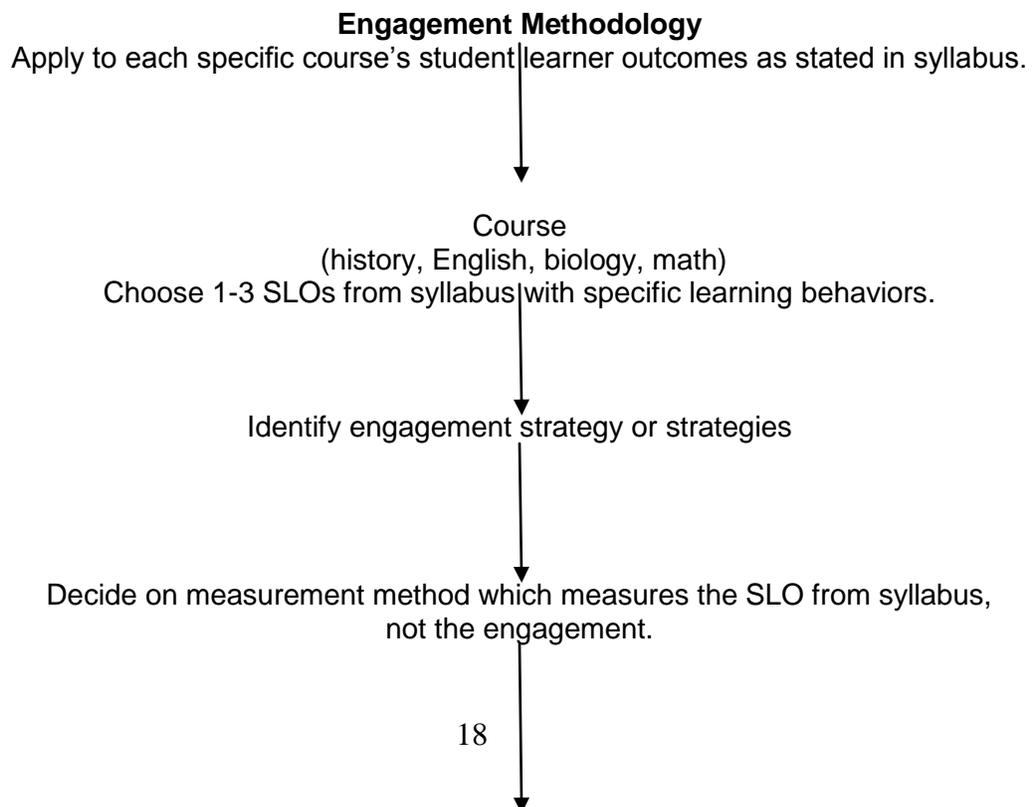
According to Bates and Poole, the needs of learners and demands of subject matter rather than technology should drive good teaching. Technology is a tool, a means to an end rather than the end itself (2003, p. xiv). VConnected addresses the consequences of new social and technological developments both inside and outside the College environment. A weakness of communication has always been to link the fundamentals of teaching to the unique or particular characteristics of technology. "In order to survive in a knowledge-based society, literacy in a range of different media and technologies is becoming a critical life skill" (Bates and Poole, 2003, p. 8). However, there are several

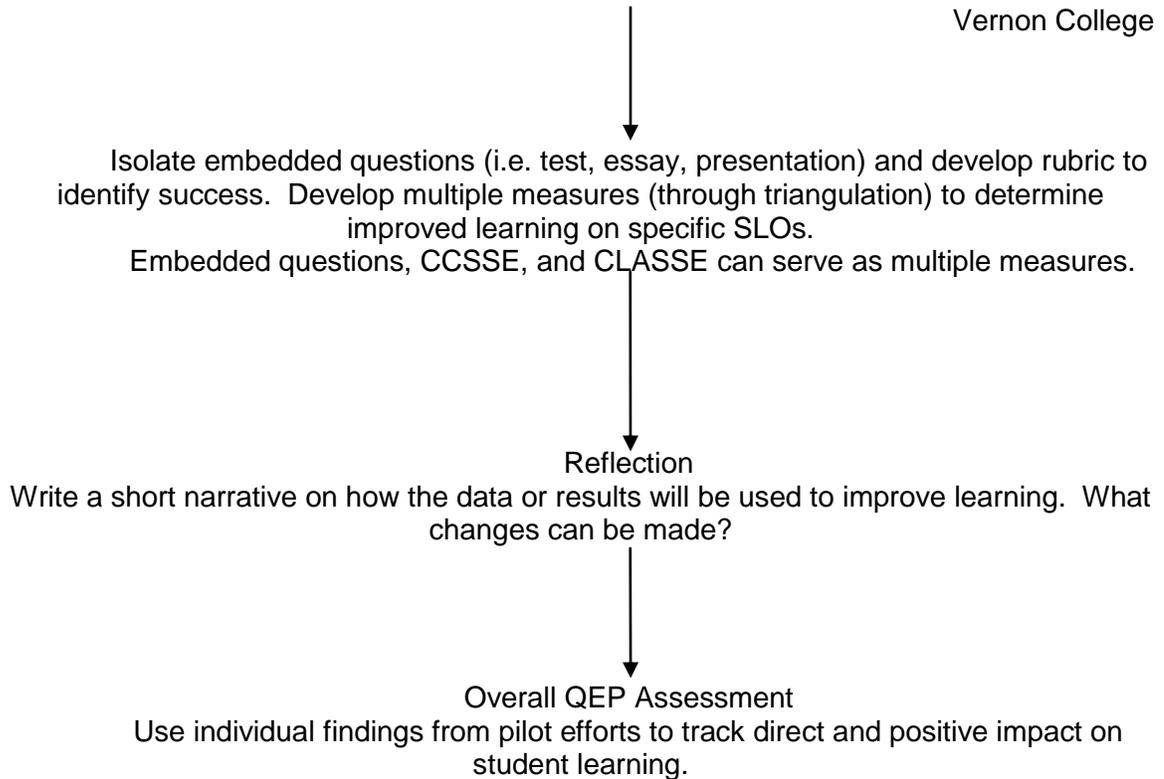
key elements of quality in teaching collaboration and connectivity using technology as a means of improving engagement through collaboration:

- Content
- Course planning
- Instructional design
- Media production
- Support and moderation of the learning experience
- Student administration
- Course evaluation and maintenance. (Bates and Poole, 2003 p. 23)

### **Student Learner Outcomes**

The purpose of the Vernon College QEP is to increase engagement through improved collaboration and connectivity between students, faculty, and student support services personnel. In order to increase learning, student engagement techniques and technologies will be applied to the current course-level student learner outcomes (SLO) in each course’s syllabus. If the project is undertaken in a student support area, the VConnected team member will write a learner outcome for the project. The following flowchart illustrates the process of applying engagement methodologies to current learner outcomes and the assessment of that process.





Vernon College will transform curriculum and instruction, provide innovative professional development opportunities, and create a technology-rich environment for instructional and student support services.

The following table provides examples of applying engagement methodologies to student learner outcomes and the assessment of that process.

<b>SLO</b>	<b>Possible Engagement Activities</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Vernon College will target student learning outcomes on a project-by-project basis using established competencies from course syllabi. As engagement techniques are integrated into a course or project, specific student learning outcomes will be tracked and	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. VConnected team develops activities and projects that encourage students to come to class prepared.</li> <li>2. VConnected team develops activities and projects that increase time on tasks.</li> <li>3. VConnected team develops activities and projects that require students to prepare more than one draft of an assignment.</li> <li>4. VConnected team develops assignments that require students to make presentations or discuss ideas from readings with classmates or instructors.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Team member develops specific measurement criteria or identifies questions from current measurements that correlate to target outcomes.</li> <li>2. Activities, projects, and assignments are developed and are documented in VConnected reports to QEP Implementation Committee.</li> </ol>

<p>assessed to determine if increased learning did occur due to increased engagement techniques.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. All faculty members train on active learning strategies to increase engagement.</li> <li>6. All faculty members train on the use of new technologies in learning sessions.</li> <li>7. VConnected team develops activities and projects that encourage students to engage in collaborative projects.</li> <li>8. VConnected team develops activities and projects to teach students to share experiences with peers, faculty, and support staff.</li> <li>9. VConnected team develops activities and projects that require integrating ideas or information from various sources.</li> <li>10. VConnected team develops activities and projects for students to work with classmates outside of class to prepare assignments or participate in a community project.</li> <li>11. All faculty members and support staff receive training on collaboration.</li> <li>12. VConnected team will develop occasions to discuss career options with students.</li> <li>13. VConnected team develops assignments in which students collaborate with others students using the internet for outside and inside class assignments.</li> <li>14. VConnected team will design projects and activities for students to share software applications using the internet.</li> <li>15. VConnected team will develop activities and projects for students and faculty to collaborate using the internet for outside and inside class assignments.</li> <li>16. All faculty and support staff will receive training on engagement practices.</li> <li>17. The College develops standardized internal systems of communication between students, faculty, and support staff.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Training will occur as documented by Instructional Designer and reported to QEP Implementation Committee.</li> </ol>
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### **Improving the Learning Environment**

The phrase “student-centered” seems like jargon. However, its intent is to depict the shift from an instruction paradigm to a learning paradigm described in the work of Robert Barr and John Tagg. In “A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education” several claims are made in favor of a less traditional lecture-based format. Barr and Tagg quote Alan Guskin who claims, “the primary learning environment for undergraduate students, the fairly passive lecture-discussion format where faculty talk and most students listen, is contrary to almost every principle of optimal settings for student learning” (2003, p. 3).

Consequently, Barr and Tagg set out to examine the nature of a “learning paradigm.” The instructionally-centered paradigm, they say, has confused means with ends. Evidently, many educational leaders have agreed with them in the past decade as “active” learning has gained its foothold in the concepts applied in our classrooms. There seems to be more work to do beyond identifying the means (modes) of learning. Whole institutions are being asked to study their own work / product, assuring its quality. Actually, learning institutions are the very subject of QEP projects.

Like the global economy, concepts of teaching are undergoing revisions with the availability of technology. Assuming that machines and software enable a “learning paradigm,” VConnected addresses one of Barr and Tagg’s concerns about the old paradigm’s “design flaw.” They argue that educational outputs are directly related to costs. Thus, increases in outputs without increases in costs threaten quality. VConnected manages to renovate learning methods without the costs associated with the addition of teachers, leaders, sections, and classrooms. Physical space is negated, and learner-centeredness gains a promised land for function.

Vernon College has used CCSSE surveys to benchmark student perceptions of their own engagement. Data from 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007 provide specific insights

into VC students and their experiences in our classrooms. Key findings from CCSSE are available in benchmark scores (quoted here), frequency of responses for each benchmark item, and in key findings for colleges like Vernon College.

<b>Benchmarks</b>	<b>2004 Scores</b>	<b>2005 Scores</b>	<b>2006 Scores</b>	<b>2007 Scores</b>
Active & Collaborative Learning	44.9	47.1	46.5	49.4
Student Effort	44.4	46.8	47.8	48
Instructional Challenge	45.6	45.5	47.7	48.4
Student-Faculty Interaction	47.7	46.3	51.6	48.1
Support for Learners	48.8	51.2	52.1	48.4

### **Benefits to be Derived from the QEP**

Students learn best when they are involved. VConnected addresses student engagement. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) presents a compelling argument for direct correlation between high levels of student engagement and high levels of student learning. VConnected enables classes, virtual or conventional, to address five areas of CCSSE’s benchmarks for engagement:

- Active and Collaborative Learning
  - Portals and workspaces permit a new generation of group workers. Student presentations may be published and shared. Tutorial sessions may become virtual and available outside of “normal” operating hours.
- Student Effort
  - VConnected intends to increase opportunities for “time on tasks.” Preparation for class may be assisted at the times that students need the help they require. Acknowledging the reality of student behaviors is the only way to modify those behaviors.
- Instructional Challenge
  - The standards for student performances cannot be published enough. Students should have access to our expectations of their competencies at all times. The community in which students will operate should have access to such competencies and examples of other students’ achievement of collegiate quality. Transparency of standards will enforce recognition of best practices in education.
- Student-Faculty Interaction

- VConnected addresses this benchmark directly by connecting students to instructor designed experiences in shared workspaces. The current generation of college students has demonstrated its tendency toward interaction. VConnected will facilitate prompt oral and written feedback, advising, and new levels of faculty participation.
- Support for Learners
  - Whether it is the streamlined business solutions or the immediate access to PASS Center tutors, VConnected intends to develop a more robust application of our student support services: social, instructional, and financial.

Part of the mission of Vernon College is to integrate education with opportunity through our instructional programs and student services. This QEP supports that objective by promoting increased communication in the learning environment and by introducing collaboration skills necessary for the twenty-first century job market.

## Chapter Three

### Actions to be Implemented

Vernon College is committed to achieving the overall QEP goal and objectives by providing adequate personnel, financial, instructional, and physical resources. New hardware and software will be purchased to implement the plan, but existing systems, structures, and personnel will be the primary avenue for implementation. This will facilitate infusion of the QEP in the overall infrastructure of Vernon College.

The primary goal of the QEP is to improve student learning by increasing engagement through incorporating collaboration and connectivity into every aspect of the students' collegiate experience. The timeline is organized to ensure that all faculty are trained and course implementation is complete by 2014. A broad overview of QEP planning and implementation activities is provided below, followed by a detailed timeline of the preparation year and implementation years.

#### QEP Overview

##### ***Planning Phase: January 2006 – December 2007***

- Determine QEP focus through research and community input.
- Establish QEP leadership.
- Develop timeline for implementation.
- Develop QEP budget.
- Begin professional development. (June-December—identify and train VConnected team members)

##### ***Preparation Period: January 2008 – December 2008***

(January-May—conduct pilot courses) (September-December—evaluate/assess)

- Continue professional development.
- Select VConnected team to pilot.
- Select pilot courses for implementation.
- Provide specific training/workshops for VConnected Team.
- Develop engagement assessment template (includes comparison studies, surveys, self-evaluations, progress reports, CCSSE scores, and technical data reports).
- Implement online resource tools.
- Evaluate/reassess online resource tools and techniques
- Promote QEP to students.

##### ***Implementation Years: 1-5: January 2009 – May 2014***

**Each year the following activities will be accomplished.**

- Implement engagement activities in courses taught by current VConnected team.

- Dean of Instructional Services and QEP Implementation Committee uses engagement assessment template to evaluate activities.
- Select courses for next year's VConnected team implementation.
- Develop QEP budget for next year.
- Continue professional development activities.
- Continue developing resource library.
- QEP Implementation Committee develops annual report.
- Continue promotion of QEP to students.

**QEP Preparation Year  
January 2008 – December 2008**

(January-May—conduct pilot courses) (September-December—evaluate/assess)

**Spring 2008**

- Select VConnected pilot group and continue first pilot groups.
- Select new pilot courses for implementation.
- Identify internal professional development personnel.
- Conduct professional development.
- Provide specific individual training/workshops for VConnected Team.
- Develop Engagement Assessment Template (includes comparison studies, surveys, self-evaluations, progress reports, CCSSE scores, and technical data reports).
- Implement online resource tools.
- Evaluate/reassess online resource tools and techniques.
- Solicit volunteers for VConnected pilot projects—training and benchmarking.
- Promote QEP to students.

**Fall 2008**

- Faculty development training provided on engagement and the Engagement Assessment Template.
- VConnected Team reports on/assesses projects.
- Provide professional development opportunities to second round of pilot instructors.
- QEP Development Committee evaluates and assesses both sets of pilots using rubric data.
- Continue professional development in engagement for entire College community.
- QEP Implementation Committee established.
- VConnected team members solicited for Year 1 projects.

**QEP Implementation Years 1-5  
January 2009-May 2014**

**Spring Semester 2009 (continuation of VConnected pilots, transition into Implementation Phase)**

- QEP update presented at all orientations: new employees, new students, faculty (full-time and adjunct), and staff.
- Year 1 VConnected Team receives training and individualized training to develop courses for spring.
- QEP Implementation Committee investigates trainings, conferences, and workshops for upcoming instructional year and includes budget requests.
- Year 1 VConnected Team finalizes activities and reports progress.
- All VConnected team members from prior years continue developing courses.
- CCSSE administered and a summary of data analysis submitted to QEP Implementation Committee for dissemination to Dean of Instructional Services and Division Chairs.
- Next year's VConnected Team identified.
- Next year's VConnected Team begins training and attends relevant conferences on and off campus.
- Engagement results reported to Dean of Instructional Services so that changes can be incorporated into all student assessment tools, department surveys, program reviews, as part of planning and evaluation process by May.
- QEP Progress Report composed by QEP Implementation Committee sent to Planning and Assessment Committee for forwarding to President and then the Board of Trustees.

**Summer Semester 2009**

- Upcoming VConnected team members attend conferences and trainings both on and off campus.
- Employees encouraged to use tools throughout the year as new features are added.
- QEP Implementation Committee develops QEP Progress Report to be presented to Board of Trustees.
- 2012: Annual reports to be used as a basis for five-year impact report.

**Fall Semester of Each Year**

**Beginning 2009-2010 Instructional Year**

- QEP update presented at all orientations: new employees, new students, faculty (full-time and adjunct), and staff.
- New VConnected Team begins activities and projects in selected courses.
- All VConnected Team members from prior years continue developing courses.
- Next year's VConnected Team identified and begin benchmarking activities with Institutional Effectiveness director and QEP director.
- Next year's VConnected Team begins training and attends relevant conferences on and off campus.

- Engagement findings incorporated in all student assessment tools, department surveys, program reviews, as part of planning and evaluation process.

### **Spring Semester of Each Year**

- VConnected Team members submit summary report of engagement data to QEP Implementation Committee and continue to do so every spring thereafter.
- QEP Implementation Committee evaluates activities/projects using the Engagement Assessment Template and reports findings to team members.
- QEP Implementation Committee investigates trainings, conferences, and workshops for upcoming instructional year and includes budget requests.
- Next year's VConnected Team begin development of activities and projects to be implemented in upcoming instructional year.
- Next year's VConnected Team attend training and workshops.
- CCSSE administered and a summary of data analysis submitted to QEP Implementation Committee for inclusion in QEP Progress Report.
- Each support service area submits a report to QEP Implementation Committee outlining general observations of QEP progress, updates on action plans dealing with engagement, results of engagement questions on surveys, etc.
- Spring advisory committee meetings include QEP/engagement information, updates, and input.
- Action plans updated as needed.
- QEP budget developed.
- QEP Progress Report composed by QEP Implementation Committee sent to Planning and Assessment Committee for forwarding to President and then the Board of Trustees.
- 2011: team of faculty and staff evaluate rubric and make adjustments.

### **QEP Leadership**

Selection of leadership for the QEP began by first identifying those internal positions that were crucial not only to the development of the plan but also to the long-term success of the QEP. Consideration was also given to those with experience and/or training in the reaccreditation process. Placing added responsibilities on faculty and staff was a concern, and an additional challenge was selecting leadership that would be effective across the College community with diverse campuses. It was crucial that QEP leaders effectively create an atmosphere of collaboration and communication among campuses.

### ***SACS Leadership Team***

The SACS Leadership Team assumes ultimate responsibility for implementing and incorporating the QEP into the infrastructure at Vernon College. The team is comprised of administration members responsible for overseeing the entire reaffirmation process (Appendix V). The team ensures that appropriate administrative and instructional support is available for the QEP and provides feedback and suggestions on a monthly basis to the QEP Director.

***QEP Director***

The QEP Director is a faculty member from the Vernon Campus. Her function is to oversee the day-to-day operations and to develop, write, and submit the QEP with input from the SACS Leadership Team, the QEP Planning Committee, and the QEP Development Committee. After the development phase, a part-time or full-time QEP Director will be hired to permanently oversee the activities of the QEP.

***QEP Planning Committee***

The QEP Planning Committee (see Appendix I) is a core group of leaders consisting of faculty and staff from across the College community. Their function is to gather information, develop documents and ideas for the QEP topic, and provide input and feedback to the SACS Leadership Team and the College community during the first part of the Planning Phase. This team will disband in October 2006 when the final QEP topic is announced by the SACS Leadership Team. The QEP Development Committee assumed leadership of the QEP beginning in November 2006.

***QEP Development Committee***

The QEP Development Committee serves in a leadership role for QEP development during the remainder of the Planning Phase (through December 2007) and remains active through Fall 2008. This decision-making group represents faculty (both full-time and adjunct) and staff from across the College community as well as student

representatives (see Appendix I). This committee will disband in October 2008, and QEP leadership will shift to the QEP Implementation Committee at that time.

***QEP Implementation Committee***

Once the on-site review is completed and implementation begins, the QEP Implementation Committee will assume joint responsibility with the Dean of Instructional Services to serve as the primary governing body of the QEP (see Appendix I). The QEP Implementation Committee will work with the VConnected team members and the Instructional Designer to oversee the daily implementation of the QEP, direct changes, document progression of the QEP projects, develop and maintain the QEP budget, use the Engagement Assessment Template to evaluate individual projects, and report progress to the QEP Implementation Committee.

***QEP Instructional Designer***

The Instructional Designer will be hired in the fall of 2008 as a full-time faculty member to serve as the primary resource person in the area of instructional methodology and active learning pedagogy. This person will lead professional development efforts relative to student engagement for all employees as well as work individually with faculty to assess weaknesses and develop goals targeting student engagement opportunities in each course. The Instructional Designer will work with the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, the QEP Director, Deans, and VConnected team members to ensure that adequate resources are made available to support QEP initiatives.

### **Financial and Physical Resources**

The QEP will become an integral part of all systems throughout the College. Vernon College is committed to providing financial and physical resources to support its implementation and continued success. The table below provides an outline of the QEP proposed budget beginning with the Planning Phase (2006-2007). This budget is being developed with a goal of implementing engagement strategies in all courses by 2014. The detailed budget for each year is integrated into the College's budget by division. This budget will be reviewed and evaluated annually with adjustments made as needed.

# QEP BUDGET

Description	Preparation	Implementation	Implementation	Implementation	Implementation	Implementation
	Period	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Faculty Release Time *</b>	4 instructors X \$1,350 = \$5,400 X 2 semesters = \$10,800	6** instructors X \$1,350 = \$8,100 X 2 semesters = \$16,200	6** instructors X \$1,350 = \$8,100 X 2 semesters = \$16,200	6** instructors X \$1,350 = \$8,100 X 2 semesters = \$16,200	6** instructors X \$1,350 = \$8,100 X 2 semesters = \$16,200	6** instructors X \$1,350 = \$8,100 X 2 semesters = \$16,200
<b>Laptops for Pilot Instructors with cameras &amp; microphones</b>	\$0 (Purchased for Pilot Instructors 2007-2008)	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$9,000
<b>Travel (Conferences &amp; Workshops)</b>	\$12,000.00	\$16,000.00	\$16,480.00	\$16,974.40	\$17,483.63	\$18,008.14
<b>Supplies</b>	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
<b>Classroom Tools</b>	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
<b>Production Software &amp; Project Hardware (media production software, FIC tools &amp; upgrades)</b>	\$7,500.00	\$10,000.00	\$11,000.00	\$12,100.00	\$13,310.00	\$14,641.00
<b>Information Resources (library databases)</b>	\$7,500.00	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
<b>Instructional Designer (12 month - Master's Level)</b>	\$50,221.00	\$51,727.63	\$53,279.46	\$54,877.84	\$56,524.18	\$58,219.90
<b>WIMBA</b>	\$14,500.00	\$14,500.00	\$14,935.00	\$15,383.05	\$15,844.54	\$16,319.88
<b>Peripheral Equipment (Web Cams)</b>	N/A	N/A	\$3,000	\$3,000	N/A	N/A
<b>IT Hardware (Servers Bandwidth etc..)</b>	Determined by IT department	Determined by IT department	Determined by IT department	Determined by IT department	Determined by IT department	Determined by IT department
<b>Computer Lab (Hardware, furniture, printers, etc..)</b>			\$75,000 (CC)	\$75,000 (V)		
<b>Computer Lab Proctor (20 hrs wk, \$10.00 hr)</b>			1 lab X \$2,500 = \$2,500	2 labs now X \$2,500 = \$5,000	2 labs now X \$2,500 = \$5,000	2 labs now X \$2,500 = \$5,000
<b>CCSSE</b>	\$2,500	\$5,000	\$2,500	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
<b>QEP Director</b>	\$50, 221.00	\$51, 727.63	\$53, 279.46	\$54,877.84	\$56,524.18	\$58,219.90

<b>Advertising</b>		\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
<b>Lunch &amp; Learn Sessions for Dissemination</b>	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$158,742.00</b>	<b>\$189,155.26</b>	<b>\$255,973.92</b>	<b>\$282,413.13</b>	<b>\$204,886.53</b>	<b>\$215,608.82</b>

\*Annual Plan Reflects Request For Adjunct/DL Pay to \$1,500.00 When Granted These Figures Will Change.

\*\*If the number of participants increases, as per Dr. Johnson's recommendation, certain line items (release time, laptops, travel, supplies, and classroom tools) must also be adjusted to accommodate the extra participants' needs.

**NOTE:** As Student Learning Outcomes are developed, items may need to be added or amended to accommodate changes in direction of the QEP.

### **Instructional Resources and Systems**

The QEP will be integrated into instructional resources and systems already in place. The intent is to provide the foundation for a QEP that is substantive yet attainable. Current procedures and systems will be restructured and improved to ensure appropriate support for QEP progress.

### **Professional Development**

All faculty and staff will be provided the necessary training for successful QEP implementation. The initial focus of professional development activities will be to create a base of new knowledge about CCSSE and engagement as well as new technologies. The next emphasis will be placed on providing strategies for incorporating engagement into courses and services. Distance learning and online courses will be treated no differently than face-to-face courses and will also incorporate engagement activities and projects. The Instructional Designer and the QEP Director will work in conjunction with the Dean of Instructional Services to provide integrated professional development.

Workshops and trainings will be designed to continually build the knowledge base of instructors and will improve their teaching strategies with the overall goal of increasing the level of student engagement. The activities and projects incorporated in the classes will be determined by the faculty members after they have completed

collaboration and engagement training and have researched and studied best practices in the field of student engagement.

During the Preparation Year (2008), the VConnected Team will complete intensive training. They will also be responsible for developing practices and outcomes to be used by future VConnected Team members. The QEP Development Committee will be responsible for developing an Engagement Assessment Template including various methods of evaluation to be used for measuring effectiveness of activities and course design. The entire Vernon College faculty will vote on the final rubric. At the end of four years, a College-wide team of faculty will be tasked with evaluating the rubric documents. The method for selecting the team and their plan for evaluation of the rubric's contents will be determined during year three of implementation.

During the fall of 2008, QEP Development Committee recommends that a Instructional Designer be hired to oversee professional development and course development and implementation activities and serve under the Dean of Instructional Services.

Each year, the VConnected Team will attend in-depth engagement training both on and off campus and will be required to share information from other trainings with other faculty and staff in their departments.

In addition, all faculty will be invited to participate in professional development and trainings conducted on campus several times each year, often times led by the QEP faculty who have returned from off-campus workshops. Support staff and faculty will also be invited to participate and will have access to on-campus resources. Suggested trainings for the preparation year include QEP attendance at the NISOD and CCSSE Conferences and an on-campus workshop led by a recognized expert on student engagement that will be attended by Vernon College faculty and staff.

An Engagement Strategies seminar course will be developed by the Instructional Designer and approved by the QEP Implementation Committee, and each new VConnected Team member will receive personal training either individually or in small groups prior to developing a QEP course. The seminar course will include modules on the latest information and research on engagement, links to websites, assessment tools, projects, rubrics, and course-specific activities. It will be updated every year with the most recent information and research.

This commitment to professional development is already being implemented. All members of the QEP Development Committee were invited to attend the state CCSSE training session in Austin on May 22, 2007. Five members of the QEP Development Committee attended this session. All QEP Development Committee members were also provided a live demonstration of Horizon Wimba “virtual classroom” software by Estelita Young on April 2, 2007. Another Horizon Wimba demonstration was provided for student services personnel on June 5, 2007. A portion of professional development activities in August 2007 and August 2008 will be devoted to student engagement training for all faculty and student support staff members and provided by CCSSE personnel from Austin. To remain committed to the initiative, there will be a student engagement component added to each year’s professional development day activities. The QEP Director, along with the Instructional Designer, will be responsible for researching and planning professional development activities each year, which will vary as new workshops and/or speakers are discovered.

### ***Learning Resource Centers***

The Learning Resource Centers on each of the Vernon College campuses are committed to the goals of the QEP and will support and reinforce professional development. An engagement section in each of the Vernon College libraries will house literature on engagement, collaboration, and connectivity best practices. Engagement library resources will be updated as new information is published. In addition, copies of all QEP documentations will be located in each of these locations. In anticipation of the QEP preparation year, books have been ordered for each campus (see Appendix VII). This collection will continue to grow each year.

### ***Student Support Services***

Although implementation in courses is the primary focus of the QEP, student support services areas will also be included in on-campus training and will be expected to implement engagement components in daily procedures and processes. The expectation is for engagement to become a part of the daily procedures and processes. As students learn engagement skills in courses, these skills will be reinforced in support areas as well.

Specific strategies that have been suggested include student organization seminars focused on engagement. In addition, a pilot project will be implemented by Spring 2008 by the Director of Library Services to provide an audio-video instant messaging service for students at sites that are not fully staffed to improve student collaboration. Engagement activities will include communication with student services through a Horizon Wimba address provided by the College.

### **Maintaining Progress**

QEP progress and effectiveness will be incorporated into the established components and procedures of the Institutional Planning and Evaluation process (see

Appendix VIII). Program and discipline review forms will be revised to ensure that engagement strategies are included as part of every review cycle (see Appendix IX). Engagement will also become an integral component of Institutional Effectiveness plans as departments and divisions begin applying engagement principles and practices to daily operations. Integrating QEP components into the existing planning and evaluation cycle will help ensure that sufficient resources and systems are in place to sustain the outcomes of the QEP.

Chapter Four describes in detail how engagement activities in individual courses will be measured and monitored. In addition to course evaluations, each year the QEP Implementation Committee will develop a QEP Progress Report. This report will include a thorough review of all QEP strategies. Data from courses, faculty reports, reports from student support services, survey results, CCSSE findings, and informal feedback will be included. This annual QEP Progress Report will provide a means of keeping the College community focused and on track in meeting the goals of the QEP. Each summer this report will be submitted to the Board of Trustees. Vernon College will maintain QEP progress through systematic and on-going planning and evaluation cycles that guide decisions and focus on continuous improvement.

### **Pilot Projects**

As a means of testing real-life applicability of VConnected, the QEP Development Committee decided to pilot the process in the 2007-2008 academic year. Topics for pilots were solicited from the QEP Development Committee using the QEP Pilot Proposal form, and 5 proposals were received. The pilots covered various areas of the College: Library Services, biology, English, Health Information Technology, and college algebra. Each VConnected pilot member researched and developed the project during the Fall 2007 semester and implemented during the Spring 2008 semester.

Proposals were presented by VConnected team members to the entire College community in January 2008 at staff development. VConnected pilot team members used the Engagement Assessment Template to report results in May 2008.

The VC library system, directed by Marian Grona, piloted the QEP to improve collaboration between library staff and students and faculty at Skills Training Center (STC) and Seymour locations. The student learning outcome that drove this project was, "The student will interact with faculty and support personnel to enhance their learning experiences." With limited on site support at both locations, the library wanted to implement technologies that would facilitate effective communication and reference support for STC and Seymour students. In March 2008, webcam terminals were installed in resources centers at STC and Seymour. To promote the service, the library posted signs at each location and sent email notifications to all faculty and staff. Two library personnel attended Wimba training for two days to learn Wimba capabilities.

VConnected team member Dennis Taylor piloted engagement strategies in his general biology class with two expectations: "Students will actively participate in class activities at a higher level than non-pilot courses," and "Students will collaborate with classmates and faculty on designated tasks at a higher frequency than non-pilot courses." Findings were based on the Student Engagement Survey administered to both the pilot and a non-pilot course. In the non-pilot class, 56.6% of the class asked questions only 1-2 times during the semester or not at all while in the pilot class, 88.8% stated that they asked questions 3-8 or more than 8 times during the semester. In the non-pilot class, more than 80% of the class never gave a presentation or worked with classmates during the semester or while in the pilot class, 100% stated that they gave a presentation and worked with others during the semester. In the non-pilot class, 76% stated they used the internet or instant messaging to work on an assignment, but 56% of

the class stated they did not use e-mail during the semester. In the pilot class, 100% stated they used the internet or instant messaging to work on an assignment, and 84% of the class stated they did use e-mail during the semester. In the non-pilot class, 46.6% of the class stated they never skipped class while in the pilot class, 66.7% stated that they never skipped class. Mr. Taylor stated that “several years of data needs to be gathered and used to verify that the QEP project designed for this class can be assessed as effective or not. I believe that the pilot class was more engaged based on the survey, and general comments from the students.”

VConnected team member Paula Whitman piloted engagement strategies in a college algebra course, which involved using radio frequency clickers to allow the students to individually respond to questions posed during class lectures. The instructor received immediate feedback revealing how well the content had been mastered. The Pilot class was M1414 – College Algebra with Review. This four hour class used clickers for each class period. The Control class was M1314 – College Algebra. The same course material was used for both classes. There was a difference in that the pilot class was a 4 hour class and the control was a 3 hour class. In the Fall 08 these same two classes were taught by the same instructor with the 4 hour class having considerably lower averages so it is assumed that adding the extra hour of instruction by itself did not improve the success of the students. The grade distributions for the Pilot and Control Classes are given.

1414 (Pilot)

A	B	C	D	F	W
1	5	2	5	2	2

1314 (Control)

A	B	C	D	F	W
3	2	0	2	2	11

6%	29%	12%	29%	12%	12%	15%	10%	0%	10%	10%	55%
	Transfer Credit		47%			Transfer Credit			25%		
	Passed		76%			Passed			35%		
	Completed		88%			Completed			45%		
	Withdrew		12%			Withdrew			55%		

The pilot and control classes were surveyed with the CLASSE instrument. The individual questions in which the answers varied significantly between the classes are shown below. The following conclusions were drawn based on the survey results.

1. Pilot class perceived they worked on projects requiring integrating ideas from various sources more than the control class.
2. Control class worked with classmates outside of class more than the pilot class.
3. The pilot class used email to communicate with instructor more than the control class.
4. The pilot class discussed grades and assignments with the instructor more than the control.
5. The pilot class perceived they made presentations in class more than the control. (There were no class presentations)
6. The pilot class felt they received prompt feedback more than the control class.
7. The pilot class felt they were using higher cognitive levels more often than the control class.
8. The control class felt they applied theories/concepts more than the control class.
9. The pilot class felt more challenged by the exams.
10. The pilot class spent more time on assignments.
11. The pilot class attended more review/help sessions than the control class.
12. The control class was more interested.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Assessment of the Plan**

Vernon College recognizes that assessment is an integral part of the QEP. This evaluation stage will involve two major components. One deals with an ongoing evaluation of the QEP itself, and the other is an evaluation of the specific activities and projects that will be planned and implemented by the QEP Implementation Committee and faculty across divisions. Both components will be guided by the overall QEP goal: the Vernon College QEP will increase student learning through improved engagement by transforming curriculum and instruction, providing innovative professional development opportunities, and creating a technology-rich environment for instructional and student support services

### **Evaluation of the Overall QEP**

Vernon College will utilize its existing institutional infrastructure to assess the QEP, including the Strategic Goals, Schedule for Planning and Evaluation, the Budgeting Process, Program and Discipline Evaluations, and Survey of Student Instruction. In addition, the QEP will use CCSSE scores to indicate improvement in engagement. Vernon College recognizes that in order to foster and assess engagement of and collaboration with students, it is important that all College employees, including faculty, staff, and administration, demonstrate these qualities. The initiatives of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) align with Vernon College Directive Goals (see Appendix VI) which in turn drive the formation of division and departmental goals annually. During the Planning and Assessment cycle, these goals drive the budgeting process. All divisions of the College, (Student Services, Instruction, Administration, Admissions and Records, and President's Office) will develop new initiatives aimed at increasing student engagement which will be reflected in the Annual

Budget. In this way, the QEP will be integrated into and sustained by Vernon College's current assessment infrastructure. In addition, Vernon College evaluation instruments will be revised to include engagement outcomes and the new course evaluation documents will be implemented as each professor finishes the training and implementation phase of engagement training.

At the end of each instructional year, the QEP Implementation Committee will conduct a formative evaluation of the overall QEP. This formative evaluation will include assessment measure results: budget projections for the next year, pilot evaluations, upcoming goals, action plans, surveys of students and instructors, and recommendations for improvement. The results will be included in an annual QEP Progress Report that will be submitted to the College president who will in turn share it with the Board of Trustees. The report will also be used as the foundation for the five-year impact report.

The formative evaluation will include a review of the overall administration of the QEP and an overview of all exams, activities, projects, etc., implemented and assessed both directly and indirectly during the instructional year. Changes are expected and will be made to the plan based on the results of the annual evaluations.

### **Evaluation of Individual Activities and Projects**

During the preparation year (2008), the QEP Development Committee, with input from faculty in their specific areas, will develop a draft of an institution-wide standardized Engagement Assessment Template (see Appendix X) to assess student engagement activities and projects. This rubric will contain the actual documents used to assess student learning outcomes in relation to engagement in each course. VConnected team members will analyze which instruments will be best suited to evaluate efforts in individualized projects. As stated in chapter three, while developing the rubric, the QEP

Development Committee will draw on what they have learned from their engagement training and on information received from workshops they have attended as well as on the experience they already have from developing rubrics in prior classes. Assessment tools included in the Engagement Assessment Template will include but not be limited to qualitative focus groups, the CCSSE Course Feedback Form, comparison studies, surveys, self-evaluations, progress reports, CCSSE scores, course specific objective exams, and grades. Once developed, the draft will be shared with all Vernon College faculty members to obtain input. After necessary changes are made based on faculty input, the entire Vernon College faculty will vote to approve the rubric. A plan for validating the rubric will also be developed at that time. The foundation for developing the rubric will be the QEP Focus Statement, *Vernon College will improve student learning by increasing engagement*, and the QEP Student Learning Outcomes:

Vernon College has identified three major expectations to guide the QEP:

1. Students will actively participate in class activities.
2. Students will collaborate with classmates, faculty, and support staff on designated tasks.
3. Students will interact with faculty and support staff to enhance their learning experiences.

### **Evaluation Cycle for Assessing QEP Progress**

Every fall beginning with the implementation year 2009-2010, the VConnected team will develop engagement activities and projects that they will incorporate into their classes or support services area the next spring. Specifics about the roles and function of the pilot projects and the table for development and implementation of activities/projects are explained in detail in chapter three of this document.

### **Organizational Structure**

The QEP Implementation Committee will be comprised of the Instructional Designer, the QEP Director, the Division Chairs, a member of the Student Services division, and

the current VConnected team members. At the end of the fall semester, the QEP Implementation Committee will meet to hear a report on the progress of the development of the projects. At the end of the spring semester at a QEP Implementation Committee meeting, the VConnected team members will submit samples of students' activities and projects as well other documentation listed on the Engagement Assessment Template. At that meeting, the QEP Implementation Committee will evaluate the activities/projects using the Engagement Assessment Template that was developed during the planning year. The QEP Implementation Committee will provide an evaluative report by the end of the spring semester. The report will include the following:

- Brief description of the activity or project designed in the fall and implemented in the spring semester
- Statement of Expectation to be met by the activity/project
- Results of the data shared by the VConnected team members and analyzed by the QEP Director
- Discussion of what worked, what did not work, and what could be improved
- Discussion of the feasibility of incorporating the activity/project in additional courses or service areas

The QEP Implementation Committee will review the reports and evaluate how each activity/project met the overall QEP goals and if students improved learning through engagement. Academic Support and Student Services will turn in a report to the QEP Implementation Committee annually in late spring detailing engagement findings in their areas. Once done, the QEP Implementation Committee will develop a QEP Progress Report that will be submitted to the Vernon College Planning and Assessment Committee. The Planning and Assessment Committee is a standing committee of the College that will report annually in mid-summer by reviewing the QEP Progress Report, forwarding the QEP Progress Report and their comments to the College president and the QEP Implementation Committee. The College president will then share the QEP Progress Report with the Vernon College Board of Trustees. In addition, these progress reports will be the foundation for the five-year impact report composed by the QEP

Director and Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The Planning and Assessment Committee will be tasked with producing long-term cohorts and statistical data as well (see Appendix XI).

To ensure the institution-wide standardized Engagement Assessment Template remains effective, a College-wide team of faculty will be tasked with evaluating the rubric at the end of the fourth year of implementation. The method for selecting the team and their plan for evaluation of the rubric will be determined during year three of implementation, and a summary about the team, their plan, and their findings will be included in the five-year impact report.

**Evaluation Cycle for Assessing QEP Activities and Progress**

<b>Preparation Year 2008</b> (January-May conduct pilot courses) (September-December evaluate/assess)	
<b>January-August</b>	QEP Development Committee attends trainings, workshops, and conferences.
<b>January-February</b>	QEP Development Committee researches engagement assessment methods, tools, and forms.
<b>February</b>	QEP Marketing Committee formed. Meets to choose logo for VConnected project.
<b>March</b>	QEP Development Committee develops a draft of standardized Engagement Assessment Template.
<b>4<sup>th</sup> week in March</b>	E-mail sent to all members of the College community soliciting pilot projects for Fall 2008, Spring 2009 year.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> week in May</b>	QEP Development Committee evaluates and assesses pilots using rubric data and feedback reports.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> week in May</b>	VConnected instructors give feedback reports to QEP Development Committee.
<b>Last week in August</b>	QEP Implementation Committee established.
<b>Last week in August</b>	QEP Development Committee meets with QEP Implementation Committee.
<b>Last week in October</b>	VConnected Team meets with QEP Implementation Team to assess feedback report and consider changes in pilot strategies.
<b>December</b>	VConnected Team reports status in pilot assessment to QEP Implementation Committee.
<b>Spring 2009 (January-May)</b> (complete pilot cycle and transition to first year implementation)	

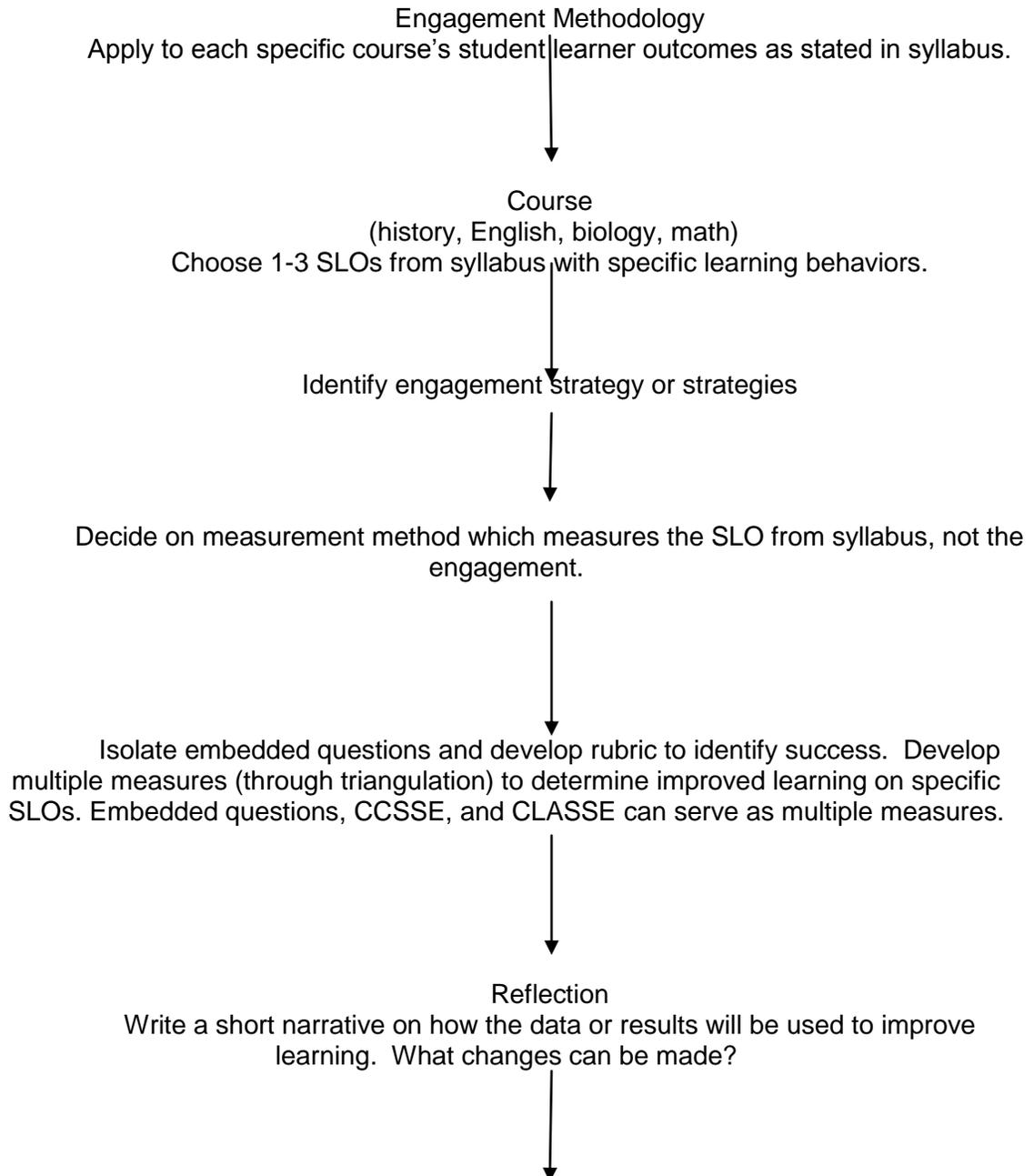
<b>January</b>	VConnected instructors continue to implement engagement strategies in pilot courses.
<b>January-May</b>	QEP Director and Instructional Designer investigates trainings, conferences, and workshops for upcoming instructional year which includes budget requests to Dean of Instructional Services and I.E. Director.
<b>April</b>	CCSSE administered.
<b>April</b>	QEP Implementation Committee submits QEP budget proposal to Dean of Instructional Services.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> week in May</b>	QEP Implementation Committee hears final reports from VConnected team members and collects data from pilots.
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> week in May</b>	QEP Implementation Committee gathers information from Academic Support and Student Services.
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> week in May</b>	QEP Implementation Committee compiles report.
<b>Summer 2009</b> (preparation for first year of implementation)	
<b>June</b>	CCSSE data analysis captured by QEP Implementation Committee for consideration.
<b>June</b>	QEP Implementation Committee writes a pre-QEP Progress Report in June and forwards to Planning and Assessment Committee for comments and forwarding to College president.
<b>June</b>	Planning and Assessment Committee provides comments of QEP Progress Report to QEP Implementation Committee.
<b>Fall Semester of Each Year Beginning 2009-2010 Instructional Year</b>	
<b>Late in August</b>	VConnected team members and QEP Director provide summaries of VConnected projects to all faculty and staff as a staff development activity.
<b>Late in August</b>	QEP Director archives VConnected project presentations in libraries and portal.
<b>Late in August</b>	QEP Director and Instructional Designer provides all faculty and staff with professional engagement training as a staff development activity.
<b>Early in September</b>	VConnected Team begins development of activities and projects.
<b>Early in September</b>	Previous VConnected Team members continue engagement strategies in courses and student services areas.
<b>November</b>	Next academic year's VConnected Team identified.

<b>Spring Semester of Each Year Beginning 2009-2010 Instructional Year</b>	
<b>January</b>	VConnected Team implements engagement strategies into courses.
<b>January</b>	Next academic year's VConnected Team begins training and attends relevant conferences on and off campus.
<b>January</b>	QEP Leadership Team continues to insure incorporation of engagement findings in all student assessment tools, department surveys, program reviews, as part of planning and evaluation process.
<b>February</b>	QEP Implementation Committee provides budget proposal to Dean of Instructional Services and I.E. Director for inclusion in budgeting process.
<b>March</b>	QEP Implementation Committee meets to monitor success of on-going engagement projects.
<b>April</b>	CCSSE administered.
<b>April</b>	Spring advisory committee meetings include QEP/engagement information, updates, and input.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> week in May</b>	VConnected Team members submit summary report of engagement data to QEP. Implementation Committee and continue to do so every spring thereafter.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> week in May</b>	QEP Implementation Committee evaluates activities/projects using engagement assessment template and report findings to VConnected Team members.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> week in May 2011 only</b>	QEP Implementation Committee consults all VConnected Team members as well as all faculty and staff to evaluate engagement assessment template and make necessary adjustments.
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> week in May</b>	QEP Director and Instructional Designer investigates trainings, conferences, and workshops for upcoming instructional year and includes budget requests.
<b>4<sup>th</sup> week in May</b>	Next VConnected Team begins development of activities and attends training conferences and workshops.
<b>Summer of Each Year Beginning 2009-2010 Instructional Year</b>	
<b>June</b>	QEP Director and Instructional Designer send summary and analysis of CCSSE data to QEP Implementation Committee for inclusion in QEP Progress Report.
<b>June</b>	Each academic and support service area submits a report to QEP Implementation Committee outlining general observations of QEP progress, updates on action plans dealing with engagement, results of engagement questions on surveys, etc.
<b>June</b>	Action plans and syllabi updated as needed.
<b>June</b>	QEP Progress Report composed by QEP Implementation Committee and sent to Planning and Assessment

	Committee for forwarding to President and Board of Trustees.
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The flowchart below details the assessment cycle for the overall QEP. It will change as modifications are made to the plan.

### QEP Assessment Cycle



Overall QEP Assessment

Use individual findings from pilot efforts to track direct and positive impact on student learning.

Vernon College will transform curriculum and instruction, provide innovative professional development opportunities, and create a technology-rich environment for instructional and student support services.

## Chapter Five Broad-Based QEP Involvement

The SACS Leadership Team has invited broad participation from faculty, students, staff, advisory board members, Foundation Board members, Vernon College Board of Trustees, and other community leaders in the development of the Quality Enhancement Plan. Vernon College began the QEP process with the SACS Leadership Team appointing a senior faculty member as the QEP director, who was charged with structuring a rotating committee to see the project through three distinct phases: planning, development, and implementation. The QEP director, along with three members of the SACS Leadership Team, attended the SACS-COC annual conventions held in December 2005 and December 2006. During the spring semester of 2007, three members of the SACS Leadership Team attended an orientation session in Atlanta. In August 2005 and January 2006, QEP information was disseminated and input was requested first at staff development meetings and then electronically to all employees. It was at this time that the planning phase officially began. This phase focused on professional development, planning and research, and generating College-wide awareness. Faculty leadership and involvement were always encouraged, and the faculty were the driving force of this project.

One challenge marked the planning phase. The challenge came in establishing consensus among faculty on a QEP topic and maintaining an “open-and-above-board” approach for team-building purposes. The QEP Planning Committee met in spring 2006, charged with soliciting input from the entire College community for QEP topics, focusing on strengths and weaknesses as areas of interest. A proposal was made and supported by the SACS Leadership Team to pay a stipend for the three best QEP proposals.

Twelve proposals were submitted from the College community by April 2006. The QEP Planning Committee developed a rubric (see Appendix II) to evaluate the

effectiveness of each proposal to the College using the following criteria: relation of topic to institutional effectiveness; ability to enhance student learning; cost and resources; ability to measure success; ability to be supported by research and best practices; importance to students; importance to College community; and ability to garner broad agreement of College community.

Members, using the rubric, selected the three proposals with the highest rankings to submit to the SACS Leadership Team for topic consideration. All proposal writers received written feedback on their proposals from the Planning Committee. The three finalists presented their topic ideas to the SACS Leadership Team in May 2006 and received written feedback for improvement in July 2006.

The three finalists fleshed out their ideas in longer reports to the SACS Leadership Team in August 2006. The SACS Leadership Team voted to allow the entire College body to hear presentations on the three topics and to vote on the three proposals by the end of September 2006. Community-wide presentations were also held, allowing interested parties to hear the same presentations and cast votes as well. The chosen topic, VConnected, was announced by the SACS Leadership Team in October 2006.

The College-wide and community-wide balloting identified connectivity as a high priority issue; however, the topic needed to be condensed and clarified by the QEP Development Committee.

Faculty representing each area of instruction were involved in the process of refining the QEP goal through representation on the QEP Development Committee. In addition, liaisons were included as members on the QEP Development Committee from Information Technology and Student Relations. Faculty, staff, students, administrators, alumni, community members, and Board of Trustee members were given the opportunity

to provide input on the selection of a QEP theme using a balloting system (see Appendix III). Information about accessing the presentation and ballot was distributed through press releases published in the *Vernon Daily Record* and the *Wichita Falls Times and Record News* (see Appendix IV) as well as through College-wide e-mail messages. In addition, committee members made personal contacts to encourage responses from members of the Faculty Senate and Student Government Associations. Of the 175 ballots distributed, 105 were returned. VConnected received 50 votes or 47.6% of the vote while Student Success Initiative received 33 votes or 31.4 % and Mastering Mathematics received 22 votes or 20.9 %. The theme of connectivity that ultimately was selected as the focus of the QEP was identified as a high priority by a majority of the stakeholders in the College community.

Because today's community college student faces a challenging global economic reality characterized by collaboration through technological breakthroughs, the student must be prepared for alignment of his or her skill sets with those of other potential collaborators. Embracing the importance of technology in education, millennial students will expect to continue to grow within technological boundaries.

As distance learning students become a larger percentage of Vernon College's enrollment figures, it becomes apparent that those students deserve adequate resources for and methods of instruction. Since many students may be outside of the physical classroom, interaction between faculty and students evolves.

If social and economic realities affect the delivery methods of instruction and training, Vernon College must acknowledge that a student's learning experience is more than coursework. VConnected will permit a forward-thinking approach to instruction, assessment, and service that will ultimately enhance a student's overall educational experience.

The challenge to the QEP Development Committee has been explaining the highly complex topic of engagement to the College community. Engagement has numerous components, and in many instances, faculty and staff were hesitant to ask clarifying questions due to the complexity of the issue. Trying to explain a new process, such as the QEP, coupled with an abstract topic like engagement required numerous approaches. A wide range of understanding existed. Some faculty believed engagement was already being fostered in many courses, while others were perplexed as to how such a lofty goal could be accomplished.

While the development of the QEP has been faculty driven, a carefully planned effort to involve support staff has also been implemented. Announcements and updates about the projected QEP have been broadcast at regular staff meetings, and open forums have been held on all campuses to answer questions and to clarify the progress of the QEP. In addition, the QEP has been on the agendas of many Advisory Board meetings, Faculty Senate meetings, Academic Council meetings, and Board of Trustees meetings. In December 2007, a QEP Marketing Committee was formed comprised of members from a wide range of College departments. The charge of this committee was to inform all constituents of the College community about VConnected.

The following timeline describes how Vernon College came together for a common cause of finding new and better ways of preparing students for a successful future.

**QEP Planning Phase  
January 2006 – October 2006**

<b>October 2005</b>	Pre-planning activities included appointment of a QEP Director and naming of the SACS Leadership Team.
<b>January 2006</b>	Presentation of SACS reaffirmation information to entire College community, call for volunteers for QEP Planning Committee.
	Entire College community asked to review the College's overall

	vision, mission, objectives, and strategies.
	Instructional Directive Goals presented to all faculty.
<b>February 2006</b>	QEP Planning Committee meets for the first time: reviews SACS committee structure and assignments.
	QEP Planning Committee sets March 31, 2006, as deadline for QEP proposals and agrees to allow committee members to submit proposals as long as they abstain from voting on their own proposals.
	QEP Planning Committee develops guidelines for how to solicit proposals—e-mail, word of mouth, group proposals.
<b>March 2006</b>	QEP Planning Committee develops rubric for topic selection to match criteria on proposal form—description, relative to institutional effectiveness, enhance student learning, ability to implement, cost, measurability, review of literature, importance to students, importance to College community, ability to garner broad agreement.
	QEP Planning Committee finalizes rubric and agrees to conduct tally electronically. Feedback will be provided in writing to each topic presenter.
	SACS Liaison presents information on reaffirmation process to QEP Planning Committee.
<b>April 2006</b>	Oral reading of 12 proposals with roundtable discussion for entire College community in Vernon.
	Oral reading of 12 proposals with roundtable discussion for entire College community in Wichita Falls.
<b>May 2006</b>	Electronic tally of proposals conducted by QEP Planning Committee. Feedback provided to proposals not chosen.
	Top three proposals presented to SACS Leadership Team for approval/validation.
<b>June 2006</b>	SACS Leadership Team returns approval for all three topics.
<b>August 2006</b>	Three topics' presenters turn in 15-page descriptions of proposals to SACS Leadership Team.
	Three proposals presented at staff development for consideration in ballot form by all members of the College community.

<b>September 2006</b>	Ballots returned and tallied.
<b>October 2006</b>	SACS Leadership Team announces winner after a validity study.

**QEP Development Phase  
October 2006 – October 2008**

<b>October 2006</b>	QEP Director requests volunteers to serve on QEP Development Committee.
<b>November 2006</b>	First QEP Development Committee held to review charge: to develop goal, focus, objectives of the QEP. Direct communication between faculty and students immediately emerges as a priority.
<b>January 2007</b>	President Thomas informs QEP Director that a portal system cannot be the focus of the QEP because that system must be implemented immediately for software contractual obligations.
	QEP Development Committee realizes the need to identify the real focus of the topic of collaboration.
	Emphasis shifts to teaching and learning to empower faculty to engage students with collaboration.
	QEP Development Committee studies CCSSE benchmarks and works to define concepts of collaboration and connectivity and how to apply those concepts to entire College.
	QEP Development Committee invites more faculty members as well as students to join committee for better representation at all locations.
<b>February 2007</b>	QEP Development Committee works on forming goals to integrate collaboration and connectivity into a definitive goal.
	Student members attend QEP Development Committee for the first time. QEP goal gains clarity and expectations are articulated: to transform curriculum and instruction; to provide relevance, connecting classes to real life; to provide personal contact between student and teacher; to create powerful learning experiences; to foster group dynamics; and to create connectivity among students in the classrooms.
<b>March 2007</b>	QEP Development Committee develops time line for QEP project and decides to pilot engagement concepts in the interim between submitting QEP and waiting for results to maintain momentum.
<b>April 2007</b>	SACS Leadership Team provides first feedback report about

	QEP progress. No changes are recommended. Real issues develop: how to bring distance students' experiences closer to campus experiences; how to replace ITV rooms with individualized experiences; the price of Live Classroom; bandwidth concerns. A preliminary budget is prepared.
	QEP fliers placed through campus.
	Budget request is finalized with addition of a instructional designer to teach faculty how to implement engagement strategies.
	Faculty volunteer to serve as VConnected pilot instructors.
<b>May 2007</b>	Five members of QEP Development Committee attend NISOD conference. All members attend a Horizon Wimba Live Classroom demonstration. Committee searches for information on CCSSE. Budget concerns develop.
<b>July 2007</b>	QEP Director presents QEP progress to Board of Trustees.
<b>October 2007</b>	QEP Development Committee develops pilot proposal forms to document efforts by faculty and support staff to increase engagement in individualized areas.
	E-mail updates begin daily to all employees on QEP progress.
	Director of Institutional Effectiveness asks QEP Development Committee to add questions to the Student Survey of Instruction to gain benchmark data for future engagement efforts.
<b>November 2007</b>	QEP Development Committee develops Assessment Cycle Chart for overall performance of QEP. A library pilot is added.
	QEP Development Committee and SACS Leadership Team meet with Dr. Michael Johnson, the College's SACS Liaison.
	Dean of Instructional Services meets with QEP Development Committee to firm up budget proposal for submission to College president.
	QEP Development Committee meets to rewrite student learner outcomes.
	QEP presentations at faculty and division meetings.
<b>December 2007</b>	QEP Development Committee firms up student learner outcomes.
	QEP Director and SACS Leadership Team travel to New Orleans, LA to attend SACS/COC Convention.

<b>January 2008</b>	QEP Development Committee meets to develop specific assessment methods for pilot courses.
	QEP Marketing Committee formed composed of members from all areas of the College community to spread information about the QEP to students.
	Live demonstration of Wimba presented to entire College community at staff development by QEP Director. VConnected instructors individually explain efforts to entire College faculty.

The development of the QEP has involved representatives from across all areas of the College community. A QEP Marketing Committee has been formed and will guide efforts in informing students each semester about the QEP.

### **QEP Implementation Phase**

The Vernon College faculty has shown support for the QEP and are prepared to begin training and implementation. The QEP Director has led the daily operations of the QEP with the support of the QEP Development Committee. Beginning in the fall of 2008, a Instructional Designer and QEP Director will be hired to add permanence to the project. The SACS Leadership Team has approved every step of the QEP Development process. The Vernon College staff has been involved in QEP development and the SACS Leadership Team has provided adequate resources, support, and encouragement throughout the process. The Vernon College Board of Trustees has been informed about the QEP progress and wholly supports the College's QEP.

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## **Appendices**

### Appendix I—QEP Committee Members

#### QEP Planning Committee—serving from January 2006--September 2006

Annette Bever	Speech Instructor
Daria Close	Nursing Instructor
Cindy Coufal	Committee Chair
Karen Gragg	Mathematics Instructor
Marion Grona	Director of Library Services
Joe Johnston	Communications Division Chair
Donnie Kirk	Speech Instructor
Rita Lee	Office Technology Instructor
Michael Ruhl	Anatomy and Physiology Instructor
Dennis Taylor	Biology Instructor

#### QEP Development Committee—serving from December 2006—October 2008

Amilia Cato	Student representative (stopped serving in Oct. 2007)
Cindy Coufal	Committee Chair
Bristi Cure	Adjunct Agriculture & Speech Instructor
Jim Binion	Network Administrator
Whitney Fontenot	Student representative (graduated May 2007)
James Graham	Computer Specialist for Instruction
Marian Grona	Director of Library Services
Betsy Harkey	Director of Student Relations
Dean Johnston	English Instructor
Joe Johnston	Communications Division Chair
Stacy Kuehn	Adjunct Math Instructor
Rita Lee	Office Technology Instructor
Mike McCoy	Director of Distance Learning
Chris McLain	Student representative
Justin Miller	Student representative (added to replace Amilia Cato)
Nancy Smith	Business Instructor
Dennis Taylor	Biology Instructor
Paula Whitman	Mathematics Instructor

#### QEP Implementation Committee—serving from October 2008-May 2014

**Appendix II**  
 Vernon College  
 Quality Enhancement Plan  
 Topic Evaluation Rubric

Topic presented by: \_\_\_\_\_

Scale: 1=weakest 5=greatest

1. Description of topic or change:	1	2	3	4	5
2. Relative to institutional effectiveness:	1	2	3	4	5
3. Ability to enhance student learning:	1	2	3	4	5
4. Ability to be implemented:	1	2	3	4	5
5. Cost and resources:	1	2	3	4	5
6. Ability to measure success:	1	2	3	4	5
7. Supportable by research:	1	2	3	4	5
8. Importance to students:	1	2	3	4	5
9. Importance to College community:	1	2	3	4	5
10. Ability to garner broad agreement:	1	2	3	4	5
Totals:					

Strengths:
Weaknesses:

**Appendix III**  
Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Topic Ballot  
Fall 2006

Please circle your ONE choice for Vernon College's QEP topic. Return ballots to Cindy Coufal (Vernon Campus) or Dr. Dawn Ferrell (Century City) by **SEPTEMBER 15, 2006**.

- "VConnect"—Jim Binion and Joe Johnston
  
  
- "Student Success Initiative"—Dennis Taylor and Michael Ruhl
  
  
- "A Developmental Math Program"—Barbara Jinks and Margaret Patin

#### **Appendix IV**

##### **QEP Press Release September 2006**

Among colleges and universities in the United States, accreditation is a voluntary and self-regulatory mechanism. Accreditation associations have been established in regional zones. Vernon College is a member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, which plays a significant role in fostering public confidence in its educational enterprise. Accredited institutions comply with a common set of requirements and standards.

The concept of “quality enhancement” is at the heart of the philosophy of accreditation. The College is expected to dedicate itself to enhancing the quality of its programs and services within the context of its mission, resources, and capabilities, and to create an environment in which teaching, public service, research, and learning occur.

The concept of quality enhancement presumes each member institution to be engaged in an on-going program of improvement and able to demonstrate how well it fulfills its stated mission. As part of its process for applying for reaffirmation of accreditation, Vernon College will be proposing a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) in the fall of 2006.

Three topics have been developed by the College faculty and staff. Vernon College welcomes its college community to attend a seminar detailing these proposals and invites community members and students to attend and vote on which of the three proposals to implement as part of its accreditation process.

Cindy Coufal, QEP Director, and Dr. Dawn Ferrell, Director of Institutional Research will present the program on September 12, beginning at 5:30 p.m. at the Vernon Campus, Electra Waggoner Biggs Arts and Sciences Center, Room 306 and in Wichita Falls on September 13 at 5:30 p.m. at the Century City Campus in Room 201.

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**Appendix V****SACS Leadership Team**

<b>Leadership Committee</b>	
Dr. Steve Thomas	President
Dr. Brenda Kays	Dean of Instructional Services
Dr. Dawn Ferrell	Accreditation Liaison
Dr. Gary Don Harkey	Division Chair/Faculty
John Hardin	Dean of Student Services (added Oct. 2007)
Gene Gooch	Dean of Administrative Services (added Oct. 2007)
Joe Hite	Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid/Registrar (added Oct. 2007)

**Appendix VI**  
**VERNON COLLEGE DIRECTIVE GOALS**  
Academic Year 2007-2008

- 1) Prepare for SACS Reaffirmation
  - a) Ensure College is in compliance with all Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards, and Federal Mandates in the *Principles of Accreditation* and write the *Compliance Certification* for SACS
  - b) Work toward developing the College's Quality Enhancement Plan
  - c) Communicate all efforts toward SACS Reaffirmation with the College community
  
- 2) Continue To Be Proactive in Seeking External Funding
  - a) Continue dialogue with Wichita County concerning branch maintenance tax
  - b) Continue marketing plan that "brands" Vernon College
  - c) Broaden the base of support for the College's Foundation through fundraising
  - d) Seek local, state, and federal grant funding
  
- 3) Promote Partnerships with the Independent School Districts Within Our Service Area by developing the College Connection Program by Focusing On:
  - a) Distance learning
  - b) Dual credit / concurrent enrollment
  - c) All technical programs
  - d) Transitional programs
  - e) Compact (short-term) training opportunities (multiple entry, multiple exit)
  - f) Vertical alignment with curriculum
  
- 4) Foster Relationships Within the Communities We Serve
  - a) Respond to education/training requests from members of our community
  - b) Sponsor charitable causes/organizations within our community
  - c) Serve in education, community, business, and charitable organizations
  
- 5) Implement Technology that is Systematic and Integrated to Maximize the Efficiency of the Work Processes of Faculty, Staff, and Students
  - a) Implement the College's Web Portal
  - b) Create a Web Site for SACS Reaffirmation
  - c) Continue to implement and fully use Docubase
  
- 6) Serve More Students to Sustain Ability to Serve Our Communities and Service Area
  - a) Continually analyze the needs of our community members
  - b) Expand and renovate facilities, as appropriate, to accommodate the growing student population
  - c) Promote the College's programs and courses throughout our service area

**Appendix VII**  
**Library Collection Additions**

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## Appendix VIII

## Institutional Planning and Evaluation Process

Vernon College						
Planning Schedule: <b>Instructional Year 2007-2008</b>						
Type Plan	Date	Activities	Objectives	Key Individuals	Preparation	Intended Outcomes
ALL	7/5/2007	Call for Planning issued by the president	Call for Review of College Priorities and begin the planning process for 2008-2009	All College Employees	Identification of Planning and Assessment Committee Members	All College Employees participate in the planning process
SP	7/17/2007	Strategic Plan / College Priorities Meeting	Identify 2008-2012 College Priorities	Planning and Assessment Committee / Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee	Long range planning includes priorities for next 1- 5 years	Planning and Assessment Committee identifies first draft of 2008-2012 Tentative College Priorities
AP (06-07)	8/15/2007	Evaluate Goals and Objectives from 2006-2007 Annual Plan	Distribute 2006-2007 Annual Plan for evaluation	Deans and Faculty and Staff Planning Units	2006-2007 Annual Plan	Begin Evaluation of Goals and Objectives from 2006-2007 Annual Plan
SP	8/30/2007	Evaluation of Tentative Priorities	Distribute and review 2008-2012 Tentative Priorities as developed by the Planning and Assessment / Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee	All College Employees	Memo and distribution to all employees	All College Employees participate in College Priorities Review Process - Comments due by 09/07/2007
AP (06-07)	8/30/2007	First Progress Review of 2006-2007 Annual Plan	Review Progress toward evaluating objectives as outlined in the 2006-2007 Annual Plan	Division/Unit Planning Leaders	2006-2007 Annual Plan	Provide Chair, Planning and Assessment Committee, information on Progress of 2006-2007 Annual Plan
SP	9/14/2007	2008-2012 Priorities Review	Review staff comments for consideration for 2008-2012 College Priorities	Planning and Assessment Committee	Staff comments on 2008-2012 Priorities	Planning and Assessment Committee approves Second Draft of 2008-2012 Priorities

AP (06-07)	9/14/2007	Second Progress Review of 2006-2007 Annual Plan	Review Progress toward evaluating objectives as outlined in the 2006-2007 Annual Plan	Division/Unit Planning Leaders	2006-2007 Annual Plan	Provide Chair, Planning and Assessment Committee, information on Progress of 2006-2007 Annual Plan
SP	9/20/2007	2008-2012 College Priorities Approval	Distribute the 2008-2012 Tentative Priorities	All College Employees	2008-2012 Tentative Priorities	Employees approve the 2008-2012 College Priorities
AP (08-09)	9/20/2007	Begin Faculty and Staff Planning Unit meetings	Develop Unit Goals and Objectives for the 2008-2009 Annual Plan	Deans, Faculty and Staff Planning Units, and Director of Research and Planning	Goals and Objectives Form / College Priorities and Division/Unit priorities	Planning Units develop goals and objectives for 2008-2009
AP (06-07)	9/28/2007	Third Progress Review of 2006-2007 Annual Plan	Review progress toward evaluating objectives as outlined in the 2006-2007 Annual Plan	Division/Unit Planning Leaders	2006-2007 Annual Plan	Provide Chair, Planning and Assessment Committee, information on Progress of 2006-2007 Annual Plan
AP (06-07)	10/12/2007	Final Review of 2006-2007 Annual Plan	Report Evaluation of goals and objectives as outlined in 2006-2007 Annual Plan	Division/Unit Planning Leaders	2006-2007 Annual Plan	Provide Chair, Planning and Assessment Committee, final report on 2006-2007 Annual Plan
AP (08-09)	10/18/2007	Submit 2008-2009 goals and objectives	Submit 2008-2009 Unit Goals and Objectives to the Chair, Planning and Assessment Committee	Deans, Faculty and Staff Planning Units	Goals and Objectives Form / College Priorities and Division/Unit priorities	Planning Units complete goals and objectives for 2008-2009 Annual Plan
AP (08-09)	10/25/2007	P&A Effective Planning Ad Hoc Committee Meeting	Review and comment on first draft of 2008-2009 Annual Plan	P&A Effective Planning Ad Hoc Committee	First Draft of 2008-2009 Annual Plan	Effective Planning Ad Hoc Committee reviews first draft and provides comments/assistance to divisions/units

AP (08-09)	11/15/2007	P&A Effective Planning Ad Hoc Committee Meeting	Review and comment on second draft of 2008-2009 Annual Plan	P&A Effective Planning Ad Hoc Committee	Second Draft of 2008-2009 Annual Plan	Effective Planning Ad Hoc Committee reviews second draft and provides comments/assistance to divisions/units
SP	11/30/2007	Board of Trustees Meeting	Review the 2008-2012 College Priorities	Board of Trustees	List of College Priorities for 2008-2012	Trustees review and approve College Priorities for 2008-2012
AP (08-09)	12/6/2008	P&A Committee Meeting	Review and comment on third draft of 2008-2009 Annual Plan	P&A Committee	Third Draft of 2008-2009 Annual Plan	P&A reviews third draft of the 2008-2009 Annual Plan.
AP (08-09)	02/01/08 - 03/31/08	Budget Development Meetings	Begin budget development process based on College Priorities and modify budget and recommend changes to annual plan to reflect level of funding and projected expenditures	President's Council	Third Draft of 2008-2009 Annual Plan	Provide recommendations for revisions to Annual Plan to Chair, Planning and Assessment Committee
AP (08-09)	4/14/2008	Finalize 2008-2009 Annual Plan	Modify Annual Plan with any revisions recommended by Budget Development Meetings	Chair, Planning and Assessment Committee	Final 2008-2009 Annual Plan	Provide Final 2008-2009 Annual Plan to P&A Committee for approval
ALL	7/1/2008	Call for Planning by the President	Begin planning process for 2009-2010 and distribute the 2007-2008 Annual Plan for evaluation	All College Employees	Identification of Planning and Assessment Committee Members	All College Employees participate in the planning process

## Appendix IX

### VERNON COLLEGE FORMAT FOR EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL DISCIPLINES

#### V. TITLE PAGE

CIP Taxonomy:

Name of Discipline:

Specific Degree/Certificate Awarded upon completion:

Name of Division Responsible:

Name and Teaching Location of Faculty Responsible for the Discipline:

Faculty:

Adjunct Instructors:

#### VI. DISCIPLINE LEARNING OUTCOMES

##### A. Discipline Learning Outcomes:

1. List what the student learning outcomes for this discipline are designed to accomplish.
2. Have the discipline outcomes been reviewed in the past year? If yes, Please describe the review process and any changes made. If not reviewed, please justify.
3. Do the course outcomes appear on all course syllabi?  
Please attach a copy of all course syllabi to the evaluation form.

##### B. Anticipated changes in outcomes:

1. What changes, if any, in discipline outcomes are being considered for the near future?
2. What changes, if any, in the course outcomes are being considered for the near future?

##### C. Evaluation of Discipline Outcomes:

1. Describe the evaluation procedure used to determine whether or not discipline outcomes have been met.
2. Show the percentage and raw numbers of students achieving A, B, C, D, F, W, and WF during the Fall 2006 semester.
3. Indicate overall course completer rate for all courses taught during the 2006 – 2007 school year.

(Institutional Research Associate will provide by September 14, 2007)

##### D. Effectiveness of Distance Learning courses: If applicable, provide information on the effectiveness of ITV/Internet courses.

1. Are course completion rates in Internet courses within 10% of course completion rates of face to face courses? (Institutional Research Associate will provide by September 14, 2007)
2. Do courses (ITV/Internet) have at least an 80% satisfaction level among surveyed students? (For ITV – Institutional Research Associate; for Internet - Director of Distance Learning will provide by September 14, 2007)

##### E. Evaluation of Developmental Instruction:

1. Percentage of Developmental (applies only to math, reading, and writing) students passing all sections of THEA or comparable test in fiscal years 2004, 2005, 2006.
2. Compare with state rate. (Available through the Institutional Research Associate or the Coordinator of Developmental Studies.)

##### F. Relationship to the mission of VC:

1. Describe and show the relationship of student learning outcomes to the mission of the College. (College Mission statement found in catalog.)
- G. Does discipline participate in the College's Planning and Evaluation process?  
Show changes made to discipline over the last three years that have resulted from planning and evaluation.

VII. Discipline Structure

A. Rationale:

What is the rationale behind the sequence of courses, examinations, and other required part of the discipline?

VIII. Need

A. Transfer institutions:

List similar disciplines and the senior institutions, in our area, to which students may transfer to the same or similar discipline. (Check College Guide Books or Catalogs)

B. Relationship with other Disciplines:

How is your discipline related to other programs/disciplines at Vernon College? Indicate the kind and the extent of involvement with disciplines in your field, as well as, programs/disciplines in related fields. Indicate the support this discipline provides to others as well as the support it derives from them.

IX. Students

A. Enrollment statistics:

1. Provide enrollment statistics from the Load and Listing form for each class taught in discipline for the past three years. Indicate whether each class was taught via Internet, Face to face, or ITV. If classes were combined for load purposes, please indicate. (See Associate Dean of Workforce Education and Training).
2. Provide projections for future methods of instruction delivery (i.e. # Internet, # ITV, # face to face). Include declared majors for the last three years (Inst. Research Assoc. will provide by October 5, 2007)
3. Please elaborate on projections.

B. Enrollment capacity:

What is the maximum capacity for the discipline? If not met, what strategies have been put in place to meet capacity. What resources are needed to reach capacity?

X. Personnel (Faculty-Adjunct Faculty)

A. Faculty who are direct participants in the discipline:

Attach a list of present faculty, including adjunct faculty, who are involved in the discipline. Include date of appointment, highest degree earned and granting institution, research, publication citations, service on national or professional committees, important awards and recognitions and work experience (See Accreditation Liaison (Dawn Ferrell) for Faculty Credential forms)

XI. Curriculum

A. Course Syllabi

1. Attach current syllabi and confirm that it is on file with the Dean of Instructional Services. (See Linda Haney)
2. Confirm that all syllabi have been reviewed and revised for the current school year.
3. Confirm that appropriate division chair and applicable faculty have a copy of the most recent course syllabi.

4. Does course syllabi include course objectives stated in terms of student learning outcomes? (i.e.: By the end of the semester student will be able to .....
5. What student evaluation procedures are used to measure student learning?
6. Are course syllabi provided to students? How?
7. Confirm that each course taught at any location uses the same course syllabi.

B. Textbooks

1. Confirm that all adopted textbooks are up-to-date.
2. Are textbooks utilized for face-to-face the same at all locations? If no, please describe the circumstance.
3. Is the same textbook utilized for all internet courses in the course area? (IE all COSC 1301 online courses use the same textbook) If no, please describe the circumstance.

C. Discipline deficiencies:

Describe any weaknesses or deficiencies of the discipline. Describe changes planned for the discipline that would remedy these deficiencies.

XII. Educational Support Services

A. Advising:

1. How do you inform Student Services of discipline changes?
2. Per semester, during the 2006-2007 academic year, indicate the average number of students advised by faculty and provided with career information.
3. Developmental programs only: Is there a periodic review of the advising process that ensures resources are used effectively for developmental placement? Describe. Has a review of testing and placement procedures been made that ensures developmental courses are serving the appropriate student population?

B. Library Resources:

1. What are the strengths and deficiencies in available library resources as they relate to the current discipline?
2. What plans have been made to correct any deficiencies?
3. To what extent have discipline faculty assisted the library with resource development, including collection weeding and replacement?
4. Indicate use of cooperative arrangement with external agencies (i.e. SAFB Library, MSU Library.)

C. Facilities capital equipment and software:

1. Indicate whether classroom/labs are accessible and adequate for instructional needs.
2. Are facilities used for discipline safe, functional and well maintained?
3. Indicate whether equipment and software for the discipline is adequate and "technically" up-to-date.
4. List any such items proposed for the next three (3) years and provide a cost estimate for each year.

XIII. Finance

A. Total discipline costs:

1. Compare/contrast VC cost per contact hour with similar disciplines at identified cohort.
2. Is the discipline operating at a cost above or below similar disciplines at identified cohort?
3. If operating costs are above cohort median please explain.

4. Is the cost of the discipline operating at an amount below the state contact hour funding rate?
5. If operating costs are above the state contact hour funding rate, please explain.
6. Indicate if and how your input was solicited during budget planning.  
*Attach the Program/Discipline Expenditure Report will be provided by the Institutional Research Associate in October.*

XIV. External Support:

Indicate whether or not discipline has solicited external funding entities to obtain resources for discipline improvement (grants). Please describe.

- XV. Comments and suggestions: Make any comments regarding aspects of the discipline not covered in the preceding sections which should be describe and/or documented.

**Appendix X**

**Engagement Assessment Template  
Determine Expectations**

Student Learning Outcome	Unit	Strategy	Measure	Data
<p>To be determined by project (competencies from course syllabi) or developed by VConnected Team member for Student Support Service projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courses</li> <li>• Programs</li> <li>• Services</li> <li>• Internships</li> <li>• Community service projects</li> <li>• Extracurricular activities</li> <li>• Work experiences</li> <li>• Independent studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inventories</li> <li>• Tests</li> <li>• In-class writing samples</li> <li>• In-class analysis of a problem</li> <li>• In-class collaborative project</li> <li>• Portfolio</li> <li>• Performance</li> <li>• Simulation</li> <li>• Focus group</li> <li>• Pre- and Post-Tests of Course Content Objectives</li> <li>• Pre- and Post-Tests of Informal Engagement Survey</li> <li>• Comparison study</li> <li>• Survey</li> <li>• Instructor Self-Evaluation</li> <li>• Course Feedback Form</li> <li>• CCSSE scores</li> <li>• Technical data report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numerical score on exams</li> <li>• Holistic score on ability to solve a problem</li> <li>• Mastery-level score on culminating project</li> <li>• Mastery-level score on writing samples</li> <li>• Increase in satisfaction levels on surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standardized tests</li> <li>• Locally designed tests</li> <li>• In-class writing exercise</li> <li>• In-class case study</li> <li>• Portfolio</li> <li>• Performance</li> </ul>

**Short Narrative: (Reflection--how do you intend to use data for results?)**

### Appendix XI Assessment Cycle

