

Question

Study

Write

Live

Evaluate

Read

Seek

Communicate

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INtopFORM



Executive Summary

Through a university-wide conversation about student learning and careful analysis of assessment data, ETSU has selected information fluency as the focus of its forthcoming Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). INtopFORM will enable and encourage ETSU students to excel in seeking, using and communicating diverse and often complex information. The plan defines excellence with respect to six abilities essential for students' professional success, personal fulfillment and active citizenship. Students who are INtopFORM ask insightful questions and are persistent and resourceful when seeking information. They thoughtfully evaluate the credibility and implications of information. They use information skillfully to accomplish their purposes and communicate information effectively to aid others' understanding. They recognize their ethical obligations when seeking, using and communicating information. Underlying all of these abilities are attitudes of curiosity, disciplined skepticism and independence of thought.

Data from numerous longstanding assessments of undergraduate student learning and engagement at ETSU reveal a compelling need and a timely opportunity to enhance students' information fluency. These data include first- and senior-year assessments of students' oral communication, writing, critical thinking, and information technology skills. The results of the National Survey of Student Engagement further reinforced the relevance of a QEP focusing on information fluency.

ETSU pursued a deliberate, inclusive process for selecting the theme of its QEP. Spanning approximately 12 months, the process engaged all of the university's key stakeholders, including faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, and community leaders. A university-wide survey in early fall 2011, to which nearly one thousand individuals responded, culminated the selection process, resulting in the adoption of INtopFORM as ETSU's QEP. A QEP Development Team comprising outstanding faculty from across the university, as well as Students Affairs staff and undergraduate and graduate students, then drafted the implementation and assessment plan. Throughout the development process the team actively sought ideas and guidance from the university community through online surveys, meetings with university governance bodies, interviews with campus leaders, and a day-long retreat sponsored by President Brian Noland.

The implementation plan for INtopFORM focuses principally on undergraduate education. However, it

also provides opportunities for participation by faculty teaching graduate and professional students, and it invites all university units to propose projects to help ETSU students develop and apply information fluency skills. The plan has four components—introducing INtopFORM skills in the first year of college; enhancing INtopFORM mastery in undergraduate programs of study; awarding INtopFORM fellowships open to all faculty in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs; and creating a university-wide culture of excellence in information fluency. The last of these elements includes awarding INtopFORM student support and engagement grants for which all university units may apply.

ETSU's Office of Assessment and Teaching will oversee and support assessment of INtopFORM learning outcomes, and the director of the QEP will track execution of the implementation plan. Measures of student learning include the California Critical Thinking Skills Test and the iSkills test, locally developed standardized exams, embedded assessments of students' use of information in speaking and writing assignments in designated general education courses, and selected items on the National Survey of Student Engagement. Undergraduate programs participating in the QEP will develop discipline-appropriate assessments of their majors' attainment of the INtopFORM learning outcomes, and INtopFORM fellows and units receiving student support and engagement grants will define and assess the expected results in their projects.

East Tennessee State University is fully committed to the successful implementation of INtopFORM. The university recently filled the position director of Assessment and Teaching, whose responsibilities include oversight and support of assessment of the QEP. ETSU will also create three new, full-time positions as part of the plan—director of the Quality Enhancement Plan, executive aide to the director of the QEP, and INtopFORM librarian. In addition to funding these positions, ETSU has allocated significant financial resources to support assessment and implementation, including faculty development. To assure the continuing involvement of the entire university community, an INtopFORM leadership team will oversee the plan. Its membership will include the director of the QEP, the director of Assessment and Teaching, the INtopFORM librarian, students, faculty, and staff. The team will report annually to ETSU's University Planning Committee, which oversees strategic initiatives.