

Summary of Project:

The 2016 - 2021 Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) at Columbus State University (CSU) is focused on enhancing the creative, real-world problem solving skills of our students. The QEP Design Team is designing new programs and opportunities for our students that will focus on helping students to develop and hone their problem-solving skills. To be as inclusive in soliciting feedback as possible, members of the QEP Design Team met with several focus groups representing different factions of the campus community in 2015.

Introduction:

On Wednesday, June 24 from 5:15 – 6:15 pm, Jennifer Newbrey and Iris Saltiel met with 18 members of the ROAR Orientation Team to get their feedback about the programs and assessments associated with the new QEP. The students on the Orientation Team lead new students and parents on campus tours during eight student orientation sessions in the summer.

Participant Demographics:

The students that participated in the focus group were mainly juniors ($n = 9$), but there were also three sophomores and five seniors.

They represented a cross-section of majors: Art History, Biology ($n=2$), Communication ($n=2$), Criminal Justice, Engineering, Exercise Science, Health Science, Marketing, Nursing, Psychology, Special Education ($n = 3$), and Theater Education ($n=2$).

Questions Asked:

Students in the focus group were asked to answer the questions below in writing and then the members of the Design Team led discussions about each question.

1. As of today, how would you rank your skills in creative, real-world problem-solving on a scale of 1 (extremely weak) to 5 (extremely strong)?
2. What kinds of real-world problems do you see yourself creatively solving during your career?
3. If you could choose which problem-solving programs we were going to make more available to students, what would you choose (i.e., independent research, class-embedded research, internships, student art exhibits, etc.)?
4. What do you think about the idea of expanding Tower Day to provide more students with the opportunity to present/deliver their solutions to “problems” (i.e., art exhibits, musical performances, solutions to classroom-based problem-solving activities, etc.)?

5. In order to show the growth of our students in their problem-solving skills, we need students to complete a report at the end of problem-solving activities. The requirements of the report are listed in the box below. What do you think would be most challenging about completing such a report? What do you think would be the most rewarding?

I Solved It!	
Creative, Real-World Problem-Solving Reflection Report	
<u>Discovery Phase</u>	
1)	What was the real-world problem that you or your team addressed?
2)	What made that problem challenging or complex to solve?
<u>Design Phase</u>	
3)	What strategies did you or your team identify and try out to solve the real-world problem?
4)	What worked and did not work when using those strategies?
<u>Delivery Phase</u>	
5)	What was your or your team's final creative solution to the real-world problem?
6)	How (also when and where) was your or your team's solution presented to and received by others?
<u>Learning Reflection</u>	
7)	What new learning or insights did you or your team gain about creative, real-world problem-solving from this experience?
8)	After this experience, how would you rate your or your team's level of skill in creative, real-world problem-solving on a scale of 1 (extremely weak) to 5 (extremely strong)?

6. Do you have any additional ideas on how we can help students to increase their creative problem-solving skills here at CSU?

Student Responses:

1. As of today, how would you rank your skills in creative, real-world problem-solving on a scale of 1 (extremely weak) to 5 (extremely strong)?
 - 13 students rated themselves at a 4
 - Four rated themselves at a 3
 - One person rated themselves as a 3.5
2. What kinds of real-world problems do you see yourself creatively solving during your career?
 - Accommodating patients/clients/students/customers (n = 4)
 - Problems between students (n = 4)
 - Mastering discipline-specific methods (n = 3)
 - Problems with people (n = 3)
 - Money/time management (n = 3)
 - Dealing with people (n = 2)
 - Problems with teaching everything I need to

- Best way of exhibiting art
 - Staying focused on goals
 - Learning to think on your feet and under pressure
 - Which job to take
 - Working with a team
 - Being sensitive to people's perspectives and personal issues/concerns
 - Solving communication and technology problems
 - Effective communication
3. If you could choose which problem-solving programs we were going to make more available to students, what would you choose (i.e., independent research, class-embedded research, internships, student art exhibits, etc.)?
- Internships/hands-on experience (n = 18)
 - Art exhibits (n = 2)
 - Independent research
 - Class-embedded research
4. What do you think about the idea of expanding Tower Day to provide more students with the opportunity to present/deliver their solutions to "problems" (i.e., art exhibits, musical performances, solutions to classroom-based problem-solving activities, etc.)?
- All but one student expressed their support of this idea
5. In order to show the growth of our students in their problem-solving skills, we need students to complete a report at the end of problem-solving activities. The requirements of the report are listed in the box below. What do you think would be most challenging about completing such a report? What do you think would be the most rewarding?

Most challenging:

- Discovery phase (n = 2)
- Design phase (n = 2)
- Delivery phase (n = 5)
- Knowing the criteria (n = 2)
- Working in a group (n = 2)
- Nothing would be challenging

Most rewarding:

- Design phase (n = 2)
- Delivery phase (n = 4)
- Learning reflection (n = 5)
- Entire process (n = 2)
- Able to communicate ideas
- Confidence from overcoming problems
- Knowing your skills were useful in a situation
- To see how everyone came to a conclusion
- To put real-world thinking and skills to use

6. Do you have any additional ideas on how we can help students to increase their creative problem-solving skills here at CSU?

- More classroom introducing benefits of research
- Be able to listen to other people when a problem does occur. Be open-minded and try not to take things personal
- Tower Day and incorporating all departments
- Have students more hands-on opportunities to be confident in our majors as we apply to the real-world
- By placing them in a variety of situations where they must use creative problem-solving skills to solve the problem at hand
- Offering more independent studies and internships within criminal justice
- Seminars with activities
- More scenarios to think outside the box
- Creative fairs – art, music, etc.
- Artistic contests and shows
- Internships
- Incorporate this into freshmen learning communities

Conclusions:

All of the students that participated in the focus group seemed interested in/excited about the new opportunities that would be available as part of the new QEP. They were especially interested in more opportunities to gain hands-on experience in their fields of study prior to completing their degrees.