

# Sharing the Responsibility: A University-Wide Effort to Improve the First-Year Experience for Students at McNeese State University



## Presented by:

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# A University-Wide Effort to Improve the First-Year Experience

## Where we were in 2004

- One-day Freshman Orientation Program
- College success course in Dept. of Biological & Environmental Sci. (120)
- College success course in Dept. of Visual Arts (30)
- College success course in Dept. of Engineering (100)

## Where we are in 2008-2009

- 60 sections of Freshman Foundations
- Serving all 22 academic departments on campus
- Enrolling every first-time student (well, almost)
- Students served = 1,374

## Where we want to be 2012

- Regional university that has undergone a cultural transformation

# Reaffirmation of Accreditation Southern Association of Colleges and Schools/ Commission on Colleges

SACS Requires:



## **Core Requirement 2.12 states:**

The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan and demonstrates that the plan is part of an ongoing planning and evaluation process.

# QEP - Quality Enhancement Plan

**The QEP must be:**

- A plan, not an idea
- A focused course of action
- Related to improving student learning
- A product of faculty deliberations

# QEP Development – Timeline

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Apr. 2005   | Charged with creating and planning an acceptable QEP - Included faculty, students, staff, and community members |
| 2005 – 2007 | Conducted meetings with student focus groups, academic colleges, library, visited other schools                 |
| Mar. 2007   | On-site SACS visit  |
| Dec. 2007   | Unconditional Approval by SACS  |



# QEP Statement of Intent

## Written by Faculty Focus Group

### *Initial Statement of Intent:*

After completing core curriculum and course requirements, students will be able to write effectively and appropriately as required by their disciplines.

### *Revised Statement of Intent:*

After completing core curriculum, students will have the foundation to write effectively and appropriately as required by their disciplines.

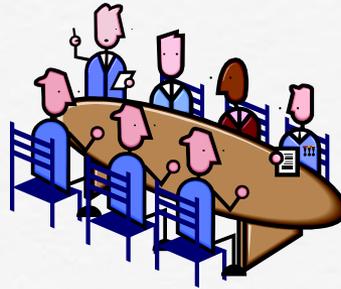
# 5 Principal Components of QEP

- Freshman Foundations courses (enculturate)
- Modification of ENGL 101/102 (introduce)
- Writing Center serving students and faculty (assist)
- Identification of courses as writing enriched (facilitate)
- Modification of the Faculty Annual Performance Review (encourage)



**September 2006  
Freshman  
Foundations  
Committee  
Formed**

A faculty representative from each of the six colleges, General & Basic Studies, and the QEP Administrator



**Course  
Developed**

A Freshman Foundations course was developed

- 1) to introduce the writing component of the QEP to incoming students and
- 2) to enhance our one-day orientation program.

# Goal: Freshman Foundations would be a shared responsibility among all disciplines

Our Beginning: Develop the course - FFND 101  
Freshman Foundations

Freshman Foundations (FFND 101) will replace the one-credit hour orientation in all degree plans.



- 1 credit hour lecture/lab course. Meets 1 hour each week for the duration of the term.
- Spring 2008 – 7 Pilot sections
- Fall 2008 – FFND 101 required of all first-time freshmen

Freshman Foundations Faculty Committee developed three major components for the course:

# Freshman Foundations Faculty Committee developed 3 Learning Outcomes for the course:

- **College Adjustment**

Students will demonstrate an awareness of the attitude and skills necessary to support academic achievement.

- **Writing Initiative**

Students will be introduced to the institution-wide nature of the writing component and expectations of the University concerning writing in all disciplines.

- **College Content**

Students will demonstrate an understanding of faculty expectations, program requirements, career expectations, and proper sequencing of courses for a successful and timely completion of a degree.

# Parts Needed for Implementation



# Now what?



1. **What outcomes are we seeking from students taking FFND 101?**
  - a. Achievement of 6 Student Learning Outcomes
  - b. Positive attitude and behavioral changes dealing with college success
  - c. Improved writing capability
2. **How do we help students learn?**
  - Lectures
  - Blackboard assignments
  - Group activities
  - Guest speakers
  - Writing activities
  - Campus tours
  - Attendance at campus events
  - Peer Mentors
3. **How do we measure whether students achieved # 1?**
  - Pre and Post surveys
    - ✓ given on content pertaining to 6 SLOs
    - ✓ given on changes in attitude/behavior
  - Statement of Intent writing assignment using University-wide grading guide or rubric

# Spring 2008 – Our Results from Pre/Post Surveys

## Content:

Students scored  $\geq 70\%$   
on 4 of the 6 SLOs, but  
scored much lower on:  
SLO 2 University expectations  
concerning writing  
SLO 3 Knowledge of writing  
rubric and its applications



## Attitude/Behavior:

On a scale of 1 to 5, we  
were looking for a mean  
increase of 1 point  
42 % increased (avg = 0.4)  
39% decreased (avg = 0.5)  
11% scores stayed same  
8% scores were unreliable



# Results from the Writing Assignment

We based our measure of proficiency on grades:

70 % of students will score  $\geq 80\%$  on the writing assignment

But did our findings indicate student strengths & weaknesses in writing? We need a better assessment instrument.

Results: 69% of the students in the pilot sections scored  $\geq 80\%$  on the writing assignment



# Changes Based on Assessments

- Student Learning Outcomes reduced/refined
- Course content edited or eliminated
- Grading guide (rubric) revised and used for assessment in all Writing-Enriched courses
- Pre- and post- assessment surveys revised and will be given 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> week of course
- Some college-specific content introduced earlier in the semester
- Section for nontraditional students established

# Fall 2008

## FFND 101 Required of all First-time Freshman

U, 674 Students provided support for all FFND 101 students



Classroom Activities



Peer Mentors



Career Day



Classroom Activities



Special Events



Guest speakers

# Fall 2008 Course Assessments

## Students in FFND

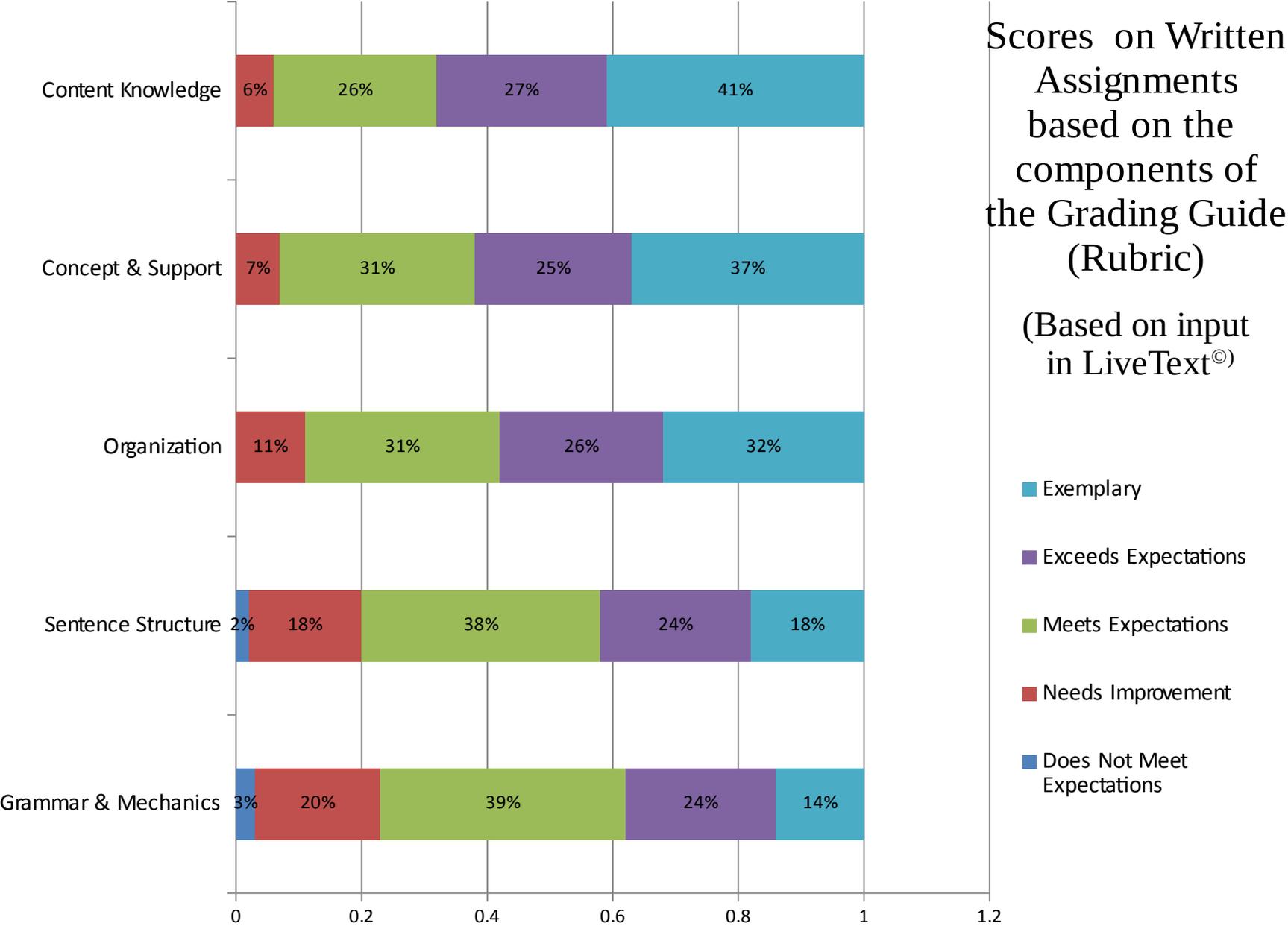
- a. Achievement of 5 Student Learning Outcomes
- b. Positive attitude and behavioral changes dealing with college success
- c. Improved writing capability

## Our findings:

- a. Students scored  $\geq 70\%$  on 4 of the 5 SLOs, but scored much lower on:  
*SLO 2 University expectations concerning writing*
- b. Most significant changes in students' attitude or behavior involved:
  - ✓ □ a decrease in students' preparation for classes
  - ✓ □ decrease in anticipated visits to the Writing Center
- c.  $\geq 75\%$  of students scored "Meets Expectations" on writing assignment using grading guide or rubric

# Scores on Written Assignments based on the components of the Grading Guide (Rubric)

(Based on input in LiveText<sup>®</sup>)



# Assessing our First-Year Initiative

## 1. What do we want to know?

- What are the strong points of our first-year initiative?
- What are our short comings?
- Has our initiative brought about changes in the campus culture as it relates to our QEP?

## 2. What information do we need to gather?

- ✓ Interviews with students selected sections from six colleges and General & Basic Studies
- ✓ Weekly feedback from Peer Mentors
- ✓ End of course meeting with Peer Mentors
- ✓ Online weekly surveys from Freshman Foundations faculty
- ✓ Interviews with FFND faculty
- ✓ Online surveys about peer mentors

## 3. What do we do with the results?

Maintaining the vision

# Improvements Based on Assessment Outcomes

- Consider fewer content topics that are covered more in-depth
- Create textbook with MSU content
- Involvement in campus activities important to student success
- More emphasis on reason and importance of writing effectively
- More opportunities for classroom discussions, less lectures
- More emphasis on college-specific content
- More emphasis on careers
- More assistance with degree plans

# Long-term Plans

- Maintain consistency of course across curricula
- Improve student attitudes/behaviors
- Student achievement of all SLOs
- Faculty training and support
- Peer Mentor training and support
- Maintain backing from senior administration
- Transitional programs for transfer students
- Assimilation of nontraditional students
- Survey of Fall 2008 cohort during Spring term 2010
- Remember 2012