

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



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Freshman Foundations & Students in
Transition

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:

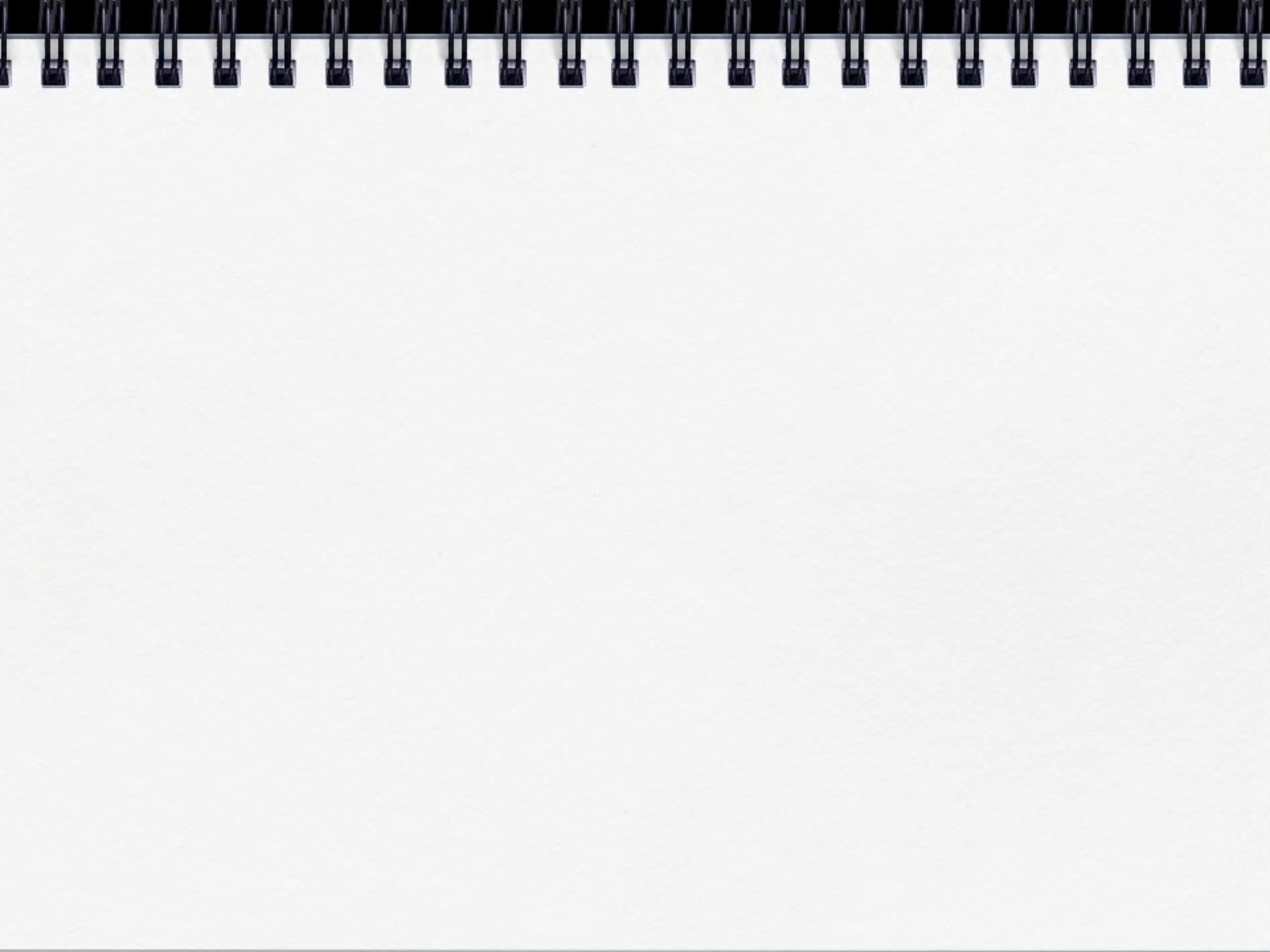
After completing core curriculum and course requirements, students will be able to write effectively and appropriately as required by their disciplines.

Revised Statement of Intent:

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

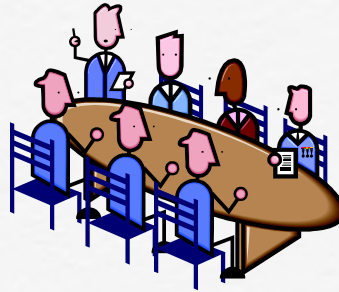
5 Principal Components of QEP

- 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 2nd/3rd 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

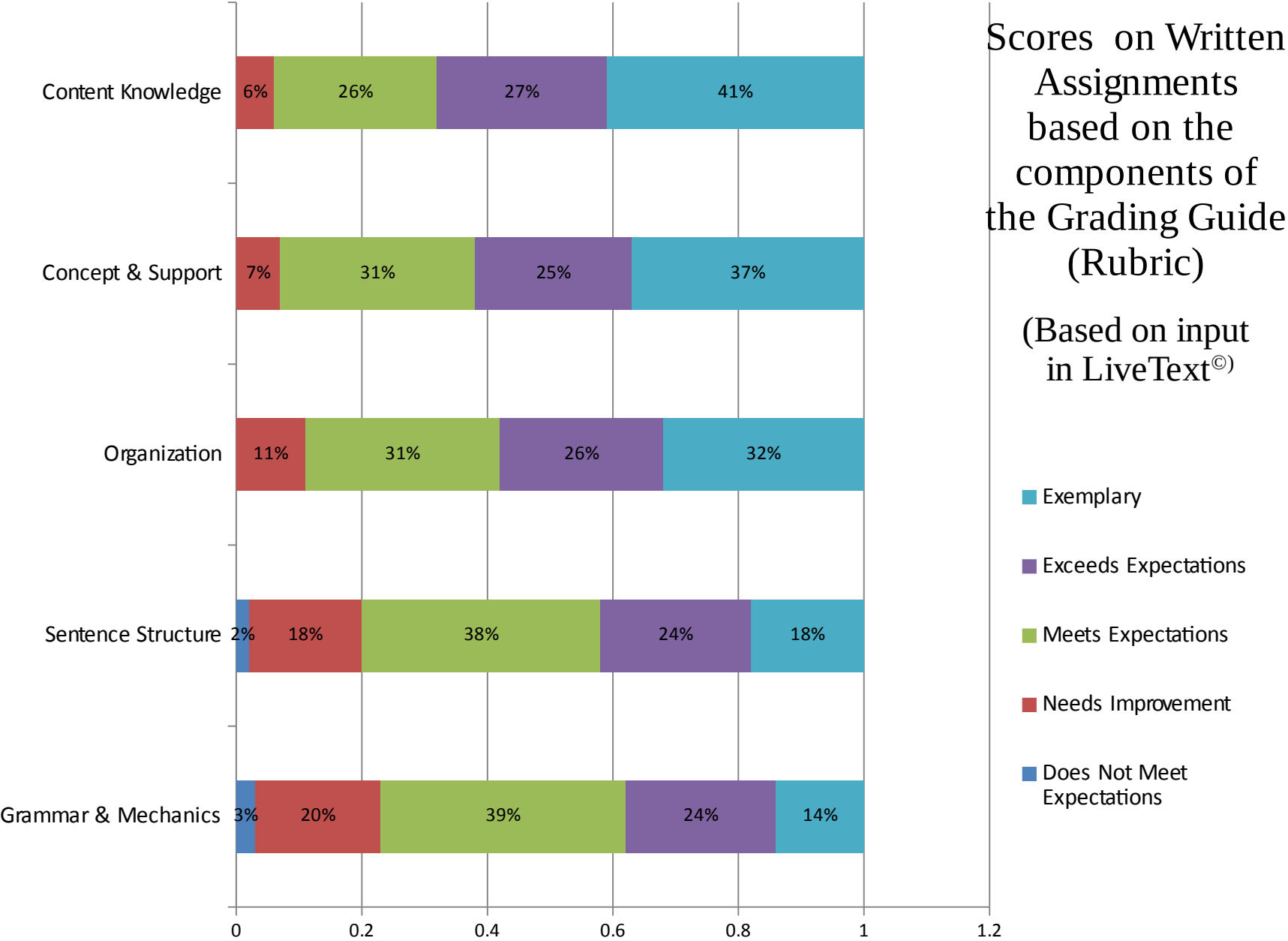
- a. Achievement of 5 Student Learning Outcomes
- b. Positive attitude and behavioral changes dealing with college success
- c. Improved writing capability

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[®])



- Exemplary
- Exceeds Expectations
- Meets Expectations
- Needs Improvement
- Does Not Meet Expectations

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