

Friends,

At the recent General Faculty meeting, I mentioned two specific processes Washburn University will be initiating this year. One is known as Quality Assurance (QA) and the other will be referred to as Washburn's Quality Initiative (QI). As we begin the process of developing these two initiatives further, I wanted to provide additional information about [progress being made in each area.

The Quality Assurance process is built around five criteria and effective practices common to high achieving universities. The criteria address our mission, integrity, student learning support, student learning assessment, and resource planning. In addition, as part of our Quality Assurance process we must verify that Washburn follows assumed practices evident in all institutions of higher learning. Some examples of important assumed practices include transparency in student costs and transfer of courses, academic rigor for college courses, appropriately credentialed faculty, and the ability of the institution to meet current and future financial obligations. Our task is to determine the types of activities at Washburn which best exemplify these areas and develop efficient processes for gathering this information and summarizing it annually. Also, as part of good assessment practices, we will develop ways of codifying the information, sharing it with our stakeholders, and using it to enhance our educational processes.

To accomplish this major undertaking, we believe six subcommittees will need to be formed (five for the criteria and one for the assumed practices). Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Nancy Tate, Dr. Donna LaLonde, Assessment Coordinator, and Dr. Margaret Wood, Associate Professor of Anthropology have agreed to provide leadership in the QA area. On behalf of Washburn University, I would like to thank all of them for taking on this incredibly important project. They may be contacting you in the next few weeks to see if you would be willing to help by serving on one of the committees. Dr. Wood is also reviewing some ongoing Washburn evaluation processes such as Program Review to assure that our procedures will efficiently align with our QA aspirations. If you are contacted about participating in any of these activities, I hope you will agree to help. I believe this initiative will allow us to annually reflect on the things we are doing well and the things we can improve on the path to becoming an even stronger institution. Assuring the quality of our educational process is vital to all of us working at Washburn as well as to our students, community members, Regents and external constituents such as accrediting bodies.

Washburn's Quality Initiative involves the development of a university-wide project that will help us improve the quality of our institution. Because Educational Excellence is at the core of what we do every day and a central element of our strategic plan, we are inviting proposals addressing how we can enhance that excellence in three ways-- (a) through a focus on infusing Technology to an even greater degree in the classroom, (b) by developing processes that allow students to effectively transition to university life and (c) by developing training opportunities and support which prepare our faculty to provide the best education possible to our students. I will be working with Dr. Tom Underwood in providing coordination for the QI project. I would like to thank him in advance for his service to Washburn University in this area. Tom is currently establishing a website for information about QI and will be distributing a "call for proposals" soon. This document will request very brief descriptions of ideas which might transform and enhance educational excellence at our university. We hope that faculty and staff will consider proposing concepts which could be embraced across the university to create the best possible environment for learning. I encourage you to review the information you will receive from Tom and submit your ideas this fall.

Thank you for all the many ways you support and enhance Washburn. If you have any questions about either initiative--QA or QI--don't hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes for the fall semester.

Randy Pembrook
Vice President for Academic Affairs