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A Roundtable Conversation About READY FOR THE WORLD

UT’s Quality Enhancement Plan: The International and Intercultural Awareness Initiative

Keep the Conversation Going
from Chancellor Loren Crabtree

Many people worked hard for two years behind the scenes during the planning and accreditation phases of UT’s Quality Enhancement Plan. Then, at the end of fall semester, their hard work paid off when the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools granted UT overwhelmingly positive reaccreditation. Campus leaders didn’t await outside endorsement to begin thinking interculturally. We’ve had a wonderful array of events on campus this year – speakers and performers whose experiences have enlivened our desire to know the world and to become superior intercultural partners.

This month we’ve officially entered a more public phase of the QEP. We’re drawing student, faculty, and staff attention to the plan with a new Web site and a new name, Ready for the World. And, we’re drawing every area of university life into the process of attuning to the global experience. Four faculty-staff groups are at work: Global Advisory Committee, Assessment Work Group, Curriculum Infusion Work Group, and Fostering Intercultural Awareness Across Campus.

I want to thank the campus leaders who participated in this Commission for Women roundtable for continuing the discussion of our intercultural and international initiative on campus in such a wonderfully constructive way. Let’s keep conversing and learning -- and nurturing a community where we are all creative, engaged and Ready for the World.

Why does UT need the Ready for the World Initiative?

HODGES: The QEP initiative began about two years ago as a requirement of the SACS accreditation committee. The chancellor came up with the idea of focusing on internationalization and intercultural awareness because it fits UT’s strategic plan to focus on better understanding and appreciation of cultural pluralism. The whole idea is that we enhance student learning, especially in our undergraduates, but also that we engage faculty, staff and students all across campus.

GEHLHAR: QEP, which just this month adopted a new name - Ready for the World - not only engages UT goals but those of the state of Tennessee and society in general. It is imperative that today’s university graduates be fully aware of society inside and outside the United States. If UT graduates are not conversing broadly, they will not perform as well in their professional careers or in their lives.

HINDLE: I see Ready for the World offering a unifying theory for the campus, the state, and beyond, which lays out opportunities for learning to thrive in a pluralistic society. The world is getting smaller and smaller due to our communicating and traveling worldwide, and we have a growing dependence on each other. Technology now allows us to do good things together or to do destructive things to each other unless we communicate and understand each other. This great theory of unity is long overdue.

HODGES: I like the fact that you talked about our growing dependence on one another. I think that understanding is at the center of being Ready for the World, and the QEP document serves as a framework for how we can do this -- not only for the next 5 or 10 years as SACS requires, but as we go on and on and on. This framework will help us appreciate and make the most of our dependence.
we value diversity and have programs to support that. Students, faculty and staff who are recruited from diverse backgrounds have gone up. The trend is toward fewer undergraduate students with the qualifications. That means a more diverse faculty, and told the whole class about every one, and I think that that reached a lot of our students. As little as you would think prepared for their careers. In past student surveys some have said “I wish I had studied abroad or interacted more with students from other backgrounds.” Through Ready for the World programming and initia- tives, our students now can engage in interactions with other cultures while they are here and become much better prepared for their careers.

HODGES: Aside from the immediate affect of helping stu- dents see these different things that Sarah so well stated, it helps students prepare for their careers. In past student surveys some have said “I wish I had studied abroad or interacted more with students from other backgrounds.” Through Ready for the World programming and initia- tives, our students now can engage in interactions with other cultures while they are here and become much better prepared for their careers.

HODGES: I just had a thought: If faculty members reinforce multicultural events and say, “This has my stamp of approval, I really think you should go,” it could be really helpful. I know my cultural anthropology teacher men- tioned cultural attractions events she was impressed with and told the whole class about every one, and I think that that reached a lot of our students. As little as you would think that, students do listen to their teachers.

Are staff included?

HODGES: That's one of the greater hallmarks of the plan -- inclusion of staff as well as students and faculty. As a staff person I feel very positive about that. It takes a village to have a university. We're all in this thing together and we need each other. Ready for the World calls on all of us to stretch and grow, to get training in new areas. Students and faculty are used to stretching, but staff, perhaps, haven't done as much stretching. Ready for the World compels us to do so, and I think that that's a wonderful, won- derful thing. Can you tell I'm rather delighted with this whole initiative?

HODGES: That's so true. Ready for the World brings people together to support one another -- for example, the neces- sity of planning and programming brings student affairs and academic affairs together. The Learning Commons and Ready for the World are a natural part of what students learn; they will come into contact with cross-cultural perspectives throughout their education. It gives faculty a chance to think in different ways about what they teach, think more from an interdisciplinary approach, showing more and more international and intercultural perspectives in what they teach. Students realize their careers depend on a now global economy where it's important to know how to interact with people from other cultures, make a good impres- sion and do business. For example, in business it's very important to know how to shake hands! It's hard for me to put that into words, but I think Ready for the World will be an awesome improvement in the quality of education at UT. And, Ready for the World will benefit Knoxville as a whole, if it takes off. It will expand on the scale of com- munity I feel in Knoxville -- you walk down the street and people smile at you. If you can introduce more diversity on a smaller scale then it will have an impact on the larger and larger scale, too.

GEHLHAR: And it applies not to just the business communi- ty but really to any profession nowadays. No profession is in isolation. If anybody's going to advance in any field they have to be able to get along with others, exchange ideas with others -- on the other side of town or on the other side of the globe.

HODGES: Or in Washington D.C.

GEHLHAR: Yes. Anywhere in the United States, too. We want UT graduates who are not afraid of other people, but rather, are comfortable working with all people.

Summary Comments

GEHLHAR: As long as UT’s Quality Enhancement Plan remains a document, it’s nothing. It has to be appreciated, used and implemented -- not just by one set of people, but across campus.

PEACOCK: From the student perspective, I hope campus organizations can begin to work together more, to network through the central program council and other central leadership bodies. We’ll become informed about each other’s international and intercultural programming and begin to collaborate and reach our target groups with the news about what’s going on. The weekly Student @tennes- see that started this semester can help us with that.

HODGES: The International and Intercultural Awareness Initiative is a “framework,” something upon which to build, something upon which to grow. That’s how I look at the Quality Enhancement Plan -- a framework for moving into something grander in the future.

HODGES: QEP is an organic thing, isn’t it? We are growing as we work with it and move with it and internalize it. So the Quality Enhancement Plan will change and then it will change. Its working name has al- ready changed! Now let’s go get Ready for the World!
http://uthr.admin.utk.edu/tandd/

So rumor has it that you have a question about policy HR128?

Whether you are an employee or a supervisor, it’s important to get the facts straight. Don’t listen to hearsay! Check out the information at The University of Tennessee Employee and Organizational Development website.

The site includes information about various policies as well as HR128. In addition, a Frequently Asked Questions, FAQ on HR128, document is available for download in PDF format.

Why not go to http://uthr.admin.utk.edu/tandd/ and get the RIGHT information? What’s stopping you? You will find a wealth of knowledge about HR128 as well as a list of courses, both in the classroom and online.

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