

2009 Research Grants Awarded by Quality Matters

The Quality Matters Research Advisory and Academic Advisory Committees are pleased to announce funding for five research projects. The RFP generated an enthusiastic response with a total of twenty-six proposals submitted from sixteen states. Findings from the studies will be published in June 2010.

Project Awarded (in alphabetical order by project leader)

Grant 1: Project Leader: Edward C. Bowen, PhD, Executive Dean, Dallas TeleCollege, TX

Project Title: *QM Standard 8 Pilot Project*

A partnership among faculty members, staff experienced in accessibility standards, and staff certified as QM reviewers, will develop a checklist that all district faculty members can use to improve course accessibility for all students enrolled in online courses. Students will have an opportunity to give feedback on usability and learning outcomes of the checklist and it will be refined using student and faculty input.

Three online courses will be modified using the QM Standard 8 specific review standards and the checklist. Input from students will be gathered in post-assessment and face-to-face or online focus groups. Necessary modifications to the checklist will be made. The students will have a unified voice in the evolution of the checklist. Since the checklist will be created in a collaborative environment drawing on input and first hand experiences from students and faculty, it will minimize course maintenance relating to accessibility, thereby allowing students and faculty to focus on teaching and learning.

Grant 2: Project Leader: Veronica Diaz, PhD, LEARNING TECHNOLOGY MANAGER, Maricopa Center for Learning and Instruction (MCLI), Maricopa Community Colleges, Tempe, AZ

Project Title: *Maricopa Quality Matters Program Review*

The ten colleges of Maricopa Community College make up one of the largest community colleges in the US with over 4000 faculty members and 250,000 students. Through the Quality Matters pilot and in preparation for becoming a statewide consortium, the MCLI supported the training of 67 Maricopa Quality Matters certified peer-reviewers. Moving to the next phase, the MCLI will conduct a mixed methods district-wide assessment of Quality Matters certified peer-reviewers to determine the learning and application impact.

Grant #3: Project Leader: Anna A. Hall, PhD., Associate Professor/Sociology, Delgado Community College, Metairie LA

Project Title: *Quality Matters Rubric as 'Teaching Presence': Application of Community of Inquiry Framework to Analysis of the QM Rubric's Effects of Student Learning*

The project will examine the effects of the QM Rubric implementation on the two forms of "presence" identified within the CoI (Community of Inquiry) domain: (1) student social presence (with the focus on group cohesion), and (2) student cognitive presence/inquiry (both, in the form of exploration and resolution).

The impact on student learning will be investigated by operationalizing QM design improvements as teaching presence by quantifying data on social and cognitive presence from archived pre-and current post-reviewed courses. All course sections, archived pre- and current post-reviewed, are taught by the same instructor. The second goal of this project is to demonstrate the effects of social, cognitive, and teaching forms of presence on student course performance (as reflected in overall and assessment-specific grades) and student perceived satisfaction with the course.

Grant #4: Project Leader: Evelyn Knowles, PhD, Coordinator of Program Quality Development, School for Online Learning, Park University, MO

Project Title: *The Impact of Quality Matters Standards on Learning Experiences in Online Courses*

Although Park University has redeveloped over three hundred courses with an online course development model that incorporates QM standards, the benefit of using QM standards at Park remains anecdotal. Four online courses, which remain in their original 2005 design, will be redesigned using the QM rubric as a guideline. The courses will be in different academic areas and reflect a diverse student population. "Pre-redesigned" course descriptive/usage and student experiences, along with design changes, will be carefully documented to compare significance of specific modifications.

Students in the four courses (pre- and post-redesign) will complete a survey on whether or not identified standards are met in the courses. Care will be taken to put survey questions in "student", not QM standards language. Students' successes in achieving the core assessments in the pre- and post-redesigned courses will be compared.

Grant #5: Project Leader: Karen Swan, PhD, James J. Stukel, Distinguished Professor of Educational Leadership, University of Illinois Springfield

Project Title: *Linking Course Design to Learning Processes Using the Quality Matters and Community of Inquiry Frameworks*

This project will focus on the review and revision of a "gold" (or master) course which is taught by multiple faculty members and is fundamentally unchanged during the nine years offered online. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the impact of revision related to QM Rubric Standards 5 (Learner Engagement) and 6 (Course Technology).

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) survey, recently created and validated through factor analysis, will be used to measure student perceptions of learning processes in online courses. The instrument focuses on students' perceptions of social, cognitive, and teaching presence. Regression analyses will be performed to compare pre/post-scores on the Community of Inquiry (CoI) survey, its subscales, and any items that seem important to determine whether any changes in student perceptions are statistically significant. In addition, faculty who teach the course will be surveyed.