

I. SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

The USC Aiken (USCA) Quality Enhancement Plan was designed to improve students' Critical Inquiry skills. In accordance with the plan, beginning with the 2011-2012 academic year, all USCA first-year students are required to take a one-credit hour course in Critical Inquiry (CI) based on the First-Year Reading and taught by faculty from across the disciplines. The Quality Enhancement Plan slogan, "Think DEEP," was formulated to serve as a reminder for students to *Discover, Experiment, Evaluate, and Perform* (DEEP) as a means to practice Critical Inquiry and thereby increase their learning.

The QEP was also crafted, and is now being implemented, in ways meant to simultaneously challenge faculty to become more adept at developing the intellectual curiosity of students. To that end, during the first year of implementing our program, faculty teaching the CI course became members of a learning community and were given opportunities through a three-day "Think DEEP Summer Institute" and through learning community meetings during the academic year to share approaches to teaching the CI course. Our goal is for most full-time faculty at USCA to teach the CI course at some time during the five-year implementation period. Another aim is for faculty to engage in more intentional development of students' Critical Inquiry abilities in general education courses, major requirements, and elective credits across the academic disciplines. As USCA faculty integrate CI vertically into the curriculum and students apply CI at every level of learning, we believe our students' college experiences will be enriched.

Because true learning is a process, and being proficient at learning requires focused practice, our approach involves actively engaging students as agents in their own education. The CI course is focused on helping students to learn by doing as they become DEEPer thinkers. Their ability to *Discover* new ways to see the world; to *Experiment* and gain access to new information; to *Evaluate* the quality of information; and to *Perform*, present, and disseminate their knowledge—all elements of the AFCl 101 course—should increase their confidence, enhance their skills, and instill a desire for a life of learning as they complete their degrees at USCA and enter the larger world.

Our ongoing mission is to motivate students to reach beyond their accustomed levels of thinking and effort, to look DEEPer into problems and issues related to the First-Year Reading, and to contribute to more meaningful class discussions. Accordingly, over their first year in our AFCl 101 course, our students explored issues and ideas, expanded their information literacy skills, and became more appreciative of the power of civil discourse.

In addition to the CI course, the stated goals of our QEP include affording opportunities to participate in co-curricular activities linked to the subject of the First-Year Reading (e.g., blogging and social networking, Peer Mentoring in the CI course, service learning on campus or in the local community, and collaborative projects suggested by the topic of the First-Year Reading) in order to create a more comprehensive and fulfilling learning environment for undergraduates, staff, and faculty.

Although the CI course was designed primarily to focus on the fall semester of most students' first college year, and on the spring semester for a few students, the intention is for the social connections created among students and the students' close interactions with faculty to form a scaffold of collaborative relationships that students will build on throughout their USCA experience and beyond.

II. CRITICAL INQUIRY PROGRAM: PILOT YEAR

Critical Inquiry Workshop

In accordance with the QEP plan, the inaugural 2011-2012 pilot year of the Critical Inquiry Program began in May 2011 with a three-day “Think DEEP Summer Institute” at USCA. The workshop facilitator was Dr. Michael Sweet of the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Sweet led a series of breakout sessions and whole-group discussions on the following items: *The Last Town on Earth* (the shared text for all AFCI 101 sections), “The Essential Elements of Team-Based Learning,” and “Teaching Critical Thinking for Transfer Across Domains.” The workshop was highly interactive, and provided teaching tips, tools, and sample CI assignments for use in teaching the AFCI 101 course. In addition to the readings, Dr. Sweet referenced the contents and critical thinking resources posted on the *Teacher to Teacher: Critical Thinking in the College Classroom* website (<http://www.utexas.edu/academic/ctl/criticalthinking/#Start>) that he helped develop for the University of Texas at Austin.

Fall 2011 Semester

The AFCI 101 course was offered for the first time during the Fall 2011 Semester. Rather than piloting the program with a small group of selected students, we elected to require all incoming freshmen at USCA to complete the AFCI 101 course beginning with the 2011-2012 academic year. For the fall of 2011, a total of twenty-nine sections were taught by full-time faculty from across the disciplines. Each section met once per week for fifty minutes. All sections of AFCI 101 were required to use the First Year Reading Experience text *The Last Town on Earth* as a common reader, but each instructor’s approach to the book and the course were up to the individual instructor. Other required elements of the course were: a common quiz over the reading; an information literacy assignment that involved a class period in the library; a term project of some kind; and the CI Portfolio, which had to contain the information literacy assignment, a reflective essay that discussed each student’s personal experience with Critical Inquiry and involvement in the term project, and an artifact from the term project.

The total freshman enrollment at USCA for the Fall 2011 Semester was 606. 572 students were enrolled full time. Thirty-four were enrolled part time. A total of 559 students took the AFCI 101 course in the fall. Forty-seven incoming freshmen did not enroll.

Of the 559 students who did enroll in AFCI 101 in the Fall 2011 Semester, 501 successfully completed the course with a grade of D or better. This represents a 90% pass rate. Fifty-eight students failed to complete the course. 10% of students failed or withdrew from the class.

The complete grade distribution for Fall 2011 sections of AFCI 101 appears below:

Spring 2012 Semester

Only five sections of AFCI 101 were offered in the Spring 2012 Semester to serve students who were unable to take the class in the Fall 2011 Semester and students who failed to successfully complete the course on their first attempt. These five sections were taught by full-time faculty who took part in the three-day "Think DEEP Summer Institute" at USCA, but were unable to teach the course in the fall semester. As was the case in the fall, each section met once per week for fifty minutes. All sections of AFCI 101 were required to use the FYRE text *The Last Town on Earth* as a common reader, but each instructor's approach to the book and the course were up to the individual instructor. Other required elements of the course were: a common quiz over the reading; an information literacy assignment that involved a class period in the library; a term project of some kind; and the CI Portfolio, which had to contain the information literacy assignment, a reflective essay that discussed each student's personal experience with Critical Inquiry and involvement in the term project, and an artifact from the term project.

There were twenty-six new freshmen at USCA in the Spring 2012 Semester. Twenty-one were enrolled full time. Five were enrolled part time. There was a carryover of 105 students from the Fall 2011 Semester who either did not enroll in AFCI 101 or failed to complete the course. A total of eighty-five students took the AFCI 101 course in the spring. Forty-six students who should have enrolled failed to do so.

Of the eighty-five students who did enroll in AFCI 101 in the Spring 2012 Semester, sixty successfully completed the course with a grade of D or better. This represents a 71% pass rate. Twenty-five students failed to complete the course. 29% of students failed or withdrew from the class.

The grade distribution for the Spring 2012 sections of AFCI 101 appears below:

III. ASSESSMENT

USCA has adopted an assessment plan that incorporates both summative and formative methods. Summative measures have been designed to ascertain the degree of learning in the Critical Inquiry course and determine the effectiveness of our efforts to improve our first-year students' Critical Inquiry skills. The impact of the CI course on longer-term academic behaviors and attitudes as reflected in several performance indicators currently tracked will also be evaluated. Formative assessment methods provide a source of feedback to the Academic Assessment Committee, the QEP Director, and the Coordinator of CI regarding the effectiveness of specific components of the Quality Enhancement Plan to guide long-term improvement of the program.

Summative Measures

Summative measures were designed to assess the following three student learning outcomes for the AFCI 101 course. Students are required to:

- apply the Critical Inquiry process by identifying and analyzing the main themes and ideas in an assigned reading;
- demonstrate information literacy by gathering, evaluating, and using information effectively and responsibly;
- exhibit an ability to consider multiple ideas and perspectives and to communicate that understanding.

To measure student comprehension of the common text, *The Last Town on Earth*, a common quiz was administered in all sections of AFCI 101 during the second and third week of class. In addition to the common quiz, three summative measures have been implemented at USCA to evaluate student performance in the above areas: the Critical Inquiry (CI) Portfolio, the ETS-PP, and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

CI Common Quiz

Each AFCI 101 instructor was required to administer a First Year Reading Quiz to every student in all sections of the CI course. This First Year Reading Quiz had to be administered in week two or week three of the class, and had to comprise 10% of the total overall grade for the course. A bank of test questions over *The Last Town on Earth* was disseminated to all AFCI 101 instructors prior to the beginning of the Fall 2011 Semester and the Spring 2012 Semester. The questions addressed thematic elements, plot details, elements of setting, characters, etc. Instructors were welcome to use questions from the quiz bank to construct the First Year Reading Quiz, or the instructors could formulate questions of their own, with one exception: ten of the questions in the quiz bank, the CI Common Quiz, were mandatory for all instructors to use in the FYRQ. Detailed instructions on how to collect and report the resulting data were given to all AFCI 101 instructors.

However, because of difficulties on the part of some faculty with the data collection process and the reporting format, some of the data were lost or unusable. As a result, CI Common Quiz scores are available for only twenty-two of the thirty-four total sections of AFCI 101 taught in the pilot 2011-2012 academic year (nineteen from the Fall 2011 Semester and three from the

Spring 2012 Semester). A total of 404 students out of the 644 who took the course are represented.

In order to address issues with CI Common Quiz data collection and reporting, a workshop was given to new CI faculty at the 2012 CI Summer Institute. At the first CI Learning Community Workshop for the Fall 2012 Semester, a session was dedicated to the FYRQ. Both of these sessions reinforced the importance of administering the CI Common Quiz, and of reporting the resulting data in a usable format.

A summary of the available results of the CI Common Quiz for the 2011-2012 academic year is as follows:

10 of 10 correct: 23%
9 of 10 correct: 26%
8 of 10 correct: 25%
7 of 10 correct: 14%
6 of 10 correct: 7%
5 of 10 correct: 3%
4 of 10 correct: 1%
3 of 10 correct: 1%
2 of 10 correct: 0%
1 of 10 correct: 0%
0 of 10 correct: 0%

Because a grade of D or better is passing, only 5% of the reported students failed the CI Common Quiz. 49% of students taking the Common Quiz made grades of A.

The complete individual score distribution for all students in the reported sections of AFCI 101 for both the Fall 2011 Semester and the Spring 2012 Semester appears in the chart below:

Section	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Spr	Spr	Spr	%score	
Score	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	100	
10	1	1	3	9	5	2	3	2	3	10	7	6	3	4	3	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	4	23
9	7	7	3	2	5	5	5	5	2	4	5	5	4	9	4	7	4	6	6	1	3	6	6	26
8	7	9	6	5	5	5	5	7	6	2	5	8	6	2	5	3	4	4	2	1	2	4	4	25
7	2	1	5	4	1	3	5	1	3	2	3	0	6	1	6	3	0	0	3	1	5	2	2	14
6	0	0	1	0	2	2	1	4	3	1	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	2	3	1	2	1	1	7
5	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	3
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	17	18	19	20	18	20	20	21	19	20	21	19	19	18	20	21	13	18	19	10	16	18	404	

CI Portfolio: Overview

Each student enrolled in APCI 101 for the pilot 2011-2012 academic year completed a CI Portfolio that included three artifacts that served as the basis for evaluation of the student learning outcomes: 1) documentation of performance on an Information Literacy assignment based on a relevant theme from the First-Year Reading, 2) documentation of performance on a class project, and 3) a reflective essay in which each student commented on his/her personal experiences and development in Critical Inquiry through his/her participation in the CI course. To assess the student learning outcomes, the university collected and evaluated CI Portfolios from every student in the course. Two types of evaluations were performed on the portfolios.

First, each APCI 101 instructor assigned a portfolio grade to every student in every section based on the student's performance on the Information Literacy assignment, the CI project, and the reflective essay. The criteria and weighting for each individual piece of the portfolio varied with the individual instructors. However, instructors were required to structure the overall grade for each of their courses so that the CI Portfolio formed at least 40% of each student's overall grade for the course. The First Year Reading Quiz was mandated to count 10% of the students' course grade.

Second, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness compiled a stratified sample of 200 freshmen students at USCA. This stratified sample was matched to our freshman class in terms of the proportional representation of gender and ethnicity/race. We first broke out the freshman class into race strata for males and females separately. We then identified the number of individuals we would need in each group to have an identical proportional representation in a sample size of 200. Within each group, every individual had an equal chance of being selected; we continued until we had the requisite number of participants. As a result, it is a highly representative sample. At the end of both the Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 Semesters, all CI Portfolios were collected by the university from the APCI 101 instructors. The portfolios for the stratified sample of 200 students were separated from the rest of the portfolios for additional evaluation. We followed the model used for evaluating student Writing Proficiency Portfolios at USCA to evaluate these CI Portfolios. This model calls for careful training of cross-disciplinary portfolio readers in the use of an established rubric to ensure inter-rater reliability and consistency. Each portfolio was rated by two readers. In the case of a significant difference in the scores awarded by the two readers (greater than two points in any category), a third reader reviewed the portfolio. Faculty members from departments across the campus were invited to serve as portfolio evaluators and were compensated for each portfolio graded. The established performance target for the CI portfolios is an average score greater than three on a four-point Likert scale.

The QEP Committee initially recommended the following rubric for evaluating CI Portfolios:

DRAFT Critical Inquiry Portfolio Rubric¹

Category	Excellent 4	Very Good 3	Satisfactory 2	Poor 1
Topic Selection	Identifies a creative, focused, and manageable topic that addresses potentially significant yet previously less-explored aspects of the topic.	Identifies a focused and manageable topic that appropriately addresses relevant aspects of the topic.	Identifies a topic that while manageable is too narrowly focused and leaves out relevant aspects of the topic.	Identifies a topic that is far too general and wide-ranging as to be manageable and doable.
Identification and Assessment of Evidence	Collects and synthesizes detailed information from relevant sources representing various points of view/approaches	Presents detailed information from relevant sources representing various points of view/approaches.	Presents information from relevant sources representing limited points of view/approaches.	Presents information from irrelevant sources representing limited points of view/approaches.
Application of Knowledge	Theoretical framework and project objectives well described. All elements of the methodology are skillfully developed. Appropriate methodology or theoretical framework drawn from across disciplines or from relevant subdisciplines.	Critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are developed and project objectives well-defined, however, more subtle elements are ignored or unaccounted for.	Critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are missing or incorrectly developed. Project objectives unfocused.	Inquiry design demonstrates a misunderstanding of the methodology or theoretical framework.
Analysis and Conclusions	Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus. Reaches a conclusion that is a logical extrapolation from the results of the inquiry.	Organizes evidence to reveal important patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus. Conclusion focused solely on the inquiry findings, and arises specifically from and responds to the results of the inquiry.	Organizes evidence, but is not effective in revealing important patterns, differences, or similarities. States a general conclusion that, because it is so general, also applies beyond the scope of the inquiry findings.	Lists evidence, but it is not organized and/or is unrelated to focus. States an ambiguous, illogical, or unsupported conclusion from inquiry findings.
Synthesis	Provides insightful and detailed discussion of limitations and implications. Demonstrates clear understanding of conclusions and their relevance to project objectives.	Provides good discussion of limitations and implications. Demonstrates a good understanding of conclusions and their relevance to project objectives.	Presents limitations and implications. Demonstrates a good understanding of conclusions with some relevance to project objectives.	Presents limitations and implications, but they are possibly irrelevant and unsupported. Demonstrates limited, if any, understanding of conclusions. Relevance to the project objectives is not well described.

However, after further reflection, this draft rubric was expanded in order to more fully and accurately measure performance on the targeted SLOs. A final annotated version was produced, and this was the rubric used by the evaluators to measure student performance in the AFCI 101 course.

The final annotated rubric appears below:

¹ Modified from the AAC&U's *Inquiry and Analysis VALUE Rubric* and Eastern Kentucky University's *Critical and Creative Thinking Rubric*.

Annotated Critical Inquiry Portfolio Rubric² for AFCI 101 Instructors

Category	Examples of how this may be used to inform assessment in the AFCI 101 course ³	Excellent 4	Very Good 3	Satisfactory 2	Poor 1
Topic Selection <i>(Group or individual projects)</i>	These criteria can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of topic selection in individual or group assignments in the course.	Identifies a creative, focused, and manageable topic that addresses potentially significant yet previously less-explored aspects of the topic.	Identifies a focused and manageable topic that appropriately addresses relevant aspects of the topic.	Identifies a topic that while manageable is too narrowly focused and leaves out relevant aspects of the topic.	Identifies a topic that is far too general and wide-ranging as to be manageable and doable.
Identification and Assessment of Evidence <i>(Information literacy assignment)</i>	This category and criteria relate to the information literacy that students will complete following that session in the library.	Collects and synthesizes detailed information from relevant sources representing various points of view/approaches.	Presents detailed information from relevant sources representing various points of view/approaches.	Presents information from relevant sources representing limited points of view/approaches.	Presents information from irrelevant sources representing limited points of view/approaches.
Application of Knowledge <i>(Group or individual projects)</i>	On a course-based level, these criteria may or may not be useful in the evaluation of individual or group projects in AFCI.	Theoretical framework and project objectives well described. All elements of the methodology are skillfully developed. Appropriate methodology or theoretical framework drawn from across disciplines or from relevant subdisciplines.	Critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are developed and project objectives well-defined, however, more subtle elements are ignored or unaccounted for.	Critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are missing or incorrectly developed. Project objectives unfocused.	Inquiry design demonstrates a misunderstanding of the methodology or theoretical framework.
Analysis and Conclusions <i>(Group or individual projects)</i>	On a course-based level, these criteria may or may not be useful in the evaluation of individual or group projects in AFCI.	Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus. Reaches a	Organizes evidence to reveal important patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus. Conclusion	Organizes evidence, but is not effective in revealing important patterns, differences, or similarities. States a	Lists evidence, but it is not organized and/or is unrelated to focus. States an ambiguous, illogical, or unsupported conclusion

² Modified from the AAC&U's *Inquiry and Analysis VALUE Rubric* and Eastern Kentucky University's *Critical and Creative Thinking Rubric*.

³ Items in bold will be most useful to AFCI 101 instructors in course-based assessment and grading. Other items may be useful depending on the individual assignments.

		conclusion that is a logical extrapolation from the results of the inquiry.	focused solely on the inquiry findings, and arises specifically from and responds to the results of the inquiry.	general conclusion that, because it is so general, also applies beyond the scope of the inquiry findings.	from inquiry findings.
Category	Examples of how this may be used to inform assessment in the AFCI 101 course	Excellent 4	Very Good 3	Satisfactory 2	Poor 1
Synthesis <i>(Group or individual projects)</i>	On a course-based level, these criteria may or may not be useful in the evaluation of individual or group projects in AFCI.	Provides insightful and detailed discussion of limitations and implications. Demonstrates clear understanding of conclusions and their relevance to project objectives.	Provides good discussion of limitations and implications. Demonstrates a good understanding of conclusions and their relevance to project objectives.	Presents limitations and implications. Demonstrates a good understanding of conclusions with some relevance to project objectives.	Presents limitations and implications, but they are possibly irrelevant and unsupported. Demonstrates limited, if any, understanding of conclusions. Relevance to the project objectives is not well described.
Reflection <i>(Reflective essay)</i>	This category and criteria relate to the reflective essay that students will complete at the end of the course, following the guidelines in the CI Portfolio.	Demonstrates integration of experiences and ideas gained through participation in the AFCI course. Provides examples of how the student is using or will use what they have learned and apply it current or future actions and/or learning.	Demonstrates some integration and application of experiences and ideas gained through the AFCI course, but these may not be described fully.	Recounts some experiences, but with little integration of learning or applicability outside of the classroom	Information is not present or fails to address any of the elements in the “Excellent” category.

⁴ Modified from the AAC&U’s *Inquiry and Analysis VALUE Rubric* and Eastern Kentucky University’s *Critical and Creative Thinking Rubric*.

⁵ Items in bold will be useful to most useful to AFCI 101 instructors in course-based assessment and grading. Other items may be useful depending on the individual assignments.

CI Portfolio: Evaluation

The three components of the CI Portfolios turned in by the students who were included in the stratified sample compiled by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness were graded together by all of the portfolio evaluators.

Of the 200 students in the stratified sample, 181 enrolled in the AFCI 101 course in the fall. Of the 181 who enrolled, ten students either failed or withdrew from the course without submitting a portfolio. One student passed the course without submitting a portfolio. Five portfolios were misplaced during the process of collection and evaluation. As a result, a total of 165 CI Portfolios were evaluated at the end of the fall semester.

The mean scores for those 165 CI Portfolios in the six categories laid out in the Annotated Critical Inquiry Portfolio Rubric are as follows:

Topic Selection: 2.4

Identification and Assessment of Evidence: 2.2

Application of Knowledge: 2.2

Analysis and Conclusions: 2.1

Synthesis: 2.0

Reflection: 2.4

Topic Selection and Reflection were the strongest categories for the 165 students in the stratified sample. None of the mean scores for any of the categories reached our stated target of 3.0 (Very Good) or greater. However, the mean scores for all six categories placed at or above 2.0 (Satisfactory).

One of the reasons for the lower-than-hoped-for scores was a failure on the parts of some instructors to connect the students' final project in a meaningful way with the Information Literacy portion of the course. In order to improve performance on the CI Portfolio, issues with student projects were addressed with new CI faculty at the 2012 CI Summer Institute and at the first CI Learning Community Workshop in the fall. Several instructors from the 2011-2012 academic year shared their experiences with student projects and gave recommendations to incoming faculty on better connecting the final project with the Information Literacy portion of the course. Examples of successful and unsuccessful student efforts were provided. In addition, workshops were given on the following topics related to increasing student performance on the CI Portfolio: leading student discussions of the common reader, getting the most out of the library component of the course, managing the Information Literacy component, and a portfolio review.

The complete individual CI Portfolio score distribution for the Fall 2011 Semester appears in the chart below:

Student #	Scorer #1						Scorer #2					
	Topic	Evidence	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Reflection	Topic	Evidence	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Reflection
1	3	3	3	3	2	4	2	3	2	2	2	3
2	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	2
3	3	3	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	3	2	3
4	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
5	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	3
6	2	1	2	2	1	2	3	2	1	1	2	1
7	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	2
8	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	1
9	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2
10	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	3
11	3	3	3	3	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	3
12	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
13	2	2	3	3	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
14	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	3
15	3	2	2	1	1	2	3	2	2	1	1	2
16	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
17	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4
18	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2
19	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
20	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	1	3	2	2	3
21	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	1	1	2	3
22	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	2	1	2
23	2	2	1	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2
24	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	2
25	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	3
26	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2
27	3	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	2	3	1
28	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	1	1	2
29	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	3	2	2	3
30	3	1	3	3	2	3	2	1	2	2	2	3
31	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	2	3	2	3	3
32	2	4	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	3
33	3	3	2	2	2	4	3	3	2	2	2	3
34	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	3
35	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2
36	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	3

37	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	2
38	1	2	3	3	3	3	1	2	1	2	2	1
39	3	1	3	2	3	2	3	1	3	3	3	1
40	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	2	2
41	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	3
42	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2
43	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	1
44	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	2	3
45	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	3
46	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	2
47	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3
48	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
49	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1
50	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	2
51	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	2
52	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	2
53	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3
54	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	3
55	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2
56	2	1	2	1	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	2
57	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	2
58	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
59	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	3
60	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
61	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3
62	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
63	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	1	2	2	2
64	2	2	3	2	2	1	3	3	2	2	2	1
65	3	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
66	2	2	1	2	2	3	1	2	2	2	2	2
67	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2
68	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
69	2	3	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	3
70	3	3	3	4	3	2	3	3	2	3	2	2
71	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
72	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	3
73	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	2
74	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	3

75	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	3
76	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
77	3	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
78	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	2
79	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	3
80	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	4
81	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
82	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	3
83	3	2	3	3	2	1	3	3	2	3	2	1
84	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	2
85	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	3
86	4	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	3
87	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	1	2	2	1
88	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
89	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	3	3	1	1	2
90	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	3	3	2	2
91	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	4
92	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	2	2
93	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	3
94	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	3
95	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2
96	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2
97	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	1	2	2	2
98	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2
99	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2
100	3	3	2	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	2
101	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	2
102	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4
103	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	2
104	2	2	2	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	2	2
105	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	3
106	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	3
107	2	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	2	1	2
108	2	2	1	1	1	2	3	3	3	2	3	4
109	3	2	2	3	2	3	4	3	4	3	3	3
110	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3
111	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	2	3

112	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
113	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	2
114	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
115	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	3
116	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1
117	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	2	2	3
118	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	4	1	2	1	2
119	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3
120	1	1	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	2
121	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2
122	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
123	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	2	3	2	2	3
124	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3
125	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	3
126	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	2
127	3	2	2	2	1	2	3	3	2	1	1	3
128	2	1	1	1	1	3	4	2	1	1	2	3
129	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	3
130	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2
131	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	1	3	3	3	2
132	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	1	2
133	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	4
134	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	3
135	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	2
136	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	3
137	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3
138	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	1	2	3	2	3
139	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	2
140	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	2
141	3	4	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	2
142	4	4	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	2	2	2
143	3	2	2	3	2	2	4	3	3	3	3	3
144	3	2	2	1	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	3
145	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
146	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
147	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	2	2
148	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1

149	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	4
150	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2
151	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	2
152	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	4
153	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2
154	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	2
155	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	3
156	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2
157	3	3	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	3	3	4
158	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	1
159	3	2	2	2	1	3	3	1	1	2	1	3
160	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
161	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	2
162	1	3	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
163	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2
164	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	2	2	2
165	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3
Means	2.4	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.0	2.4						

Of the 200 students in the stratified sample, nineteen enrolled in the AFCI 101 course in the spring. Of the nineteen who enrolled, two students were taking the class again after failing in the fall semester. Seven portfolios were misplaced during the process of collection and evaluation. A total of twelve CI Portfolios were evaluated at the end of the spring semester.

The mean scores for those twelve CI Portfolios in the six categories laid out in the Annotated Critical Inquiry Portfolio Rubric are as follows:

Topic Selection: 1.8

Identification and Assessment of Evidence: 2.5

Application of Knowledge: 1.7

Analysis and Conclusions: 2.0

Synthesis: 1.6

Reflection: 2.3

Identification and Assessment of Evidence and Reflection were the strongest categories for the twelve students in the stratified sample. None of the mean scores for any of the categories reached our stated target of 3.0 (Very Good) or greater. The mean scores for three categories placed below 2.0 (Satisfactory).

One of the reasons for the lower-than-hoped-for scores was a failure on the parts of some instructors to connect the students' final project in a meaningful way with the Information Literacy portion of the course. In order to improve performance on the CI Portfolio, issues with student projects were addressed with new CI faculty at the 2012 CI Summer Institute and at the first CI Learning Community Workshop in the fall. Several instructors from the 2011-2012 academic year shared their experiences with student projects and gave recommendations to incoming faculty on better connecting the final project with the Information Literacy portion of the course. Examples of successful and unsuccessful student efforts were provided. In addition, workshops were given on the following topics related to increasing student performance on the CI Portfolio: leading student discussions of the common reader, getting the most out of the library component of the course, managing the Information Literacy component, and a portfolio review.

The complete individual CI Portfolio score distribution for the Spring 2012 Semester appears in the chart below:

Student#	Scorer #1						Scorer #2					
	Topic	Evidence	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Reflection	Topic	Evidence	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Reflection
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	3	1	2	1	2	3	3	3	2	2	3
3	1	4	1	2	1	2	1	3	3	3	3	3
4	1	3	1	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	2
5	2	4	2	2	1	3	3	4	3	2	2	3
6	2	4	2	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3
7	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
8	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
9	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1
10	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	1	2
11	2	3	2	2	1	3	1	2	2	2	2	2
12	1	1	1	2	2	3	1	1	1	1	2	2
Means	1.8	2.5	1.7	2.0	1.6	2.3						

Note: Two of the students in the above chart also took the course in Fall 2011 Semester.

ETS-PP

Every other year, the ETS Proficiency Profile (ETS-PP) will be administered to a representative sample of first semester freshmen students and second semester seniors. This instrument was chosen because it assesses skills that are directly related to the student learning outcomes that have been identified for the CI course. Using student performance data from the initial administration of this instrument in 2009-10 as a baseline for comparison, we will analyze responses to questions in the area of Reading and Critical Thinking Skills. Trends in the senior scores over time and a value-added statistic calculated by comparing performance of seniors to that of first-year students will serve as indicators of improvements in students' critical thinking skills and reading skills.

The ETS-PP was administered on October 14, 2011 to the stratified sample of 200 freshman students compiled by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Two of the students did not take the test. The ETS-PP results for the 198 students who did take the test are as follows:

	Possible Range	Mean Score	95% Confidence Limits* for Mean	Standard Deviation	25th Percentile	50th Percentile	75th Percentile
Total Score	400 to 500	435.35	433 to 437	17.00	424	431	444
Skills Subscores:							
Critical Thinking	100 to 130	108.90	108 to 110	5.67	105	107	112
Reading	100 to 130	114.38	113 to 116	6.81	110	114	120
Writing	100 to 130	113.27	112 to 114	5.25	110	113	117
Mathematics	100 to 130	112.12	111 to 113	5.15	109	112	115
Context-Based Subscores:							
Humanities	100 to 130	112.73	112 to 114	5.91	108	112	117
Social Sciences	100 to 130	111.24	110 to 112	5.54	107	112	115
Natural Sciences	100 to 130	113.05	112 to 114	5.90	110	113	117

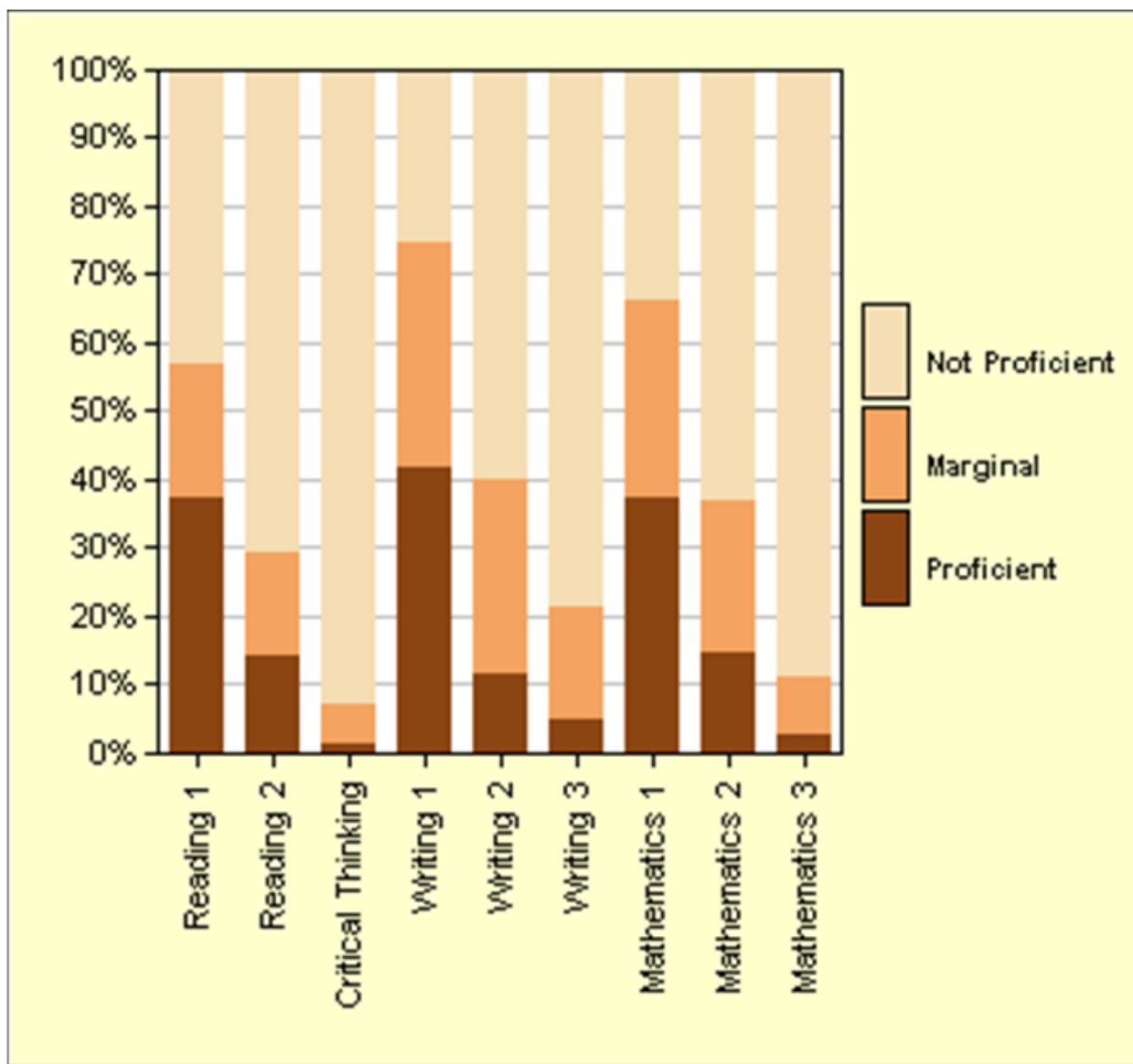
*The confidence limits are based on the assumption that the questions contributing to each scaled score are a sample from a much larger set of possible questions that could have been used to measure those same skills. If the group of students taking the test is a sample from some larger population of students eligible to be tested, the confidence limits include both sampling of students and sampling of questions as factors that could cause the mean score to vary. The confidence limits indicate the precision of the mean score of the students actually tested, as an estimate of the "true population mean" - the mean score that would result if all the students in the population could somehow be tested with all possible questions. These confidence limits were computed by a procedure that has a 95 percent probability of producing upper and lower limits that will surround the true population mean. The population size used in the calculation of the confidence limits for the mean scores in this report is 198.

The skills measured by the ETS Proficiency Profile test are grouped into proficiency levels. There are three proficiency levels for writing, three for mathematics, and three for the combined set of skills involved in reading and critical thinking. The table below shows the number and percentage of students who are proficient, marginal, and not proficient at each proficiency level for reading and critical thinking, writing, and mathematics. A student classified as marginal is one whose test results do not provide enough evidence to classify the student either as proficient or as not proficient.

Skill Dimension	Proficiency Classification		
	Proficient	Marginal	Not Proficient
Reading, Level 1	37%	20%	43%
Reading, Level 2	14%	15%	71%
Critical Thinking	2%	6%	93%
Writing, Level 1	42%	33%	25%
Writing, Level 2	12%	28%	60%
Writing, Level 3	5%	16%	79%
Mathematics, Level 1	37%	29%	34%
Mathematics, Level 2	15%	22%	63%
Mathematics, Level 3	3%	9%	89%

As can be seen in the above table, Critical Thinking is the weakest area for incoming freshmen students at USCA. Fully 93% of incoming students are not proficient. As a result of our QEP, we expect to see student scores in this area improve significantly.

As a further illustration of the need for our Critical Inquiry QEP, a graph showing current proficiency levels for the stratified sample as measured against a perfect score of 100% appears below:



National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

To assess changes in student perceptions related to Critical Inquiry, we will administer (in alternate years) the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to second semester first-year students and second semester seniors. Results from the 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2010 administration of the NSSE (see Appendix VI in the QEP Report) provide a strong basis from which to compare data from future administrations of the survey. In particular, we will be looking at responses to the following items (which are related to QEP student learning outcomes) to ensure that students' careers at USC Aiken are marked by an academically challenging curriculum that promotes critical thinking skills:

- 1.d. In your experience at your institution during the current school year about how often have you worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas of information from various sources?

- 2.b. During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components?
- 2.c. During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships?
- 2.d. During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions?
- 2.e. During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations?
- 6.f. During the current school year, have you learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept?
- 11.m. To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in solving complex real-world problems?

2012 NSSE results have been analyzed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness with respect to our summative and formative QEP assessment plans. These data serve to establish a baseline for the implementation period of the QEP. Formative results will be reported in the Formative Measures section of this QEP First Year Assessment Report.

Summative results appear in the table below:

Table 1: 2012 NSSE QEP Summative Assessment Measures				
Question	First Year Students		Senior Students	
	Effect Size	Percentile Rank	Effect Size	Percentile Rank
1.d.	0.26	60%	0.08	53%
2.b.	-0.03	49%	0.13	55%
2.c.	-0.03	49%	0.03	51%
2.d.	0.05	52%	0.05	52%
2.e.	-0.03	49%	0.23	59%
6.f.	-0.04	48%	0.20	58%
11.m	0.06	52%	0.15	56%

Only three of the freshmen scores were above the mean. The strongest area for incoming freshmen was integrated research (1.d.). The weakest area was in the students' perception of having their basic understanding of a concept changed in some way as a result of their experience at USCA (6.f.). All of the senior scores are above the mean. The strongest area for seniors was coursework that applied theories and/or concepts to practical problems (2.e.). The weakest area was in organizing and synthesizing ideas and/or experiences into new and more complex interpretations and relationships (2.c.).

As a result of the previously discussed changes in the way the AFCI 101 course is taught, as USCA faculty integrate CI vertically into the curriculum, and as students apply CI at every level of learning, we believe these scores will improve significantly at both the freshman and senior levels.

Formative Measures

To achieve the three student learning outcomes previously identified, several strategies have been employed over the pilot year of the QEP that as a whole encompass all campus constituencies. These strategies will continue as full implementation of the QEP unfolds. To evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies and to guide long-term improvement of the program, each major component of the QEP has been—and will continue to be—formatively assessed. These additional components include faculty development, Peer Mentoring, First-Year Reading, and co-curricular activities. Information collected through formative assessments of these components will drive modifications of the strategies toward those which are most effective in achieving the goals of QEP.

Faculty Development

Beginning with the three-day “Think DEEP Summer Institute” in May 2011, USCA faculty from across the disciplines volunteered to join a CI Faculty Learning Community and to receive training in developing students’ Critical Inquiry skills prior to teaching the CI course. Our objectives for faculty development are to foster the use of Critical Inquiry methodologies in the APCI 101 course and to increase the use of such methodologies across the curriculum. To promote “DEEPer” learning, CI faculty are encouraged to:

- Discover course materials and activities which encourage active and collaborative learning;
- Experiment with strategies and techniques that foster Critical Inquiry;
- Evaluate learning to determine the extent to which students have engaged in Critical Inquiry;
- Perform in such a manner as to engage students in the Critical Inquiry process, both in the CI course and in discipline-specific courses.

Over the course of the 2011-2012 pilot year of the QEP at USCA, CI faculty met a total of six times—three times in the Fall 2011 Semester and three times in the Spring 2012 Semester. These CI Learning Community Workshops allowed faculty teaching the APCI 101 course to share their personal classroom experiences including time management, effective assignments, group activities, and the difficulties of integrating the Information Literacy assignment with the CI Project. In addition, the QEP Director brought the attention of the CI instructors to valuable materials pertinent to the FYRE text and various thematic issues connected with the book.

Syllabus review is another key formative measure involving faculty development. At the CI Summer Institute in May 2011 syllabus development was covered extensively, including the major elements of the APCI 101 course: a common quiz over the reading; an information literacy assignment that involved a class period in the library; a term project of some kind; and the CI Portfolio. Prior to the beginning of the Fall 2011 Semester, a template syllabus was completed by the QEP Director and disseminated to all CI faculty. At the beginning of the Fall 2011 Semester and the Spring 2012 Semester, all CI faculty submitted their syllabi to the QEP Director for approval. A formal review of these syllabi was conducted to determine the extent to which high impact practices such as class discussions, collaborative group activities, and applied assignments were incorporated in the APCI 101 course. As a result of this review, it was determined that the template syllabus—while ensuring the incorporation of the required elements and the desired high impact practices—was a limiting factor in our stated aim for faculty to creatively engage in more intentional development of students’ Critical Inquiry abilities.

In order to address this issue, at the CI Summer Institute in May 2012 faculty were only given a series of basic syllabus requirements for the AFCI 101 course. This allowed CI instructors to be more creative in their various approaches to teaching Critical Inquiry to the students in each individual section of AFCI 101 as we head into the first year of the full implementation of the QEP in 2012-2013. Required elements were: a common attendance policy; specific weights to the FYRQ, Information Literacy assignment, reflective essay, and CI project; a library orientation and research basics session; a statement of the goals of the course; a disabilities statement, and an electronic devices statement. All AFCI 101 syllabi were submitted to the new Coordinator of Critical Inquiry for approval prior to their dissemination to the students.

Over the course of the 2011-2012 pilot year, we actively sought CI faculty feedback with regard to the following elements:

- structuring the CI Summer Institute to better prepare CI instructors to teach the AFCI 101 course;
- tailoring the CI Learning Community Workshops to better help CI instructors with their classes during the fall and spring semester; and
- improving the AFCI 101 course.

At the end of the 2011 CI Summer Institute and at the Fall 2011 Semester, faculty members were surveyed to assess their perceptions of the course, of their own preparation (through the CI Summer Institute) for managing Critical Inquiry course content, and of the effectiveness of the CI Learning Community.

The results of these surveys of CI faculty were compiled and analyzed by the QEP Director. They were also reported to the CI Faculty Learning Community, the Academic Assessment Committee, and the Academic Council, and used as the basis for proposing improvements to the CI course, course preparation, and course management.

A summary of the CI Summer Institute survey results is as follows:

What key points did you take away from this workshop?	The value of CI faculty interaction. The importance of team-based learning. Practical activities to teach Critical Inquiry.
How could this workshop have been improved?	More specific advice on syllabus development. More specific discussion of CI assessment process. More specifics on teaching critical thinking. A “what works and what doesn’t” session by other people teaching the course.
What topics would you suggest for future faculty development workshops?	Discussion and application of team-based learning. Activities that help teach critical thinking. Syllabus planning. Academic dishonesty. Teaching reading practices.
The workshop length was . . .	Exactly right/A little too long.
The workshop was well-coordinated and organized.	Strongly agree/Agree.
The instructor was professional and an expert in the subject matter.	Strongly agree/Agree.
The room environment was beneficial for my learning experience.	Strongly agree/Agree.
Do you have any other comments?	Excellent workshop/helpful. More syllabus content coverage needed. More emphasis on/discussion of Critical Inquiry,

	less on team-based learning. Shorter days.
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A summary of the CI Learning Community recommendations is as follows:

Classes:	Every class meeting should be structured, but do not lecture. Avoid open-ended group questions or vague assignments. Avoid disorganization. Use timed activities to maintain a pace and keep students focused.
Groups:	Assign group activities, but monitor them closely. Do an introduction activity so the members get to know each other. Rely on activity-based learning, but identify both loafers and leaders- each can create unwanted dynamics in small groups. Make sure all members of groups have roles to play so they are engaged. Rotate the roles. Give the groups harder questions than you would an individual. Group grades must be balanced with individual grades to avoid dissension.
Activities:	Debates are excellent; have all students prepare both sides, then assign sides randomly at the time of the debate. Pull statements/ themes/characters out of a hat to discuss. K Drive activities all have been used effectively. Build on the Library assignment topics and sources.
Assignments:	Repeat the instructions. Have students repeat the instructions. Do not assume the students understand your instructions or were listening. Repeat the instructions again.
Assessment:	Journals are a very good tool for self-reflection, but relate them to the task at hand or the learning objectives. If used, make them a part of the grade and use them for student feedback. Avoid excessive assessment.
Peer Mentors:	If using a PM, delegate specific duties. There are no downsides to a good PM. Have them circulate among groups. Have them contact students outside of class for feedback.
Library/Information Literacy Assignment:	Prepare for the library visit the week before. Very important to help students practice writing clear, focused, searchable questions that lead to a specific answer. The library assignment will very likely help lead to project topics. Students consider the library assignment an “eye-opener”. Require a revision that must be included in the CI Portfolio.
Projects:	Do not allow self-selected groups. Presentations should be based on real research that requires Critical Inquiry. Poster-style and PowerPoint presentations can be very low quality if they are not supported by good research. Avoid projects that are no more advanced than high school or the projects students have done in the past. All projects should have individual and group components; they should be evident in the presentation. PowerPoint presentations with only images force students to speak; 20/20 presentations are very effective. Use concept-mapping/story-boards/stages to lay out and plan projects. Have the class do formal evaluations of practice and final presentations. Have group members do anonymous evaluations. Class evaluation of sources. Quality and consistency are major foci for the instructor.
Portfolios:	Must have a clean and revised library assignment, a reflective essay based on the guidelines, a project artifact that accurately reflects the intent and components of the project. Cover page to explain the objectives of the project.

Faculty Development:	Solicit feedback from other CI instructors.
Activities that worked and/or were favorably received:	Journaling, Reflective essays, Working on audio-visuals, Triage, Observation-inference, Cause and effect, "What would you do if...", Debates, Write a newspaper article, Timeline of the book, Role-playing from the book.

After analyzing both surveys, changes were made to the CI Summer Institute and the CI Learning Community Workshops in an attempt to better prepare and support CI faculty.

To better prepare faculty to teach the AF CI 101 course, two separate workshops on syllabus development were offered at the 2012 CI Summer Institute. In addition, workshops were held on information literacy, on sample assignments to help teach critical thinking, on the CI project, and on CI Portfolio review. Discussions of best practices from year one by several CI instructors from the 2011-2012 pilot year were given. A group discussion of what worked and what did not work in year one was held.

To help make the CI Learning Community more effective, and to facilitate all aspects of the Critical Inquiry Program at USCA, a Coordinator of Critical Inquiry position has been created and filled. The Center for Teaching Excellence at USCA has become much more involved in the process of preparing and supporting CI faculty, cooperating directly with the Coordinator of Critical Inquiry to better serve the CI Learning Community.

First-Year Reading

USCA first-year students participate in an annual Freshman Convocation; and through faculty-led small groups, students are introduced to themes and ideas in the First-Year Reading. The CI course builds on this experience by including additional critical analysis of themes and major issues within the selected text. The Information Literacy assignment, and the associated research, initiate with the First-Year Reading text. The CI Project is the end product of the research and the students' semester-long focus on Critical Inquiry.

Initially, we had planned to give students a brief survey that asked how much of the book they had read and the extent to which they believed their reading and initial discussion of the book might impact their perceptions and ideas as well as their personal development or interaction with others. However, upon further reflection, we did not feel that the input we would get from the survey would be sufficient to merit the resources such a survey would entail. Instead, we used the Common Quiz and the reflective essay to gauge the students' engagement with the book its impact on their personal development. The information gathered was the same; only the means of collecting that information changed.

The overall solid performance of the students on the Common Quiz (see the Summative Measures section, above) indicates a high level of reading and comprehension of the First-Year Reading text. Students' reactions to the impact of the book on their perceptions and ideas, however, were mixed. The First-Year Reading text for the 2011-2012 academic year was *The Last Town on Earth*, by Thomas Mullen. The novel focuses on the impact of the 1918-1919 Spanish Flu epidemic on a fictional town in the state of Washington. In their reflective essays, many students expressed difficulty connecting this epidemic with their own life situations. Notable exceptions were those students who, as a result of class content or their own personal research, linked the Spanish Flu of the early 20th century with the AIDS epidemic of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Peer Mentor Development

In keeping with our stated goal of including Peer Mentors in the ACFI 101 classroom experience, an effort was made to recruit Peer Mentors from the undergraduate student population at USCA and to link those students with CI instructors who were willing to work with a Peer Mentor over the course of the fall or the spring semester. Most Peer Mentor candidates were identified by faculty who wished to incorporate a Peer Mentor into the CI course instruction. However, one volunteer Peer Mentor was matched with a faculty member who did not initially express an interest but was willing to participate in the program. In addition to a faculty recommendation and sophomore-level or higher standing, Peer Mentors were required to have at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average. These requirements are consistent with USCA's requirements for undergraduate tutors and Supplemental Instruction Leaders.

Peer Mentors were expected to demonstrate knowledge of Critical Inquiry as well as familiarity with themes and ideas presented in the First-Year Reading. Peer Mentors were also tasked with modeling the use of the Critical Inquiry process both in and out of the classroom, and thereby promoting Critical Inquiry to freshmen. A total of six Peer Mentors served during the 2011-2012 academic year, five in the Fall 2011 Semester and one in the Spring 2012 Semester. Each Peer Mentor was paid \$150 per semester.

Initially, it was our intention to survey students taking the ACFI 101 course about how effective they felt the Peer Mentor was in modeling the CI process. We also intended to survey CI faculty to assess the extent to which Peer Mentors fulfilled their obligations. At the end of the semester, we also planned to have Peer Mentors complete a reflective essay that would afford these students the opportunity to describe personal changes related to CI, as well as their expectations concerning the experience and the extent to which those expectations were met. However, because the role of the Peer Mentors was so limited during the 2011-2012 pilot year of the QEP, we did not conduct these surveys, nor did we have Peer Mentors write reflective essays. Instead, at the end of each semester, each Peer Mentor who had served during that semester with the Director of the QEP. The QEP Director also met with all CI instructors who had used a Peer Mentor in class. With the exception of individual input from the students enrolled in ACFI 101, the information gathered about the Peer Mentors was the same; only the means of collecting that information changed. Both the Peer Mentors and the CI faculty who worked with them reported having had satisfactory experiences with regard to the role of the Peer Mentors in and out of the classroom.

We initially intended to hold a Peer Mentor focus group, led by the QEP Director, at the end of each semester to reveal more nuanced information about individual Peer Mentors' experiences in the CI course. Because of the limited number of Peer Mentors, this was handled through one-on-one conferences instead. All Peer Mentors reported having had excellent experiences with both faculty and students in and out of the classroom. Because most of the Peer Mentors plan to become teachers themselves, one of the comments they most often made was the great benefit they received from working with an experienced faculty member to help run a class. Comments regarding the Peer Mentors' personal experience with the CI process and/or their perceived growth in knowledge of CI, were mixed. Most students felt that they already understood Critical Inquiry, and that they already applied the Critical Inquiry process in their academic and non-academic lives.

One of the main lessons learned during the 2011-2012 pilot year of the QEP with regard to Peer Mentors was that—despite its limited scope—the Peer Mentor element of the QEP was a

valuable addition to our effort to teach Critical Inquiry at USCA. As a result of our first-year experience, we have resolved to make a more concentrated effort to recruit Peer Mentors for future academic years. To that end, the new Coordinator of CI addressed students in the Honors Program at the beginning of the 2012-2013 academic year in an attempt to generate interest in that elite group. We have also resolved to make an effort to convince more CI instructors to incorporate a Peer Mentor into their AFCE 101 classes. At the 2012 CI Summer Institute, a workshop session was dedicated to the Peer Mentor issues. A faculty member who employed a Peer Mentor during the 2011-2012 academic year talked about the value of the experience for herself, the Peer Mentor, and the AFCE 101 students. The pros and cons of Peer Mentor use were then discussed in an open forum by those attending the 2012 CI Summer Institute. A tip sheet with suggestions for Peer Mentor use was distributed.

Creating an Integrative Learning Experience

A stated goal of the QEP is to create an integrative learning experience. Students are introduced to Critical Inquiry through the CI course, but one goal of this type of teaching and learning is the ability to apply Critical Inquiry to experiences outside the classroom. One way in which we had envisioned this process occurring was through the development of a separate Collaborative Learning Community. The idea was to involve faculty and staff who were not currently teaching the CI course in identifying ways to encourage students to transfer and apply Critical Inquiry into all aspects of their learning. However, upon further consideration, the decision was made to find other ways to integrate CI into all four years of each student's experience at USCA, and beyond.

One such effort has been integrating the Center for Teaching Excellence much more closely with the QEP. Beginning with the 2012-2013 academic year, the CI Learning Community Workshops have been coordinated and managed by the CTE. CI Learning Community Workshops are now announced to all USCA faculty by the CTE via e-mail and on the CTE webpage, and all faculty are invited to attend the workshops in addition to just those instructors who are actually teaching the AFCE 101 course. The new Coordinator of Critical Inquiry, who leads the CI Learning Community Workshops, has expanded the agendas to include a focus on teaching CI outside the AFCE 101 classroom. The CTE also runs the CI Summer Institute; and through CTE announcements, an even greater emphasis is being placed on including all USCA faculty in these CI-focused sessions. The aim is for faculty to engage in more intentional development of students' Critical Inquiry abilities in general education courses, major requirements, and elective credits across the academic disciplines. As USCA faculty integrate CI vertically into the curriculum and students apply CI at every level of learning, we believe our students' college experiences will be enriched.

Another strategy to create faculty-student synergy with regard to Critical Inquiry involves including the Writing Proficiency Portfolio in our QEP. All students with between sixty and ninety credit hours at USCA are required to either prove their writing proficiency by submitting a portfolio of essays from their previous coursework or to enroll in AEGL 201. These portfolios are collected by the Director of Writing Assessment at USCA and evaluated by USCA faculty based on a five-point Likert scale with six elements, one of which is Quality of Thought. The vast majority of USCA students elect to submit the portfolio. In addition the Quality of Thought measure in the rubric, Critical Inquiry is directly involved in this process in three ways. First, the students must select essays from their previous coursework that address all six elements of the grading rubric for the WPP. Second, each student must write a reflective essay that explains his/her rationale for including the works that he/she has selected. Third, those students who are not judged to be proficient by the WPP evaluators are given a chance to revise their portfolios

and resubmit them for further consideration. These students first meet with the Director of Writing Assessment at USCA. The Director of Writing Assessment shares the evaluators' comments with each student; during the conference, each student discusses plans for revision designed to improve the portfolio so that it meets the required standards for proficiency. The student then reworks the essays in the portfolio and writes a new reflective essay which details the changes made and the student's rationale for making them. As the students selected for our stratified sample make their way through their coursework at USCA and submit their Writing Proficiency Portfolios, the resulting scores will be made a part of the QEP Assessment Report.

In an attempt to move the study of Critical Inquiry further afield, a new course in CI has been developed for Honors students. The new course, AHON 490 CI Honors Study Abroad, will focus on advanced studies of Critical Inquiry for Honors students at the sophomore level and above. The program has three consecutive segments, comprising six credits of electives, offered every other year. All segments are seminar-based, relying on active student intercourse. Spring semester begins with developing critical thinking skills, which form the course foundation. The Seven Revolutions global issues are introduced, weekly, each critically examined and explored. From this process the class selects a common research theme, with student groups choosing sub-projects within the common theme. The spring class concludes with formal group CI project proposal presentations, including the on-site international linkage plan. Students critique their colleagues' proposals, providing enrichment opportunities. During Maymester students finalize their research plan, complete their study, and prepare written reports for their on-site, international presentations. In Summer One the class travels to the selected international sites, using the on-location sites to present and demonstrate their findings to their peers. The class culminates with formal presentations at an academic, international conference. The course will be taught by the Coordinator of Critical Inquiry and a professor in the School of Business with a great deal of experience with Study Abroad initiatives. Travel will be coordinated by the Director of International Programs at USCA.

Critical Inquiry Blog

A "weblog" or "blog" for AFCI 101 students was envisioned as a way to create a community diary of impressions, expressions, and reflections written by students in the CI course. However, none of the CI instructors teaching the AFCI 101 course have so far elected to include this element in their classes. Because it is our strong belief that CI instructors should have as much freedom to teach Critical Inquiry in their own classrooms as they see fit, we decided not to require a blogging element for the course. Instead, both at the CI Summer Institutes and in CI Learning Community Workshops, journals and reflective diaries have been recommended as elements to strongly consider including in AFCI 101.

Community Service and Co-Curricular Activities

Our AFCI 101 course and the First-Year Reading, in combination, provide numerous opportunities to link students to the campus and to the broader Aiken community. However, we have chosen not to require a community service element of CI faculty who teach AFCI 101. CI students who choose to participate in community service and/or volunteerism are encouraged by individual instructors to reflect on those personal experiences through the CI Portfolio and, in particular, on how their volunteer experience has involved or affected their ability to think critically. Some individual instructors have elected to include a community service element in their sections of AFCI 101. In the Fall 2011 Semester, for example, one faculty member chose to focus her CI course on the Spanish Flu pandemic that plays such an important role in *The Last Town on Earth*. Students researched and disseminated to the greater Aiken community

information on flu prevention. Students focused their CI Projects around this effort, and discussed their experiences in their reflective essays. But because the choice to include community service lies with each individual instructor, we elected not to include community service as an element of the CI Portfolio as we had originally planned.

Co-Curricular activities have always been a point of focus at USCA. As a result, a great number of opportunities for co-curricular activity exist at USCA. It was originally our intention to require the inclusion of co-curricular activities of some kind in the AFCI 101 course. However, because of our commitment to allow the greatest possible creative freedom in course construction to CI instructors, because of the limited amount of instruction time available for this one-hour course, and because of the already-robust level of such activity at USCA, we have chosen not to mandate the inclusion of co-curricular activities in AFCI 101. Instead, it is our aim to encourage AFCI 101 students to become involved on campus in ways that relate to the First-Year Reading. Thematic issues that emphasize the importance of volunteerism are a key criterion in the selection of the First-Year Reading text.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) will indicate whether USCA students are more likely to become involved in co-curricular activities following the full implementation of the CI course requirement and our efforts to integrate CI vertically throughout the institution. Two questions in particular are designed to measure the role of community service, volunteerism, and/or engagement with the greater campus/Aiken community:

7.b. Which of the following have you done or plan to do before you graduate from your institution? - Community service or volunteer work?

11.o. To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas? Contributing to the welfare of your community?

2012 NSSE results have been analyzed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness with respect to our summative and formative QEP assessment plans. These data serve to establish a baseline for the implementation period of the QEP. Summative results were reported in the Summative Measures section of this QEP First Year Assessment Report.

Formative results appear in the table below:

Table 2: 2012 NSSE QEP Formative Assessment Measures				
Question	First Year Students		Senior Students	
	Effect Size	Percentile Rank	Effect Size	Percentile Rank
7.b.	-0.11	46%	0.06	52%
11.0.	0.01	50%	0.29	61%

For question 7.b. the data have been coded in a binary fashion as 0=a response of Have not decided, do not plan to do, or plan to do; and 1= Have done. Thus the mean is the proportion responding Have done. Our freshman mean is 35% and our senior mean is 62%.

For question 11.0. responses are 1 = very little, 2=some, 3= quite a bit and 4 = very much. The average response of 2.52 for freshmen is not significantly different than all other NSSE participating institutions (percentile rank was 50% - so we are right at the mean). Among seniors the average was 2.84 which is statistically significantly higher. 61% of institutions across the nation who participated in NSSE have seniors who rated below USCA.

As a result of the previously discussed strategies to emphasize student involvement outside the classroom, and as USCA faculty integrate CI vertically into the curriculum so that students apply CI at every level of learning, we believe these scores will improve significantly at both the freshman and senior levels.