

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 officially implemented, in ways meant to simultaneously challenge faculty to become more adept at developing the intellectual curiosity of students. To that end, during this first official implementation year for 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 AFCI 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, in our AFCI 101 course, our students explore issues and ideas, expand their information literacy skills, and become 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: FIRST OFFICIAL IMPLEMENTATION YEAR

Critical Inquiry Workshop

In accordance with the QEP plan, 2012-2013, the first official implementation year of the Critical Inquiry Program, began in May 2012 with a three-day “Think DEEP Summer Institute” (also referred to as the CI Summer Institute) at USCA. The workshop facilitator was Dr. Enoch Hale of the Foundation for Critical Thinking. On the first day of the institute, Dr. Hale led a series of breakout sessions and whole-group discussions on *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* (the FYRE selection and the shared text for all AFCI 101 sections), and on various techniques for teaching critical thinking skills to college students. The full-day workshop was highly interactive, and provided teaching tips, tools, and sample CI assignments for use in teaching the AFCI 101 course. The second day of the Think DEEP Summer Institute featured presentations and workshops conducted by various faculty members at USCA. Dr. Andy Dyer, QEP Director; Dr. Chad Leverette, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs; Dr. Andrew Geyer; Dr. Michelle Petrie; Professor Kari Weaver; Professor Jane Tuten; and Dr. Susan Glenn led the attendees in sessions devoted to “Overview of the QEP/AFCI Course,” “The Syllabus . . . the Roadmap for the Class,” “Tips on Leading a Discussion of the Text: *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*,” “Introduction Exercises: Best Practices,” “The Common Quiz,” “Information Literacy in the CI Course,” “Triage Exercise,” and “Debate Exercise.” Day three of the institute, led by Dr. Andy Dyer, Dr. Chad Leverette, and Dr. Spring Duvall, was devoted to CI Portfolio administration and assessment, detailed syllabus preparation, and working with CI Peer Mentors.

Fall 2012 Semester

Although the Fall 2012 Semester marked the opening semester of the first official implementation year of the QEP, the Critical Inquiry Program spent the semester building on the excellent foundation laid during the 2011-2012 pilot year. Prior to the beginning of the Fall 2012 Semester, Dr. Andy Dyer stepped down from his position as QEP Director and Dr. Andrew Geyer took over the newly created position of Coordinator of Critical Inquiry. The Coordinator of Critical Inquiry is tasked with recruiting instructors for the AFCI 101 course, mentoring CI instructors, coordinating the AFCI 101 class schedule, leading the CI Learning Community, conducting CI Learning Community Workshops (with the Center for Teaching Excellence), organizing and conducting the CI Summer Institute (with the Center for Teaching Excellence), recruiting and coordinating CI Peer Mentors, and providing annual reports of the program outcomes from AY 2011-2012 onward.

In addition, the Coordinator of CI serves as the chair of the newly expanded and reorganized FYRE/CI Committee. This committee, which has been enlarged and broadened in scope from the old FYRE Committee to include faculty from all areas, staff, and students, selects the FYRE text, advises the Coordinator of CI on all things related to the CI Program, and approves new additions and/or changes to the AFCI course. Currently, the FYRE/CI Committee consists of ten faculty and staff members and three students. The FYRE/CI Committee represents a key step forward in USCA’s continuing effort to involve the entire university in building the Critical Inquiry Program.

Under the new management and governance structure, the AFCI 101 course was offered for the third time during the Fall 2012 Semester. For the fall of 2012, a total of twenty-five sections were taught by full-time and part-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 Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* 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 2012 Semester was 526. 488 students were enrolled full time. Thirty-eight were enrolled part time. A total of 513 students took the APCI 101 course in the fall. Thirteen incoming freshmen did not enroll.

Of the 513 students who did enroll in APCI 101 in the Fall 2012 Semester, 450 successfully completed the course with a grade of D or better. This represents an 88% pass rate. Sixty-three students failed to complete the course. 12% of students failed or withdrew from the class. One student received a grade of Incomplete.

The complete grade distribution for Fall 2012 sections of APCI 101 appears below:

Department:

CRITICAL INQUIRY

Course	Sec	A	B+	B	C+	C	D+	D	F	S	U	I	T	W	WF	NR	Aud	Total
AFCIA101	001	7	6	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
	002	2	8	5	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
	003	11	1	4	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
	004	7	2	3	2	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	21
	006	8	5	3	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
	007	4	0	0	5	2	0	3	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
	008	4	5	7	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	21
	010	7	1	5	0	2	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
	011	13	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	21
	012	5	3	6	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
	013	5	1	4	3	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
	014	4	6	3	4	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
	015	7	1	4	3	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	21
	016	9	3	1	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
	017	13	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
	018	7	3	2	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	20
	019	6	3	0	3	1	2	1	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	21
	021	9	4	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	21
	023	6	2	4	1	1	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
	024	5	3	6	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	21
	026	10	2	4	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
	027	10	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
	028	14	0	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
	029	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	21
	300	8	0	7	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	19
Course Total:		200	70	87	39	29	9	16	43	0	0	1	0	19	0	0	0	513
Course %:		39%	14%	17%	8%	6%	2%	3%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	

Spring 2013 Semester

Only three sections of AFCI 101 were offered in the Spring 2013 Semester to serve students who were unable to take the class in previous semesters and students who failed to successfully complete the course on their first attempt. These three sections were taught by full-time and part-time faculty who took part in the three-day "Think DEEP Summer Institute" at USCA. 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 Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* 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 fourteen new freshmen at USCA in the Spring 2013 Semester. Twelve were enrolled full time. Two were enrolled part time. There was a carryover of seventy-six students from the Fall 2011 Semester who either did not enroll in AFCI 101 or failed to complete the course. A total of forty-eight students took the AFCI 101 course in the spring. Twenty-eight students who should have enrolled failed to do so.

Of the forty-eight students who did enroll in AFCI 101 in the Spring 2013 Semester, thirty-five successfully completed the course with a grade of D or better. This represents a 73% pass rate. Thirteen students failed to complete the course. This represents a 27% failure/withdrawal rate.

The grade distribution for the Spring 2013 sections of AFCI 101 appears below:

Department:		CRITICAL INQUIRY																
Course	Sec	A	B+	B	C+	C	D+	D	F	S	U	I	T	W	WF	NR	Aud	Total
AFCIA101	001	6	2	3	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	19
	002	4	1	5	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	17
	003	2	1	2	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	12
Course Total:		12	4	10	2	3	1	3	5	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	48
Course %:		25%	8%	21%	4%	6%	2%	6%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	17%	0%	0%	0%	

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 and the Coordinator of Critical Inquiry 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 Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, 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 of each individual section (week two or three of the semester, depending on holidays and/or the day on which the first class day fell), and had to comprise 10% of the total overall grade for the course. A bank of test questions over *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* was compiled by the Coordinator of Critical Inquiry from sample questions submitted by those who attended the 2012 Think DEEP Summer Institute. This bank was disseminated to all AFCI 101 instructors prior to the beginning of the Fall 2012 Semester and the Spring 2013 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 designated as being mandatory for all instructors to use in the FYRQ. Detailed instructions on how to collect and report the resulting CI Common Quiz data were given to all AFCI 101 instructors.

In order to address issues from the pilot year of the Critical Inquiry Program with CI Common Quiz data collection and reporting, a workshop was given to new CI faculty at the 2012 Think

DEEP 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 properly administering the CI Common Quiz, and of reporting the resulting data in a usable format.

One of the goals for the first official implementation year of the QEP was 100% reporting of all CI Common Quiz data. This goal was achieved. As a result, CI Common Quiz scores are available for all sections of AFCI 101 taught in both the Fall 2012 Semester and the Spring 2013 Semester (twenty-five sections from fall 2012 and three sections from the spring 2013). A total of 546 students out of the 561 who took the course are represented. A total of fifteen students did not take the CI Common Quiz.

A summary of the available results of the CI Common Quiz for the 2012-2013 academic year is as follows:

10 of 10 correct: 8%
9 of 10 correct: 22%
8 of 10 correct: 23%
7 of 10 correct: 17%
6 of 10 correct: 12%
5 of 10 correct: 11%
4 of 10 correct: 3%
3 of 10 correct: 3%
2 of 10 correct: 1%
1 of 10 correct: 0%
0 of 10 correct: 0%

Because a grade of D or better is passing, only 18% of students failed the CI Common Quiz. 30% of students taking the Common Quiz made grades of A. The scores for the 2012-2013 academic year were lower than the reported CI Common Quiz scores for the pilot year (see the QEP First-Year Assessment report). However, because not all scores from the pilot year were reported, it is difficult to make valid comparative conclusions between the data sets.

The complete individual score distribution for all students in the reported sections of AFCI 101 for both the Fall 2012 Semester and the Spring 2013 Semester appears in the chart below:

Section	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	S	S	S	%score		
Score	1	2	3	4	6	7	8	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	21	23	24	26	27	28	29	300	1	2	3	100
10	0	2	2	2	0	4	1	3	3	2	2	1	2	0	1	2	1	3	0	2	1	2	3	1	3	2	0	0	8
9	2	3	5	3	3	3	3	2	7	4	5	7	6	4	4	6	4	3	8	4	6	6	3	9	8	1	2	1	22
8	3	6	5	5	8	0	2	5	5	6	5	5	3	6	7	5	8	3	3	5	7	2	3	5	2	6	2	4	23
7	6	3	3	3	3	5	5	4	1	7	3	1	4	2	4	4	5	3	5	1	2	4	4	0	1	3	4	2	17
6	1	2	4	4	2	3	5	3	2	1	5	0	2	4	2	0	0	6	1	4	0	1	3	1	2	2	2	4	12
5	5	3	0	3	2	3	2	0	2	0	0	5	3	3	3	1	2	2	2	4	2	1	3	4	1	1	2	1	11
4	2	1	2	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	3
3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	3
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
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	0	0	1	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	0	0	0	0
	19	20	21	20	19	20	20	20	20	21	21	21	21	20	21	19	21	21	21	21	19	17	21	20	18	17	15	12	546

CI Portfolio: Overview

Each student enrolled in AFCI 101 for the 2012-2013 academic year was required to complete a CI Portfolio that included three artifacts which 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 each student in every section of the course. Two types of evaluations were performed on the portfolios.

First, each AFCI 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 205 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 205. 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 2012 and Spring 2013 Semesters, all CI Portfolios were collected by the Coordinator of Critical Inquiry from the AFCI 101 instructors. The portfolios for the stratified sample of 205 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. 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 assignment 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.

In order to address issues from the pilot year of the Critical Inquiry Program with CI Portfolio data collection and reporting, a workshop was given to new CI faculty at the 2012 Think DEEP Summer Institute. At the second CI Learning Community Workshop for the Fall 2012 Semester, a session was dedicated to the CI Portfolio. Both of these sessions reinforced the importance of ensuring that all CI Portfolios were complete when submitted and that all CI Portfolios be collected and forwarded to the Coordinator of Critical Inquiry. One of the goals for the first official implementation year of the QEP was 100% collection of all completed CI Portfolios. This goal was achieved.

Of the 205 students in the stratified sample, 200 enrolled in the APCI 101 course in the fall. Of the 200 who enrolled, nine students either failed or withdrew from the course without submitting a portfolio. One student submitted an incomplete portfolio. As a result, a total of 190 CI Portfolios were evaluated at the end of the fall semester.

The mean scores for those 190 CI Portfolios in the six categories laid out in the Annotated Critical Inquiry Portfolio Rubric are as follows:

Topic Selection: 2.1

Identification and Assessment of Evidence: 2.4

Application of Knowledge: 2.2

Analysis and Conclusions: 2.2

Synthesis: 2.0

Reflection: 2.4

Identification and Assessment of Evidence and Reflection were the strongest categories for the 190 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).

This AY year's scores for fall were higher than last year's for Identification and Assessment of Evidence, and Analysis and Conclusions. This year's fall scores were lower than last fall's for Topic Selection. However, the overall mean of all categories (2.2) for the fall semester this year was identical to last fall's overall mean score.

Students in the Fall 2012 Semester of APCI 101 continued to have issues with the CI Portfolio, particularly in the area of Synthesis, which was also the lowest-scoring category last fall. 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.

At the 2013 CI Summer Institute, we continued our efforts to help CI instructors (both new and continuing) guide their students in the compilation of better CI Portfolios. To that end, workshops were held on “Leading a Discussion of the Book *Into the Wild*,” “A Brief Introduction to the Film *Into the Wild*,” “Best Practices/What Worked and What Didn’t Work,” and “The CI Portfolio: Overview and Examples.” A review of sample portfolios was also held. For AY 2013-2014, we will also hold a session on the CI Portfolio during the second CI Learning Community Workshop.

Of the fifteen students in our stratified sample of 205 who either did not register for or did not successfully complete the AFCE 101 course in the fall, four students took CI in the spring. Of the four who enrolled, three students were taking the class for the first time. One was taking the class again after failing in the fall semester. A total of four CI Portfolios were evaluated at the end of the spring semester.

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

Topic Selection: 3.5
Identification and Assessment of Evidence: 2.6
Application of Knowledge: 3.1
Analysis and Conclusions: 2.9
Synthesis: 2.5
Reflection: 3.5

Topic Selection and Reflection were the strongest categories for the four students in the stratified sample. Three of the mean scores for individual categories reached our stated target of 3.0 (Very Good) or greater. The mean scores for all six categories placed above 2.0 (Satisfactory). The overall mean for all categories was 3.0.

While the sample size was quite small, and the mean scores in all categories did not reach our stated goal of 3.0 (Very Good), the fact that the overall mean for all categories did reach our goal is encouraging. We hope to build on this success in AY 2013-2014.

ETS-PP

In alternating years, 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.

In the fall of 2012, the ETS-PP was administered to incoming freshmen. These freshmen were required to take AFCI 101 at USCA, and their scores on the ETS-PP are a part of the QEP First-Year Assessment report.

The ETS-PP was administered in the spring of 2013 to second semester seniors. These seniors have not taken part in the Critical Inquiry Program at USCA. Their scores are being included in this report as a benchmark only.

As students involved in the Critical Inquiry Program make their way through their coursework at USCA and reach the second semester of their senior year, we expect to see their scores on the ETS-PP improve significantly in the area of Critical Thinking.

The ETS-PP scores for second semester seniors from Spring 2013 appear below:

ETS® Proficiency Profile

Summary of Scaled Scores To show the ability of the group taking the test

University of South Carolina – Aiken
Abbreviated
03/11/2013

Cohort Name: Seniors - Spring 2013
Close Date:

Student Level:
Seniors

Test Description: Abbreviated Form B Paper

Number of students tested: 202

Number of students included in these statistics: 201

Number of students excluded (see roster): 1

	Possible Range	Mean	95% Confidence Limits* for Mean	Standard Deviation	25th Percentile	50th Percentile	75th Percentile
Total Score	400 to	449.28	447 to	19.01	436	449	462
Skills Subscores:							
Critical Thinking	100 to	112.05	111 to	5.85	107	112	117
Reading	100 to	119.07	118 to	7.28	114	120	125
Writing	100 to	115.31	114 to	4.93	113	115	119
Mathematics	100 to	115.34	114 to	5.62	111	116	119
Context-Based Subscores:							
Humanities	100 to	115.26	114 to	6.77	110	115	121
Social Sciences	100 to	113.93	113 to	6.29	109	114	118
Natural Sciences	100 to	115.61	115 to	5.61	112	116	120

*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 201.

Reports based on a sample of fewer than 50 test takers are representative of the performance of **that sample only**. Reports based on **fewer than 50 test takers** should not be considered representative of the larger group of like students, and inferences or generalizations about the larger population or subgroup **should not** be made based on such small samples.

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 2012, 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 AFCI 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 AY 2012-2013, the first official implementation year of the QEP at USCA, CI faculty met a total of six times—three times in the Fall 2012 Semester and three times in the Spring 2013 Semester. These CI Learning Community Workshops allowed faculty teaching the AFCI 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 Coordinator of Critical Inquiry 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 2012 syllabus development was covered extensively, including the major elements of the AFCI 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. At the beginning of the Fall 2012 Semester and the Spring 2013 Semester, all CI faculty submitted their syllabi to the incoming Coordinator of Critical Inquiry for approval.

As a result of a formal review of syllabi for the AY 2011-2012 pilot year of the AFCI 101 course, it was determined that the template syllabus provided at the May 2011 Think DEEP Summer Institute—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 for the first full implementation year 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.

Over the course of the 2012-2013 first implementation 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 2012 CI Summer Institute and at the end of the Fall 2012 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 Coordinator of Critical Inquiry. 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 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.

The results of the CI Learning Community survey appear below:

How many semesters have you taught AFCI 101?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	12	100.0	100.0
2	0	0.0	100.0
3	0	0.0	100.0
4	0	0.0	100.0
Total	12	100.0	

How many sections of AFCI are you teaching this semester?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	4	33.3	33.3
2	8	66.7	100.0
3	0	0.0	100.0
4	0	0.0	100.0
Total	12	100.0	

Overall, how would you rate your experience teaching the course?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Excellent	1	8.3	8.3
Good	6	50.0	58.3
Fair	4	33.3	91.7
Poor	1	8.3	100.0
Total	12	100.0	

Overall, how would you rate *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* as a text for the course?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Excellent	2	16.7	16.7
Good	8	66.7	83.3
Fair	2	16.7	100.0
Poor	0	0.0	100.0
Total	12	100.0	

Overall, how helpful do you feel the Information Literacy/Library component of the course was for the instructors?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Helpful	3	25.0	25.0
Helpful	6	50.0	75.0
Somewhat Helpful	2	16.7	91.7
Not Helpful At All	1	8.3	100.0
Total	12	100.0	

Overall, how helpful were the Critical Inquiry Learning Community sessions for the instructors?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Helpful	1	8.3	8.3
Helpful	6	50.0	58.3
Somewhat Helpful	5	41.7	100.0
Not Helpful At All	0	0.0	100.0
Total	12	100.0	

Would you be willing to teach the course again?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	11	91.7	91.7
No	1	8.3	100.0
Total	12	100.0	

Summary of Responses to Open-Ended Questions:

What was most enjoyable about teaching the AFCL 101 course?	Interacting with students. Interacting with faculty. Group discussions in class. Class activities.
What was least enjoyable about teaching the course?	Grading. Difficulty with students. Issues with getting everything to come together. Too little time in the class/too few classes in the semester.
If you could change one thing about the course, what would it be?	Two meeting times/week. Longer classes than 50 minutes. More organization of CI Meetings. More common curricula.
Do you have any additional comments?	Glad the next CI Summer Institute will be in-house, and focused on practical CI teaching components. Grade portfolios at the CI Summer Institute. Devote each Learning

	Community meeting to a best practice activity. Really enjoyed teaching the course/will do so again.
--	---

After analyzing both surveys, basic changes were made to the CI Summer Institute, the CI Learning Community Workshops, and the structure of the AFCI 101 course in an attempt to better prepare and support CI faculty in their efforts to teach Critical Inquiry to their students.

To better prepare faculty to teach the AFCI 101 course, the 2013 CI Summer Institute was shortened to two days, run entirely by USCA faculty, and focused intensively on practical workshop sessions keyed to the various elements of the CI course. The 2013 CI Summer Institute opened with an overview of the course. Two separate workshops on syllabus development and were offered, along with a group lunch discussion about building the syllabus. A complete sample syllabus for the semester was included in the CI Summer Institute materials. Workshops were held on teaching the *Into the Wild* book and on literary terms in the book. Two workshops were held on the *Into the Wild* film, and the film was shown. A workshop on intertextuality between the book and the film was also held. In addition, workshops were held on the CI Common Quiz, on information literacy, on representation in ads, and on compiling the CI Portfolio. A CI Portfolio review was also held in which actual sample CI Portfolios were evaluated. A workshop on best practices/what worked and what did not work was given by a two-time instructor of the AFCI 101 course.

To help make the CI Learning Community more effective, and to facilitate all aspects of the Critical Inquiry Program at USCA, the Coordinator of Critical Inquiry will lead targeted sessions at each CI Learning Community meeting for AY 2013-2014. The Center for Teaching Excellence at USCA will assist in the process of preparing and supporting CI faculty, cooperating directly with the Coordinator of Critical Inquiry to better serve the CI Learning Community. Targeted sessions will include the CI Common Quiz, the Information Literacy Assignment in the CI Course, and the CI Portfolio.

In an effort to expand the scope of the AFCI 101 course beyond a 50-minute one-day-per-week format, changes to the structure of the AFCI 101 course have been proposed, discussed, and approved by the newly expanded and refocused CI/FYRE committee to begin in AY 2013-2014. The new elements, which connect directly with the themes/topics of the First-Year Reading and AFCI 101 text *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer (see the Community Service and Co-Curricular Activities section below), are a lecture series and a number of community service activities. Under the new One + One requirement, all AFCI 101 students will be required to attend a film showing of the Sean Penn film adaptation of *Into the Wild* on the USCA campus, and to attend/participate in one of the lectures or community service opportunities. There will be a total of four lectures and three community service opportunities offered per semester. Each lecture will be given by a USCA faculty member and will last for one hour. Community service opportunities will be coordinated through USCA.

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.

We gave students attending Freshman Convocation 2012 a two-part survey. The first section asked specific questions about 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 about their own educational opportunities. Students were also asked about their transition from high school to college. The second section asked open-ended questions and called for student comments. We received a total of 463 readable responses (out of 540 in attendance) from students who attended Freshman Convocation First-Year Reading discussion groups.

The results for the first section appear below:

1.1) Did you read *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*?

Yes: 94.7%
No: 5.3%

1.2) If you read the book, how much did you read?

All of it: 54.2%
About 75%: 18.6%
About 50%: 11.9%
25% or less: 15.4%

1.3) The content and themes in *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* caused you to think about your own educational opportunities.

Strongly Agree: 33.4%
Agree: 57.4%
Uncertain: 5.5%
Disagree: 3.7%
Strongly Disagree: 0%

1.4) Is the transition from high school to college a major concern for you?

Strongly Agree: 20.1%
Agree: 41.5%
Uncertain: 16.5%
Disagree: 18.2%
Strongly Disagree: 3.8%

The results for the second section appear below:

What did you most enjoy about <i>The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind</i> and Convocation?	William's persistence and determination. The way he built the windmill. William's father's stories. Reading about another culture. The group discussion.
What did you least enjoy about <i>The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind</i> and Convocation?	Too many details about Malawi. Scientific terms were boring. Book moved too slow/too many details about famine. Killing the dog. Convocation ceremony was too long.

What suggestions do you have to enhance next year's Convocation?	None/nothing/enjoyed it. Make the Convocation shorter/shorter speeches. Pick a different book. Include interactive activities.
Please share any additional comments.	Liked/didn't like book. Good job. Enjoyed discussion sessions. Looking forward to starting school.

The lower overall Common Quiz scores for this year as compared to AY 2011-2012 (see the Summative Measures section, above) indicate a higher level of difficulty in comprehension of the AY 2012-2013 First-Year Reading text. Students' reactions to the impact of the book on their perceptions and ideas were mixed. The First-Year Reading text for the 2012-2013 academic year was *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer. Rich in details about the culture and politics of Malawi, this work of creative nonfiction focuses on the struggles of William Kamkwamba and his family to overcome famine and drought in Malawi; William's difficulties in getting an education; and his eventual triumph through hard work, discipline, and innovative thinking. While the students liked William and sympathized with his plight, in their reflective essays and in their written comments on our Convocation survey, many of them expressed difficulty connecting Malawian culture and politics with their own life situations.

In an effort to more closely connect the Convocation event and First-Year Reading discussions with the AFCI 101 course, the newly expanded and refocused CI/FYRE Committee proposed, discussed, and approved a new component of the CI course. During the pilot year and the first official implementation year of the QEP, students who were absent from the Convocation event and/or their assigned FYRE discussion group sessions had holds placed on their spring registration at USCA. Beginning in AY 2013-2014, that penalty will change. Instead, students who are absent from the Convocation event and/or their assigned FYRE discussion group will be required to participate in the One + Two component of the AFCI 101 course. Rather than being required to attend a showing of the *Into the Wild* film and to attend/participate in only one lecture/community service opportunity, these students will be required to attend/participate in an additional lecture or community service opportunity. Students who fail to fulfill the One + Two requirement will be assigned an absence in their respective AFCI 101 sessions.

Peer Mentor Development

In keeping with our stated goal of including Peer Mentors in the AFCI 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. Some Peer Mentor candidates were identified by faculty who wished to incorporate a Peer Mentor into the CI course instruction. However, some volunteer Peer Mentors were matched with faculty members who expressed an interest in working with a Peer Mentor but did not have a particular candidate in mind. 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. For AY 2012-2013, in accordance with our stated QEP goal of interlinking the Critical Inquiry QEP with all other areas of the USCA campus, an initiative was begun to recruit CI Peer Mentors from the ranks of students in the Honors Program. All of the CI Peer Mentors for AY 2012-2013 were Honors students.

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 four Peer Mentors served during the 2012-2013 academic year, one in the Fall 2012 Semester and three in the Spring 2013 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 each 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 number of Peer Mentors was so limited during the 2012-2013 first official implementation year, 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 met with the Coordinator of Critical Inquiry. The Coordinator of Critical Inquiry 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 Coordinator of Critical Inquiry, 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 2012-2013 pilot year of the QEP with regard to Peer Mentors was that—despite its limited scope—the Peer Mentor element of the QEP is a valuable addition to our effort to teach Critical Inquiry at USCA. At the 2013 CI Summer Institute, the “Best Practices/What Worked and What Didn’t Work” session, which was conducted by Dr. Michelle Vieyra (who worked with a Peer Mentor during the Fall 2012 Semester) included a section on working with a Peer Mentor. A call was made to all CI Summer Institute participants to consider working with a Peer Mentor during AY 2013-2014. A tip sheet with suggestions for Peer Mentor use was included in the course materials for the CI Summer Institute.

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 were coordinated and managed by the CTE. CI Learning Community Workshops were 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 AFCl 101 course. The new Coordinator of Critical Inquiry, who leads the CI Learning Community Workshops, expanded the agenda of each meeting to include a focus on teaching CI outside the AFCl 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 samples 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 was developed for Honors students. The new course, AHON 490 CI Honors Study Abroad, was intended to focus on advanced studies of Critical Inquiry for Honors students at the sophomore level and above. The program was designed to include three consecutive segments, comprising six credits of electives, offered every other year. All segments were to be seminar-based, relying on active student intercourse. Spring semester was to begin with developing critical thinking skills, which form the course foundation. The Seven Revolutions global issues were then to be introduced, weekly, each critically examined and explored. From this process the class was to select a common research theme, with student groups choosing sub-projects within the common theme. The spring class was to conclude with formal group CI project

proposal presentations, including the on-site international linkage plan. Students were to critique their colleagues' proposals, providing enrichment opportunities. During Maymester students were to finalize their research plan, complete their study, and prepare written reports for their on-site, international presentations. In Summer One the class was supposed to travel to the selected international sites, using the on-location sites to present and demonstrate their findings to their peers. The class was supposed to culminate with formal presentations at an academic, international conference. The course was supposed to 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 was supposed to be coordinated by the Director of International Programs at USCA. However, although a concentrated effort was made to recruit Honors students for the new AHON 490 course, an insufficient number of students signed up for the class. A total of ten students would have been necessary in order to make the class. Only four students actually signed up. After it had become clear that the course would not make, the Coordinator of Critical Inquiry and the Director of the Honors Program surveyed Honors students about the reasons that they chose not to take the AHON 490 course. The overwhelming majority of students responded that the cost of the course was too great. The second most common reason for students choosing not to enroll in the course was that the number of hours required. After a series of conferences that included the Coordinator of Critical Inquiry, the Director of the Honors Program, and the professor in the School of Business who was scheduled to co-teach the course, it has been decided that the AHON 490 course will have to be substantially reduced in expense and in scope in order to attract the required number of students.

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 each 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, for AY 2012-2013, we chose 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.

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 on our campus. It was originally our intention to require the inclusion of co-curricular activities of some kind in the AFCI 101 course. To that end, one of the goals of the newly expanded and refocused CI/FYRE Committee was to find ways to incorporate a community service element into all sections of the CI course. The AY 2013-2014 First-Year Reading selection and AFCI 101 text *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer, includes a host of thematic issues that emphasize the importance of volunteerism. For AY

2013-2014, the CI/FYRE Committee identified three community service opportunities that will be linked to the teaching of the AFCI 101 course for the Fall 2013 Semester and the Spring 2014 Semester: a food drive to benefit disadvantaged students at a local high school, a sleep-out event on the USCA campus to benefit the homeless, and a Habitat for Humanity Alternative Fall Break/Spring Break Program which will also benefit the homeless. Students will not be required to take part in these community service opportunities. However, these opportunities will be among the options available to them in order to fulfill a new requirement (One + One) that students in all sections of AFCI 101 take part in some CI-related activity outside the classroom.

The new One + One requirement also connects with our efforts to integrate the Critical Inquiry QEP throughout the USCA campus as a whole. The lecture series, which is directly connected with topics/themes from the First-Year Reading and the AFCI 101 text, will be open to open to all USCA students, and all students who attend each lecture (including students in CI courses) will receive ICE credit. USC Aiken's Inter-Curricular Enrichment Requirement (ICE) Program, which went into effect for all incoming students in Fall 2009, supports USCA's mission as a comprehensive liberal arts institution that aims to produce engaged learners and principled citizens. USC Aiken undergraduate students who are admitted in Fall 2009 and thereafter are required to attend at least 2 ICE events per academic semester up to a total of sixteen over their four-year college career. Freshman Convocation constitutes the first ICE event for entering freshmen. Beginning in AY 2013-2014, linking the Critical Inquiry QEP with the ICE initiative will mark a major new step in our effort to integrate Critical Inquiry into the campus culture at USCA.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which is given every other year, 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. The NSSE was administered in 2012, and those results appear in the QEP First-Year Assessment report. The test will be given again in 2014.