



## REVITALIZING THE SPRING TERM

THE WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY

*Quality Enhancement Plan*

Revised in Response to the SACS On-Site Review Committee Report, August 27, 2009

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## The Washington and Lee University Quality Enhancement Plan:

# REVITALIZING THE SPRING TERM

### PREFACE IN RESPONSE TO S.A.C.S. ON-SITE REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE VISIT

Our meeting with the on-site team in March of 2009 was extremely beneficial, helping us see the strengths of our Q.E.P. project, as well as ways in which our proposal could be strengthened. The team praised the broad-based involvement of the Washington and Lee community in the formation, development, and planned implementation of our Q.E.P.; also the institutional capability for the initiation and continuation of the plan was approved; and our enthusiasm for and commitment to the plan met with approval. The key

suggestions dealt with part of the focus and assessment strategies for the Q.E.P., and we have responded to the team's suggestions with several major revisions to these elements of the plan. Although these revisions affected other parts of the plan, overall our major changes have been in the section titled, "Assessment of the Plan," on pp. 24-34. We believe the Q.E.P. is even stronger as a result of these changes. We thank the site visit team for their constructive criticism and submit this revision with enthusiasm for final review.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following on a broadly inclusive process that generated more than 200 ideas, Spring Term Revitalization was selected as Washington and Lee's Quality Enhancement Plan (Q.E.P.). Currently, Washington and Lee's academic calendar consists of two 12-week terms (fall and winter) in which students typically take four or five courses, and a six-week Spring Term in which students typically take two courses. Recent reviews by the faculty affirmed the educational value of the more intensive Spring Term but also recognized that the structure of the shorter term was not optimized to realize the student outcomes that are espoused in the institutional mission statement. The heart of the Q.E.P. is to restructure Spring Term to become a four-week, educationally transformative experience. Students will take one, and only one, uniquely designed four-credit course that holds

their undivided attention in a full-time endeavor of learning, enriched by a small group of peers and the personal mentoring attention of the professor. Since all 1,750 undergraduate students enroll in Spring Term, the Q.E.P. requires that the faculty develop about 140 new courses that meet newly articulated, higher-order objectives for Spring Term. These new objectives are for student outcomes that are the result not only of individual courses, but also derive from the additive effect of students' experience in four successive years in such courses. The central learning outcome we seek to enhance is our students' critical and creative thinking abilities. Planning for the launch in spring of 2010 is well underway. As of this writing, faculty have already developed more than 140 courses with the kind of innovative pedagogy and experiential learning that is possible only in

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this intensive, full-time-and-attention format. The institution has committed up to \$250,000 annually to implement and administer the Q.E.P., and for the unusual expenses associated with these course offerings, which may include class travel, speakers, special resources, class productions and the like. A rigorous assessment protocol that measures students' improvement in critical and creative thinking, as well as the effect of our new learning contexts for Spring Term courses and the cumulative effect of the Spring Term experience over four years, is an essential component of the Q.E.P.

### *Outline of the Contents*

Our Q.E.P. follows scrupulously the four major components outlined in the SACS *Handbook for Reaffirmation of Accreditation* (2nd printing, 2004), Part III: "The Quality Enhancement Plan." These components are the major indicators that the On-Site Review Committee uses to determine the acceptability of an institution's Q.E.P. Although our proposal follows the logic most appropriate to its own arguments and integrity, the outline below shows clearly which sections of our proposal correspond to the SACS indicators:





## I. THE FOCUS OF THE PLAN

1. “The Concept,” “The Background,” “The Scope” (pp. 7-8)
2. “The Four-Week Spring Term: Its Essential Focus” and “At the Heart of the Spring Term: 140 New Courses” (pp. 10-14)
3. “The Revitalized Spring Term: Beyond the Classroom,” “The Student Experience of the Spring Term,” and “The Faculty Experience of the Spring Term” (pp. 20-22)



## II. THE BROAD-BASED INVOLVEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE Q.E.P.

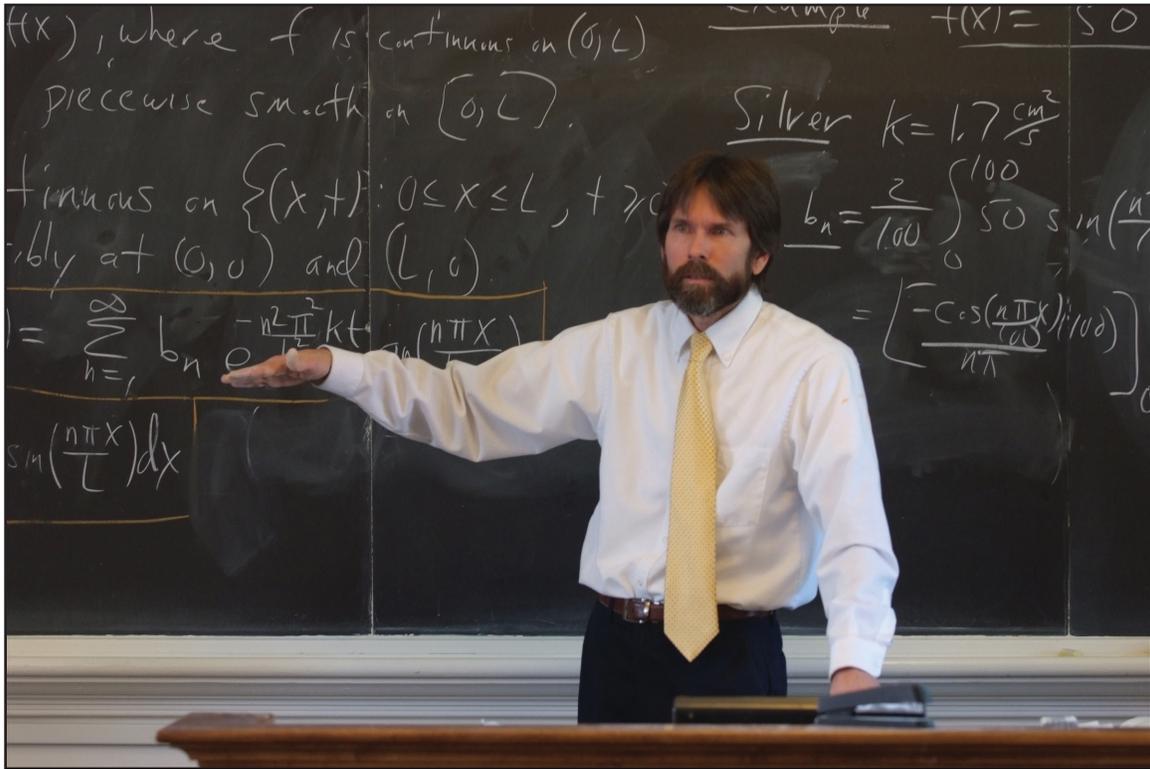
1. "The Q.E.P. Selection Process" (pp. 8-10)
2. "The Course-Creation Process" (pp. 14-18)
3. Appendix III: A Brief History of the Spring Term at Washington and Lee (pp. 45-50)
4. Appendix IV: Timeline of the Major Dates, Events and Decisions (pp. 51-52)



### III.

## INSTITUTIONAL CAPABILITY FOR THE INITIATION AND CONTINUATION OF THE PLAN

1. “The Course-Creation Process” (pp. 14-18) and “The Course Selection and Enrollment Process” (pp. 18-20)
2. “The Budget for the Q.E.P.” (pp. 22-24)
3. “Conclusion” (pp. 34)
4. Appendix I: Decisions of the Implementation Task Force (pp. 36-40)



## IV. ASSESSMENT OF THE PLAN

1. "Assessment of the Q.E.P.: Objectives, Strategy, and Instruments"  
(pp. 24-34)
2. Appendix II: Initial Assessment of the Spring Term, 2008 (pp. 41-44)

## REVITALIZING THE SPRING TERM

**The Concept:** Our QEP begins with a thought experiment: what would happen if, for a concentrated period of time, university students took a single, unique course, one whose activities, assignments, and projects would fill their entire week? These courses would be fully engaging, often employing experimental pedagogies, with high student-faculty contact; furthermore, these courses would have as their primary focus the enhancement of the student learning process, seeking to challenge and develop the learning of students in ways that traditional teaching methods might not be able to match. Over a four-week Spring Term, with students fully engaged in one of these innovative and intensive courses, what might be the impact on the student learning experience at Washington and Lee?

**The Background:** The Spring Term at Washington and Lee University has long been a model for intensive, experimental and unique teaching and learning opportunities. For more than three decades, the Spring Term has allowed students and faculty to come together in a variety of classroom settings to engage in the liberal arts learning process in ways that longer terms do not necessarily enable.<sup>1</sup> By choosing the revitalization of our Spring Term as our Quality Enhancement Plan, we seek to strengthen those aspects of our Spring Term that have long served as models of the liberal arts teaching ideal; to enhance the Spring Term learning experience by giving it several new emphases, objectives and methods; and to bring the Spring Term into closer alignment with the rest of our academic year, so that our longer terms and our intensive four-week Spring Term complement one another in order to offer our students a superb and unique learning experience.

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<sup>1</sup>For a concise history of the Spring Term at Washington and Lee, please see Appendix III.

The Revitalization of the Spring Term represents a new model for intensive, rigorous, innovative and challenging teacher-student interaction that could well exemplify what the liberal arts education can be in the 21st century. Washington and Lee is in a unique position to fulfill this aim: we have had a six-week Spring Term for more than three decades, during which a number of innovative and intense pedagogies have been implemented. The Spring Term has long been the subject of faculty and administration scrutiny, assessment and evaluation: seven years ago the faculty formed a Spring Term Renewal committee that met for a full academic year and studied all aspects of the Spring Term in its six-week format. Five years ago the faculty re-affirmed its commitment to the Spring Term by voting to maintain this calendar structure after considering a range of alternatives. At the same time, the faculty recognized that the current Spring Term model was not optimized for student learning outcomes. During the fall of 2007, in the wake of President Kenneth P. Ruscio's Academic Life Renewal Proposal (detailed in Appendix III), the faculty voted by a wide majority to re-structure the six-week term to a four-week term, believing that this new format would allow us to best realize the possibilities of a unique, concentrated and intensive student learning experience. In the spring of 2008, after a lengthy selection and consideration process, Washington and Lee chose the Revitalization of the Spring Term as our Quality Enhancement Plan, the project that gives us the best opportunity to make a significant and lasting improvement to the student learning process at Washington and Lee.

**The Scope:** The new four-week Spring Term will require students to take a single course, so faculty teaching Spring Term courses will know that they

have their students' undivided attention.<sup>2</sup> Each course is expected to require between 30-35 hours of student work time per week, so the students will be fully engaged with their single course. These courses will now be worth four academic credits, to take into account their intensity and level of engagement. The development of a Mission Statement and Learning Objectives unique to the Spring Term, along with the shift to a four-week format in which faculty will be able to focus students entirely on a single course, means that every Spring Term course will have to be newly conceived and designed by the implementation date of spring 2010. Thus, our Q.E.P. requires the creation (or significant redesign) of approximately 140 new courses before the Spring Term of 2010. (To accommodate 1,750 students with a target student:faculty ratio of 15:1, we need fewer than 120 courses; but to have sufficient flexibility in the system and to give students adequate choice among courses, 140 new courses are needed.) This is an ambitious task. From December of 2007 through March of 2009, an Implementation Task Force met weekly to work out the expectations and logistics for these new courses, including the higher-level learning objectives that the Spring Term concept will attain, the different formats and structures for courses, and how best to encourage faculty to think outside the box and create bold, innovative, challenging teacher-student experiences that will embody the liberal arts ideal at Washington and Lee.

The response of the faculty to this charge has been enthusiastic and impressive: by September of 2008, we already had 12 new course ideas submitted; another 25 were proposed by December of 2008; by January 15, 2009, an additional 53; and by April 2009, another 50, giving us a total of 140 new courses

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<sup>2</sup>It is crucial to understand that, unlike January or Spring Terms at other institutions, our Spring Term is *required* of all our students in every year, unless students arrange an internship or abroad program or some other structured option for the spring. A student's required credits for graduation include the 16 credits she will earn in four Spring Terms. Also, our faculty are all required to teach in the Spring Term, although the frequency of this will be determined by each department's needs.

already planned and proposed, with more than a year still to go before implementation.<sup>3</sup> We anticipate no difficulty developing the full array of new courses by the spring of 2010.

**The Q.E.P. Selection Process:** The Q.E.P. Selection Team was chosen to represent a wide breadth of our campus community. The members ranged from undergraduate students and students in the Law School to faculty within the College, the Williams School, and the Law School, and also staff and administration from many areas of the University. The committee consisted of the following membership: Michael Anderson, professor of economics (chair); Rich Cleary '09; Charles Curry '11; Debbie Dailey, assistant provost; Bob Danforth, associate dean of the Law School; Scott Dittman, University registrar; Marcia France, professor of chemistry; Katy Hall '09 (Law); Joseph Martinez, professor of theater; Aubrey Shinofield, Shepherd Poverty Program; Robert Strong, professor of politics; John Tombarge, professor, University library; Dawn Watkins, dean of students; and Elizabeth Wicht, Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

The Q.E.P. Selection Team was formed in September of 2007, and held its first formal meeting on Sept. 27, 2007. It immediately set about communicating with the larger W&L community what a Q.E.P. is, what its aims are and what opportunities it provides. The team solicited ideas from the entire campus community that might enhance student learning. The Q.E.P. Selection Process was widely inclusive, soliciting suggestions through campus forums, campus notices, posters, newspaper publicity, broadcast emails, on-campus suggestion boxes, and other announcements. The winnowing and selection process was rigorous, with

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<sup>3</sup>The Committee on Courses and Degrees, a combined faculty/administrator/student committee that oversees all curricular administration, officially approved the first batch of new Spring Term courses at its January 6, 2009, meeting. Since that meeting, the C&D Committee has approved new Spring Term courses regularly each week.

weekly meetings regularly from Sept. 27, 2007 through Jan. 30, 2008. The selection and evaluation process followed this model, established in the Oct. 17, 2007, memo from Committee Chair Michael Anderson:

Process for screening and evaluating proposals:

1) We hire a work-study to enter all paper submissions onto the Web page, giving us a readable and searchable set of submissions.

2) A small subgroup pre-screens the submissions, eliminating for further consideration all that clearly miss the target for a QEP (not student-outcomes-focused, for example). These ideas are posted to the committee-only Web page so that other committee members can resurrect an idea if they think it has been buried prematurely.

3) The subgroup narrows the remaining submissions into like ideas, e.g. topics focused on writing, topics focused on the calendar, etc.

4) The larger committee then divides into subgroups, each with a chair, that receives a packet of ideas to evaluate.

5) Each idea is evaluated, on a one- to three-star basis, on the following criteria:

- Does the idea have a champion?
- Is the idea feasible/can it be completed?
- Will the idea have a positive effect on student learning outcomes?
- Is it a transformative idea?
- Can we measure the effect of the initiative?
- How costly will this be?

6) The subgroups place their evaluations on the committee-only Web page for all to see.

7) Each subgroup presents their sense of the best two or three ideas that they've received (assuming that there are that many top ideas in each subgroup).

8) The larger committee picks the 10-12 best ideas for further consideration.

After the committee winnowed the number of proposals (initially more than 200) down to the 10 deemed most viable, the provost issued another broadcast e-mail to the campus community, inviting

further input on the short list of finalists. This input was received over the Q.E.P. Web site and factored into the selection process. The final ideas included the following:

1. Advising
2. Diversity
3. Freshman Seminar
4. Information Fluency
5. International Education
6. I-Program
7. Service Learning
8. Spring Term Revitalization
9. Student Intellectual Life
10. Sustainability Report

The team formed subcommittees to consider each of the 10 ideas in great detail, using their developed criteria and a ratings system. They ultimately arrived at five ideas that they deemed most promising for enhancing student learning outcomes at W&L. On Feb. 18, 2008, the team recommended two ideas to the president and provost: Spring Term Revitalization and Environmental Sustainability. After carefully considering both of these ideas, as well as the entire team report, President Kenneth Ruscio and Provost June Aprille selected Spring Term Revitalization as the Washington and Lee University Quality Enhancement Plan.<sup>4</sup> The Spring Term concept was deemed as having strong faculty and administrative support; it forms “a key specific component of the comprehensive Academic Life Renewal initiative” proposed by President Ruscio in the autumn of 2007; it is “consistent with the [University’s] strategic plan” and offered the most comprehensive connection “to all the higher order learning outcomes for our students that are expressed in our mission statement.”

Following the Q.E.P. selection, in April 2008 the provost appointed Marc Conner, professor of English, to direct the Q.E.P. Leadership Team, charging that committee with the task of writing the Q.E.P. document to be submitted in February of 2009. This Leadership Team, consisting of eight faculty ranging

<sup>4</sup>Please see full timeline in Appendix IV.

from assistant to full professor and representing all the major divisions of the College and the Williams School, and four staff members representing information technology, interdisciplinary study and institutional effectiveness, immediately began meeting and planning the composition of the Q.E.P. itself. (For details on the breadth and selection of the Q.E.P. Leadership Team, please see Appendix VI.) It is important to note that the Q.E.P. Selection Team recommended that all of the top ideas be considered by the provost and the president as highly worthy campus initiatives, and they are being considered as action items in the coming years. (The Campus Sustainability initiative has already been launched.) The full report of the Q.E.P. Selection Team, including their top recommendations and the other concepts that were submitted, may be viewed at: <http://qep.wlu.edu/rec.htm>.

### THE FOUR-WEEK SPRING TERM: ITS ESSENTIAL FOCUS

The Learning Contexts, Goals, and central Learning Outcomes of the Spring Term are consonant with those of Washington and Lee University as a whole, and all derive from the University's Mission Statement. In short, we seek in the Spring Term to deliver the same elements as in our longer terms: a superb liberal arts education, combining the mastery of disciplines and critical thinking skills along with W&L's emphasis on character and civility. But the four-week model allows us to employ other forms of teaching and learning, experimental pedagogies, unique learning systems and environments and intense student/faculty interaction that a traditional, longer term may not allow. That is, the Spring Term enables us to use different means to achieve the same end of an outstanding liberal arts education.

The essential difference of the Spring Term is twofold: first, students take a single course, so their energy and thought are focused on a single learning experience; and second, the learning process in that course is uniquely intense, involving more than 30

hours per week inside and outside the classroom, during which students are entirely devoted to the material of their particular course. This allows faculty to challenge students in unique ways; it requires students to work together in focused projects over a short period of time; it makes possible creative assignments that are not feasible during a long term when students are juggling four classes and multiple other commitments; and it changes the nature and the process of teaching and learning both for the professors and for the students. Such a teaching and learning opportunity both complements and fulfills what is done during the longer semesters. Indeed, one of the research questions we will be pursuing in our ongoing assessment of the Spring Term is precisely whether it enables us, in some cases, to perhaps achieve our learning goals in ways *superior to* the long terms. Consequently, the experience of the Spring Term may well lead to an enhancement of our teaching and learning during our longer, more traditional terms as well.

### MISSION STATEMENT FOR THE NEW SPRING TERM

In the first step of the Q.E.P. writing process, the Q.E.P. Leadership Team composed a Mission Statement and Learning Contexts for the new Spring Term. Our conception of the Spring Term and its aims are, therefore, as follows:

*The Spring Term offers innovative, intensive and challenging student learning experiences in ways that differ markedly from the experiences of our long terms. Students and faculty benefit from a focused learning environment that allows them to devote undivided attention to the subject matter of one course. Through a range of pedagogies including experimental, interdisciplinary, international and interactive approaches, the Spring Term accomplishes the University's stated mission of developing students' critical and creative thinking and promoting their growth in honor, integrity, and civility.*

## THE LEARNING CONTEXTS OF THE NEW SPRING TERM

We seek in the revitalized Spring Term to establish an atmosphere of fully engaged learning that will enhance our students' critical and creative thinking, while also fostering experiences of working with others in harmony and cooperation. Towards that end, we have established the following four "Learning Contexts" that faculty have used as the framework for developing their new Spring Term courses.

Through their cumulative four-year experiences of the Spring Term, students will have the opportunity:

1. To work closely with faculty in a single course, both inside and outside the classroom, in intensive learning experiences, thereby engaging in critical research or creative work under faculty direction.
2. To study subjects in depth and detail, generally performing focused, often interdisciplinary study and/or particular enrichment of understanding rather than breadth of coverage.
3. To work collaboratively with a diverse group of fellow students (and possibly larger communities) in ways that generate greater respect towards one's fellow citizens. Such work may often involve service learning projects to further one's sense of commitment to others.
4. To produce papers, projects, reports, journals, creative works or performances that exemplify the possibilities of the class's particular pedagogies.

At the heart of these experiences is our effort to enhance students' critical and creative thinking abilities. It is crucial to note that these contexts will be realized *during a student's entire experience of the Spring Term over his or her four years at Washington and Lee*. No single course will necessarily reflect all of these contexts, nor will students have experienced all of these contexts through a single Spring Term

experience (although it is certainly possible that a single course experience will indeed reflect all of these contexts). But the aim here is that by the end of a student's four years in college, all four of these learning contexts will have been realized through that student's cumulative experiences of the Spring Term.

**On Intensive Learning:** Considerable research indicates that short, intensive learning experiences can be an effective means of enhancing student learning. Scott and Conrad (1992) concluded, after reviewing 50 studies of intensive courses, that such courses often result in "superior learning outcomes when compared to semester-equivalent courses" (cited in Kucsera, Zimmaro, Trividi, 2008). Similarly, Eileen Daniel, in a thorough review of the literature on intensive learning courses, states that "the literature strongly indicates that time-shortened formats . . . can produce favorable outcomes [including] superior test scores, [can] stimulate discussion, and result in creative teaching techniques" (Daniel). One of the major research questions we will pursue throughout the new Spring Term process is, what effect does the intensive learning format have on our student learning outcomes? The assessment of the Spring Term, discussed below, will focus closely on how effective such intense courses can be in fostering student learning—particularly in the enhancement of critical and creative thinking—both in the short term itself and in conjunction with our longer, more traditional terms.

In addition to the benefits of intensive learning pedagogies, we also see a potential gain in the student-life aspect of the student learning experience through the focused term. A phenomenon in higher education in the past decade is the proliferation of double majors, as well as the heightened interest in interdisciplinary study. At Washington and Lee, we have seen a marked increase in both the number of double majors—now over a quarter of our students—as well as in the student and faculty interest in interdisciplinary, non-major programs. In the past five years, we have created curricular programs (converted this year into

minors) in the following areas: African-American Studies, East Asian Studies, Environmental Studies, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Poverty and Human Capability, and Women's Studies. As Table 1 indicates, this is consonant with a dramatic increase in double majors among our students.

This data reveals an increase from nine double majors a decade ago to 134 double majors today; and a 30 percent increase in the number of majors per graduating student, a highly significant shift. The revitalized Spring Term will help channel these interests in interdisciplinary learning through its range of courses that in many cases cross, combine or put into dialogue different disciplines. By giving this trend a solid curricular structure, we can shape and sharpen the interdisciplinary interest for the maximum benefit to the student learning experience.

At the same time, the recent student interest in multiple majors and programs, along with student engagement in a range of extra- and co-curricular activities ranging from art to athletics, service work to student governance, can result in a withering of

student focus and energy as students find themselves spread so thinly that the overall quality of their academic experience suffers. Many studies attest to the deleterious effects on students of being over-engaged in a wide range of activities both inside and outside of the classroom, a phenomenon that is apparent to many faculty, as well as those working in student services. We believe that a four-week term in which students can focus on just *one* thing, a single class, could be a welcome alternative for our students.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the shift in tempo and rhythm that the Spring Term will require should also facilitate student learning. Teaching students of this current generation requires innovative and dynamic methods. Just as one varies the tempo and rhythm in a 55-minute lecture during the conventional 12-week term to hold the attention of the learner, so too varying the rhythm of the academic year can be an effective aid to teaching. The different structure of the term will generate unique teaching methodologies, increase attention to the tempo of learning and encourage faculty and students to scaffold learning in units that overlap and integrate

**TABLE 1: INCREASE IN DOUBLE MAJORS**

<i>Curricular Indicator</i>	<i>Academic Year 2007/08</i>	<i>Academic Year 1997/98<sup>5</sup></i>
<i>Multiple majors</i>		
Majors completed	565	414
Number of graduates	431	405
Majors/graduate	1.31 (= 565 / 431)	1.02 (= 414 / 405)
Graduates with two or more Majors	116 (27% of students)	N/A
<i>Non-major Programs</i>		
Number of formal non-major programs	7	0
Program completion	66	9 (University Scholars)
Percentage of graduating student body	15.1%	2.5%

<sup>5</sup>Sources: QEP team calculations from <http://ir.wlu.edu/cds/>, <http://ir.wlu.edu/factbook/academicaffairs/majors/Completions.htm>, <http://ir.wlu.edu/factbook/academicaffairs/majors/Graduates%20by%20Program.pdf>, <http://www.wlu.edu/x18084.xml>.

<sup>6</sup>It is worth noting that our initial assessment data from the Spring Term of 2008 indicated that one of the things students most appreciate about the Spring Term is the ability to dedicate the majority of their learning time to a single course. Please see Appendix II.

well within four weeks. The learning and teaching process will emphasize full and active engagement and renewed thinking about course material and learning styles, and launch a journey of collaborative learning between the instructor and students. Furthermore, academic institutions typically pay greater attention to the beginning of the year, whereas endings are left to winding down. Our Spring Term is devoted to reinvigorating the learning process during the last four weeks of the year. By ending the year with this heightened focus and energy, students and faculty alike, it is our hope, will embrace the learning and teaching enterprise well beyond the last day of the school year.

#### AT THE HEART OF THE SPRING TERM: 140 NEW COURSES

The creation of 140 new courses for a four-week, required short term certainly seems, on the face of it, a dauntingly ambitious task. And certainly we envision this Q.E.P. as precisely that—a bold and innovative undertaking on the part of the entire University that will redefine a key part of the Washington and Lee undergraduate educational experience. However, it is not as if we are creating this term out of nothing, cutting it from new, whole cloth. We have been running a successful six-week Spring Term at W&L for more than 35 years, which means that our academic and student culture is already defined by a version of the Spring Term. Our institution at every level is acclimated to a spring term—in terms of academics, institutional infrastructure, athletic programs, student life programs and all the other elements that go into a university, we already build the academic year around a Spring Term experience. Our Spring Term Q.E.P. reconceives the structure, format and to some extent the very nature of the Spring Term, and establishes clear and thorough learning contexts and intellectual goals of that term, which of course necessitates a good deal of rethinking of W&L's resources, institutional capability and academic infrastructure.

The new courses created for the four-week Spring Term will represent tremendous variety across disciplines, throughout the range of students from first-year to senior major, as well as showing a wide range of teaching methods and approaches to learning. Some courses in the spring will be upper-level experiences designed for junior or senior majors who seek to explore a concept or topic in extreme depth and detail; other courses will be designed with the first- or second-year student in mind, offering an introductory exploration of issues and topics that will be experienced in other ways in the longer terms. Still others will seek to bring together several disciplines in a single learning experience, giving students a hands-on understanding of how different modes of thought and approaches to a subject can yield exciting and challenging results.

We believe that the enhanced teacher-student relationship that becomes possible with one full-time course will yield interesting and positive benefits for both the professor and the student, and this will form another research question that we will pursue in our ongoing assessment of the Spring Term experience. Faculty will inevitably find that their own research work and interests will dovetail with what their students are working on, and an almost apprentice model of teaching will emerge. In many cases, students will see the teacher's methods of *learning*, as well as of teaching. In an educational world in which increasing attention is paid to undergraduate research, this model of collaborative learning could serve as the ideal means to deepen students' understanding of the life of the mind, the life of the scholar and the life of the academy.

We further anticipate that the Spring Term structure will encourage professors to innovate, to experiment and to reconceive their teaching methods, conceptions and philosophies. Although so-called traditional teaching methods will hardly be discarded (certainly the lecture, the blackboard and the seminar discussion will all occupy a key place in Spring Term teaching and learning), the four-week, intensive format and the requirement for each faculty member to

create a new or radically revised course does encourage faculty experimentation, offering the opportunity to try new pedagogies, experiment with more intensive and interactive learning experiences, and find ways to take full advantage of the unique opportunity of having their students' complete attention and focus for a four-week period.<sup>7</sup> Faculty success with innovative teaching in the Spring Term will undoubtedly carry over to enhanced teaching methodologies for the longer terms as well.

**The Course-Creation Process:** One of the most exciting aspects of the Q.E.P. process has been the development of these innovative new courses by our faculty. A key element in this entire process has been the fact that the actual guidelines for these new courses, and hence the conception of what the Spring Term courses will accomplish, has been directed by the faculty. In the winter of 2008, the Academic Life Implementation Task Force, consisting of both faculty and administration, drew up only a general set of guidelines for what the new Spring Term courses would want to accomplish and how they might be structured. Those guidelines, sent out to the faculty in the early spring of 2008, were as follows:

#### **GUIDELINES FOR FOUR-WEEK SPRING TERM COURSES:**

These guidelines are meant to encourage maximum creativity in the way that we approach teaching and learning. In the spirit of "renewing academic life" faculty are encouraged to think more about *how* we teach in contrast to focusing primarily on topic coverage and content delivery. On the other hand, there is also a need for some

accountability in determining what is counted for academic credit. New ways of teaching should uphold standards of academic rigor.

On the creative side, courses might:

- Move away from breadth in content coverage to depth and enrichment of understanding, seeking the deeper meaning of content rather than factual knowledge.
- Generate questions for research and debate that lead to more questions as a means of stimulating curiosity and skills for independent learning.
- Be linked to other courses taken in succession in previous/following terms.
- Be linked to others in the same term as a collaborative course grouping, with courses meeting separately most of the time and sometimes all together to incorporate different ideas and perspectives.
- Be labeled as FDR (i.e., "foundation requirements" or general education courses), capstone, gateway, recruiting to major, cross-course collaborative, first-year seminar, intensive field, studio, lab research, service learning, etc.
- Possibilities are endless!

On the accountability side, every four-week Spring Term course will have to be approved by the Committee on Courses and Degrees, whether it is a new course or a revised course as we move from a six-week to four-week term. *There is a strong expectation that one should not simply take a six-week course and compress it to offer the same content in four weeks. This is an opportunity for re-thinking how a course should be constructed to produce the desired learning result.*

The course syllabus should document:

1. Learning objectives—what outcomes can students expect to achieve as a result of taking this course?
2. A course plan that includes at least 8-10 hours of face time per week between professor and class as a whole. This class time could be used

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<sup>7</sup>In our assessment of the Spring Term of 2008, students indicated that the "unique aspect of the course content" and the "intense method of instruction" were major factors in choosing their courses (71.5 percent of 129 respondents), and that the interdisciplinary nature of the courses was also a key element in their appeal (83.4 percent of 102 respondents). This suggests that the pedagogies employed in this sort of instruction are effective from the students' perspective. Please see Appendix II.

for a variety of teaching strategies other than lectures, e.g. other kinds of direct instruction; group discussion; student reporting; group planning; structured reflection. Remember, students are enrolled in only one course—your course—so you will have their full time and attention.

3. In addition to group class time, the other expected activities related to meeting the course objectives. Note that the course as a whole should require a student of average ability to commit a total of 30-35 hours per week (including class meeting time) for the four-week term. The weekly time commitments outside of class meeting time might include (for example):
  - Individual or subset meetings with the instructor.
  - Assigned individual or group projects working time.
  - Research and independent study time expectations.
  - Experiential or field work assignments.
4. Rigorous assessment plans related to learning objectives: e.g. exams, papers, journals, oral reports, class discussion, qualitative surveys and course evaluations.

These guidelines formed the basis for the first group of proposals, from the so-called Spring Term Pioneers, the first group of 15 faculty. Each member of this group submitted a course concept to the Q.E.P. director and the provost. We then convened a round-table session with the group in early June, each member presented her concept, and a lively discussion followed that focused on the opportunities, challenges and common questions faculty were facing as we conceived of these Spring Term courses. The pioneers then spent the summer of 2008 refining and honing their proposals. Each pioneer was granted a \$1,000 stipend for this work, as well as an additional \$1,000 available as needed for course development expenses. Then in late August, we brought this group

together for a Faculty Academy luncheon that was open to the entire faculty community. At this session, the provost and the QEP director talked briefly about the efforts and expectations of the new Spring Term and its related courses; and then three of the pioneers presented their detailed courses to the group as a whole. This was a well attended event—roughly 70 people present all told—and the atmosphere was very lively and enthusiastic, as professors got to talk in depth about their teaching and the invigorating possibilities the new Spring Term offers. Then in September 2008, the pioneers submitted their new course proposals—with detailed syllabi and learning objectives that match their departmental objectives as well as the new contexts, goals, and learning outcomes for the Spring Term—to the University’s Committee on Courses and Degrees, which oversees all new curricular developments. The resulting courses then formed the basis for the Q.E.P. Leadership Team’s efforts to further define and clarify what the Spring Term seeks to accomplish. This dynamic, interactive process means that the W&L faculty themselves have established what the Spring Term shall be—the standards and objectives arise from the faculty’s own conception of what we are trying to achieve in the classroom and what sorts of student learning experiences best exemplify Washington and Lee’s commitment to an excellent liberal arts education.

The Pioneers Course Proposal Process has since been repeated thrice more, with Pioneers II submitting 25 new proposals during the autumn of 2008; Pioneers III submitting another 53 proposals during the winter of 2009; and Pioneers IV submitting another 50 during the spring/summer of 2009. In each case, the extended process, which includes direct feedback on every course by the director of the Q.E.P. Team as well as the provost, a round-table discussion by all participants and the formal submission of the course to the Committee on Courses and Degrees, has proven very effective in helping individual faculty to work through the numerous issues of detail, logistics and guidelines that the reconceived Spring Term Q.E.P. requires. In several cases, the Q.E.P. director

has met with whole departments to talk about the opportunities and challenges of the course-creation process. The resulting campus-wide discussion of these new courses has proven a very exciting and engaging conversation among the faculty, and has helped spread the word to students about these great new courses that are fast approaching.<sup>8</sup>

**The Actual Courses:** A full listing of all the courses that have been formally submitted to the Courses and Degrees Committee may be viewed at <http://qep.wlu.edu/Proposals/SPRING TERM 2010 COURSE PROPOSALS.htm>.

This site includes the detailed syllabus for each course, as well as a description of how the course will seek to fulfill the learning objectives for the Spring Term. Here too one can view the Courses & Degrees Course Proposal Form (required of any new course submitted to C&D) as well as the C&D Supplemental Spring Term Form (required of all courses submitted to C&D as new Spring Term courses). Many of these course descriptions run to a dozen or more pages in length, and they offer fascinating reading and superb examples of innovative course design. To give a quick portrait of the variety of learning opportunities W&L students will have in the Spring Term, we offer here five brief descriptions (in each professor's own words) of proposed courses.<sup>9</sup>

#### **PROPOSAL 1: "BONN AND BEYOND: A SUPERVISED STUDY THROUGH GERMANY'S RHINELAND"**

##### **Prof. Daniel Kramer, German Department**

This intensive language course offers students a four-week period of direct exposure to the language, culture and people of Germany. Students will immerse themselves in the culturally rich environs of Bonn,

Cologne and the region along the important Rhine River. Over the course of the four weeks, the students will significantly improve their communication skills through extensive and innovative language instruction offered by both the program director and a native language assistant. They will also gain a greater understanding of German history, from its Roman origins and Baroque splendor to its post-WWII reconstruction and contemporary culture, through lectures by native authorities, tours of museums, churches, companies and governmental organizations, and—above all—through their interaction with their host families and with German university students.

#### **PROPOSAL 2: "THEATER DESIGN & PERFORMANCE: PROPERTIES, PUPPETS AND MASKS"**

##### **Prof. Owen Collins, Department of Theater**

This course is an in-depth exploration of the crafted artifacts of the theater, specifically properties, puppets and masks. The first section will focus on a familiarity with the application of research. The essence of design is the crafting of an object to tell the story of the given play. All properties are an outgrowth of the artistic vision for the play and the research guided by that vision. Next, in introducing mask performance to students through videos and demonstrations, the students will explore mask-making techniques and performance methods. In addition, they will craft specific character masks for Commedia stock characters. They will culminate in a scene performed in mask by the students. The students will evaluate the effectiveness of the masks based on how the final design is suited to the character. Finally we will study puppetry, both shadow puppets and other forms of traditional puppetry. Again, studying videos and demonstrations, the students will begin experimenting with various construction techniques, and perform a scene using the puppets they have created.

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<sup>8</sup>For a full timeline of this process and its place among the rest of the Q.E.P. work, please see Appendix IV.

<sup>9</sup>All five were approved by Courses and Degrees on January 6, 2009, and by the faculty as a whole on Jan. 12, 2009.

**PROPOSAL 3: “THE MATHEMATICS  
OF CRYPTOGRAPHY”**

**Prof. Gregory P. Dresden,  
Department of Mathematics**

Cryptography is the art and science of encoding secret messages. Techniques range from the simple substitution and transposition codes (used by the ancient Greeks and Romans) to the modern public-key systems used by banks and governments, allowing them to maintain a high level of security. Both ancient and modern cryptographic systems are a fascinating blend of mathematics, creativity and subterfuge, and in total it forms a fascinating field of study. In this four-week Spring Term course, we will study a few areas of cryptography in depth. I plan on having three main components to this course: first, to understand the historical context and importance of these systems; second, to understand the mathematics behind the codes; and third, to have hands-on practice in making and breaking codes. Homework will be of two types: math problems, to further the students’ understanding of the theory, and cryptography problems, to put into practice their knowledge of the material. Assignments will be challenging and time-consuming, as is true for most math homework, and I expect that students (and I) will be spending a great deal of time outside of class on these problems. The best way to learn mathematics is by doing mathematics, and in this class they will have plenty of homework in order to do so. Students will periodically design codes that I then attempt to break. The idea of different groups of students collaborating together to try to come up with a system that can defeat their professor will prove exciting and a good learning approach. Instead of exams, I will give four challenging projects during the four weeks. These might reference famous cryptographic puzzles, or might be riddles and problems of my own making. Naturally, the instructions and assignments will themselves all be in code, and the students will be required to decrypt them just to understand the assignment.

**PROPOSAL 4: “PLANT FUNCTIONAL ECOLOGY”**

**Prof. Bill Hamilton, Department of Biology**

This field-based laboratory course will cover topics that investigate the vital roles that plants play in shaping earth’s ecosystems by conducting novel research projects in a variety of field settings (e.g. on campus, the Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountains or the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem). The emphasis and location of the study area differs from year to year. Information regarding the specific course topic and field trip schedule is made available in the fall prior to the Spring Term in which the class is offered. Topics will focus on the responses of native plants to environmental stresses such as global climate change (elevated temperature and carbon dioxide and drought), herbivory and invasive species. Field and laboratory exercises will focus on testing hypotheses through experiments using a variety of species from intact plant communities. A review of the pertinent literature (conducted in Winter Term’s Biology 295) is used to develop and conduct a term research project. Students will have a total of three written products. The first will be a three- to four-page lab report written during the second week of class. The lab report will summarize the data that we have collected to date and will include observations about techniques that (possibly) didn’t work and why, and a brief discussion of additional data worth collecting. The second and third written works will be final papers. The first is a two- to four-page class review paper. The review will be a perspectives paper written in first person about what you experienced and learned in the course outside of the research material (e.g. personal observations, skills, and knowledge gained outside the research project). The final eight- to 10-page paper will be written using the data from the term research project and will take the form of a scientific manuscript with introduction, methods, results, discussion and reference sections. Students will also have two assignments that will produce two common forms of scientific communication, an oral PowerPoint presentation and a poster presentation.

The oral presentations will occur in the first week of the semester on an introductory topic related to the planned term research project. The poster presentation will be developed as an abbreviated version of the final paper and will be produced by two students working together to produce the final product. The final posters will be displayed in the Science Center with a scheduled class presentation during the last week of class.

### PROPOSAL 5: “CHILDREN’S LITERATURE”

#### **Prof. Suzanne Keen, Department of English**

Children’s literature has often been invested with the duty of inculcating virtues, values and morality into young readers. Does reading fiction really work this way in real children? In a historical, anthology-based study of children’s literature, the course investigates the relationship between children’s literary reading and character formation. In the course, students consider questions from literary, psychological and pedagogical perspectives. Beginning with tools for teaching literacy (primers, alphabets and readers), students examine children’s literature in historical and cultural context, debating appropriateness and effectiveness for pedagogy. For instance, are unedited classical myths (full of sex and violence) good tools for teaching character, as advocates of cultural literacy have argued? Do the gender stereotypes in many fairy tales accidentally teach girl readers invidious ideas about their roles in society and in relationships? Should myths and fairy tales be censored, expurgated or revised? Do modern versions correct these problems? Can children’s literature be used to promote contemporary values, such as tolerance, or do unruly literary texts and unpredictable child readers escape adult intentions? Observations from students’ 12-hour service-learning placements will supplement our discussion of course texts. Weekly response papers of 1,000 words each engage students with four major secondary texts representing a variety of perspectives about the function of children’s literature. Appropriate for students in the Teacher Education program and

FDR HL. Course Web site at <http://sakai.wlu.edu>.

These five diverse courses—a study-abroad course, a hands-on artistic production course, an intermediate/advanced mathematics course, an in-the-field lab science course, and a general level literature course with a dedicated service learning component—exemplify the range of offerings and the overall curriculum renewal that the Spring Term produces. Students will have a dazzling array of courses from which to choose, ranging from introductory experiences to highly focused, discipline-specific classes. Our expectation is that students will have difficulty only in choosing which terrific class to focus on each spring.

**The Course Selection and Enrollment Process:** As the Spring Term course creation process continues apace, we anticipate the creation and approval of approximately 140 courses by the mid-fall of 2009, well in advance of the inaugural Spring Term of 2010. This will allow us ample time for the crucial work of advertising the courses, advising students about the academic offerings and expectations of the new courses, and to run the student registration process, described below. By working our way through the course development process in this gradual and steady fashion, we avoid a sudden onslaught of new courses to evaluate and approve, and are able to patiently and carefully guide the new courses so that they clearly present the learning contexts and fulfill the central learning outcomes of the new Spring Term.

Although W&L students are quite familiar with our Spring Term, there are major differences in the revitalized, four-week model, and so student involvement in the process has been and continues to be crucial. Student representatives were an important part of the Q.E.P. Selection Committee, and their input on the process and the selection of final ideas was a major component of the process. Similarly, there are student representatives serving on the Courses and Degrees Committee, so student input has been constant as well in the process of screening and approving every single course that will

be taught in the new Spring Term. (Indeed, a number of students offered Spring Term course ideas at the provost's invitation in the spring of 2008, and a prize was awarded to the best class concept.) To further involve students in the new Spring Term, the Q.E.P. director held a campus-wide Student Information Forum in February of 2009, to which all students were invited, in particular the student representatives from the Executive Committee and from the student social and leadership organizations. At this session, the director explained the essential aspects of the revitalized Spring Term, and went over the major differences from the old model. He also presented the new Spring Term registration process, so students will see how important an early consideration of their Spring Term classes will be.<sup>10</sup>

When students choose their Spring Term course, the process differs markedly from their registration process during the longer terms. Because students are taking only a single course, and their entire academic effort will be focused on this course for a four-week period, it is particularly imperative that students understand fully what the course schedule and requirements will entail. In addition, because faculty understand that they will have their students' undivided attention throughout the four weeks, they are free to schedule their class activities in creative and non-traditional ways. A course might, conceivably, meet three times a week for four hours each day; have a six-hour field outing planned on another day; and have student round-tables and group projects scheduled throughout the fifth day. There are infinite variations on these possibilities. Professors must plan more than six months in advance how they will structure their time demands, so that students can examine the courses and know what kind of commitment they are making. Furthermore, because these courses will, from the very first day of the Spring Term, move at a very accelerated pace and involve all sorts of work,

activities and projects from the first hour onward, students will not have the usual luxury of a long drop/add period during which they can switch classes and shop around for the class that will suit them best. (We will offer only a two-day drop/add period for the Spring Term, and students will understand that the course they choose in the early registration process is the course they will have.) Consequently, we have developed the following registration process:

1. In October of 2009, the courses that will be offered in Spring Term 2010 are advertised in both a print publication and a Web-based publication. The print publication will give a description and general overview of the course; the Web publication will give full details, including the meeting schedule, possible additional costs and time demands (including any off-campus elements) of the course. Students will be advised to begin looking through these courses very early in the fall term, talking to their advisors and the professors about the offerings, and seeing exactly which course would best suit their interests, their majors, their plans—in short, their liberal arts education.
2. In November of 2009, students will pre-register for their spring term classes, giving the faculty and administration a portrait of where student interest and enrollment figures seem to be tending. This gives us an opportunity to adjust the number and nature of our offerings if we think it appropriate.
3. In February of 2010, students register for the Spring Term, choosing the one course they most want to take, and also submitting a second choice and a third choice in case their top pick is full. The electronic registration process will sort out the registration, so students will know by late February exactly what Spring Term course they are taking.
4. During the Winter Term, faculty will receive the roster for their Spring Term courses, and they will make preliminary contact

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<sup>10</sup>It is worth emphasizing the high degree of student enthusiasm for the Spring Term. Our initial assessment in 2008 confirmed that preserving and enhancing the Spring Term was certainly a student priority. Please see Appendix II.

with the students enrolled in their courses. Faculty will make clear to the students the nature of the course, its time schedule, its various commitments and its workload and assignments. During this time, there will be a period during which students can transfer to a different course that might suit them better, should they desire this and the course have sufficient room for them.<sup>11</sup>

The effect of this process is twofold: to help the students choose the courses that most excite them and that most suit their needs; and to ensure that the University has provided enough courses and enough seats in the courses to offer an exciting and fulfilling educational experience to every student in the Spring Term.

If, during the winter period, it becomes apparent that we need to offer a few more courses, or that certain courses are not filling up or others are over-full and indeed have a lengthy waiting list, we have the capability to create a group of additional courses that would also fulfill the Spring Term's learning goals. There will be sufficient flexibility in the system that we can adapt and adjust to the inevitable enrollment variations. There are several complex issues at work here, including the challenge of scheduling classrooms and other facilities without a set campus-wide schedule. But because a number of courses will be study-abroad courses or domestic travel courses, we are confident that the campus facilities will be more than adequate for the program.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>The logistics and complications for students who participate in spring varsity athletics have been considered thoroughly. For a complete discussion of how we will accommodate those students and still involve them in the rich experience of the Spring Term, please see Appendix I.

<sup>12</sup>These logistical issues, and a host of others like them, have been the subject of ongoing study and resolution by the Academic Life Implementation Task Force, a faculty and administrative

## THE REVITALIZED SPRING TERM: BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

The wide array of new, renewed or reconceived courses is the centerpiece of our Quality Enhancement Plan, and the administration, execution and assessment of these courses constitute its major focus and its central budgeting priority, as we explain below. But the liberal arts education is not confined to the classroom, and these new courses are not meant to exist in isolation from one another, or from larger cross-course experiences. Thus we have also discussed a range of other experiences, events and activities that would further enhance and strengthen the Spring Term learning experience for our students and our faculty. Our aim in the Spring Term is to provide students and faculty with as rich and ambitious a liberal arts experience as possible, and toward that end we have conceived several campus-wide, multi-disciplinary, cross-cultural events that would harmonize with the intensive classroom experiences and promote a stronger sense of an inclusive W&L community. These events themselves constitute important initiatives, and at the outset of the new Spring Term, we intend to implement only one of them, the Spring Term Festival. This is partly to manage our resources intelligently, partly to prioritize the classes themselves and partly to see the degree of intensity and involvement for our campus community, to see what we can add to the Spring Term (or to determine that it is already chock-full and that adding further programming would diminish its effectiveness). (A part of our ongoing assessment of the Spring

group first convened by the provost in December of 2007. This group has worked through dozens of the complex details involved in the implementation of the Spring Term. For a complete list of their resolutions, including faculty approval of them, please see Appendix I. In March of 2009, a new committee, the Spring Term Coordinating Committee, chaired by Marc Conner, Professor of English and Director of the Q.E.P. Leadership Team (now the Director of the Spring Term) was formed, and the logistical challenges of the new Spring Term have passed into their purview.

Term will be to determine the degree of intensity and engagement by the students.) The other three initiatives, described in Appendix VII, will remain in the plan as possible additions over time. But only the festival is included in the initial budget and proposal.

**The Spring Term Festival:** At the end of each four-week Spring Term, the University will sponsor a one-night Spring Term Festival. This will consist of an evening cook-out reception for all faculty, staff and students on Cannan Green, featuring live music (perhaps several student groups performing in sequence), and offering the chance for everyone to come together in a celebration of what we have accomplished in these intense four weeks. Over time this might develop into presentations of student work or poster sessions for particular courses and what they achieved during the four-week term. In its initial stages, however, the emphasis will be on celebration and a sense of communal achievement.

#### THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF THE SPRING TERM: WHAT ONE CAN EXPECT

What do we anticipate a typical student's experience during the renewed Spring Term might be? If that student is taking an on-campus course, as probably 85 percent of our students will be, then she can expect to spend about 10 hours per week (often more) in direct contact with her professor. This might take the form of seminar time, of discussion, of workshop activities, of lecture, of directed lab or of other more-or-less traditional pedagogies. In addition, that student might participate in a range of group projects with her fellow students during the week. There might be Web-based discussion forums or on-line blog or chat forums that she is required to monitor and participate in. Creative projects might occupy several hours, or preparation for in-class or out-of-class presentations. Independent reading, readings in addition to or complementary to the required readings on the syllabus, might fill more of her time. And of course there would likely be papers, quizzes, reports, problem

sets or essays depending on the nature and discipline of the course. Furthermore, there might well be a field trip or site visit during the week to a theater, a musical performance, an archive or a D.C.-based think-tank; there might be guest speakers coming to lecture or meet with her to discuss her research projects. In sum, our typical student would likely fill 25 or more hours each week in fully engaged class activity, in addition to her 10 hours of in-class activity. The combination of a serious time commitment with the singularity of focus on this one class will result in a learning experience whose intensity and depth would be hard to match in more traditional teaching structures. Such an experience could well be one of the most memorable and transformative elements in her entire undergraduate education.

#### THE FACULTY EXPERIENCE OF THE SPRING TERM: WHAT ONE CAN EXPECT

What might a typical professor's experience during the renewed Spring Term look like? If we imagine a professor whose course is based on campus, as probably 90 percent of our faculty will be, then she would probably set up a class schedule that demands 10 contact hours (often more) with her students, in more or less traditional pedagogical interactions—say, a mix of seminar discussion, tutorial, lecture, group work, etc. This classroom work will likely be somewhat more labor-intensive than in a long term for a standard course—for example, in the long term, a professor might teach three hours per week, say as one three-hour seminar; and in the old six-week Spring Term, that professor would likely teach six hours per week, as two three-hour sessions; in the new four-week Spring Term format, that professor might schedule three three-hour meetings, for nine hours in a single week. Over the course of four weeks, this would yield about 36 contact hours, the same as in the six-week model and in the 12-week term. So the classroom experience for the professor, in terms of contact hours, is basically unchanged, if rather compressed. But the professor would also plan a range of

outside-of-the-classroom projects, assignments and activities for the class, some of which she might supervise closely, and some of which she might design for the students to run on their own. Certainly, as every teacher knows, the more work we give the students, the more work is demanded of us to respond to and evaluate this work. But the intensity of the Spring Term, and the reason for its four-credit-per-course designation, is connected not to the old model of faculty contact hours, but to the intensity, focus and rigor that the students themselves experience. This is very important to our concept: we assign and evaluate the rigor of the Spring Term experience not from the perspective of what the faculty are putting into the course, but from the perspective of what the students are doing and learning within the course—what the students do and what the students learn. To be sure, this will be an intensive teaching (and learning) experience for our faculty. But the typical professor ought to have ample time for her other activities during this term: research work should certainly be possible, even if the professor’s class consumes as much as 20 hours

of her week. And of course, as part of the Academic Life Renewal proposal, the Spring Term will now end two weeks earlier than before, thereby enabling the professor to move seamlessly into her summer scholarly work and have a longer summer research agenda before her than she did previously. This enhancement of faculty research time will further improve the quality and intensity of teaching in both the Spring Term and the longer terms.

Thus, we envision the renewed Spring Term as an enhancement to Washington and Lee’s teacher-scholar model. Ideally, the faculty too will have an intensive and transformative experience. The opportunity to work closely with students in focused and consuming projects is, of course, at the very heart of the teaching mission at Washington and Lee. These courses provide an ideal opportunity for the professor to realize some of her most cherished teaching goals, as well as a chance to pursue in some form her research agenda. We anticipate that the faculty will see many insights and renewing ideas from the new Spring Term experience.

***BUDGET FOR THE Q.E.P.***

**TABLE 2: COSTS FOR 2008-09, LEADING UP TO SPRING TERM 2010**

<i>Expense</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Total Cost</i>
Individual Faculty Course Development Grants	\$1,000 each	140	\$140,000
Individual Faculty Course Development Expenses	\$1,000 each	60	\$60,000
Leadership Stipend	\$11,000	1	\$11,000
Course releases	\$7,000	2	\$14,000
Round-table Leadership, spring-summer 2009	\$5,000	1	\$5,000
Faculty meetings, Round-Tables, Luncheons	\$3,000	1	\$3,000
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$233,000</b>

It is important to emphasize this substantial investment in the Q.E.P. even prior to its formal beginning in the 2009-2010 academic year. The institutional commitment to the project is evident in this substantial support. The faculty grants also

indicate the degree of involvement by the faculty—before the Q.E.P. even has its formal launch in Spring 2010, already 140 W&L faculty will be actively involved in the project.

**TABLE 3: ANNUAL COSTS FOR EACH SPRING TERM, BEGINNING 2009-2010 ACADEMIC YEAR<sup>13</sup>**

<i>Expense</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Total Cost</i>
Expenses for Domestic (Travel) Courses	\$2,000 average for each course	70	\$140,000
Faculty Travel Expenses for Study Abroad Courses	\$5,000 each	20	\$100,000
Operations and Special Events	\$3,000	1	\$3,000
Leadership Costs (stipend, course release)	\$16,000	1	\$16,000
Publications Costs (Spring Term Course Brochure, Posters, etc.)	\$2,000	1	\$2,000
Summer Intern	\$4,000	1	\$4,000
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$265,000</b>

Although the majority of the new Spring Term courses will be without any additional costs, many will require additional funding to support the various concepts and pedagogies faculty are putting into place. In some cases, these costs will be minimal—\$600 to take a theater class to the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, for example, or \$1,000 to bring in a visiting lecturer for two days. Other courses will have somewhat more involved costs—two trips, or a longer trip in distance or duration, or bringing in more speakers or for a longer time. Some courses will be yet more ambitious in their expenses, perhaps requiring \$3,000 or \$4,000. We have estimated a \$2,000 sum for half of the courses, or a total of \$140,000. The Spring Term Coordinating Committee and the Office of the Provost will evaluate the budget requests and

allocate monies as appropriate, trying to work out the average to \$2,000 per course for half of the courses. Courses whose expenses are more extraordinary—those costing above \$4,000 in their expenses—will fall under the study-abroad model we have long employed for our Spring Term Abroad courses: after the initial \$4,000 is deducted, and after the instructor’s costs are paid, the course will require students to pay a certain fee to cover the costs of the course in addition to their regular tuition and fees for the academic year.

A handful of courses will be true study-abroad courses, in which a professor takes students to another country for an international immersion experience. Obviously the costs involved here—approaching \$100,000 for some courses—are beyond what the University can assume. Students pay a set fee that varies for each course, depending on its own costs. But the Q.E.P. seeks to support these courses—many

<sup>13</sup>The first two years of the Q.E.P. budget are already in place, the monies set aside by the Provost.

of which are among the most sterling examples of the Spring Term concept of fully engaged learning—by paying the instructor’s costs for the program, so that these are not passed along to the students. We also have additional Spring Term financial aid available to our students who select these courses, and the Spring Term Coordinating Committee will work closely with the Office of Financial Aid to make these opportunities affordable and available to all our students.

### *Additional Costs to be Incurred at the End of the Fourth Spring Term (2013-2014)*

**Assessment Costs:** We will bring two outside evaluators to campus to provide a self-study of the term, its operations, its relative successes and everything else involved in a typical program self-study.<sup>14</sup> Total costs for this process are estimated at \$5,000.

The **Spring Term Scholars** will involve a cost of their \$100 stipend for 10 students, \$1,000 total, beginning in Spring Term 2013.

## ASSESSMENT OF THE Q.E.P: OBJECTIVES, STRATEGY AND INSTRUMENTS

### *The Objectives of the Spring Term and their Relation to the Overall Objectives of the University*

From the outset of our work on the Q.E.P., we have had assessment issues in the forefront of our planning. Our guiding questions have been, “How can the revitalized Spring Term enhance the learning of our students?” and “How can we know if this is

indeed happening?” Our initial work consisted in developing a mission statement unique to the Spring Term, with four corresponding Learning Contexts, that would establish a learning environment that would lead naturally into a range of strategies and instruments for assessing how well our Spring Term is accomplishing its stated goals. Consequently, the Spring Term Mission Statement and Learning Contexts follow specifically the Washington and Lee University Mission Statement:

*Washington and Lee University provides a liberal arts education that develops students’ capacity to think freely, critically, and humanely and to conduct themselves with honor, integrity, and civility. Graduates will be prepared for life-long learning, personal achievement, responsible leadership, service to others, and engaged citizenship in a global and diverse society.*

The dual emphasis in the University Mission Statement on critical thought and civil conduct underpins the Spring Term Mission Statement:

*The Spring Term offers innovative, intensive, and challenging student learning experiences in ways that differ markedly from the experiences of our long terms. Students and faculty benefit from a focused learning environment that allows them to devote undivided attention to the subject matter of one course. Through a range of pedagogies including experimental, interdisciplinary, international, and interactive approaches, the Spring Term accomplishes the University’s stated mission of developing students’ critical and creative thinking and promoting their growth in honor, integrity, and civility.*

Our four Learning Contexts, which we conceive as the foundation for establishing the learning environment most conducive to intensive, fully immersed, and experimental teaching, are as follows:

*Through their cumulative 4-year experiences of the Spring Term, students will have the opportunity:*

<sup>14</sup>As a first step in this sort of outside consulting about our concept, we invited and hosted a team from Colorado College, which famously employs a block plan in which students take one course for 3.5 weeks, and faculty teach a single course. While there are many differences between this plan and our Spring Term concept, nevertheless we share many common questions and ideas. The team’s visit in February of 2009 offered us a chance to discuss and share many of the challenges and opportunities of this model of intense, fully engaged learning.

1. *To work closely with faculty in a single course, both inside and outside the classroom, in intensive learning experiences, thereby engaging in critical research or creative work under faculty direction.*
2. *To study subjects in depth and detail, generally emphasizing focused, often interdisciplinary study and/or particular enrichment of understanding rather than breadth of coverage.*
3. *To work collaboratively with a diverse group of fellow students (and possibly larger communities) in ways that generate greater respect towards one's fellow citizens. Such work may often involve service learning projects to further one's sense of commitment to others.*
4. *To produce papers, projects, reports, journals, creative works or performances that exemplify the possibilities of the class's particular pedagogies.*

### THE PRIMARY LEARNING OUTCOME

At the heart of our educational efforts in the Spring Term is the enhancement of our students' abilities in critical and creative thinking. This is our primary learning outcome for the Quality Enhancement Plan, and this is where we will focus the bulk of our assessment work.

Critical and creative thinking constitutes the essence of the liberal arts educational ideal. The "Liberal Education and America's Promise" (LEAP) initiative sponsored by the Association of American Colleges and Universities lists seven Principles of Excellence in its guiding mission of championing the value of a liberal education for American students and American society as a whole. The third principle states, "Teach the Arts of Inquiry and Innovation," including the charge to "immerse all students in analysis, discovery, problem solving, and communication." In shifting from this broad principle to the "Essential Learning Outcomes" that follow from it, LEAP includes under "Intellectual and Practical Skills" the following out-

come: "critical and creative thinking."<sup>15</sup> We agree that this skill resides within the very heart of the liberal arts mission, and our guiding principle in our QEP is consequently the following:

*Every course taught in the spring term will seek to enhance our students' critical and/or creative thinking skills.*

Towards that end, we have worked in the course development process to align the student learning objectives established within each department with the learning contexts established by the new spring term structure, so that each course demonstrates in some effective manner how it will enhance either the critical thinking skills or the creative thinking skills of its students. Naturally these are intellectual skills that vary widely depending on the field, discipline, or methodology of a given course: critical thinking in, say, a chemistry course might well be defined as the ability to master certain formulas or solve certain problem sets; in a history course, it might be defined as the ability to understand and show proficiency in a cause-and-effect pattern or the relations between a series of historical events; in an English course it might be the ability to show improvement in one's critical writing skills and the posing of an argument; in a sculpture class it might be the ability to learn and apply certain craftsmanlike skills in shape, color, and form. The list could go on at great length. The point is that critical and creative thinking will vary from course to course, discipline to discipline. Each discipline has established its own definitions of critical/creative thinking and its own means of assessing how well its students are improving in these areas, definitions that are embodied in that department's own

<sup>15</sup> The AAC&U notes that "only 6% of college seniors are proficient level in critical thinking, and 77% are not proficient; less than one standard deviation gain in critical thinking from freshman to senior year," showing that this most fundamental of college-level skills is in crisis at our nation's universities at this time. See "Liberal Education Outcomes."

learning objectives. Consequently, we will employ as much as possible the assessment tools and strategies already in place in our various departments as a means of assessing how well our spring term courses are accomplishing the central goal of enhancing our students' critical and creative thinking.

Our chief means of assessment will be embedded within the course, employing pedagogical tools and instruments that are already a part of the course structure, and we will seek as many means as possible to assess start-to-finish in the courses, to determine the relative progress in the learning objectives over the duration of the class. Research indicates that course-embedded assessment can be extremely effective in determining the relative success of attaining clearly defined learning outcomes in the classroom:

Course-embedded assessments can be used for individual-, course-, program-, and institution-level assessment of student learning through appropriate analysis and aggregation. Selected assignments can be designated within major courses to serve as threshold, milestone, or capstone assessments. Such assignments can serve as assessments of both general and major-specific knowledge and skills when scored using appropriate methods and personnel. ("Liberal Education Outcomes")

Every single one of the 143 courses already proposed for the new Spring Term has had to address and explain its discipline-specific learning objectives, how it intends to fulfill those objectives, and what means of assessment it will employ to evaluate the relative success of those objectives. These learning objectives are all conducive to enhancing the critical and creative thinking abilities of the students in those classes. Consequently our entire Spring Term curriculum has been designed from the outset with the fulfillment of our primary learning outcome clearly in place.

In the following section, we offer four detailed examples that show different ways of employing pedagogy-based, course-embedded assessment of critical

and creative thinking skills in courses that exemplify the range of offerings in the Spring Term. We show a study abroad literature course, a lab science general education course, an interdisciplinary art/chemistry study abroad course, and a creative writing/poetry workshop course. In each we give various examples of how the course-embedded assessment will proceed, and how the individual learning objectives match up with the overall objective of enhancing students' critical and creative thinking abilities. Again, these examples serve to illustrate the sorts of assessment strategies that will be in place for all Spring Term classes.

#### EXAMPLE #1: ASSESSING A SPRING TERM STUDY ABROAD COURSE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

The Department of English has established five higher-level learning objectives that apply to all of its courses. Among these five objectives are two that match particularly well with the "critical thinking" approach:

1. Students will read closely, recognizing subtle and complex differences in language use;
2. Students will seek out further knowledge about literary works, authors, and/or contexts.

In the Spring Term, particular courses in English will demonstrate how well they succeed in enhancing students' abilities to fulfill these two specific objectives, in ways that correspond to the particular course under consideration. As much as possible, we will employ course-embedded assessment tools, so that the pedagogy and the assessment will be as closely linked as possible. The following outline, for **English 388: The West of Ireland**, a study-abroad program that spends four weeks in Ireland exploring the literature, history, and culture of the western Irish area, demonstrates one plan for assessing the degree to which critical thinking will be enhanced by the course:

Measuring the gain in critical thinking in English 388: The West of Ireland:

1. students will demonstrate an increase in their knowledge of the history, geography, and politics of Ireland. To assess this increase, the course will perform the following exercises:
  - a) administer initial knowledge quiz at start of winter term orientation class: 20 questions that reflect the important aspects of Irish life that the professor wants the students to know by the end of their immersion in Irish culture
  - b) at the end of the spring term experience, students take this quiz again, demonstrating (one hopes) a dramatic gain in knowledge of Irish culture. (administered through the SAKAI web-based course management program, for easy access in Ireland)
  - c) students write a one-paragraph response to a question about Irish culture during the winter term orientation course; they then write a similar one-paragraph response (to a different but comparable question) at the end of the spring term experience, and the two writings compared will demonstrate a significant increase in the depth and complexity of their understanding of Irish cultural and political life. (Example: analysis of the Celtic Cross / analysis of the Irish round tower)
2. students will improve their ability to analyze, interpret, and understand modern Irish literature. To assess this increase, the course will perform the following exercises:
  - a) During the winter term orientation class, students will write a “5-minute paper” on a selected text from a major Irish modernist writer, whom they will study in greater detail during the course (e.g., Heaney, Yeats, Joyce, Synge, Kavanagh)
  - b) Near the end of the spring term experience, students will write another “5-minute paper” on a major Irish modernist

writer; the two papers compared will demonstrate a significant gain in the students’ ability to analyze, understand, and articulate the major meanings of these writings, based on students’ greater familiarity with and understanding of Irish history and culture.

These writings may be submitted to an outside evaluator for comparison and assessment. The assessment rubric will include the following questions:

1. How well does the student identify several significant ideas, themes, and issues in the selected writing? (using a 5-point scale)
2. How well does the student articulate clearly the important elements in the selected writing? (using a 5-point scale)
3. How well does the student demonstrate clear understanding of the selection’s meaning and importance? (using a 5-point scale)
4. How well does the student provide analysis of the selection’s technical elements (style, narrative voice, metrical structure, voice, descriptive passage, etc.)? (using a 5-point scale)
5. How well does the student demonstrate a broader understanding of the cultural context out of which the writing emerges and upon which it comments? (using a 5-point scale)

#### **EXAMPLE #2: ASSESSING A GENERAL EDUCATION LAB SCIENCE SPRING TERM COURSE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY**

Embedded Assessment in Chemistry 106, Disorder and Chaos:

Chemistry 106 is a non-science major course that fulfills the SL (laboratory science) FDR. As such, it is governed by the university-approved learning objectives for this and all SL courses. As designated in the Washington and Lee Foundation and Distributions Requirements (FDR) for a laboratory science, students should be able to:

1. learn science as it is practiced in order to understand the operation of natural processes and phenomena;
2. learn the basic language and procedures of one of the sciences, in this case, nonlinear dynamics;
3. formulate hypotheses, design experiments, and gather, analyze and interpret data.

In general, objectives 1 and 2 are assessed with embedded assessment of problem sets and standardized multiple choices exams, both of which have been developed by the W&L chemistry department faculty. Objective 3 is assessed using laboratory work and through embedded questions which are answered in the laboratory reports. As an example, the following question is from the first problem set:

In a remote region in the Northwest Territory of Canada, the dynamics of fly populations have been studied. The population satisfies the difference equation

$$x_{t+1} = 11 - 0.01x_t^2,$$

where  $x$  is the population density in flies per square meter and  $t$  is a discrete time index. Using Excel, determine the long term dynamics of fly population density for initial densities above and below  $\sqrt{(1100)}$ . Do both of these cases make sense?

This question measures three aspects of student learning:

1. How an equation describes a physical system and how mathematical variables relate to physical properties (fulfills or addresses learning objective # 1).
2. How to solve a difference equation using a spreadsheet program (fulfills or addresses learning objective # 2).
3. How to analyze data to answer a question about a natural system (fulfills or addresses learning Objective # 3). In this case, the data was generated by a computational process and represents a numerical experiment on a

specific mathematical model, i. e., the population equation. This kind of information is increasingly common in many disciplines.

The use of these embedded assessment techniques in this spring term course will help us to assess the extent to which the course is attaining its three major learning objectives, each of which is a version of the overall spring term outcome of enhanced critical thinking. By using embedded assessment tools, we are able to combine our assessment work with our actual pedagogy, thereby attaining a true assessment view as well as harmonizing our teaching with our assessment of that teaching. We believe this model can be applied to other science-based disciplines.

### EXAMPLE #3: ASSESSING A SPRING TERM CREATIVE WRITING COURSE (POETRY WORKSHOP) IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

The Creative Writing courses in the Department of English seek to fulfill the 4 key learning objectives of all English courses (those focusing on literary analysis as well as those performing creative work) along with a fifth objective that applies only to the creative writing classes:

Students majoring in English will learn how to

1. write clear, persuasive analytical essays driven by arguments about texts;
2. read closely, recognizing subtle and complex differences in language use;
3. seek out further knowledge about literary works, authors, and/or contexts, and document research appropriately, adhering to the highest standards of intellectual honesty;
4. derive pleasure and edification from a broad range of texts;
5. **in optional creative writing courses, create literary texts of their own.**

As a subset of the fifth learning objective, creative writing courses will pursue the following more specific learning objectives:

- create literary works of their own;

- revise those literary works to convey greater power and control.

In our Spring Term creative writing courses, faculty have developed multiple strategies for helping students develop their work over the course of the four-week term. These strategies can all be adapted for ongoing course-embedded assessment, for indeed the heart of the course is to track how well students are improving in their production of and skills with creative writing.

For example, the professor will work throughout the term on the skills that go into a competent poem: finding a compelling subject, using concrete sensory detail, developing complexity in emotion or argument, refining poetic structure (particularly a concept of the line) that reflects the poem's meaning, and using fresh and interesting diction and imagery. The students concentrate on these issues in turn while the professor teaches various forms—haiku, sonnet, blues, etc.—and the students draft new poems in these forms. The emphasis is on producing lots of new work and trying out skills, on the theory that you have to write many poems to develop a good one or two.

Each student receives an initial grade on each draft: check minus (the draft does not convey complexity, the language is not interesting, the subject is not interesting or urgent); check (there are some good things going on here and it might be worth revising); and check-plus (this is a really interesting draft and worth revising). The professor then asks them to choose a few poems from among their drafts for revision and then grade them, following a detailed description of what the professor considers in her grading.

Consequently, a portfolio is developed day by day and week by week, which at any time may be collected and assessed to check the degree of student improvement in mastering the skills of poetic writing. Because revision of previous written work forms such a key component of a creative writing class, the students are further asked to revise one poem for each Friday, for a grade, and then produce a final portfolio

of 3 different revised poems, also for a grade. This forms an additional spectrum of student work over the course of the four weeks of class, that can be evaluated according to the professor's rubric for poetry to ascertain the extent to which the students are producing literary works and enhancing their creative thinking skills in the process.

#### EXAMPLE #4: ASSESSING A SPRING TERM INTERDEPARTMENTAL COURSE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF ART HISTORY AND CHEMISTRY

CHEM 157 and ARTH 357 are two linked interdisciplinary courses on the technical examination of 17th-century Dutch painting. Both courses involve mixed doses of science and art topics, lectures, demonstrations, etc., with somewhat more of the science emphasis in the winter and somewhat more of the art emphasis in the spring. CHEM 157 will satisfy the FDR requirement of a non-laboratory course in science; ARTH 357 will satisfy the FDR requirement for a Fine Arts course. This seven-credit, two-course sequence will develop students' fundamental understanding of certain physical, chemical, biological, and geological concepts and utilize that vocabulary and knowledge to discuss 17<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch Art. The emphasis will be on key aspects of optics, light, and chemical bonding needed to understand how a painting "works" and how art conservators analyze paintings in terms of conservation and authenticity.

Embedded course assessment will occur in several ways—among them:

1. At the beginning of CHEM 157, the students will be shown a 17th-century Dutch painting and asked to write a ten minute in-class essay about it. No prompts will be given—the objective will be to see how students of varying backgrounds approach the task and with what level of art vs. scientific sophistication. At the end of CHEM 157, the students will be shown another 17th-century Dutch painting and asked to write a ten minute in-class essay about it. At the end

of ARTH 357, the students will be shown a third 17th-century Dutch painting and asked to write a ten minute in-class essay about it. These three essays will be compared to see what progress the students make in the sophistication of their analyses, but will also be compared to see how the students' notion of what should be included in their discussion changes.

2. In CHEM 157, students will be tested periodically on the math and science that is critical for success in the course. Questions will be asked involving math explicitly (e.g., What is the energy of a mole of 605 nm photons?); questions will be asked that involve math implicitly (e.g., Use your knowledge of the refractive index to explain why painters use varnish on finished works of art.); questions will be asked that involve schematic analysis (e.g., When we say in our class that oil paint dries, we really mean it polymerizes. Please draw diagrams of the process and briefly explain it. If you haven't had chemistry before, just do the best you can—I'm interested in seeing what you can do). As the course progresses, the ability to handle these discreet types of questions will be monitored.
3. In ARTH 357, the students will present a researched PowerPoint presentation on a 17th-century Dutch painting on which considerable technical examination has been performed. The students will be evaluated on how well they blend an art historical and technical analysis of their case study.
4. In ARTH 357, the students will be keeping a daily journal. Their journal entries will be tracked to evaluate growth in sophistication of thought regarding their experiences and observations. Again, the journal entries will be evaluated regarding their combination of art historical and scientific thought.

As these four examples suggest, the flow of priority in our planning and development of our learning objectives is as follows:

1. UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT AND STRATEGIC PLAN  
↓
2. SPRING TERM MISSION STATEMENT  
↓
3. SPRING TERM LEARNING CONTEXTS  
↓
4. PRIMARY LEARNING OBJECTIVE: ENHANCE CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING  
↓
5. SPECIFIC COURSES IN THE SPRING TERM AND HOW THEY RELATE TO THE PRIMARY LEARNING OBJECTIVE

In addition to our course-embedded assessment work, we have developed a number of secondary assessment tools that, working together, promise to give us both a broad and deep understanding of precisely how and how effectively we are improving student learning through the new Spring Term experience. These additional tools include the following:

#### *Longer Descriptions of the Key Tools of Assessment*

**Descriptive Data:** Each spring, the Registrar's Office, in conjunction with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Spring Term Coordinating Committee, will compile data describing the Spring Term experience: class sizes (aiming for an average of 15 students per class), teacher/student ratio, the number of classes that are travel courses (either domestic or international), the class schedule, the number of engaged hours both with and without the professor's presence, the kinds of assignments, the intended audience and other descriptive elements.

These figures can be compared to the longer terms as well. The data will give us a numerical portrait of what our students are doing, how they are doing it and where they are doing it in the Spring Term.

**The Electronic Survey:** We will implement an **electronic survey** that is given to all students participating in the Spring Term (approximately 1,700 participants), asking such questions as the following: What types of pedagogies (among six or so choices) did your professor employ? What amount of time on task did you engage in? How many hours per week did you devote to your course work? What sorts of team or group projects did you engage in? What were the outside-the-classroom activities required by your course? And others. This will help us gather information about the overall Spring Term experience and the nature of work our students engage in.<sup>16</sup>

**The Focus Group:** The Focus Group will allow us to gain a more penetrating and depth-oriented view of the Spring Term learning experience. Each department will select **one course** every other year to serve as their Focus Group course for the Spring Term; smaller departments will select one course every third year. (With about 40 departments in the undergraduate part of the University, this will yield roughly 15 classes, or around 225 students, or roughly 12 percent of the student body, each Spring Term.) This process will guarantee a representative sample group across disciplines, departments and undergraduate year. This process will also avoid burdening all participants with an excess of assessment work, but will still preserve the essential breadth and representative quality of our assessments. These focus groups will conduct and make available their course-embedded assessment work to help us determine the extent to which their courses are meeting their departmental, discipline-specific learning objectives,

as well as the primary learning outcome of enhancing students' critical and creative thinking.

The Focus Group will meet throughout the academic year in round-table discussions facilitated by the Spring Term Coordinating Committee (STCC). In these sessions, faculty will strategize about the best ways to assess their students and courses in the spring; we will conduct assessment workshops and syllabus-swaps to help faculty generate effective assessment means; and we will plan an overall assessment structure that will result in each class providing their assessment data to the Spring Term Coordinating Committee at the end of the Spring Term. When the Spring Term concludes, the focus group will convene a final time to discuss the results of their assessment and share ways in which the Spring Term experience might be further strengthened. This discussion session will be led by either the director of the Spring Term or a member of the Spring Term Coordinating Committee; the discussion leader will then summarize the exchange and render it as a narrative report to be studied by the Spring Term Coordinating Committee and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, as well as the provost and the deans, to evaluate the relative success of the Spring Term. The combination of course-embedded assessment tools and qualitative commentary will help build an overarching view of what constitutes successful intensive learning in the Spring Term. It is our contention that mere contact hours or hours spent on a task is not the same as intensive learning (though one assumes such elements need to be present in greater or lesser degree), but that the nature of the work, the focus of the student and the guidance of the professor are equally essential for this kind of learning. The multiple tools and approaches we will take to the assessment work should help us form a complex and thorough picture of the Spring Term learning experience.

**Individual Course Evaluations:** At the level of the individual course, we will want to see departmental and individual course-specific evaluation of the courses for those classes participating in the Focus Group. In

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<sup>16</sup> We will use the Survey Monkey electronic survey tool for this task, which we have already employed in our initial Spring Term assessment work; see Appendix II.

addition, we will develop a universal Spring Term Course Evaluation Form that seeks to ascertain how well a course is fulfilling the overarching objectives of the Spring Term. This will be administered electronically to those students participating in the focus group courses. (All faculty will continue to be free to implement their own individual course evaluations in addition to the Spring Term Evaluation Form.) The data generated by this evaluation will help us compare one Spring Term experience to another and to see how the cumulative effect of four Spring Terms contributes to a student's overall education at Washington and Lee.

**First-Year-to-Senior-Year Assessment Tools:** In addition to the annual assessment of these issues, we will develop and administer a first-year-to-senior-year assessment rubric that measures the impact of the Spring Term experience on a student over her four years at W&L. We will invite 20 students in their first year, identified by the dean of students, dean of first-year students and director of the Spring Term to offer as much breadth and diversity as possible, to participate in this program. These students will be designated Spring Term Scholars, and at the end of their four years of participation will receive a certificate of completion and a \$100 stipend for their work over the course of four Spring Terms. Our assessment of their four years' of work will consist of two principal tools: first, an addition to the electronic survey that will be given to a selected group of students in their first year, sophomore year, junior year and senior year. By measuring their responses over time, we can get a sense of the cumulative effect of the Spring Term experience on them. In addition, we will ask these students to compile each year a portfolio of their Spring Term course work. This material will be stored electronically and archived each year, and at the end of their four years it will be assembled into a portfolio of their entire four-year experience of the Spring Term. We will invite two outside evaluators to campus who have expertise in interdisciplinary

and experimental education to assess the quality and content of these portfolios, in order to determine how well the student work over four years fulfills the central learning objective of the Spring Term. The first such outside evaluation will coincide with our five-year self-study and Impact Report of the Spring Term (described below).

The electronic student portfolio has become a major resource for assessment of student work. We draw on the latest research in the field of educational assessment to conceptualize this project. In the Spring 2008 issue of the *Association for Institutional Research Professional File*, in an article titled "The Relationship Between Electronic Portfolio Participation and Student Success," Knight, Hakel and Gromko argue that "electronic portfolios represent an assessment measure with strong potential to provide feedback about student performance to improve curricula and pedagogy, to determine individual students' mastery of learning and support feedback for improvement, and to actively involve students in the assessment process." Under our concept of the e-portfolio, each year the students in our Spring Term Scholars focus group will:

- Compile, in chronological order, every formal assignment they undertake for their Spring Term course
- Describe, in brief narrative form, every group project they undertake
- Provide a brief narrative describing and evaluating their work in the course
- Provide e-portfolios of their Spring Term work over the course of their four Spring Term experiences, from their first year to their senior year. This will offer a view of the Spring Term as it has worked for a W&L student over the course of her entire career.

We estimate that a minimum of 10-15 complete portfolios will be an adequate database for outside evaluation.

## RESPONDING TO THE DATA/FOLLOWING UP ON THE ASSESSMENT

The amount of data and narrative that we will gather each spring is formidable, and it will be the task of the Spring Term Coordinating Committee to put together a concise, but detailed, report on this material by Sept. 1 following the Spring Term each year. The Survey Monkey tool is a relatively easy tool for arranging and presenting survey data. Managing the electronic portfolios is relatively easy, and the budget includes money for a summer student intern to help with scanning and formatting of the Web-based materials. The narrative reports on the focus group discussions will be the responsibility of the chair of the STCC (the Spring Term Director), who will submit these documents to the committee as a whole and to the provost. Over the summer, the STCC will produce a full report on the results of the Spring Term, as well as a list of action items that need attention. These items will be drawn from the results of the assessment, and will include ways to improve whatever problematic or unsatisfactory results we are seeing, as well as to make adjustments to our assessment methods, and will indicate what person or persons or office in the University is responsible for implementing the changes. This mechanism will help us improve the Spring Term each year, and to measure our future progress in these areas. Although this three-month period from June to September is a rather compressed turnaround time for evaluating the assessment data, nevertheless this is reasonable: the Spring Term Director will have a single course release and a summer stipend to help facilitate this work, and after the first year or two the process should be relatively manageable.

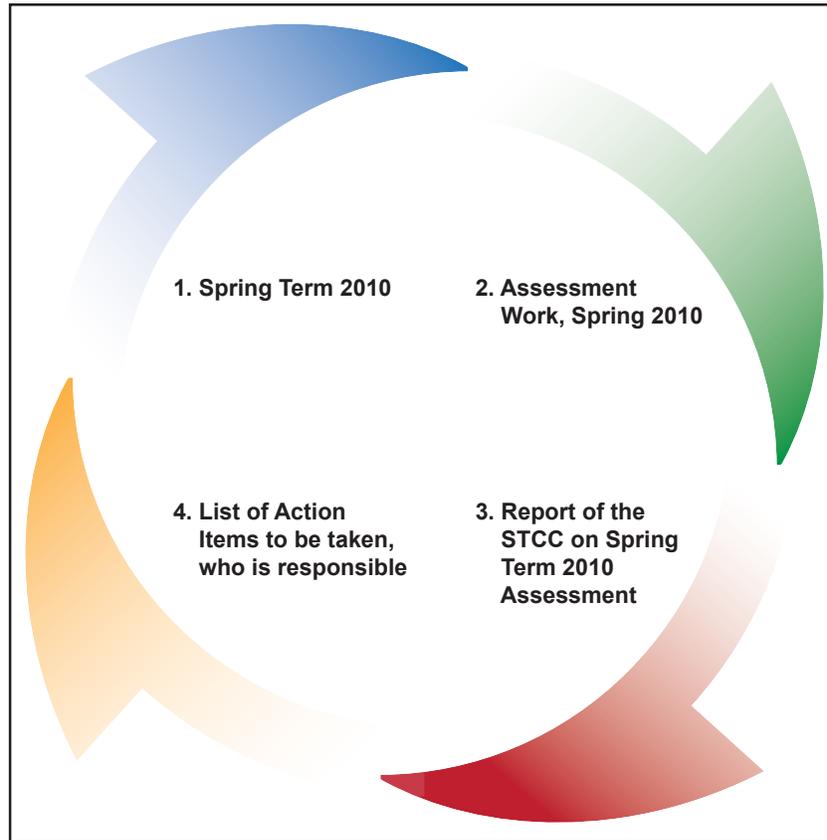
What we seek in this process is to make continuous, ongoing assessment of the Spring Term a regular activity, with scheduled tasks and clear follow-up throughout the process. This will include the means by which we will make our results known to the entire W&L community, so that students and faculty will see on an annual basis exactly how the

Spring Term is functioning. The aim is to see both what works well and what needs improvement, and to produce action items each fall based on the experience of the preceding spring that will help us make the ensuing Spring Term a stronger, richer and more effective learning experience for all. As the following diagram indicates, our assessment work will move steadily from the start of the Spring Term through the summer that follows as we study and report on the data; into the fall as we produce the action items that the assessment work tells us will improve and enhance the Spring Term learning process; throughout the academic year as the responsible parties (primarily the Spring Term Coordinating Committee and the Director of the Spring Term) implement and execute the needed changes and revisions; and then right into the next Spring Term, as this process becomes an ingrained part of our operations.

The list of action items will then help us revise our assessment needs and plans for Spring Term 2011, at which point the assessment flow will continue exactly as above, now moving through the Spring Term of 2011, and so forth as this assessment process becomes our operating culture for the Spring Term.

A major part of our assessment efforts will include preparing materials for a major review and impact report of the entire program in its fifth year, 2013-2014. This will mark the end of the first four-year cycle of the new Spring Term, and so will give us the chance to measure the cumulative effect of the Spring Term experience on our students. A key part of this effort will be compiling the various data from all our tools, especially the portfolios, electronic surveys, and data from the focus groups (which by the end of five years will constitute a majority of our faculty). Another major element will be to bring two outside evaluators onto campus to do an observation and assessment of the entire Spring Term program. This external review will form the basis of a self-study of the program that we will perform at this time. This self-study will also be the basis of our SACS Compliance Impact Report on the Five-Year Progress of the Q.E.P. As with the

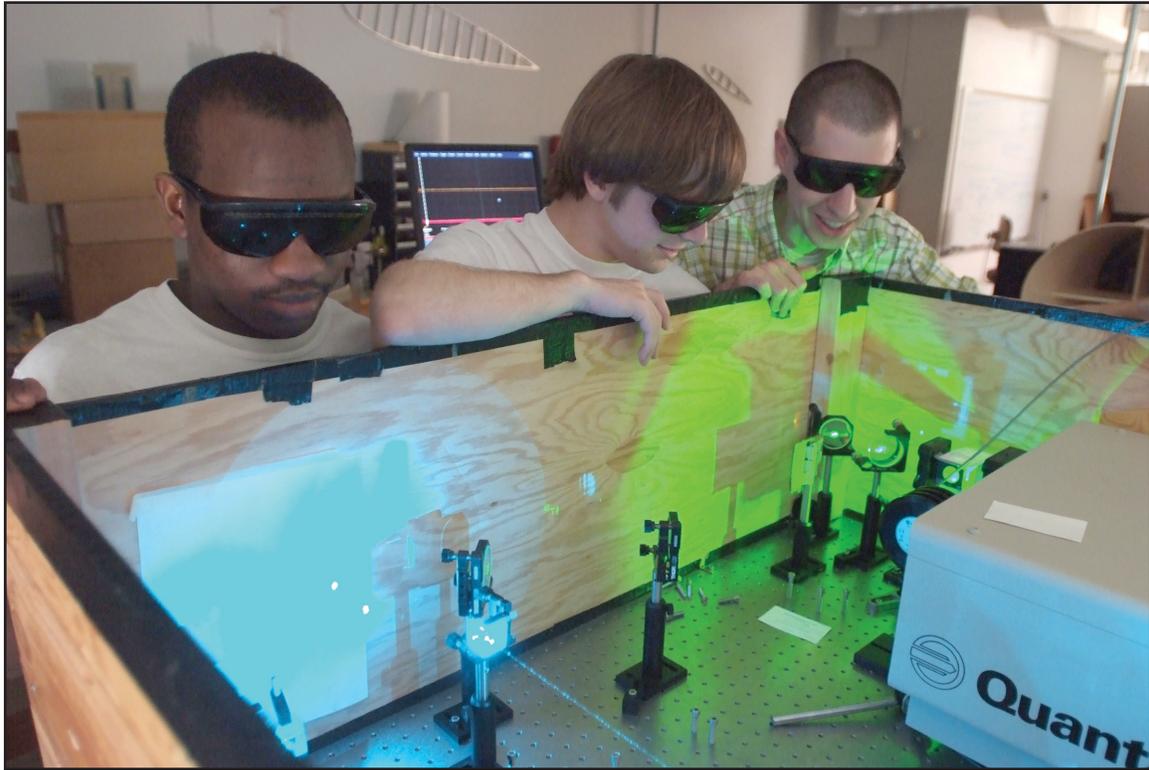
**Diagram 1: The Assessment Flow for the Spring Term**  
*(Starting with Spring Term 2010 and then ongoing for subsequent Spring Terms)*



individual Spring Term assessments, this study will issue a quantified and narrative report by the Spring Term Coordinating Committee, submitted to the provost, that will include recommended actions to further enhance the learning experience and learning outcomes for our students.

**Conclusion:** In his memo to the faculty of Sept. 17, 2007, President Ruscio announced his proposal for a revitalized Spring Term that would be part of his overall initiative of a “rededication to teaching and learning” at Washington and Lee. Through such a rededication, he stated, “we have a tremendous story to tell about the value of student-faculty relationships and about our commitment to innovative and rigorous courses taught with excellent pedagogy.” This is the very essence of the revitalized Spring Term,

the Quality Enhancement Plan of Washington and Lee. Our plan is bold and ambitious, with potentially transformative consequences both for our students and for our faculty, and offers an exciting model for liberal arts education as it is conceived in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But this is also a plan that is affordable, measurable, assessable and sustainable. We seek to enhance the quality of learning for our students in exciting, challenging and invigorating ways. That student learning process is the heart of our plan, and our students will be the primary beneficiaries of its success. We eagerly look forward to executing this Quality Enhancement Plan, putting into place a learning environment and a model for the liberal arts education that promises to deliver the best in the formation of critical and creative thinking and the development of civil character.



## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I: THE DECISIONS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

Beginning in November of 2007, when the decision to reconceive the Spring Term as a four-week, intensely focused learning experience was approved by the faculty, the provost convened the Academic Life Implementation Task Force. Composed of the major administrators of the University, as well as a rotating group of leading faculty, this task force was charged with working out the many details involved in switching to a four-week Spring Term.<sup>17</sup> The task force made a number of decisions and recommendations that were then, when applicable, approved by the faculty as a whole. Provost Aprille, in a faculty-wide memo of April 6, 2008, described the work of the task force:

The provost, deans, associate deans, registrar and several faculty members have been meeting weekly since Nov. 5, when the Academic Life Initiative was voted by the faculty. We have been keeping in mind the broader objectives of the president's proposal—such as reinvigoration of pedagogy, more effective integration of the teacher-scholar model, etc., all made possible by lower formal course loads, and especially through new kinds of Spring Term courses. However we also know that the devil is in the details, and the group has been wrestling with both the mechanical and philosophical issues which must be resolved to translate

the intent of the initiative into practice. This memo lists recommendations that have been reached by consultation and consensus so far, and which are necessary for departments and administrative units to plan in advance for the start date of fall 2009.

The major decisions reached by the task force are listed below, in two major groupings: first, those decisions approved by the faculty on May 5, 2008 (item #7 was approved Sept. 29, 2008); and second, those decisions approved by the task force as of Nov. 30, 2008.

1. C&D and the Faculty Executive Committee advised that the Implementation Group could bring their recommendations directly to the faculty, except for things like the calendar consideration, which have a history of precedent for committee consideration.
2. A revised academic calendar for 2009-10 and 2010-11 was approved by the faculty on Feb. 4, 2008. With Spring Term two weeks shorter, one week was “spent” to allow more time over the holiday break between Fall and Winter Terms, and one week was “spent” to allow an earlier end to spring term and an earlier commencement date. For detail see <http://registrar.wlu.edu/calendars/cal5-yr.htm>.
3. Guidelines were distributed to assist departments in planning course offerings, 5.5 average teaching loads and possible changes to major requirements, with reports due May 15.

Related recommendations: Courses will continue to carry the same credit hours as they do now, unless a department wishes to change them through C&D. The way that credits, contact hours, courses, team-taught courses, research supervision, etc., are counted for teaching loads will continue to be determined by departments in consultation with the dean. During a year

<sup>17</sup>Ultimately the task force included the following administrators: Provost June Aprille, Registrar Scott Dittman, Dean of the College Hank Dobin, Associate Deans of the College Janet Ikeda and Elizabeth Knapp, Dean of the Williams School Larry Peppers, Associate Dean of the Williams School Robert Straughan, and Associate Provost Robert Strong. Faculty included the following professors: George Bent, Niels-Hugo Blunch, Alexandra Brown, Marc Conner, Neil Cunningham, Marcia France, Art Goldsmith, James Mahon, Lucas Morel, Rance Ncaise, and Florinda Ruiz. The task force met regularly from November 2007 through January 2009.

in which a faculty member is on a half-year sabbatical, the number of courses taught during the remaining portion of the year will be worked out with department heads. Individual teaching loads should average 5.5 over several years, not necessarily by year.

4. The faculty voted on Dec. 3, 2008, to maintain the Spring Option, and students who remain on campus for 2008 and 2009 will be required to enroll in only one academic Spring Term course, not two as voted previously. (Students may enroll in two courses, but are not required to do so.) Any other restrictions currently linked to enrollment remain in place, e.g. students not enrolled in at least one academic course may not participate in varsity athletics during Spring Term.
5. Faculty guidelines and access to funding for new Spring Term course development were presented at the March 3 faculty meeting and posted on a Wiki Web site. Faculty are invited to post brief ideas for new courses and comment on the ideas of others on the Wiki at any time. (Notes: Only one development grant for courses that will be team taught.) Course grants and Glenn grants are not mutually exclusive. Course grants will be available in 2008 and continued through 2009. A separate Wiki for student Spring Term course ideas will be advertised in mid-April.
6. What did the vote for “36 courses for graduation” mean in terms of credits and actual number of courses? What minimum number of three- or four-credit courses constitute a liberal arts education (compared to a host of one- or two-credit offerings)?

We recommend that no minimum number of three- or four-credit courses be stipulated, presuming that most students will take at least 32 three- or four-credit courses (and probably more) in the process of completing FDR and major requirements. However, we also recommend that student experience be assessed from an analysis of transcripts through the first two classes graduating under the 36-course requirement (2013, 2014).

If this ongoing audit shows that students use too many one- or two-credit offerings to meet degree requirements in relation to what the faculty believes is necessary for a liberal arts education, the possibility of overlaying a required number of three- or four-credit courses could be considered at that time. The faculty might then also want to revisit requirements that define a liberal arts education.

7. Given the recommendation in #6, how then shall we determine the number of credits required for graduation? The issue is that 36 courses at three credits each totals only 108 credits, which starts to look thin compared to our peers, and compared to the nominal 120 credits suggested by SACS. (We require 115 credits now). However, our peer schools typically give four credits for courses similar to ours, which we value at three credits, because they use total student effort rather than a professor’s contact hours to assign credit value.

We recommend leaving Fall and Winter Term course-credit values as they are now or as determined anew in departmental course restructuring. Then a student who completes a typical full-time load of 12 credits (usually four courses) each Fall and Winter Term for four years will earn at least 96 credits during those terms.

We further recommend that all new spring courses be four credits beginning in 2010. While this may seem arbitrary, it serves several important purposes: It is consistent with the idea that course value earned by students should be related to student effort and learning—not just the professor’s contact hours. It is reasonable value for courses that will typically require a student of average ability to commit 30-35 hrs. per week (including only 8-10 hours of class time) for the four-week term. It signals students that the intensive work required for the course will be worth it. It also achieves more practical purposes: it relieves C&D from having to decide whether one course is worth more than another, as long as both have followed the course development

guidelines; and it establishes a robust number of credits required for the degree (see below). Note also: There will not be a need for a committee other than C&D to approve courses.

At four credits each, one Spring Term course in each of four years will add up to 16 credits. Combining the 32 courses (96 credits) for Fall and Winter Terms and four Spring Term courses (16 credits) adds up to 36 courses (112 academic credits) required for graduation. With one PE skills credit, we are at 113 credits required for graduation. Many (most) of our students will accumulate more than 113 by advanced placement and/or by taking more than 12 credits in the long terms.

8. Existing six-credit off-campus courses that now meet for six weeks will be exempt from the new four-week requirement and allowed to remain six weeks long and valued at six credits (mindful that seniors may not be able to enroll due to earlier commencement). New or revised off-campus courses must be planned for four weeks long and valued at four credits.
9. With the objective of only one fully engaging Spring Term course, should students be allowed to enroll for any other credit such as music lessons, PE skills, theater, etc.? We recommend that students be allowed to enroll in no more than one additional credit or one scheduled non-credit curricular activity (such as PE skills, Williams Investment Society, etc.), with the provision that it not interfere with the schedule and obligations of the four-credit Spring Term course. In so far as possible, syllabi should specify class meeting times, trips, group project times and so on in advance of registration for the spring, so that students can make decisions about enrolling in one-credit offerings that do not interfere with the primary academic course.

Anticipating that students with an intensive academic course schedule may also need to fulfill a PE skill course, skills courses should be scheduled accordingly, possibly at certain blocks during the

day (8-10 a.m., 4-6 p.m.—to be determined).

Students enrolled in an academic course may engage in other activities not for credit—athletic practice, finishing a thesis or capstone, research projects, etc.—as long as they manage their time to make sure the academic course has priority and their full attention.

10. All students—first-year through senior—will be subject to new requirements (only one course allowed in each Spring Term; 113 credits for graduation) at the time of implementation beginning in fall 2009. This will require faculty approval because it is a change in degree requirements for current students. It will also require careful advising to be sure that students are on track to graduate with fewer opportunities to take academic courses and skills courses in Spring Term beginning 2010.

Reminder that Spring Term still is required only for first-year students. Other students may opt out using the Spring Option, being mindful of whether they are on track with enough courses/credits/requirements to graduate.

11. Beginning in the fall of 2009 for the entering Class of 2013, we recommend a limit of 28 on the number of credits that first-year students can bring in from any and all non-W&L sources (AP, IB, college courses while in high school, etc.). Of the 28, no more than nine credits can be counted toward the requirements for a particular major with departmental approval; individual departments may set a limit of less than nine credits counted toward the major.

Beginning in the fall of 2009 for all students, no more than 56 of the 113 credits required for the W&L degree may be earned elsewhere or by any other means than through courses offered at W&L or through formal exchanges (e.g. VMI, Mary Baldwin, Spelman). In other words, first-year incoming credits, transfer credits, courses taken abroad, etc., will not count in the 57 credits to be taken at W&L.

12. Classroom availability for the new Spring Term model was considered. Even courses spending a lot of time off-campus may need to reserve a room for group discussion. If each section had either a morning or afternoon reservation for MWF or all day TR, we have enough rooms to accommodate 150 sections. (One course each for 1,776 students with an average class size of 12 works out to 148 sections.) Some students will use Spring Option and some courses will be off-campus (Washington, study abroad, e.g.). Overall, room scheduling does not appear to be a problem.
3. Course minimum enrollment will be eight students at the time of pre-registration. If less than eight, an attempt can be made to recruit the minimum by actual registration. Departments should have a back-up plan if a course does not fill and not enough seats are available in other courses. Faculty whose 5.5 course load depends on that Spring Term teaching should also have a contingency plan (a different course or some teaching trade-off within the department).

The second major round of recommendations from the task force, compiled in November of 2008, includes the following:

1. Spring Term courses will be planned, advertised and registered on a schedule similar to Spring Term Abroad and managed similarly by a faculty director and advisory committee (for the Q.E.P.).<sup>18</sup> Courses will be published in early fall with detail on specific times and costs required. Pre-registration will occur in late fall, and students must indicate first-, second- and third-choice preferences. Financial Aid application (if needed) and notification by end of Fall Term and deposits due as for Spring Term Abroad. Spring Term courses may require registration for a Winter Term prerequisite. Actual registration for Spring Term in February-March will be definitive for deciding whether a class will go (eight students minimum unless equipment limits to fewer), and faculty may start communicating with the class.
2. Students may drop/add any time after pre-registration and up through the second calendar day of Spring Term, except to take a spring-away option.
4. Courses offered within a department should average 15 students. Eight is the minimum unless equipment or facilities limit. No upper limit, but allowing more than 25 should be considered carefully.
5. Four-credit Spring Term courses (and those remaining at six) may not be taken pass/fail.
6. PE skills will be generally offered in one of two time periods, 8:30-10 a.m. or 1-2:30 p.m., meeting M-TH every week for four weeks. The plan offers enough courses to provide about 550 enrollments. There may be a few courses that require larger blocks of time because of travel (horsemanship, caving, etc). Students may take only one activity for credit other than the academic course, and it must not interfere with any obligations to their academic course. Faculty will be asked if possible to be mindful of scheduling class meeting times so as not to interfere with both PE time blocks. Academic courses will indicate in advance whether they are incompatible with any PE skills time blocks. Students should be advised to take PE skills in the long terms as much as possible. Students must take an academic course—i.e. they cannot register just for PE courses.
7. Academic courses may request a meeting room on campus for one of the following schedules:  
MWF all morning  
MWF all afternoon  
TTH all day  
Every day 2.5 hours at either 10:00-12:30 or 2:30-5.

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<sup>18</sup>This has now taken shape as the Spring Term director and the Spring Term Coordinating Committee.

Every effort will be made to meet needs for rooms with special technology or other amenities.

8. Adjuncts and visiting appointments will be eligible for Spring Term course development grants provided they are assured in advance of employment at W&L in the term the course will be offered.
9. Spring Term courses will have normal rubric numbers that are distinct from those used in Fall and Winter Terms. Numbers should follow similar conventions—low numbers for intro or non-majors courses, higher numbers when more advanced. Courses with similar subject matter that has two designs, one for spring and one for

a long term, should have different numbers for the two offerings and be separately approved by C&D. Spring Term courses will not be grouped together in the regular catalog, but they will be pulled together for a special Spring Term Web catalog in the fall preceding the Spring Term in which they will be offered.

10. Departments should have some open course numbers (Topics in...) with approved pedagogy that would accommodate courses that might need to be added within several weeks of the start of the Spring Term, or that might be taught by different faculty in successive Spring Terms. In other words, depending on the expertise of the professor who is teaching the course, different content could be fitted into the approved course plan.

## APPENDIX II: INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF SPRING TERM 2008

At the start and finish of the 2008 Spring Term, we sent out an electronic survey to a representative sampling of current courses, in order to get a more exact picture of students' expectations for the Spring Term, as well as the ways in which they learn and the extent of their learning during the six-week term.

The start-of-term survey had 267 respondents, which represented 16 percent of the total number of students enrolled during the term. We sent the survey to a range of courses, representing both the College and the Williams School, and all the major disciplines, from the humanities to the social sciences to the natural sciences.<sup>19</sup> The survey consisted of two parts: first, a single narrative question: "In your view, at the start of this class, what is the most important thing about this course material?" And second, five quantitative questions of a multiple-choice model. For the narrative question, we broke the results down by course level (100, 200, 300, etc.), and after reading through all of the responses, the Q.E.P. Team found the following major trends:

*In the 300-level courses*, students see the most important thing as:

- Help in major
- Future considerations such as work or research
- Gain skills to compete in marketplace
- Learn tools important to discipline
- Make connections between disciplines within the course

*In the 200-level courses*, students see the most important thing as:

- Understanding better the course content (the main subject of the course)
- Raising new questions

- Interdisciplinary nature
- Preparation for upper-level coursework
- Opportunity to improve as writer

*In the 100-level courses*, students see the most important thing as:

- Subject matter
- Methodologies
- Pedagogies
- Learn more about an interesting subject
- Enriching, interesting

Other interesting responses/comments:

- Interdisciplinary, variety, range, different perspectives, change attitudes, learn to help/affect world
- Broadening, not deepening, knowledge (100 level)
- Looking beyond the typical approach, into the atypical, a unique opportunity
- Opportunity to study abroad
- Service learning opportunity
- Deeper investigation (200 level)
- More about learning than about a grade

This indirect source of assessment does tell us that students value and seek interdisciplinary approaches at all levels in the Spring Term; that at the 100 level, students seek knowledge about methodologies and subject matter, whereas by the 300 level, they seek greater understanding within their major, the ability to connect concepts and ideas, and research and knowledge skills that will help them after graduation when they enter the marketplace. We also saw, at all levels, an interest in service learning and study abroad, as well as a tendency to take courses outside the box that they might not normally take, and courses in which the final grade is not their most important concern. These student-driven attitudes and expectations about the Spring Term have helped us to shape our reconception of the Spring Term in its intensive four-week model. Our decision to maintain

<sup>19</sup>The courses included Chemistry 345, Poverty 101, Music 397, Music 181, Music 180, Engineering 160, Physics 151, African-American Studies 295, Accounting 360, Business Administration 304, Politics 295, Geology 160/373, English 236, English 234, Art 380/University Scholars 202, Psychology 150.

courses across all levels of the curriculum, to increase interdisciplinary and study abroad opportunities, to enhance service learning and to offer experiences that go beyond the classroom to enrich character and civility, all find support in this initial assessment of student attitudes to the Spring Term.

The five multiple-choice questions sought to ascertain what students seek in a Spring Term

course, how much of their learning time they devote to the course, whether their course is an elective or a major course, what they think the major basis of their learning in the course will be, and what they think will be most essential to their learning in the course. The questions, and the aggregate responses, were as follows:

*What is your primary consideration when selecting Spring Term Courses?*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Response percent</b>	<b>Response count</b>
The syllabus provides a unique approach to course content	49.0%	50
I anticipate a light work load from the course	9.8%	10
It's a good way to meet elective requirements quickly	22.5%	23
I want to experience this course material in an intensive manner	22.5%	25
It's a key course in my major requirements	20.6%	21

*Considering your academic courseload this term, how much of your learning time (i.e., your total "schoolwork" time per week) do you anticipate dedicating to this course?*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Response percent</b>	<b>Response count</b>
Nearly all	39.2%	40
Not all, but significantly more than half	17.6%	18
About half	40.2%	41
Less than half	2.9%	3

*Does this course count as an elective or towards your major?*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Response percent</b>	<b>Response count</b>
Towards my major	45.5%	46
An elective	54.5%	55

*Do you expect the major basis of your learning in this course to be:*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Response percent</b>	<b>Response count</b>
Solely within one discipline	16.7%	17
Mostly within one discipline with some interdisciplinary elements	56.9%	58
Mostly interdisciplinary with some discipline-based elements	24.5%	25
Entirely interdisciplinary	2.0%	2

*Which of the following do you anticipate will be most essential to your learning in this course?*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Response percent</b>	<b>Response count</b>
Learning about the content areas (in the arts & sciences) that are identified on the syllabus	72.5%	74
Learning about how scholars (artists and scientists) approach issues & research questions	30.4%	31

This data confirmed that students are excited about the unique approach to course content in the Spring Term courses; that they spread their courses about equally between major courses and elective courses; and that the majority of students seek some degree of interdisciplinarity in their courses. It also shows that students anticipate devoting at least half, and for most students more than half, of their learning time to their Spring Term course. This bodes well for the full-engagement model we are inculcating in the reconceived Spring Term.

#### **SPRING TERM 2008 END-OF-TERM ASSESSMENT DATA**

Our end-of-term assessment presented students with three multiple-choice questions that follow upon the questions posed at the start of the term. As the responses below indicate, when students reflected on their actual experience in the Spring Term,

significantly more felt that they devoted more than half of their learning time to a single course (65.3 percent, compared to 56.8 percent at start of term); there also was a significantly greater number than they had anticipated who did not experience interdisciplinarity (35.2 percent said their course was a single discipline, compared to only 16.7 percent who anticipated single discipline work at the start of the term). This suggests that greater interdisciplinarity might be needed in the Spring Term. Finally, to the highly subjective, but nevertheless intriguing, question as to the quality of students' Spring Term experience, an astonishing 97.3 percent of respondents described their experience as either "very good" or "good." Clearly there is much in the Spring Term to which students respond favorably. We seek in the reconceived Spring Term to enhance those elements, and to strengthen them further to optimize the student learning outcomes of the Spring Term.

How much of your “learning time” (defined as time spent in or out of the classroom studying, reading, writing papers, etc.) for the Spring Term did you dedicate to this course?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Response percent</b>	<b>Response count</b>
Nearly all	42.4%	61
Significantly more than half	22.9%	33
About half	31.9%	46
Significantly less than half	2.8%	4

The major basis of your learning in this course was . . .

<b>Response</b>	<b>Response percent</b>	<b>Response count</b>
Solely within 1 discipline/subject area	35.2%	51
Primarily within 1 discipline with some interdisciplinary elements	40.7%	59
Mostly interdisciplinary with some discipline-based elements	18.6%	27
Entirely interdisciplinary	5.5%	8

Overall, the quality of your spring term academic experience was?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Response percent</b>	<b>Response count</b>
Very good	78.5%	113
Good	18.8%	27
Satisfactory	2.8%	4
Needs Improvement	0.0%	0

We also gave the students three narrative questions to respond to: What do you think is the most important thing about the course material? How was this course different from other courses you have taken in the Fall and Winter Terms at W&L (including course content, course workload, what you learned, course pedagogy, similarity/difference to Fall and Winter Term courses), and how could the quality of your academic experience during Spring Term be improved? How could we improve student learning? These yielded a fascinating range of responses, which have further informed our thoughts about what is most effective in the Spring Term from the students’ point of view. The complete,

raw surveys may be viewed at <http://qep.wlu.edu/Spring Term 2008 Final Assessment.pdf>

From this assessment, we learned that the overall student experience of the Spring Term is, from the students’ perspective, an extremely positive one. Indeed, students indicate that in terms of the academic quality of the Spring Term, there is little room for improvement. We believe that through the Q.E.P., we will further enhance the classroom experience for our students, retaining and strengthening what they respond well to and adding additional elements that will further strengthen and enhance the learning experience for our students in the Spring Term.

### APPENDIX III: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SPRING TERM AT WASHINGTON AND LEE

The Spring Term at Washington and Lee was created in 1970. This radical concept in education came about partly as a result of the ferment in educational thinking in the late 1960s, as many new ideas were experimentally put forth at American universities. W&L previously had a semester system of two 15-week terms, and the new six-week Spring Term was designed to allow standard courses in the longer terms, with more experimental courses in the six-week term. Credits were disconnected from classroom hours, and faculty were encouraged to innovate: single-issue topics, different forms of instruction, off-campus study and other creative concepts. It was as a result of this innovation that Washington and Lee's famous Spring Term Abroad courses were developed. Many faculty explored new topics frequently, in classes that were fresh and new each year. Team-teaching and interdisciplinary courses were encouraged. The basic idea, therefore, was to have one term where innovation, experimentation and pedagogical creativity were encouraged and, indeed, even the norm. Over the ensuing decades, the administration and faculty have constantly discussed how to improve the Spring Term, leading to a series of very reflective and helpful discussions, in the past decade in particular.

#### **1. The Spring Term Discussion of 2001, under President John Elrod**

The Spring Term came under scrutiny in 2000-2001, under pressure from two directions: first, the significant cost of the Spring Term for the University, mainly as a result of the increased demand (faculty teach one course instead of three, students take two instead of four, and the class size is kept small, hence the demand remains high while the supply drops); second, the perception that some faculty were not offering significantly rigorous courses, hence students were receiving a less than intensive academic

experience in the spring—quite counter to the ideal of the Spring Term as originally conceived. There was also a significant voice among the faculty who felt that our seven-course teaching load was already too intensive to allow faculty to continue their scholarly interests, and the intensive teaching demanded by the Spring Term was seen as part of this problem.

After months of debate, the faculty voted to maintain the Spring Term by a roughly 3:2 majority vote (127 [66.5 percent] for, 64 [33.5 percent] opposed). At the same time, President Elrod authorized a reduction in the faculty teaching load from seven courses a year to 6.5 over two years. While this relieved some of the pressure for the faculty in balancing their teaching commitments and their research agendas, it increased the pressure on the University to afford this increasingly expensive academic calendar. (It is important to note that this debate was also part of a much larger discussion in the University about general education requirements, structure of majors, course load, class size—in short, all the aspects of the classroom learning experience for our students.)

In the wake of this debate and vote, President Elrod formed the Spring Term Renewal Committee, chaired by Prof. Art Goldsmith of the Economics Department. This committee, which consisted of 12 faculty from across the entire University, was charged with establishing clear goals and objectives for the Spring Term, including increasing the academic rigor, encouraging innovative teaching models and assessing the resources available for the Spring Term. The committee met for an entire academic year, 2001-2002, and produced a 33-page report filled with goals, analysis, plans and details that would help reinvigorate the Spring Term according to its ideal of a unique, innovative and intensive learning experience. The full report may be viewed at [http://qep.wlu.edu/qep\\_docs.htm](http://qep.wlu.edu/qep_docs.htm).

## **2. The Calendar Debates of 2002-03, under President Thomas Burish**

The Spring Term Renewal Committee report was submitted in the spring of 2002 to Acting President Laurent Boetsch, who declined to respond to its contents because President Thomas Burish was set to assume office on July 1, 2002. President Burish examined the issues upon arriving on campus, and in the fall of 2002, he presented to the faculty the vexed issue of the Spring Term's expense to the University. President Burish felt that without significant increase in faculty resources, the Spring Term was too expensive to maintain. The faculty responded by forming three calendar committees, one devoted to forming a proposal for maintaining the 12-12-6 calendar; another to a 13-13-4 calendar; and a third to a 14-14 calendar. Each of these committees met throughout the late fall and winter, then submitted their proposals to the faculty as a whole. Throughout these debates and processes, the primary goal for all involved was preserving and if possible strengthening the liberal arts mission of Washington and Lee.

Ultimately President Burish recommended to the faculty that W&L adopt a 14-14 calendar. This created an immense outcry from the alumni, who hold the Spring Term as one of the most distinctive and valuable features of a W&L education; the students, who similarly saw the Spring Term as one of the most exciting and compelling parts of W&L; and many of the faculty, who viewed the Spring Term as still forming the basis of an immensely exciting pedagogical opportunity. President Burish pledged to recommend to the Board of Trustees whatever calendar the faculty finally would vote for. After months of discussion, study and debate, the faculty voted to retain the 12-12-6 calendar, which President Burish subsequently recommended to the Board of Trustees.

## **3. Justification of the W&L Spring Term**

This generates the question: What is it about the W&L Spring Term that makes it such a paramount and defining part of the W&L experience? Why do our students, alumni and most of our faculty insist that this Spring Term is an essential component of our liberal arts mission? In brief, the Spring Term at Washington and Lee, at its best, offers small, focused, innovative learning experiences to our students. The intimate experience of learning that it affords, the close interaction with faculty and students, the teaching styles that are often not possible in the traditional long semester and the unique course offerings (including service learning, student/faculty research, interdisciplinary and team-taught classes and intensive study abroad opportunities), all combine for an intensive ideal of the liberal arts education. As our Q.E.P. proposal has argued, these intensive and innovative learning experiences embody the best of liberal arts education. Our students and alumni routinely report that the Spring Term experiences are the most life-altering classroom experiences they have.

## **4. President Ken Ruscio's Reconception of the Spring Term as part of the Academic Life Renewal Proposal**

On Nov. 5, 2007, the faculty approved an Academic Life Proposal as put forth by President Ruscio. This proposal sought to bring together a range of issues that are clearly cognate with the Spring Term. Aimed at implementation in the 2009-2010 academic year, this proposal will:

- Establish the minimum requirements for a bachelor's degree at 36 academic courses instead of 38 (our peer institutions typically require 32 or 34 courses);

- Establish an average course load for faculty of 5.5 per year, instead of six;
- Adopt a four-week Spring Term during which students will enroll in only one intensive course, instead of the current six-week Spring Term in which students generally take two courses. We will retain some existing six-week, off-campus courses;
- Encourage faculty to develop new innovative courses and pedagogy in all segments of our calendar, especially courses uniquely suited to the four-week Spring Term. A course-development fund will be available especially for courses for Spring Term.

The adoption of the plan, President Ruscio wrote, will allow us to rededicate ourselves to academic programs focused on innovative pedagogy, curriculum development and the best possible teaching in the liberal arts tradition.<sup>20</sup>

Clearly this proposal focuses on the possibilities and challenges of the W&L Spring Term. To work out the enormous amount of detail connected to this proposal, which involves both a reduction in faculty teaching load and a rededication to the learning possibilities of the Spring Term, President

Ruscio formed an Academic Life Renewal Task Force consisting of both faculty and administration. This group began meeting in early December of 2007 and met weekly throughout the year. The task force formed a range of detailed recommendations for how best to implement the president's conception (see Appendix I). Although their conversations touched on virtually every aspect of academic life, from physical education opportunities to the size and structure of majors, from the number of credits awarded per class to the ideal faculty sabbatical schedule, by far the majority of their discussions touched on the new four-week Spring Term and how best to reconceive this term and bring to the forefront the learning opportunities it presents.

When the new four-week Spring Term was selected as W&L's Q.E.P., the task force was instrumental in providing information, study, resources and ideas to the Q.E.P. Leadership Team, several of whom had served on the task force. Hence the Q.E.P. work grows organically from W&L's overall reassessment of its entire academic life.

President Ruscio's memo to the faculty of Sept. 17, 2007, announcing the Rededication to Teaching and Learning Initiative:

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<sup>20</sup> The recorded vote: 137 in favor, 44 against, and 1 abstention—the faculty approved the Academic Life Proposal. The vote in favor of the proposal represents 75.3 percent of the faculty. Note: Among other points, the initiative stipulated the adoption of a four-week Spring Term beginning 2009-2010 during which students will enroll in only one course. The initiative anticipated

that faculty are to develop new innovative courses and pedagogy in all segments of our 12-12-4 calendar, especially courses uniquely suited to the four-week intensive Spring Term, with the support of a professional-development fund established by the University.

WASHINGTON AND LEE  
UNIVERSITY

Lexington, Virginia 24450-2116

Office of the President  
(540) 458-8700

September 17, 2007

**To: The Faculty**  
**From: Ken Ruscio**  
**Re: Rededication to Teaching and Learning**

Colleagues:

This is a summary of the proposal that I will have presented at the faculty meeting Monday, September 17. My goal is to launch the strategic plan and the next phase of Washington and Lee's development with a positive and aggressive commitment to academic life, and to our distinctive place in higher education. That has to include creating an environment supportive of active teacher-scholars consistent with our belief (as articulated in our mission statement) "that the personal association of our students with a highly qualified and motivated faculty holds the greatest promise of inspiring in them a thirst for knowledge that will continue throughout their lives."

***Observations and Background***

Washington and Lee has certain distinctive qualities in the universe of liberal arts colleges, and because of those characteristics it has the potential to lead a national conversation on student learning, particularly on the advantages of close student-faculty relationships, and the teacher-scholar model. We cannot shape that national conversation, however, until we renew our own campus conversation.

My concern about the state of our own campus conversation was prompted by a kind of straw-that-broke-the-camel's-back realization. It occurred at a faculty meeting last year when we were debating how to implement and enforce the "may-away" Spring Term option. In some very legitimate and commendable ways, this experiment is perfectly appropriate. But it is my distinct impression returning to W & L after a four-year absence and after listening to the discussions this past year that we have tangled ourselves in fiscal and managerial knots to preserve a feature of the curriculum that we view now less in terms of its educational benefits and philosophy and more in terms of its administrative feasibility.

We have built an academic structure that simply can't bear its weight. We require significantly more coursework for graduation than any of our peers; we are attempting to reduce our teaching load; and we are trying (or at least we should be trying) to keep our class sizes small. We have attempted to resolve these resource conundrums in almost every instance by an incremental fix, which often exacerbates the resource burden (such as by requiring students to take six credits rather than three in the Spring Term) or compromises our ability to fulfill other principles such as maintaining small class size or limiting our use of adjuncts. I keep hearing the echoes of that army officer during the Vietnam conflict: "We had to destroy the village in order to save it."

### ***The Constraints***

We have the highest teaching load among the top 25 national liberal arts colleges. My guess is that very few of the top fifty still have a teaching load of six. Also, we have the most courses required for graduation, except for Harvey Mudd, which offers engineering degrees. Even with the highest teaching load among our peers, we can't support the curriculum requirements on our students without asking at least 25 percent of them to take off during the Spring Term. If fewer than 25 percent take a Spring Term away, we must resort to adjuncts and larger classes. In other words, we have a curriculum and a calendar that can only be sustained by asking students not to take advantage of one of its salient features or by resorting to tactics completely in opposition to what we believe is the essence of close student-faculty relationships. That is hardly a position from which we can lead a national conversation.

### ***The Proposal***

We cannot have another Spring Term debate. We cannot have another set of task forces, committee reports, and endless rounds of faculty votes, amendments, and parliamentary challenges. But we must have a conversation on academic life if Washington and Lee is to be a true exemplar of a liberal arts education. And we must enter our strategic plan rededicated to innovative and creative teaching and a vibrant, rich curriculum. To create the environment for that kind of conversation, I propose the following:

1. A 5.5 teaching load
2. A four-week spring semester during which students take one course.
3. A provision to allow "grandfathering" of certain existing six-week off-campus courses, such as the Washington-term program or some study abroad.
4. A requirement for graduation of 36 courses
5. The creation of a professional development fund to encourage faculty to devise new courses or redesign existing ones uniquely suited to an intensive four-week term.

The other alternative, and the only other alternative, is the existing system. The proposed change is cost-neutral, except for the creation of the professional development fund, which is a transitional not a continuing expense. I can also envision other transition costs as some departments adjust their requirements or experience new patterns of demand.

### ***The Advantages of this Proposal***

To be leaders in the national liberal arts discussion, we must overcome our angst about "managing the burden of our curriculum" and instead embrace the opportunities it offers. To do that, we must remove some of the uncertainty we face under the present model and act now rather than react later.

We are caught between a rock and a hard place. The "rock" is that we can't abolish Spring Term right now—*nor should we*. Our Spring Term, if renewed, enhanced, and intensified does indeed provide us with an opportunity to showcase innovative and creative courses. But past debates with all their pain and divisiveness have left us uncertain, tentative and exhausted. This proposal should revitalize our curriculum, and allow us to celebrate the unique and rich opportunities our curriculum affords for student learning.

The "hard place" is our teaching load. Our anomalous position negatively affects the perception of the University among our peers and prospective faculty. A reduction in our formal course load is not a sign that we take teaching

less seriously than we used to. In fact, *exactly the opposite is the case*. In the current setting of liberal arts education teaching is a complex set of interrelated responsibilities. It blends more seamlessly with scholarship and advising. There is increased interaction among students and faculty outside the classroom, more opportunities for student research, group projects, and experiential learning. *A reduction in formal course load is not less teaching*; it allows faculty the time to revise courses, develop new pedagogical skills, and spend more time with students in non-classroom settings. In other words, we want to increase the personalized teaching that is so valued at W&L.

At Washington and Lee, we have a tremendous story to tell about the value of student-faculty relationships and about our commitment to innovative and rigorous courses taught with excellent pedagogy. On the one hand, I admit I am trying to find a way out of our conundrum by operating within some difficult constraints. On the other hand, I am trying to do so in a manner that enables us to leap to the front of the national discussion of the liberal arts and student learning.

**APPENDIX IV: TIMELINE OF THE MAJOR DATES, EVENTS, AND DECISIONS**

	<i>Event/Decision</i>	<i>Authority</i>
September 27, 2007	Q.E.P. Selection Team formed	Provost
November 5, 2007	Academic Life Renewal Initiative approved	W&L Faculty
March 28, 2008	Spring Term Renewal chosen as the W&L Q.E.P.	President, Provost
April 2008	Q.E.P. Leadership Team formed	Provost
May 16, 2008	The Q.E.P. selection is reported to the Board of Trustees <sup>21</sup>	Provost
May, June 2008	Initial Assessment of current Spring Term	Q.E.P. Leadership Team
June 6, 2008	First meeting of “Spring Term Pioneers,” faculty developing new Spring Term course proposals	Q.E.P. Leadership Team
Summer 2008	Initial drafting of Q.E.P.	Q.E.P. Leadership Team
August 26, 2008	“Faculty Academy” luncheon to discuss new Spring Term Courses and pedagogy	Q.E.P. Leadership Team
September 2008	First batch (12) of new Spring Term Courses submitted to Committee on Courses and Degrees	W&L Faculty
September 10, 2008	Second part of Q.E.P. drafted and discussed	Q.E.P. Leadership Team
October 3, 2008	Q.E.P. Director meets with all department and program heads about the Q.E.P. details	Q.E.P. Director
October 13, 2008	Second round of Course Proposals (25) submitted to Q.E.P. Director	W&L Faculty, Q.E.P. Director
October 21 & 24, 2008	2 round-table luncheon discussions with “Pioneers II” faculty who have proposed new Spring Term courses	Q.E.P. Director
November 13, 2008	Conference call with Steve Ehrman, director of Flashlight, re/survey tools	Q.E.P. Leadership Team
December 1, 2008	Completed draft of Q.E.P.	Q.E.P. Leadership Team
December 5-9, 2008	SACS Annual Conference in San Antonio, TX, attended by Q.E.P. Director, focus on Q.E.P. & Assessment panels	Q.E.P. Director
December 7, 2008	Second batch (25) of new Spring Term Courses submitted to Committee on Courses and Degrees	W&L Faculty

<sup>21</sup>Reported as information in a SACS reaffirmation update to the Board through the Committee on Undergraduate Acad-

ics and Admission, and is in the minutes of that committee meeting on May 16, 2008.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event/Decision</b>	<b>Authority</b>
December 1-January 5, 2008-09	Thorough revision of Q.E.P. Draft	Q.E.P. Leadership Team
January 5, 2009	Finished Q.E.P. presented to President, Provost, & SACS Leadership Team	Q.E.P. Leadership Team
January 6, 2009	Committee on Courses and Degrees formally approves the first group of new Spring Term Courses	Committee on Courses and Degrees
January 12, 2009	Q.E.P. presented to the W&L faculty at University-wide faculty meeting	Q.E.P. Director
January 5-21, 2009	Final revision of Q.E.P.	Q.E.P. Leadership Team
January 15, 2009	Third round of Pioneers Spring Term Course Proposals (53) presented to Q.E.P. Director	W&L Faculty, Q.E.P. Director
January 19, 2009	"W&L Gets Revised Curriculum," a 2-page informative article, published in <i>The Ring-Tum Phi</i> (student newspaper)	Allison Chopin, Managing Editor
January 21, 2009	Completed Q.E.P. presented to the President, Provost, and Faculty (posted on web site)	Q.E.P. Leadership Team
January 21, 2009	Marc Conner, Professor of English, appointed Director of the Spring Term; begins formation of the Spring Term Coordinating Committee	Provost
January 29, February 3, February 6, 2009	3 round-table luncheon discussions with "Pioneers III" faculty who have proposed new Spring Term courses	Director of the Spring Term
Early February, 2009	Orientation and Information Sessions with Student Leaders and Open Student Forums to discuss the new Spring Term	Director of the Spring Term
March, 2009	3 round-table luncheon discussions with "Pioneers IV" faculty who have proposed new Spring Term courses	Director of the Spring Term
March, 2009	SACS on-site compliance team visits campus to discuss QEP with leadership and administration	Office of the Provost

## APPENDIX V: MEETING MINUTES, AGENDAS, ATTENDANCE, ETC. FOR Q.E.P. LEADERSHIP TEAM AND Q.E.P. SELECTION TEAM

The complete minutes for the Q.E.P. Selection Team and the complete minutes for the Q.E.P. Leadership

Team may be viewed at the Q.E.P. Web site: <http://qep.wlu.edu>.

## APPENDIX VI: THE Q.E.P. LEADERSHIP TEAM

As with the Q.E.P. Selection Team, the Q.E.P. Leadership Team was chosen to represent a breadth of the University community. We sought to bring faculty and staff onto the team who had been actively involved in the W&L Spring Term through their teaching or their service, as well as to represent as many disciplines, modes of teaching and research interests as we could and still maintain an efficient and effective group. The team consisted of the following members: Marc Conner, professor of English (chair); Erich Uffelman, professor of chemistry; Francile Elrod, Shepherd Poverty Program; Janet Ikeda, professor of Japanese and associate dean of the College; Jeff Overholtzer, Information Technology Services; Don Dailey, visiting professor of education; Jamie Redwine, institutional research associate in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness; Timothy Gaylard, professor of music; Joel Kuehner, professor of physics and engineering; Sandra Reiter, professor of business administration; Elizabeth Wicht, Office of Institutional Effectiveness; Tyler Dickovick, professor of politics.

The team began meeting on April 10, 2008, within days after Prof. Conner's appointment as team chair. The team immediately began working on initial assessment of the current six-week Spring Term, as well as working towards a drafting process for the Q.E.P. itself. The team continued to meet throughout the Spring Term of 2008, collecting data, generating ideas for the draft and making progress towards the drafting process. An initial draft of the first part of the Q.E.P. was completed in August and circulated to the entire team. Feedback of both a general and

a specific nature was provided, and this made its way into subsequent revisions of the draft. Weekly meetings resumed in September of 2008, and the work was divided between working through various issues of implementation, strategy and philosophy, and at the same time the writing process on the Q.E.P. document itself. This writing process was highly collaborative and depended upon frank and clear critique of the multiple drafts of the document. Virtually every page of the final Q.E.P. went through multiple versions and received feedback from, at times, dozens of readers throughout the W&L faculty, staff and administration.

The first complete draft of the entire Q.E.P. was completed by Dec. 2, 2008. This went through yet another thorough revision, and the final document was submitted to the provost, assistant provost, the SACS Leadership Team, and the Implementation Task Force on Jan. 5, 2009. It was then presented to the W&L faculty as a whole in a presentation by Prof. Conner to the University faculty meeting on Jan. 12, 2009. After receiving detailed feedback from all of these constituencies, the Q.E.P. received a final revision during the week of Jan. 12-19, and the final, completed document was submitted to the provost on Jan. 21, 2009. Following this submission, the Q.E.P. Leadership Team continued to meet regularly to begin the transition process into the Spring Term Coordinating Committee. The provost appointed Prof. Conner to be the director of the Spring Term on Jan. 21, 2009, and he began assembling the new STCC to take up the work of implementing the Q.E.P. as the revitalized Spring Term of 2010 approached.

APPENDIX VII: ADDITIONAL PROGRAM INITIATIVES  
FOR THE SPRING TERM EXPERIENCE BEYOND THE CLASSROOM:

- 1. *The Spring Term Lecture Series and Common Reading Program:*** Each spring, the University will invite a major speaker to come to campus to deliver a public lecture on an intellectual or cultural theme that touches directly on the liberal arts. The lecture will be coordinated with a common reading or text either by the visiting lecturer or related to her or his topic. Students who wish to participate in the Lecture and Reading Program will be given a copy of the book during the Winter Term. There will be several faculty- and student-led discussion groups of the book. When the lecturer comes to campus, there will be many opportunities for students and faculty to meet and interact with the lecturer, to discuss her or his book or books and to seek ways to connect the entire event with their overall education that term or during their college work. For example, we might bring the philosopher and cultural critic Cornel West to campus in conjunction with a reading of his book, *Race Matters*; or the physicist Freeman Dyson and coordinate his visit with a reading of his study, *Infinite in All Directions*; or the legal and ethical scholar Stephen Carter to discuss such books as *Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy* or *The Dissent of the Governed: A Meditation of Law, Religion, and Loyalty*.
- 2. *The Spring Term Film Series:*** Each Friday night, the University will sponsor a special showing of a significant, powerful or important film. The film will be preceded by a short presentation by a faculty member who has some expertise in

the film's area—so, for example, we might show “Hotel Rwanda” along with a short presentation by Politics Prof. Tyler Dickovick, who is a scholar of African politics. Prof. Dickovick would give the audience some ideas, guides and concepts to help them understand the film's cultural context more deeply in their viewing. A reception and discussion will follow the film.
- 3. *The Spring Term Celebration of Culture:*** On the second weekend of the term, after the second week of classes is complete, the University will sponsor a day-long celebration of culture on the Washington and Lee campus. This event will be open to all members of the Lexington community and will offer an opportunity to combine the campus and the town in many rich and exciting ways. All W&L student groups will be invited to perform; departments can sponsor student events, such as poetry readings, historical re-enactments, staging of famous debates such as Lincoln-Douglass, improv performances and much more. Theater and music and art can perform and also offer performance workshops. Diverse international student organizations can set up booths explaining and exploring their cultural heritage. The possibilities here are endless, and community involvement will be emphasized. The day will conclude with a meal in the dining hall emphasizing a particular culture, much like the highly successful West Indian dinner sponsored in the spring of 2008 by the Caribbean Student Society.

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