

1.5 The General Education Initiative

The General Education Initiative will **facilitate, assess, and enhance critical thinking as a general education core competency.**

Adding critical thinking to the competencies addressed in general education courses is central to this enhancement plan. As general education courses serve students seeking degrees and diplomas in college transfer and vocation/technical programs, these courses are the ideal setting to begin enhancing students' abilities to think critically in academic and professional contexts. They represent important gateways for students where the key skills required for success in higher-level and technically specialized courses must be developed. These courses also often provide the first experiences students have with college-level work as they begin a program of study.

The general education core currently identifies and assesses six college-level competencies: written communication, oral communication, basic computer usage, problem solving, understanding scientific concepts and applications, and understanding social structure. These competencies are specific to and assessed within appropriate instructional areas. In contrast, this initiative seeks to establish critical thinking as a competency that reaches across all the instructional areas responsible for the general education core. Every general education course can improve and assess students' critical thinking skills. In this way, critical thinking can serve as a unifying competency underlying the existing competencies listed above.

Additionally, CFCC's definition of critical thinking and its learning outcomes feature elements also present in the existing competencies, like the analytical nature of problem solving. This is important for two reasons: first, this verifies general education courses already do much to facilitate and assess critical thinking as a learning outcome by addressing the existing competencies. Second, this points to the likelihood that as students improve their critical thinking skills, they will experience corresponding improvements in their other general education competencies. In other words, a critical thinking emphasis in general education is not a novelty, but a refinement of already sound practices that will enhance existing competencies, rather than displace them.

1.5.1 Initiative Objectives

First Objective

The first objective of this initiative is to **identify, apply, and evaluate strategies that enhance students' critical thinking skills in general education courses.** This objective acknowledges that there many effective instructional strategies already in use that develop students' critical thinking skills in general education courses. What this objective seeks is a more comprehensive overview of current strategies, their impact on student learning, and how these strategies can be more effectively implemented to enhance the cumulative effect of general education courses on students' critical thinking skills.

Second Objective

The second objective seeks to **improve how critical thinking skills are assessed as learning outcomes of general education courses.** This objective follows naturally from the first, as it is an attempt to assess with increasing accuracy the effect of instructional strategies on student learning outcomes. As with the first objective, the second objective derives from an acknowledgement of current practices. Many instructors in general education courses already assess their students' critical thinking skills either directly or indirectly. This objective will build

upon these efforts to produce an accurate and useful assessment profile of how general education courses affect students' critical thinking skills.

Third Objective

The third objective seeks to **use interdepartmental communication and cooperation to enhance students' critical thinking skills in general education courses**. This objective addresses the challenges of bringing together faculty from across a diverse curriculum to cooperate in enhancing students' critical thinking skills. A meaningful dialogue between all of this initiative's stakeholders must be ongoing in order for enhancement to be sustained and integrated into the cultural fabric of the college.

The implementation of this initiative will begin with campus-wide professional development activities as outlined in the Professional Development Initiative. These activities will raise awareness among faculty and staff about critical thinking learning outcomes and continue the campus-wide discussion on the best methods of facilitating and assessing critical thinking that began during the development of this plan. Many of these activities will be focused toward faculty teaching general education courses.

ENG III: Expository Writing will serve as the first pilot course in general education for enhancement. This is the most populated course in the college curricula, required in 30 Associate in Applied Science programs, 14 Associate in Arts programs, the Associate in Fine Arts program, the Associate in Science program, and the Associate in General Education program. It serves as an important "gateway" course for students beginning their programs of study serves the vital function of improving students' abilities to read and write at a college level. The typical section of ENG III has students from any number of these programs, making for the most diverse classrooms on campus. Therefore, beginning enhancement in this course will have an immediate impact on the widest range of students.

Another rationale for starting with ENG III is that a high quality assessment process is already in place for the written communication competency. At the end of each semester, students read and respond to a common topic, then produce an in-class writing based on that topic. These writings are then randomly distributed among ENG III faculty for assessment using a common rubric. This process will be utilized as a means of acquiring quality artifacts from a broad cross-section of students that can demonstrate changes in students' critical thinking skills. Assessment of samples of ENG III common writings will be done using CFCC's critical thinking rubric (see **Attachment V**). An initial assessment of ENG III common writings from fall 2005 and spring 2006 semester was conducted by an interdisciplinary faculty team in June 2006. The results of this assessment provide baseline data from which subsequent improvements can be measured (see **Attachment VII**).

To enhance the facilitation of students' critical thinking skills in ENG III, selected faculty will receive training and develop resources relating to Socratic seminars and the Paideia model of instruction. This instructional strategy has been a topic of interest in the English Department for some time because of its potential to foster student engagement and active learning. It lends itself particularly well to facilitating students' critical thinking skills in that it emphasizes meaningful inquiry, the consideration of multiple viewpoints, and self-monitoring. Levine-Browne et al (1993) describe the Paideia approach as a process in which "Socratic questioning leads students to listen and think critically and coherently communicate their ideas with other group members" (pp.3-4). After a semester of selected faculty piloting sections with the Socratic/Paideia emphasis, additional training will be provided to all ENG III instructors and these strategies will be implemented in all

course sections. Throughout this process, the assessment of student and instructor artifacts will be used to evaluate the impact of these strategies. It is expected that developing a critical thinking emphasis in this course will have an immediate positive impact on students' critical thinking skills at the course and program level.

Another general education course at the vanguard of this initiative is HUM 115: Critical Thinking. This course examines the application of critical thinking to “information, problem solving, approaching cross-cultural perspectives, and resolving controversies and dilemmas” (CFCC Catalog and Student Handbook). This course will serve as a benchmark for critical thinking skills by providing quality student and instructor artifacts to refine the broader assessment process.

Assessment and enhancement in other general education areas will begin as a faculty driven process of establishing a baseline for the impact of instructional strategies on students' critical thinking skills. Artifacts will be assessed with CFCC's critical thinking rubric (**Attachment V**) to produce an overview of students' critical thinking skills in general education courses that will serve as a baseline for measuring future gains. This assessment process will include a representative section of faculty from programs with general education course requirements (see **Attachment VI** for the logistics of this process). Faculty participating in the general education assessment process will have also participated in a College Learning Community (CLC) and Self-Paced On-line Courses (SPOCs) for professional development and instructional enhancement. This ensures that faculty participating in assessment activities will be adequately prepared to evaluate examples of critical thinking from diverse instructional areas.

Establishing a baseline description of students' critical thinking skills in general education courses will be the first step in a recursive process of assessment and enhancement. With the support of professional development resources and interdepartmental communication, faculty will identify the most effective strategies for facilitating students' critical thinking skills, begin implementing these strategies, and assess the results. By the third year of the Quality Enhancement Plan's implementation, all general education courses will describe specific critical thinking learning outcomes in course descriptions. By the fifth year of implementation, the annual assessment of student artifacts will describe a significant improvement in students' critical thinking skills from the established baseline. The Measure of Success target for this improvement is 70% of students demonstrating critical thinking at a “Competent” level by 2011.

The actions described below are tentative steps to improve the facilitation of students' critical thinking skills in general education courses over the next five years. These actions will be reevaluated as assessment data become available and new ideas emerge. With every step, this initiative will rely on evidence-based decisions, consider institutional capabilities, and seek broad-based input from all stakeholders.

1.5.2 Rationale and Strategies for General Education Initiative

Objectives	Rationale	Strategies
1. Identify, apply, and evaluate strategies that enhance students' critical thinking skills in general education courses	A systematic approach to identifying what strategies are currently used, developing new strategies, and evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies will improve students' critical thinking skills in general education courses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify currently used strategies through faculty surveys and workshops 2. Apply new instructional strategies and innovations in general education courses (pilot Paideia seminar in ENG 111) 3. Evaluate impact of strategies on students' critical thinking skills

Objectives	Rationale	Strategies
2. Improve how critical thinking skills are assessed as learning outcomes of general education	Improving how students' critical thinking skills are assessed in general education courses will produce better information on the impact of instructional technique, discipline area, course selection, and program of study; this information will drive instructional enhancement through professional development and curricular reform	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt the Institutional Portfolio model for assessing critical thinking in general education courses 2. Develop and refine a critical thinking rubric for the Institutional Portfolio model 3. Apply rubric to samples of student work from across the general education curriculum 4. Develop guidelines for assignments that produce assessable samples of student work
3. Use interdepartmental communication and cooperation to enhance students' critical thinking skills in general education courses	Sharing ideas about improving and assessing students' critical thinking skills will not only improve student learning at the course or section level, but will also encourage the reinforcement and transference of students' critical	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interdisciplinary teams of general education and vocational/technical faculty will participate in the assessment process; assessment results will be shared and discussed with all faculty 2. Form interdisciplinary Faculty Learning Communities (CLCs) to enhance instruction strategies

1.5.3 Outcomes and Assessments for General Education Initiative

Outcomes	Assessments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Critical thinking will be a distinct and assessable competency of all general education courses ✓ Student demonstrations of critical thinking in general education courses will improve each year ✓ Assessment results will determine professional development needs and curricular reforms ✓ Faculty will improve the facilitation of students' critical thinking skills in general education courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Institutional Portfolio model using a common critical thinking rubric (assessing ENG 111 common final and other randomly selected courses) ✓ Student performance on objective critical thinking post tests ✓ Student evaluations of teaching in general education courses ✓ Instructional portfolios for general education faculty
Measures of Success	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The level of critical thinking demonstrated by students on the ENG 111 common final will increase every year of this plan (samples to be included with every portfolio assessment cycle) 2) By 2011, 70% of students in randomly selected general education courses will demonstrate critical thinking at a competent level (assessment of student artifacts using CFCC's critical thinking rubric) 	

1.5.4 Implementation Calendar for General Education Initiative

Phase One: “Building the Tools” (Fall 2006—Fall 2007)

Start/Finish	Action	Results	Responsibilities
June 2006/ July 2006	✓ Form an interdisciplinary team of faculty to assess samples of Fall 2005 and Spring 2006 ENG 111 common finals using CFCC’s critical thinking rubric	✓ A baseline measure of students’ critical thinking skills in ENG 111 will be established (see Attachment VII); CFCC’s critical thinking rubric and the assessment process will be refined	QEP Director; assessment team
August 2006/ December 2006	✓ Enhance ENG 111: Expository Writing course description, course outline, and syllabus to reflect increased emphasis on critical thinking; incorporate CFCC’s critical thinking learning outcomes into course design and assessment of student learning	✓ Critical thinking learning outcomes will be incorporated into the objectives and design of CFCC’s most populated course	QEP Committee; QEP Director; ENG 111 Lead Instructor
August 2006/ May 2007	✓ Conduct workshops and online forums for ENG 111 instructors on critical thinking learning outcomes and their relation to reading and expository writing	✓ ENG 111 instructors will be familiarized with CFCC critical thinking learning outcomes and how these can be addressed in an expository writing course	QEP Committee; QEP Director; ENG 111 Lead Instructor
August 2006/ May 2007	✓ Campus-wide professional development activities will be offered to general education instructors	✓ General education instructors will have the opportunity to develop new strategies for facilitating and assessing students’ critical thinking skills	QEP Committee; Professional Development Committee
January 2007/ May 2007	✓ First College Learning Community (CLC) will complete first Self-paced Online Course (SPOC)	✓ A core group of faculty from diverse instructional areas will enhance their strategies for facilitating and assessing students’ critical thinking skills	QEP Committee; Professional Development Committee
January 2007/ April 2007	✓ On-site training on the Institutional Portfolio assessment model will be provided by experienced personnel from other IP schools (tentatively Surry CC)	✓ The first assessment team (first CLC) will learn the logistics, challenges, and opportunities of assessing students’ critical thinking skills using the IP model	QEP Committee; first CLC; Professional Development Committee; Institutional Effectiveness personnel; General Education Committee

Start/Finish	Action	Results	Responsibilities
January 2007/ May 2007	✓ Request student work from selected Gen Ed sections (25 total) at beginning of spring semester; collect by end of semester (450-500 artifacts) (see logistical details of process in attachment X)	✓ 450-500 artifacts from most populated general education courses will be gathered for summer assessment by first CLC	Institutional Effectiveness personnel; General Education Committee
March 2007/ March 2007	✓ ENG 111 pilot instructors will attend <i>Annual National Paideia Conference</i> (Chapel Hill, NC)	✓ ENG 111 pilot instructors will be trained to facilitate Paideia strategies in the classroom that improve students' critical thinking skills	ENG 111 pilot instructors; Professional Development Committee
May 2007/ July 2007	✓ First CLC will assess student work samples gathered during Spring 2007 semester using CFCC's critical thinking rubric	✓ Useful assessment data on students' critical thinking skills in general education courses will be produced and analyzed	First CLC; QEP Committee; General Education Committee; Institutional Effectiveness

Phase Two: "Building Momentum" (Fall 2007—Fall 2009)

Start/Finish	Action	Results	Responsibilities
August 2007/ December 2007	✓ Assessment results and information about the process will be shared with faculty and staff in In-service presentations and workshops throughout the semester	✓ Faculty and staff will develop a clear understanding of the assessment results and process	First CLC; General Education Committee; QEP Committee; Institutional Effectiveness
August 2007/ December 2007	✓ SPOCs emphasizing more advanced strategies for enhancing students' critical thinking skills will be developed	✓ A cost-effective, reusable resource that helps faculty and staff develop advanced strategies for facilitating and assessing students' critical thinking	QEP Committee; Professional Development Committee
August 2007/ December 2007	✓ Additional CLCs will be formed and begin working through first SPOC	✓ Faculty from diverse instructional areas will enhance their strategies for facilitating and assessing students' critical thinking skills	CLCs; QEP Committee; Professional Development Committee
Ongoing	✓ Campus-wide professional development activities will be offered to general education instructors	✓ General education instructors will have the opportunity to develop new strategies for facilitating and assessing students' critical thinking skills	QEP Committee; Professional Development Committee

Start/Finish	Action	Results	Responsibilities
August 2007/ December 2007	✓ On-site training in Paideia strategies will be conducted by professional consultants	✓ All ENG instructors and appropriate support staff will receive training from highly qualified professionals	QEP Committee; Professional Development Committee; ENG III Lead
August 2007/ December 2007	✓ ENG III instructors will present workshops based on the training they received the previous spring and summer to supplement on-site training	✓ ENG faculty and appropriate support staff will benefit from the off-site training experiences of their colleagues	ENG III pilot instructors; QEP Committee; ENG III Lead
Fall 2007/ Spring 2008	✓ Begin revising general education course outlines to incorporate objectives derived from CFCC's critical thinking learning outcomes	✓ CFCC's critical thinking learning outcomes will be incorporated into the objectives and instructional design of more general education courses	QEP Committee; General Education Committee; Department Chairs; lead instructors
Fall 2007/ Spring 2008	✓ Request student work from selected Gen Ed sections (25 total) at beginning of spring semester; collect by end of semester (450-500 artifacts) (see logistical details of process in Attachment VI)	✓ 450-500 artifacts from most populated general education courses will be gathered for summer assessment by first CLC	Institutional Effectiveness personnel; General Education Committee
January 2008/ May 2008	✓ All ENG III faculty begin implementing Paideia/Socratic seminar strategies in their classes	✓ A proven approach to encouraging students to think, read, and listen critically will be implemented into CFCC's main "gateway" course	ENG III Lead and committee
January 2008/ May 2008	✓ First CLC will work with new CLCs to form next summer assessment team	✓ Lessons learned from first summer assessment will be shared with new CLC members; new members on assessment team will contribute to interdisciplinary collaboration	CLCs; QEP Committee
May 2008/ July 2008	✓ Summer Assessment Team will assess student work samples gathered during Fall 2007 and Spring 2008 semesters using CFCC's critical thinking rubric	✓ Useful assessment data on students' critical thinking skills in general education courses will be produced and analyzed	Summer Assessment Team; QEP Committee; General Education Committee; Institutional Effectiveness

Start/Finish	Action	Results	Responsibilities
August 2008/ December 2008	✓ Assessment results and information about the process will be shared with faculty and staff in In-service presentations and workshops throughout the semester	✓ Faculty and staff will develop a clear understanding of the assessment results and process	Summer Assessment Team; General Education Committee; QEP Committee; Institutional Effectiveness
Ongoing	✓ Campus-wide professional development activities will be offered to general education instructors	✓ General education instructors will have the opportunity to develop new strategies for facilitating and assessing students' critical thinking skills	QEP Committee; Professional Development Committee
Ongoing	✓ Continue forming CLCs; CLCs will continue collaborating through participation in SPOCs	✓ General education faculty will continue developing more advanced strategies for facilitating and assessing students' critical thinking skills	CLCs; Professional Development Committee; General Education Committee
Fall 2008/ Spring 2009	✓ Continue revising general education course outlines to incorporate objectives derived from CFCC's critical thinking learning outcomes	✓ CFCC's critical thinking learning outcomes will be incorporated into the objectives and instructional design of more general education courses	QEP Committee; General Education Committee; Department Chairs; lead instructors
Fall 2008/ Spring 2009	✓ Request student work from selected Gen Ed sections (25 total) at beginning of spring semester; collect by end of semester (450-500 artifacts) (see logistical details of process in Attachment VI)	✓ 450-500 artifacts from most populated general education courses will be gathered for summer assessment by first CLC	Institutional Effectiveness personnel; General Education Committee
January 2009/ May 2009	✓ 08' Summer Assessment Team will work with new CLCs to form next summer assessment team	✓ Lessons learned from previous summer assessments will be shared with new CLC members; new members on assessment team will contribute to interdisciplinary collaboration	08' Summer Assessment Team; CLCs; QEP Committee
May 2009/ July 2009	✓ Summer Assessment Team will assess student work samples gathered during Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 semesters using CFCC's critical thinking rubric	✓ Useful assessment data on students' critical thinking skills in general education courses will be produced and analyzed	Summer Assessment Team; QEP Committee; General Education Committee; Institutional Effectiveness

Phase Three: “Transforming Learning” (Fall 2009—Fall 2012)

Start/Finish	Action	Results	Responsibilities
August 2009/ December 2009	✓ Assessment results and information about the process will be shared with faculty and staff in In-service presentations and workshops throughout the semester	✓ Faculty and staff will develop a clear understanding of the assessment results and process	First CLC; General Education Committee; QEP Committee; Institutional Effectiveness
Ongoing	✓ Continue forming CLCs; CLCs will continue collaborating through participation in SPOCs	✓ General education faculty will continue developing more advanced strategies for facilitating and assessing students' critical thinking skills	CLCs; Professional Development Committee; General Education Committee
Ongoing	✓ Campus-wide professional development activities will be offered to general education instructors	✓ General education instructors will have the opportunity to develop new strategies for facilitating and assessing students' critical thinking skills	QEP Committee; Professional Development Committee
Fall 2009/ Spring 2010	✓ Complete revising general education course outlines to incorporate objectives derived from CFCC's critical thinking learning outcomes	✓ CFCC's critical thinking learning outcomes will be incorporated into the objectives and instructional design of all general education courses	QEP Committee; General Education Committee; Department Chairs; lead instructors
Fall 2009/ Spring 2010	✓ Request student work from selected Gen Ed sections (25 total) at beginning of spring semester; collect by end of semester (450-500 artifacts) (see logistical details of process in Attachment VI)	✓ 450-500 artifacts from most populated general education courses will be gathered for summer assessment by first CLC	Institutional Effectiveness personnel; General Education Committee
January 2010/ May 2010	✓ 09' Summer Assessment Team will work with new CLCs to form next summer assessment team	✓ Lessons learned from previous summer assessments will be shared with new CLC members; new members on assessment team will contribute to interdisciplinary collaboration	09' Summer Assessment Team; CLCs; QEP Committee
May 2010/ July 2010	✓ Summer Assessment Team will assess student work samples gathered during Fall 2009 and Spring 2010 semesters using CFCC's critical thinking rubric	✓ Useful assessment data on students' critical thinking skills in general education courses will be produced and analyzed	Summer Assessment Team; QEP Committee; General Education Committee; Institutional Effectiveness

Start/Finish	Action	Results	Responsibilities
August 2010/ December 2010	✓ Assessment results and information about the process will be shared with faculty and staff in In-service presentations and workshops throughout the semester	✓ Faculty and staff will develop a clear understanding of the assessment results and process	Summer Assessment Team; General Education Committee; QEP Committee; Institutional Effectiveness
Ongoing	✓ Campus-wide professional development activities will be offered to general education instructors	✓ General education instructors will have the opportunity to develop new strategies for facilitating and assessing students' critical thinking skills	QEP Committee; Professional Development Committee
Ongoing	✓ Continue forming CLCs; CLCs will continue collaborating through participation in SPOCs	✓ General education faculty will continue developing more advanced strategies for facilitating and assessing students' critical thinking skills	CLCs; Professional Development Committee; General Education Committee
Fall 2010/ Spring 2011	✓ Request student work from selected Gen Ed sections (25 total) at beginning of spring semester; collect by end of semester (450-500 artifacts) (see logistical details of process in Attachment VI)	✓ 450-500 artifacts from most populated general education courses will be gathered for summer assessment by first CLC	Institutional Effectiveness personnel; General Education Committee
January 2011/ May 2011	✓ 10' Summer Assessment Team will work with new CLCs to form next summer assessment team	✓ Lessons learned from previous summer assessments will be shared with new CLC members; new members on assessment team will contribute to interdisciplinary collaboration	10' Summer Assessment Team; CLCs; QEP Committee
May 2011/ July 2011	✓ Summer Assessment Team will assess student work samples gathered during Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 semesters using CFCC's critical thinking rubric	✓ Useful assessment data on students' critical thinking skills in general education courses will be produced and analyzed	Summer Assessment Team; QEP Committee; General Education Committee; Institutional Effectiveness
August 2011/ December 2011	✓ Assessment results and information about the process will be shared with faculty and staff in In-service presentations and workshops throughout the semester	✓ Faculty and staff will develop a clear understanding of the assessment results and process	Summer Assessment Team; General Education Committee; QEP Committee; Institutional Effectiveness

Start/Finish	Action	Results	Responsibilities
Ongoing	✓ Campus-wide professional development activities will be offered to general education instructors	✓ General education instructors will have the opportunity to develop new strategies for facilitating and assessing students' critical thinking skills	QEP Committee; Professional Development Committee
Ongoing	✓ Continue forming CLCs; CLCs will continue collaborating through participation in SPOCs	✓ General education faculty will continue developing more advanced strategies for facilitating and assessing students' critical thinking skills	CLCs; Professional Development Committee; General Education Committee
Fall 2011 / Spring 2012	✓ Request student work from selected Gen Ed sections (25 total) at beginning of spring semester; collect by end of semester (450-500 artifacts) (see logistical details of process in Attachment VI)	✓ 450-500 artifacts from most populated general education courses will be gathered for summer assessment by first CLC	Institutional Effectiveness personnel; General Education Committee
January 2012 / May 2012	✓ I I' Summer Assessment Team will work with new CLCs to form next summer assessment team	✓ Lessons learned from previous summer assessments will be shared with new CLC members; new members on assessment team will contribute to interdisciplinary collaboration	I I' Summer Assessment Team; CLCs; QEP Committee
May 2012 / July 2012	✓ Summer Assessment Team will assess student work samples gathered during Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 semesters using CFCC's critical thinking rubric	✓ Useful assessment data on students' critical thinking skills in general education courses will be produced and analyzed	Summer Assessment Team; QEP Committee; General Education Committee; Institutional Effectiveness
Summer 2012 / Fall 2012	✓ QEP Committee and General Education Committee will prepare an impact report on the General Education Initiative and share results with college community	✓ The college community will understand the impact of the General Education Initiative on instruction, service, and student learning and establish additional general education goals	QEP Committee; General Education Committee

1.5.5 General Education Initiative Resources by Year

The following estimates account for the projected costs of conducting assessments of students' critical thinking skills in general education courses using the Institutional Portfolio assessment model. Estimates for professional development activities relating to the General Education Initiative are included in the Professional Development Initiative budget projections.

Academic/Fiscal Year 2006-2007

Summer assessment team (256 contract hours @ \$20/hr) (Summer 2007)	5120
Total	\$5,120

Academic/Fiscal Year 2007-2008

Summer assessment team (256 contract hours @ \$20/hr) (Summer 2008)	5120
Total	\$5,120

Academic/Fiscal Year 2008-2009

Summer assessment team (256 contract hours @ \$21/hr) (Summer 2009)	5376
Total	\$5,376

Academic/Fiscal Year 2009-2010

Summer assessment team (256 contract hours @ \$22/hr) (Summer 2010)	5632
Total	\$5,632

Academic/Fiscal Year 2010-2011

Summer assessment team (256 contract hours @ \$23/hr) (Summer 2011)	5888
Total	\$5,888

Total Estimated Expenditures for General Education Initiative

Total	\$27,136
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1.5.6 Summary

Adding critical thinking to the competencies identified and assessed in the general education core is an ambitious undertaking with inherent challenges and opportunities. The challenges facing this initiative include conducting meaningful assessments of students' critical thinking skills, respecting the academic freedom of faculty, and working within the boundaries of the college's resources. These challenges must be addressed thoughtfully and patiently throughout the implementation process. This process is a recursive one that seeks to: 1) assess students' critical thinking skills; 2) identify instructional strategies to enhance students' critical thinking skills; 3) implement those strategies; and 4) evaluate the impact of those strategies. At every stage, efforts must be made to recognize what is working and adjust plans accordingly.

Despite such challenges, this initiative offers the college tremendous opportunities to improve student learning. By creating interdisciplinary assessment teams and an honest dialogue about instructional strategies, this initiative facilitates the synergy of dedicated professionals working toward common goals. Discussing how critical thinking is applied, assessed, and improved in different areas will also reinforce and encourage students' transference of critical thinking skills as instructors develop a language of making the reasoning in their field explicit. This will provide students with the "theory" component to complement the "application" component of critical thinking. Finally, this initiative seeks a practical balance by piloting focused enhancement efforts in selected courses while still encouraging the broad-based participation necessary for meaningful curricular reform.