21st Century Classroom
Quality Enhancement Plan

Prepared by:
Anthony DiCarlo
On Behalf of Student Government
adicarl1@gmu.edu 845-234-5055

Section 1: Vision

Share your vision of how your proposed topic has the potential to transform an issue related to student learning at the institutional level. Consider your audience of the Mason community members – why should we embrace this topic and how will it enhance student learning at Mason?

George Mason University is has been recently ranked as the No.1 Up and Coming University in the nation as ranked by Newsweek, and as such this institution owes itself to our student and faculty population to continue along this course of educational innovation and excellence. One of the ways that the university can improve the level and quality of education that is being currently offered at this institution is by instituting "The 21st Century Classroom."

Currently, students who attend George Mason University are capable of taking up to 18 credits hours in one academic term. However there is a caveat that most students do not fully understand until after the fact, which is the notion that you actually pay more money for their credits once they take over 16 credit hours. Currently the university is making about $1.2 million dollars with the revenue generated from the charges associated with the additional two credit hours. In effect, student really are only permitted to take up to 16 credits hours, eliminating the possibility of taking a sixth class without embracing the additional financial burden that comes with the additional two credits. The proposed idea would be to allow students to take up to 18 credits while eliminating the increased finances associated with the additional two credits.

Another aspect of the 21st Century Classroom would be the implementation of the online classroom. This proposed idea has two components which would serve to enhance and modify the way in which classes are taught.

The first component consists of offering Major Requirement Classes online. Often times, students find themselves in difficult positions when classes that are required for their major are only offered in one semester, or are excluded entirely from the course listings. Departments within the university could sit down and discuss which classes among their curriculum would be appropriate candidates for online courses. Online courses would in conjunction with the additional ability to take 18 credits hours without the attached financial burden, would allow students to have a regular weekly course load of attending five classes, while working towards six, one of which would be an online class. These classes could be created by utilizing further applications on the Black Board Learning Program. The Provost's Office has been attempting to

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initiate further "distance learning" in the graduate studies, and it is proposed that distance learning also be applied to undergraduates studies as well.

The second component to would consist of an orientation of sorts for both faculty and students in regards to be educated on the functionality of the Blackboard Learning System. Blackboard has the potential to be a highly successful tool used by all students and faculty, however without full integration across all departments within the university, performance and usage of the system will be spotty. Blackboard would enhance the education of the classroom and has the potential to bring student and teacher closer together over the internet by providing course materials, a line of communication, while driving down the need for paper copies of materials, syllabi, etc. In addition, the University could utilize its partnership with Mac by pursuing purchasing IPOD Touch products for all incoming students. The capabilities that are presented with this product allow for students to download course material, as well as lecture notes, and articles that can easily be brought up in the classroom. The addition of the product to the classroom would allow George Mason University to further its sustainability initiative by creating less of a demand for paper copies of course materials.

Section 2: Congruence with Mission and Goals

Demonstrate how your proposed topic is consistent with Mason's mission and 2014 Strategic Plan.

The proposal of the 21st Century Classroom is fully consistent with George Mason University's Strategic Plan for 2014. Specifically, the proposal is consistent with Goals 2 & 3 of the Strategic Plan.

Goal 2: Assure student access to an affordable college education and enhance the teaching and learning opportunities, environments, and the support for an increasingly talented study body at all levels.

Goal 3: Develop systems that enhance program quality and build on Mason's history as a university that embraces its diversity

The 21st Century Classroom is based upon the idea of allowing students to maximize their potential in by encouraging students to take their maximum course load, while not being penalized for trying to excel to fast. In addition, integration technology and education into the classroom seamlessly, is an accomplishment that carries with it a high degree of excellence and innovation. George Mason University prides itself on being ahead of the curve, and instituting a plan such as the one being proposed is in sync with that ideology.

Section 3: Student Learning Outcomes

Identify at least four <u>measurable</u> student learning outcomes that your proposed topic expects to address. Specifically, if your plan were to be adopted, what would students know and be able to do as a result?

1. Graduation rates will increase from current rates
2. Increase in the usage of Blackboard Learning System / Decrease in the departmental usage of paper
3. Increase in the amount of students taking 18 credits/ six classes
4. Add a question asking about how technology is incorporated into the classroom on professor evaluation forms. There should be an increase in the level of technology brought into the classroom.

As a result of these four levels of measurement, it would be clear that there is a profound affect at the level, quality and success rate of students. Instituting a program such as this, would hopefully encourage further generations of students to seek out George Mason University as a viable choice of attending. Mason students would become that much more marketable, and would be able to compete on a greater level with students from competitor universities.

Section 4: Possible Avenues for Implementation

Describe how your proposed QEP topic relates to an issue where there is momentum building on campus or an issue that would be significantly strengthened through added attention and resources. Include your ideas about possible strategies for implementing this topic so that we could obtain meaningful results. Where possible, highlight opportunities to build on current institutional initiatives and resources.

Student Government in the last two years has been pressuring the University to adopt the policy of eliminating fees for the additional two credits that are placed on the 17th and 18th credit hours. Our research has shown that the student body would ideally like to see this policy implemented. The major reason behind students not taking a six class course load is the fact that there are additional financial burden added on to the cost of tuition. On another note, students often complain that their major course requirements are sometimes not offered, and as a result students must either wait entire semesters or possibly stay at Mason longer in order to fulfill certain major requirements. By creating online classes for major requirements, you will be eliminating that occurrence. In addition, students complain that technology in the classroom is either lacking, professors or either unable or unwilling to incorporate technology in the classroom, or that they

don't fully understand that new Blackboard Learning System. Not everyone is technically savvy, but this university should strive to have a single cohesive attitude toward the integration of technology on this campus. Professor should have to ascertain a technology certification, in which the incorporate technology in at least certain parts of their class. Similarly, professors and students should be educated about the full potential of the Blackboard Learning System, with the hopes of making professors and students in sync with the program.

In order to effectively move from proposal to implementation, I believe that a university-wide committee would need to be held. Departments from all colleges would need to sit down and figure out a university-wide policy and agenda in accordance with the matters brought up in the proposal. This proposal will not be affective if only certain colleges and departments within the university take part. This effort needs to be a collaborative and needs to involve all departments, as well as the administration, and student government. Careful negotiations with all levels of this university should yield compromises which would benefit all those involved.