

SP 03  
Academic Senate  
Draft Paper

Educational Quality/Quality of Education -- Academic Senate Suggestions

Preliminaries:

There are 2 major ways to discuss the issue of quality education – 1. philosophical/pedagogical and 2. practical. Both approaches can be melded, however, it is important to look toward what is actually attainable in a given time frame. Thus, this paper will look toward the practical first and foremost. In that practical vein, one helpful way to attend to the ever-subjective issues of quality and education is to begin with the common impediments to excellence (and sometimes adequacy.) Another way to deal with the issues is to assume that what we have now with respect to resources/availability/etc. is inadequate, and sorely limited, thus requiring solutions that are mindful of the limitations – financially and otherwise. Finally, please note that some suggestions will require adaptation and compromises that may be somewhat distasteful, but ultimately helpful.

The information for the following sections is gleaned from the reports of the senators on what individual departments found important for quality and education. Ultimately, we are attempting to find a way to make Gavilan College a better educational environment for all concerned – given the practicalities of money, our student base, and finite student numbers during the next few years.

Issues and Solutions:

1. Under preparedness of students/students lacking particular skills for classes – the abilities of the students seemed to create the largest barrier to quality education. This appeared to be a skill issue that affected all disciplines asked in varying ways. Specific concerns:
  - Inability to write/read at a ‘collegiate’ level
  - Inability to do ‘collegiate’ level research
  - Pre-requests not met or met and still under prepared
- if Institutional Outcomes and Learning Outcomes must connect somehow, and more students cannot meet the basic learning outcomes due to skills they are supposed to have by the time they arrive in class, then the current instructor’s evaluation will rest upon the student’s previous learning history. That may be problematic

Solutions: so-called ‘bridge’ classes: each discipline contributes 1 or more courses to these skill-promoting courses. Not simply English and Math – Social Sciences, Philosophy, Art, Business, all voice the same issues, thus should contribute to the solution.

## Learning Communities

Testing, tutors, evaluation of students – increased and beyond basic placement tests.

Pre-Requisites: adhering to them? Creating them?

Connecting with the High Schools – what is their curriculum? Etc.

### 2. Class size/environment –

Physical rooms/buildings – layout, structure of rooms should be conducive to the course taught, if possible. Moveable chairs, etc.

Cap class size – better education occurs in smaller classes. We should be committed to teaching in an environment physically conducive to learning.

Multi-media/interactive etc. – technology is great, enhance it, use it. Technology is also a tool, and thus should not be the focal point of a room – smart boards and white boards, etc.

Solutions: participate in the layout of new buildings and in the old ones

### 3. Interdisciplinary Cooperation

Create an environment where sharing of curricula, etc. is acceptable. Instead of being depart X or depart Y, let's think of ourselves as learning facilitators or some other term that connotes mutual collaboration rather than individual ownership.

Solution: works with the bridge idea and learning community idea.

Requires a change of campus culture.

### 4. Thinking outside of the proverbial box – think of quality as a) using what we have effectively, b) be willing to be collaborative/creative in approaches.

5. Finally, make a commitment to educating the students that we have – effectively. We need to see that Outcome Measures and the very different students with which we regularly interact may become a troubling connection given the different abilities and expectations of students enrolled in programs as disparate as GE/Transfer, Voc. Ed., certificate programs, etc. The expectation of the Transfer student to have the skills to make it in the world should not be put aside for the student in a certificate program. All students will use reading, math, cognitive skills, and all should be treated in a similar fashion.