### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### (Modified from the Troy University Quality Enhancement Plan, Revised 2009)

Once you learn to read, you will be forever free -Frederick Douglass

Dana Gioia, Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts recently observed, "Whatever the benefits of newer electronic media, they provide no measurable substitute for the intellectual and personal development initiated and sustained by frequent reading" (*To Read or Not to Read*, 2007). With so much information available from a multitude of sources, increasing attention is given to equipping students with the critical skills necessary for college success. Accessing, analyzing and using information is intrinsically linked to being an active and engaged reader. Analysis of data, however, suggests that most college successful learning.

In response to this information explosion, supported by institutional and external data, and with the active involvement of the institution's major stakeholders, Troy University has focused its Quality Enhancement Plan on *Creating a Culture of Reading*. The University's QEP is built upon three major initiatives: a Common Reading Initiative for first year students; a College Reading Initiative in which each college will select a book for its students to read and discuss; and a Faculty Development Initiative that will assist faculty as they, in turn, help their students become more engaged and active readers.

The University's QEP is closely linked to the institution's mission and strategic objectives and grew out of the dynamic learning environment created by Vision 2010, the institution's strategic plan of 2005-2010. It is fully anticipated that the QEP will be a part of the University's forthcoming 2010-2015 strategic plan as well. Troy University has committed almost three million dollars, total, in new, existing and in-kind resources in support of the QEP.

Under the leadership of the Director of the QEP and the Implementation Team, a set of dearly identified student learning outcomes, as well as outcomes for the three QEP initiatives and the overall goal of the QEP (to create a culture of reading) will be assessed regularly to measure the progress, and ultimately, the success of the QEP.

The University's initial QEP was reviewed by the SACSCOC On-Ste Review Committee that noted its general support of the project but that also noted a number of specific concerns, leading to a formal recommendation to revise the Plan. In response to the Committee's concerns and formal recommendation, the pages originally included with this Executive Summary detailed Troy University's revised QEP. In particular, the University has organized this QEP to respond to the Committee's desire for institutional development in five areas, documenting that Troy University

- 1. has engaged in a broad-based process, based on institutional assessment, that led to the emergence of key issues, including the need for an enhancement of student learning through greater reading skills;
- 2. has focused its proposed plan on measurable student learning outcomes that, individually and collectively, support the mission of the University;
- 3. demonstrates and documents that it has the institutional capacity for initiating, implementing and completing this plan, including the assignment of budget resources;
- 4. documents the broad-based involvement of University constituencies and stakeholders in the development and proposed implementation of the plan; and
- 5. has identified specific goals, with measurable outcomes and specific direct and indirect measurements to assess the plan.

These points constitute the five major sections of the approved Plan.

It is the strong belief of the University that the creation of a culture of reading will result in student success that can be measured while students pursue their studies at the University and that will be immeasurable in the years after their graduation.

Troy University QEP Impact

The University also included specific questions on reading during two years of the plan (2010 and 2012) in its use of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). All response data on these questions, for both years, reflect a consistent pattern of engaged readers:

Year	First Year Students	Senior Students
Number of books (not assigned in a course) read for personal enjoyment and/ or information in 2010	1-4 books	1-4 books
Number of books (not assigned in a course) read for personal enjoyment and/ or information in 2012	1-4 books	1-4 books

As part of its ongoing assessment activities, TROY administered the ETS

Additionally. Troy Campus students attended the presentations of the QEP-related quest speakers in large numbers. Four New York Times speakers, as well as two authors of the Common Reading selection (Ray and Sakey), delivered major addresses during the QEP. An average of 300 to 400 students attended each of these addresses in person. Recorded versions of the presentations were viewed by University students at the other campus locations. Moreover, in the first two years of the QEP, 30 to 40 Common Reading discussion groups were held during the final registration period each fall semester. These discussion groups were led by faculty and staff and engaged voluntarily attending first year students on the Common Reader that would be used that year. Separate discussion sessions during sorority rush were held and all rushees attended each year. In fall 2009 and fall 2010, 1152 students attended 71 discussion groups (excluding the ones for sorority rushees). Student participants in these sessions evaluated their overall value and usefulness in generating discussion and interaction with others at an average of 4.0 on a 5.0 scale (5.0 = highest positive). Beginning in fall 2011, a decision was made to use the late registration period differently on the Troy Campus. The discussion times in this period were shortened, but more students were required to attend. Additional Common Reader discussion groups were added to the fall semester schedule. For the fall 2011 and fall 2014 late registration sessions, an average of nine different sessions were held with an average attendance of 100 first year students (total student headcount per year was approximately 1000 new students). The Common Reader group discussions were held in mid-fall semester. During this time period, an average of 12 sessions was held, and an average of 1000 to1100 students per fall semester attended these sessions.

Troy Campus students also had the opportunity to participate in several Film Festivals, hosted by the College of Communication & Fine Arts (CCFA) in support of the Common Reader and the CCFA's College Reader selections. This participation was also voluntary. Faculty members introduced each film, the film was screened, and students participated in a post-film discussion activity. While these film festivals were not held for each Common Reader each year, data for those festivals which were held suggest strong student participation and engagement. For example, in 2010, in support of the Common Reader (Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*), over 1000 students attended 14 different films. Forty percent of the students who attended one of the films indicated in a post-film evaluation that they had read the novel, and 25% indicated that they had discussed the novel with someone else, most often a peer. This 25% engagement figure for the Frankenstein Film Festival is consistent with the other accrued data suggesting about 30% of Troy Campus students were actively engaged in discussing their reading with others.

From a **Program Outcome** perspective, University students engaged in peer discussions throughout the time period of the plan. Many of these were structured discussions related to the Common Reader and College Reader texts. These discussions also took place as part of the numerous speakers and films that were provided as support for and encouragement of engaged reading during the plan.

University students also engaged their faculty in discussions over common reading materials. The *Times Talk* program, as well as the numerous speakers, films and discussion groups, provided significant student-faculty interaction opportunities. While such interactions would have been possible on a course-by-course basis without the QEP, the plan provided a significant number of these opportunities, on a regular and recurring basis, with institutional encouragement for participation. In short, while students could have engaged in conversations with their faculty (and their peers) about what they were reading without the QEP, the plan dearly offered a context which ensured that such interactions were available and occurred.

To support these student learning and program outcomes, faculty were provided various faculty development initiative activities. In order to broaden the reach of these activities, many of the panel discussions and speakers were recorded with the access link placed on the QEP webpage and widely shared. The table below indicates the number of times these recorded programs have been accessed as of January 2015:

Engaged Reading (a series featuring faculty and students with foci on the	<b>392 views</b>
Humanities, Sciences, Mathematics and Special Student Populations)	
Panels featuring guest authors (Slakey, Williams, Davis)	115 views
Panels focusing on the QEP/ Big Read selection (Fahrenheit 451)	175 views
Total	682 views

In summary, a majority of TROY students achieved this learning outcome, in whole or in part, and contributed to the achievement of its corresponding program outcome(s).

# *SLO 4: Student reading activities will result in greater discernment and critical/analytical judgment. Corresponding Program Outcomes—PO 3 (discussed in the section above).*

TROY used the ETS *Proficiency Profile* exam to assess writing skills in its rising juniors during the time period of the plan, and over 5000 University students, representing all four of the Alabama campuses, were tested. Critical thinking assessment examined such reading-significant areas as recognizing valid inferences, discerning purpose statements, evaluating hypotheses, determining the relevance of information and recognizing assumptions. On most, if not all, of the critical thinking questions, TROY students scored at or above the national average of 110.98 with a standard deviation of 2.44. University online students also fared well on these questions. Almost 800 online students were tested with a five year average of 111.75 (slightly better than the national average) and a standard deviation of 6.38. This ETS data are consistent with survey data generated in the TROY 1101 classes on the Troy Campus midway through the plan period. Of the 1411 students surveyed at that time, 44% reported that they believed they had "a great deal" or "somewhat" greater discernment and critical judgment about materials they were reading.

In summary, a majority of TROY students achieved this learning outcome, in whole or in part, and contributed to the achievement of its corresponding program outcome(s).

## *SLO 5: Student reading activities will result in enhanced writing skill. Corresponding Program Outcomes—PO2 (discussed in the section above).*

TROY used the ETS *Proficiency Profile* exam to assess writing skills in its rising juniors during the time period of the plan. Over 5000 University students, representing all four of the Alabama campuses, were tested. Writing skill assessment examined such areas as correct sentence construction, correct agreement between subject and verb, correct word usage and the ability to recast or revise sentences properly.

On most, if not all, writing questions in each testing period, TROY students scored at or above the national average on a question-by-question analysis. Overall, University students ranged from assessment scores of 113.40 in 2009 to 114.49 in 2014. The average score was 113.91 with a standard deviation of 5.131. The national average for writing skills questions during this time period was 113.82 with a standard deviation of 1.92. TROY students' writing skills assessment scores on the *Proficiency Profile* were consistent with the national mean. Further, the correlation coefficient for TROY student reading and writing skills was a very strong .712823, suggesting good skill sets in both writing and reading during the time period of the plan. Online University students also scored at or above the national mean on the writing skills assessment questions of the *Proficiency Profile*. Almost 800 online students were tested during the plan period with an average score of 114.24 for writing skills and a standard deviation of 5.128. Additionally, the University made use of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) for questions related to writing activities during the plan's operational period, in 2010 and again in 2012. Based on the NSSE responses, University students averaged writing at least one paper in each of their classes in an academic year (classes = 8). About half of these papers were less than five pages and about half were between five and 20 pages. These responses were consistent across both years of the NSSE survey.

In summary, a majority of TROY students achieved this learning outcome, in whole or in part, and contributed to the achievement of its corresponding program outcome(s).

### *SLO 6: Student reading activities will result in greater understanding of the connection among and between reading materials. Corresponding Program Outcomes—PO 6 (discussed in the section above).*

Troy Campus students were surveyed about midway through the plan period (n=1411). Forty-one percent of the respondents indicated that they had made "a great deal" or "somewhat" more conscious connections between the Common Reader and other materials they were reading or had read previously. The best example of this connectivity over the plan's life occurred in the College of Communication & Fine Arts (CCFA). With their first College Reader selection, the CCFA selected a work by Twyla Tharpe, *The Creative Habit*, a book used throughout the 2010 academic year. Beginning 2011, *The Creative Habit* concept was adopted by CCFA for use in a semester-long seminar for all of the college's entering students majoring in journalism, speech, English, theatre, dance, music, art and modern languages. These students utilized the seminar discovering, exploring and more fully understanding the "connections" that exist between all of the CCFA majors, and this program continued through the plan period and remains in use. Student response to this seminar has been overwhelmingly positive, reflecting the developers' intention to help CCFA students understand what they have in common with each other, with the various materials within the college and across the several reading requirements and assignments within the college's majors.