

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 students, including those at Troy University, are not reading in the kind of engaged and active ways that promote 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 clearly 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-Site 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.

Part V: Impact Report of the Quality Enhancement Plan

Title: *Creating a Culture of Reading*

I. Brief Description of Troy University's Quality Enhancement Plan: The history and mission of Troy University (TROY) have always been grounded in promoting the “discovery and exploration of knowledge and its application to life-long success for its students.” TROY is a public institution of higher learning, originally founded in 1887 to educate teachers. The University is now a SACSCOC Level V institution, offering a full range of undergraduate and master's degrees along with several education specialist and two doctoral programs. Additionally, TROY is unique in that it offers degree programs beyond the historic campus of origin in Troy, Alabama. The Troy Campus is residential with predominantly traditional learners who exit high school or community college directly to the University. The other three TROY campuses in Alabama (Montgomery, Dothan and Phenix City) are mainly non-traditional, are not residential and offer selected undergraduate and graduate degree programs. TROY also offers degree programs in approved teaching locations throughout the continental United States, in select overseas locations, and online through its eTROY operation. All curricula, at all locations, are standardized. TROY's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) was delivered throughout these multiple campus, teaching location and online venues.

The initiation of TROY's QEP was consistent in supporting this mission that sought specifically to create, enhance, and maintain an institutional culture of engaged reading. A review of national literatures on current reading practices, along with extensive discussions among TROY faculty, staff, administrators and students indicated that most students do not realize the significance of reading and are not reading in an engaged way to develop critical thinking and life-long success skills. TROY selected and refined its QEP through a deliberative process involving a careful review of existing programs (such as the First Year Studies Program), the analysis of institutional and external data, and the generation of ideas and input from internal and external University stakeholders. TROY submitted its Quality Enhancement Plan, *Creating a Culture of Reading*, as part of its compliance report in 2008. While the plan was approved conceptually by the on-site review team, revisions were recommended before final approval was granted. Accordingly, TROY revised several of the operational areas of this plan, which was formally approved by SACSCOC. The first semester of the plan was fall 2009, and it has run continuously and expansively to date. Fall 2014 was the final semester for data collection. The University initially budgeted \$780,750 for the five years in support of operational and personnel costs. The QEP budget supported a staff member assigned to the QEP Director for the five years of the plan and also supported reassigned time and stipends for the two Faculty Development Initiative assistants. University in-kind and matching support for grants and the purchase of books for use by the faculty teaching the Common Readers and College Readers was provided, as was the purchase and distribution of books for outreach activities. The initial external consultant's report was supported by the QEP budget as were the costs associated with the *New York Times* partnership and travel for QEP personnel to the SACSCOC annual meetings. Speakers' honoraria, collateral materials (posters, t-shirts, bookmarks), films and other QEP-related expenses were supported out of this budget as well. The final five-year expended budget for operational expenses not including personnel costs was approximately \$460,000 (about \$80,000-\$100,000 per year).

Understanding that creating a “culture” involves sharing a set of common symbolic experiences, the QEP implementation team instituted the slogan “We Read at Troy University”—for enjoyment, appreciation, and information. TROY's QEP director and the implementation team empirically determined three major foci to achieve clear student learning outcomes and the overall goal of *Creating a Culture of Engaged Reading*: 1) Common Reading Initiative for first year students; 2) College Reading Initiative for each college; 3) Faculty Development Initiative for the faculty.

TROY's QEP was comprised of six student learning outcomes and seven program outcomes which were supported through the three initial initiatives and two additional ones (which are described in the following section). Each of these principle initiatives had numerous activities and assessment opportunities consistent with the SACSCOC requirement that the QEP focus “on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution” (CR 2.12/*The Principles of Accreditation*, 2012). Speakers, discussion groups, film series and other engagement activities complemented these initiatives. Specific references to the assessment activities of these major initiatives are included in the corresponding section on assessment.

Common Reading Initiative (CRI): The central initiative of the QEP was a Common Reading Initiative extended to all entering University students at all University locations. This initiative created a first-year common reading experience and a transitional activity into University life. After extensive discussion among faculty, staff and administrators every spring, a CRI book was selected for the following fall and widely announced. Each year, instructional material was provided for the selected CRI book, and it was taught and tested in TROY 1101, the University orientation course. The selected CRI book was also used in various General Studies courses such as English, biology and history. Discussion groups were formed each fall for students, including

online students, and conversations on specific themes from the CRI selection were facilitated annually by faculty members ensuring faculty-to-student engagement with reading. A variety of enrichment activities to support the CRI were also scheduled each semester. The specific assessment and review of the CRI are provided in the *Assessment* section.

College Reading Initiative (COLRI): The College Reading Initiative extended the ideas of the Common Reading Initiative to each academic college in all campuses and locations. This initiative provided students with opportunities to translate their reading activities into written work in selected major courses and to further understand the important process of interconnections between and among reading materials. Like the CRI, annual selections of the COLRI book was made within each academic college and widely announced. The college Deans provided the students with information about each college's COLRI selection, forthcoming discussion groups, classes that would use the COLRI selection and other related material. Also, the COLRI provided students who transferred to TROY and were not a part of the CRI activities with opportunities for engaged reading. These courses served as survey points for faculty and students regarding the impact of COLRI. Additionally, enrichment activities were scheduled to reinforce the impact of COLRI selections. The specific assessment and review of the COLRI are provided in the *Assessment* section.

Faculty Development Initiative (FDI): Another major pathway that aided TROY's QEP was the Faculty Development Initiative. Specifically defined resources, human and fiscal, were used to support faculty as they helped students become more immersed in the culture of engaged reading. Two different faculty development initiators, one at the start of the QEP and one who joined the QEP team in its latter stages, worked to develop best practices and materials to assist faculty as they encouraged a culture of reading in the students. An engagement through continuous exchanges and interactions that were synthesized and shared with faculty (in face-to-face and electronic formats) provided resources that enhanced critical thinking and professional growth. The Faculty Development Initiative created and led specific workshops and roundtable discussions as well as initiated the "Afternoon with an Author" series to discuss best practices and reading related materials. Some of these resources were video recorded for wider University distribution through the University's QEP webpage. Additionally, the Faculty Development Initiative team planned and delivered a three day conference, *Reading Matters*. This national conference, with open call-for-presentations, keynote speakers, and related workshops, further assisted the efforts of creating a culture of reading. The specific assessment and review of the FDI are provided in the *Assessment* section.

II. Evolution and Execution of TROY's Quality Enhancement Plan

In addition to these three principle initiatives, two more initiatives emerged as the plan unfolded across the five years. These additional initiatives are listed below:

TROY-Times Partnership: A partnership between the University and the *New York Times* was begun as a single year activity to help launch the QEP but proved to be so effective that it was retained for the entire duration of the plan. This partnership included a weekday distribution of print copies of the *New York Times* to all four of TROY's Alabama campuses. Online access, via the partnership, was provided at no cost to TROY students, and online access to a dedicated student success program was made available to faculty who used the *New York Times* in their classes. The *New York Times* was used in selected classes, including courses in General Studies, academic majors and the University Honors Program. Also, *New York Times* editors and reporters were invited to the Troy Campus to deliver major addresses and master classes for students. This partnership provided support for weekly *Times Talk* sessions which brought faculty and students together over lunch to discuss current events and major issues based on a shared reading of a selected NYT article. Moreover, additional supports for QEP-related grant activities focused on encouraging readers, especially children.

CORE Initiatives and Activities: A second group of initiatives and activities emerged during the life of the QEP. These were identified as *Culture of Reading Enhancements* (CORE), which extended the core values of "engaged reading" beyond the University. These activities became ways of empowering the creation of a reading culture at TROY through involvement with its internal and external stakeholders. Some of the CORE activities secured through external grant partnerships and resources included: 1) *Big Read* from the National Endowment for the Arts, 2) *Let's Talk About It (The Civil War)* and 3) *Let's Talk About It (Muslim Journeys)* from the National Endowment for the Humanities, 4) *Books for Pre-Schoolers* for the Dothan Head Start program, 5) *Alabama Book Festival*, a multiple-year support for the participation of writers and poets in the statewide three-day celebration of writing and reading, 6) *World Book Night*, a national grant opportunity to deliver books and discussion at multiple locations, 7) *Reading Discussions for Military Veterans* funded by the Alabama Humanities Foundation, and 8) *Reading Program in Alabama Prisons*, initiated as a transitional element of the QEP in 2015. Additional CORE activities that enhanced the QEP include the following: 1) supporting a local high school readership program through shared copies of the *New York Times*, 2) partnering in the national book program at Ridgefield High School in Connecticut, 3) supporting the TROY Senior Leadership

reading program, 4) linking the TROY consortium activities at the *Leon Levy-Ashkelon Expedition in Israel* with an annual reading and discussion program, and 5) incorporating the QEP into the University's 2010-2015 Strategic Plan.

Other changes to the QEP: Additional evolutions to the plan, which were to be expected, occurred over the life of the plan. These changes included the type and schedule of data collections, change of personnel, and streamlining the initial plan. In certain instances, more attention was paid to particular elements and activities within the plan that were deemed more successful while less attention was paid to those elements and activities that were proving to be less useful in actualization. These natural evolutions in the execution of a plan, especially one as broad-based in its delivery as this one, are to be expected. Two significant changes occurred as the plan unfolded. First, midway through the plan, in the summer of 2011, the Director of the QEP, who also served as the Dean of First Year Studies, retired from the University. The Associate Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies was given the responsibilities of First Year Studies, including leadership of the QEP, and guided the QEP during its second half of execution. Second, in 2012, the delivery of TROY 1101 (the entering student success course) was reconfigured to an interactive web text. While the Common Reader selection was embedded in TROY 1101 prior to this electronic reconfiguration, the period of 2012-2014 afforded greater opportunities for the engagement and analysis of the Common Reader activities.

III. Assessment of the QEP Outcomes and Activities: The QEP had six student learning outcomes and seven program outcomes. The achievement of these outcomes was focused through the major initiatives discussed in the previous sections. The materials below provide documentation, both qualitative and quantitative, to support the University's belief that most of the outcomes were achieved, in whole or part, during the life of the plan. While all of the student and program outcomes were important elements within the plan, the first student and program outcome--that student reading activities will result in greater reading--were the foundational pieces of the University's efforts to create a shared culture of engaged reading. The final **Program Outcome**, that the University will create manifestations of a culture of reading, was the central effort of the QEP. Listed below are the QEP's **Student Learning Outcomes** with their corresponding **Program Outcomes** and assessment and activity documentation.

SLO 1: Student reading activities will result in greater reading for enjoyment, appreciation and information. Corresponding Program Outcomes—PO 1: Students at Troy University will read more; PO 2: Faculty at Troy University will assign more reading materials to their students; PO 3: Troy University will develop, implement and assign more reading-intensive courses into the general studies and disciplinary curricula; PO 6: More academic departments/units will initiate common reading experiences for their specific groups of students.

Over 24,000 entering University students (24,350) were engaged with the Common Reading selections through the TROY 1101 class between fall 2009 and fall 2014. Additionally, each Common Reading selection was used as a supplemental text in a number of courses that were part of the General Studies Program (English Composition I and II, Biology I, World History), the Honors Program (Honors Colloquia, Honors Public Speaking, Honors English), and even graduate classes (Nursing). This use was enhanced and standardized with the transition of the TROY 1101 class to an engaged web text in 2012, and well over a total of 25,000 students used the annual CRI texts as readers and discussants throughout a variety of classes at the University. Mid-term examinations for TROY 1101 were based entirely on the Common Reader selections. The following data reflect a sample of TROY 1101 mid-term exam data during 2012-2014 and suggest strong student engagement with the CRI:

Academic Year	Number of Students	Avg. Mid-Term Score	Avg. Pass for Mid-Term Exam
2012-2013	237	87/100	96%
2013-2014	291	90/100	96%
2014 (Fall only)	379	90/100	95%

Another way to determine student engagement can be found in the next chart. With the transition of TROY 1101 to a web text course, the University was able to generate real-time analytics on student performance for each phase of the class. The mid-term exam, as noted, was devoted solely to an assessment of the student's understanding of the Common Reader. Each chapter for the weeks leading up to the mid-term exam (n= 8 weeks), included support materials for reading the text, a schedule to assist students in staying on schedule to complete the text, and quiz questions for the designated CRI pages for that week. These quizzes could be taken by students multiple times until the student felt that he or she had achieved sufficient knowledge of the CRI material.

The information which follows captures the students' first attempt at all quiz questions, at all University locations, for the two selected readers. The information also contains the students' final attempt at all quiz questions at all University locations. Additionally, while first attempt data was not collected, final attempt percentage for *Ghost Map* (2012) was 98%.

2013: <i>To The Last Breath</i>	First attempt (Percentage correct): 71%	Final attempt: 92%
2014: <i>Fahrenheit 451</i>	First attempt (Percentage correct): 68%	Final attempt: 96%

The first attempt data show that students were engaging the material in such a way as to correctly answer the quiz questions at a "C" (70%) level.

Moreover, the *New York Times* was distributed daily to students as well as to faculty and staff during the time period of the plan. This was a weekday physical distribution for the academic year at the four Alabama campuses of the University. This distribution required a deliberate behavior on the part of the participants; each one had to select a copy of the *Times* from one of the distribution racks located across the various campuses. While it is not expected that each student read that day's copy completely, the distribution pattern suggests a strong participation in reading activities in the areas of personal enjoyment, appreciation and desired information. Distribution data for 2010-2014 indicate that two-thirds to three-fourths of the daily distributed copies were picked up:

Academic Year	Percentage of Copies Distributed	Daily Avg. Copies Distributed
2010-2011	67%	657
2011-2012	74%	726
2012-2013	73%	717
2013-2014	68%	689
Fall 2014	70%	712

Furthermore, New Student Surveys and Senior Student Surveys, conducted by the University's Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Effectiveness, reflect relatively consistent responses for student reading during the QEP, indicating that at least half, if not three-fourths or more, of the University's students were **regular readers, who read for pleasure and information**, who perceived that their **reading level was above average** and who **read between one and three books monthly**. Students were asked to respond to a series of scaled questions about why they read, their perceived level of reading ability and how much they read. This data can be compared to similar senior student data which follows. The most positive responses are totaled in the charts which follow. It is important to read this table vertically (how new students responded and how these responses evolved over time to those of senior students). For example, in 2013, while 73% of new students read "constantly or when I have time", 80% of seniors in that year responded that this was their level of reading engagement. What this data suggests is that student reading behaviors trended upward over time when "new students" are compared to "senior students" in the same year.

Additionally, the percentage of college-ready new students from Alabama high schools hovered at around 40% for the years of the plan. To have 80% of senior students, many of whom were Alabama high school graduates, indicate a high reading engagement in 2013 strongly suggests that these QEP outcomes were being achieved.

Response from New Students	2009	2010	2012	2013
Read constantly or when I have time	83%	82%	77%	73%
Read for pleasure and to learn new things	69%	67%	57%	60%
Perceived reading level is advanced or above average	69%	70%	68%	71%
Reading 1-3 books per month	50%	48%	37%	47%
Response from Senior Students	2009	2010	2012	2013
Read constantly or when I have time	85%	84%	86%	80%
Read for pleasure and to learn new things	67%	68%	67%	68%
Perceived reading level is advanced or above average	74%	74%	74%	78%
Reading 1-3 books per month	57%	48%	47%	45%

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 *Proficiency Profile* examination to a sizeable sample of its students annually during the plan. Specific questions on reading included the ability of the student to recognize contextual meaning and purpose, to discern factual information from passages, and to recognize valid inferences in passages. Data analysis across the five years of the plan, across all University test-takers at the four Alabama campuses, indicates that the students achieved correct responses at or above the national norm on most of the reading questions. The trend line data for correct reading responses moved from an average score of 115 in 2009 to an average score of 117 in 2014. Across the entire period of the plan, over 5000 students took the exam, with reading scores averaging 116.13 (standard deviation of 7.2) while the national mean was 116.97 with a standard deviation of 2.7. Similar to the on-campus students, online University learners achieved correct responses with the *Proficiency Profile* on reading assessment at or above the national average on most questions. Of the almost 300 online University students who were assessed during the 2009-2013 period, the trend moved from an initial average of 117 in 2009 to a high of 118 in 2011 and 2012 before settling back to 117 in 2013 (the most current data for the online group). The national average during this time is documented at 116.97.

From a **Program Outcome** vantage, TROY students were actively engaged in reading activities during the five years of the plan. Both the cumulative number of students each year and the number of reading and reading-related activities were significant. Almost half of the TROY students indicated that they read one to three books a month. Sixty to eighty percent of Troy Campus students read at least one *New York Times* article weekly. In the six fall semesters of the QEP, approximately 25,000 cumulative students were asked to read, discuss and respond to the Common Reader. These students included those who were entering the University for the first time as well as those in selected courses from the Honors Program, the General Studies Program and specific majors. Also, each academic college assigned a College Reader text to selected students within those units (often in a senior level capstone course). Several thousand students across the five colleges read approximately 20 different books over the time period of the plan. In addition to Common Reader and College Reader assignments, selected University faculty assigned the *New York Times* in their classes. These classes included selected courses from the Honors Program, the General Studies Program and specific major courses. Several thousand University students engaged in this reading assignment across the time period of the plan. The University's curricula underwent significant expansion during the time period of the plan, with over forty new and revised academic program offerings (new degrees, majors and minors). While considerable discussion was extended that these new program offerings would include more reading-intensive courses, it is not clear from an overall analysis that such specific courses were added. However, within the disciplinary curricula, there clearly were changes in some classes which reflected a desire to increase reading requirements. Many of these courses were at the senior level and often were capstone classes. The General Studies Program was also revised during the latter time period of the QEP. The new General Studies Program has an expanded curriculum, providing more opportunities for students to engage in a broader and more diverse amount of reading. The long-term impact of this General Studies Program revision and the expansion of its curriculum on student reading efforts remain to be seen. TROY 1101, the University's required course for all entering students (and also a required element of the General Studies Program), was redesigned in 2012 to incorporate more reading activities, including a more structured requirement for the Common Reader, resulting in more student reading, student discussion about their reading and student engagement in reading and reading-related activities (films, speakers, etc.). Throughout the QEP, several academic units initiated common reading experiences for their specific students, making use of a College Reader for at least three years of the plan. **The First Year Studies program** engaged all entering students, at all University locations (including those who were exclusively online), with a Common Reader for each year of the plan (plus fall 2014). Specific departments within the colleges used readers and other reading material (often newspapers) as well. The English department as well as various science departments used the *New York Times* in selected classes throughout the plan. This use is documented in the student responses (60-80% read at least one *NYT* article weekly) and the *NYT* distribution for each campus.

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 2: Student reading activities will result in enhanced perspectives and broader viewpoints. Corresponding Program Outcomes—1, 2, 3, 6 (discussed in detail above): Chief among reading related activities in which students participated were the hundreds of **discussion groups** offered over the time period of the plan. These are detailed in the learning outcome below (*Engagement with others*). In addition to these various discussion groups, the University hosted a number of speakers related to the *New York Times*, the Common Reader, the various College Readers and Faculty-Student readership development. The *New York Times* provided four speakers in the five-year period, all of which drew 300 to 400 students per presentation as well as delivering discussion-based master classes: 1) Sam Tannehaus, Book Review Editor, 2) Greg Winter, Foreign Editor - Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, the United Nations, 3) William C. Rhoades, National Sports Columnist, and 4) Clifford Levy, Pulitzer Prize winner. The University also hosted two of the authors for the Common Reader selections over the five year period: 1) Janisse Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, and 2) Francis Slakey, *To The Last Breath*. Also, the “Afternoons with an Author” series on the Troy Campus (fall 2013 & spring 2014), designed to assist faculty with ways to encourage engaged readership in their students, were well attended by both faculty and students: Wendy Reed, Frye Gaillard, Bill Cobb, Randall Williams and Rod Davis addressed these gatherings. Appropriately, data gathered midway through the QEP indicated that 61% of 1411 surveyed students in the TROY 1101 class (where the Common Reader was housed) specified they had either a “great deal” or “somewhat” broader viewpoint about people and events because of their reading habits and the opportunities to engage in QEP activities. Fifty-eight percent of this group reported that they had a “great deal” or “somewhat” greater understanding of other people and their belief systems.

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 3: Student reading activities will result in greater engagement with others and greater understanding of others’ positions. Corresponding Program Outcomes—PO 4: More students will engage in peer discussion about common reading materials; PO 5: More students will engage in student-faculty engagement over common reading materials.

Students participated in a number of activities related to the various reading elements within the QEP from 2009 to 2014, promoting student engagement with peers as well as with faculty and staff and external visitors. Survey data suggest that this engagement was important to students’ understanding of others’ positions. Preliminary survey data in TROY 1101 in the first half of the plan’s time period indicated that almost 30% of the Troy Campus students were engaging in more conversations about reading with their peers and faculty, either “a great deal” or “somewhat.” Both first year and senior student survey data reflect that this 30% engagement continued over the life of the plan for those students who discussed their reading on a daily or weekly basis.

How often do you discuss books with others? (% of respondents: First Year Students)	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Daily	9.0	7.4	8.4	8.0	7.9
Weekly	23	23.2	23.3	22.8	22.4
How often do you discuss books with others? (% of respondents: Senior Year Students)	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Daily	7.7	7.4	6.6	7.6	7.8
Weekly	24.6	22.3	23.8	20.1	23.1

As part of the University’s partnership with the *New York Times*, a weekly session called **Times Talk** was held during the fall and spring semesters on the Troy Campus during the time period of the plan. These events were led by various University faculty and staff who facilitated a group discussion based on a recent article from the *Times* with attending students. Over 1000 University students are reflected in the data below. By fall 2014, approximately 1500 Troy Campus students had participated in *Times Talk* sessions, with almost three-quarters of these attending more than once.

Year	Fall 2010	Spr. 2011	Fall 2012	Spr.2013	Fall 2013	Spr.2014	Fall 2014
# of participants	181	135	133	66	219	182	111
Event described as “Excellent” or “Good”	96%	93%	100%	100%	100%	100%	99%
Attendance of two or more of these events	41%	37%	67%	62%	72%	72%	75%
Read at least one article in the <i>Times</i> weekly	61%	60%	61%	81%	66%	72%	64%

Additionally, Troy Campus students attended the presentations of the QEP-related guest speakers in large numbers. Four *New York Times* speakers, as well as two authors of the Common Reading selection (Ray and Slakey), 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 to 1100 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 clearly 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 Humanities, Sciences, Mathematics and Special Student Populations)	392 views
Panels featuring guest authors (Slakey, Williams, Davis)	115 views
Panels focusing on the QEP/ <i>Big Read</i> selection (<i>Fahrenheit 451</i>)	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.

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).

The summative **Program Outcome**, central to the entire focus of the QEP, is discussed below. This program outcome was achieved through a synthesis of the six student learning outcomes, the other six program outcomes and the activities of the five major initiatives (CRI, COLRI, FDI, NYT, and CORE). This program outcome, in its breadth and scope, reflects the efforts of the University across the five years of the plan. “Cultures” are dynamic, symbolic, evolutionary constructions where people possess shared experiences, values and meaning. These shared cultural cornerstones are noted below.

Program Outcome 7: *There will be more manifestations of a reading culture at the University:* It is clear that TROY exhibited multiple, recurring and meaningful manifestations of a reading culture across the time period of the plan. These manifestations can be noted in two broad ways: internal activities and outreach activities. Internally, this QEP report has documented how many students, in how many different ways, engaged in reading activities and the attendant opportunities for discussion, speakers, films and general conversation about what was being read and why reading was important. Thousands of students read a book (often more than one) or a newspaper or saw a film based on a book or heard a speaker discuss a book during the last five years. Many of these student opportunities were, by intention, located on the Troy Campus, where traditional residential students are housed. However, students at the University’s other locations, including those who are exclusively online, also participated in the Common Reader and College Reader programs, were provided a daily copy of the *New York Times*, and could enjoy, via recordings, the speakers and various book discussion round tables.

The University planned, executed, evaluated and assessed reading activities, reading skills and reading-related opportunities for engagement during the time period of the plan. The University’s QEP operated continuously throughout the time period, even as it evolved through on-going evaluation of its daily, weekly and annual operation. The QEP also continued to move forward with new activities and opportunities for students on a regular basis and successfully navigated the transition of its Director-level leadership midway through its time period. Activities of the QEP were regularly reported to the University’s Academic Steering Committee, of which the Director of the QEP was a member. The progress and activities of the QEP were incorporated into the University’s 2010-2015 Strategic Plan and updated quarterly and annually by the Director. QEP activities were presented to the University’s Chancellor and the senior leadership of the institution annually. The QEP was also a part of regular briefings made to the University’s governing body, the Board of Trustees.

Collateral materials—newspaper racks, course assignments, films, speakers—all provided evidence that TROY was committed to creating a shared culture of reading over the last five years. Students on study abroad programs were provided books relevant to their travels and held panel discussions open to all students upon their return. The senior leadership of the institution adopted their own reading program each year in advance of the leadership retreat meetings. Classes were created which have become part of the cultural experience of certain colleges, such as *The Creative Habit* in CCFA. Internally, “reading matters” was an on-going phrase used by administrators, faculty, staff and students throughout the five years of the plan. However, the focus on a culture of reading did not stop with the internal activities of the University. The three primary planned efforts and the *New York Times* partnership provided significant opportunities for the University’s internal stakeholders to read. What also occurred during the QEP, which was not part of the original design but which evolved organically, were a number of external activities focused on reading. In these instances, the University served as an encourager and facilitator of reading for a number of external stakeholders.

As such, the University exported its culture of reading to individuals and groups outside of the institution. Chief among these activities were externally supported grants which focused on reading. During the time period of the plan, the University secured its first National Endowment for the Arts *Big Read* grant. This award allowed the University to connect to community members in Troy, Alabama, and to generate additional reading and reading-related events, such as discussion groups about the selected work (Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*), films, speakers, book sales and support for pre-kindergarten reading programs. The initial *Big Read* was deemed successful by the University, and an application for a second one is planned for 2015. Additionally, during the plan’s period, the University secured two National Endowment for the Humanities awards that focused on reading and discussion. Both titled *Let’s Talk About It*, these featured a series of discussion meetings led by an expert in the field of the topic of the selected books, which were distributed to campus and community members. One of these awards examined the American Civil War at its 150th anniversary, and the other focused on issues about Muslims and the Islamic faith. Both of these events, across the series of discussion groups, were well-attended and well-received. The University also supported, through a partnership with the *New York Times* and the south Alabama Wiregrass Foundation, a reading program for economically disadvantaged children in Dothan, Alabama. These children received a new book, a NYT backpack, t-shirts and a tour of the local library in advance of the library’s summer reading program. The University also received a grant award from the Alabama

Humanities Foundation to lead a series of book discussions with wounded veterans in Phenix City. This project, led by an English faculty member from the Phenix City Campus, was so well-received that the Alabama Humanities Foundation has requested that the University apply for funding for another round of discussions with a new group of veterans. The University also supported the annual Alabama Book Festival and the World Book Night, both of which featured writers, poets, engagement of reading and discussion by a variety of campus and community groups. Locally, the Troy Campus partnered with Charles Henderson High School (CHHS) to provide unread copies of the *New York Times* for use in selected classes at CHHS. The University also supported a book program at a Connecticut high school (where each member of the senior class received a book from a college or university throughout the nation). Typically, the book provided was the Common Reader for that year. Finally, the University embarked late in the plan period on a program to take reading programs into selected Alabama prisons. Grant applications have been submitted to support these endeavors, and the University is moving forward under the leadership of an English faculty member with conducting this activity.

In sum, TROY manifested a strong culture of engaged reading to its internal stakeholders and to a number of external constituencies. Across the campus locations, there were posters, t-shirts, book marks, buttons, *NYT* paper racks, announcements for films and speakers, and active discussion groups about what the University was reading. If a culture is based on shared experiences, then clearly TROY made a strong and successful effort to generate a culture of reading for its stakeholders and its community at large. TROY students achieved this program outcome.

IV. Reflections and Moving Forward

Any multi-year project such as the QEP provides excellent opportunities for institutional reflection. For TROY, the QEP reinforced the following valuable lessons for the institution: initial large-scale governance structure is best evolved into smaller models while retaining accountability; projects should be open to adding previously unconsidered elements which contribute to its success; and institutional support at the highest organizational levels is critical to long-term project success.

Troy University is committed to assisting students as they become successful, engaged, life-long learners. Specific elements of the QEP will be retained to support the “culture of reading” that has been developed over the past five years. Specifically, the Common Reading Initiative, with its specific (but not exclusive) focus on entering students, will continue, and plans are already underway for the selection of the 2015-16 choice. The CRI will remain housed in First Year Studies. The College Reading Initiative, supported by the academic colleges, will belong to the Deans who have supported the COLRI throughout the years of the plan. The Deans will determine how the COLRI will continue for their respective colleges. Elements of the Faculty Development Initiative will continue as well. The FDI resource material, currently located on the QEP webpage, will be maintained and enhanced through the support of the Associate Provost and Dean of Undergraduate and First Year Studies. The regular invitation of guest authors to speak at University locations will also continue, along with the recording of these individuals whenever feasible. The annual *Reading Matters* summer conference is already in active planning for 2015, and it is expected that this event will continue through the support of University Libraries, the Office of First Year Studies and selected academic units. Roundtable discussions and panels linked to the Common Reader and College Readers will continue as a means of fostering student engagement with their peers and their faculty over these books’ topics and themes.

Additionally, selected CORE activities will continue. A proposal for the next funding cycle of the *Big Read* is already underway. Likewise, the *Alabama Humanities Foundation* has announced that it will support another series of the University’s engagement with wounded military veterans in a reading program. The University program to take book discussions into Alabama prisons is scheduled to begin in fall 2015. Some aspects of the Troy University-*New York Times* partnership are under active discussion but, given financial constraints, it is likely that some elements of this partnership will undergo transition.

In all, a budget request with dedicated funds of approximately \$30,000 annually will be presented in the spring 2015 budget planning cycle (fiscal year 2016) to executive and senior leadership to maintain and institutionalize these elements of the QEP.

In summary, the creation of a culture is admittedly a long-term activity. Cultures grow from within, with dynamics that evolve over time. It is not easy to define a culture in an absolute sense. What is, however, much easier to determine are those activities and achievements which support the various elements consistent with a shared set of symbols, experiences and values which constitute our understanding of a culture. At Troy University, there was a clear institutional commitment to embrace the significance of reading and to find ways to create a culture of engaged reading for its students. The final impact of that effort is yet to be determined. What can be certain as the Quality Enhancement Plan at Troy University draws to the end of its five-year implementation and assessment period is the University clearly has encouraged its stakeholders to understand that reading matters to life-long success.