Questions Beforehand by Email

Identify a course you teach into which you're most interested in incorporating critical thinking instruction, and answer the following questions:
1. What is the name and number of the course?
2. Is this a course for the General Education Program, your departmental major or minor programs, or both?
3. What role do you see critical thinking as playing in that course?
4. How do students demonstrate critical thinking in that course, or how would you like to them to demonstrate it?
5. What are the biggest challenges to helping your students gain proficiency in critical thinking in that course?
6. How might UWSP help you to meet those challenges?

Critical Thinking Quality Initiative Luncheon Agenda

15 min. – Share answers to emailed questions.
5 min. - Opening Remarks (Todd Huspeni)
- Information about Quality Initiative
  - o Accreditation
  - o Our focus on student learning
  - o Timeline
10 min. - Background
- CT as LEAP-Inspired Learning Outcome of GEP and many Programs (Paula DeHart)
- Grant that focused on Foundation Level of the GEP (Dona Warren)
  - o CT → Argumentation → Mapping
  - o Mechanics and Advantages of Mapping
5 min. - Goals and Timeline (Paula DeHart)
- Outcomes
- Process (FLC / FEG)
15 min - Questions, Answers, Discussion

QUALITY INITIATIVE LUNCH MEETING

Preliminary Questions

1. What is the name and number of the course into which you're most interested in incorporating critical thinking instruction?
2. Is this a course for the General Education Program, your departmental major or minor programs, or both?
3. What role do you see critical thinking as playing in that course?
4. How do students demonstrate critical thinking in that course, or how would you like to them to demonstrate it?
5. What are the biggest challenges to helping your students gain proficiency in critical thinking in that course?
6. How might UWSP help you to meet those challenges?

General Education Program (GEP) Diagram
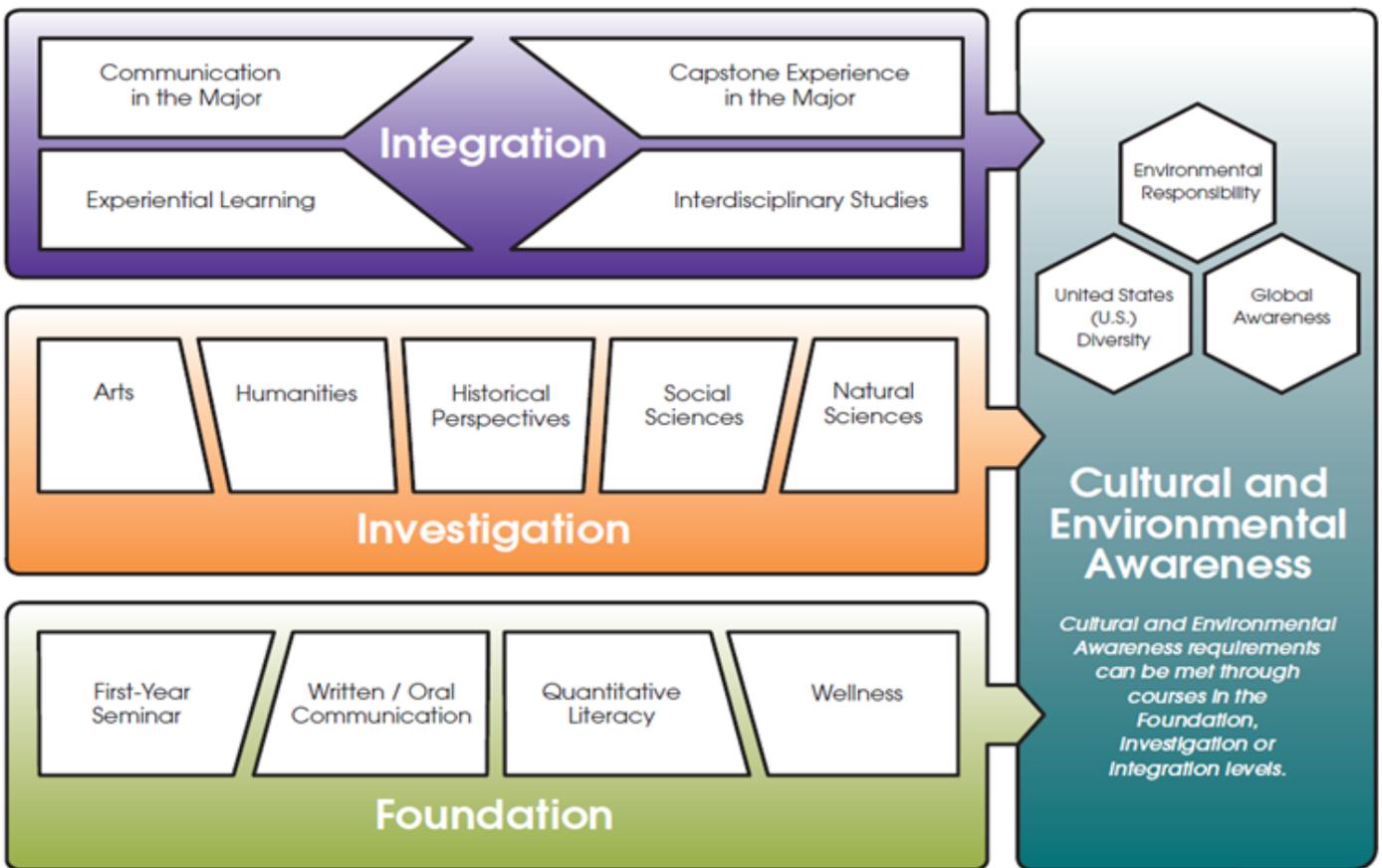
LEAP-Based General Education Program (GEP)

- "Upon completion of the GEP curriculum students will be able to demonstrate critical thinking, quantitative, and communication skills necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing global society."

Critical thinking a specific learning outcome for First Year Seminar

- "Students will be able to identify key components of critical thinking and information literacy and apply the associated skills within course assignments"

Critical thinking implicit in the GEP Communication in the Major Learning Outcomes

- "Apply discipline-specific standards of oral and written communication to compose an articulate, grammatically correct and organized presentation/piece of writing with properly documented and supported ideas, evidence, and information suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience"

Critical thinking often included by departments in their Program Learning Outcomes

- "Students should demonstrate an attitude of critical thinking that includes persistence, open-mindedness, tolerance for ambiguity, and intellectual engagement." (Psychology PLO)

Higher Learning Commission Quality Initiative

- "intended to allow institutions to take risks, aim high, and if so be it, learn from only partial success or even failure."
- Proposal sent to Academic Affairs Committee, December 2, 2015.

UW-Stevens Point's Higher Learning Commission Quality Initiative
"Developing and Assessing Critical Thinking at UW Stevens Point"

The mission the Critical Thinking Quality Initiative is
- to explore and develop a shared, cross-disciplinary understanding of critical thinking, using argument mapping, that can provide a common framework to be enriched by subject-specific content and expansion,
- to enable the introduction and assessment of critical thinking skills in a systematic way throughout the General Education Program and in those majors where critical thinking is a desired learning outcome.

As a result of this initiative
- Students will gain a deeper and broader ability to explore issues and ideas before deciding what to believe or do, enabling them not only adapt to but also positively impact a society characterized by constant change and an ever-increasing amount of information.
- Faculty will find it easier to discuss, teach, and assess critical thinking skills and will be empowered to collaborate upon critical thinking work in the scholarship of teaching and learning.
- UW-Stevens Point will be recognized as model of critical thinking instruction, where faculty and students value, develop and exercise high level critical thinking skills in their personal and professional lives.
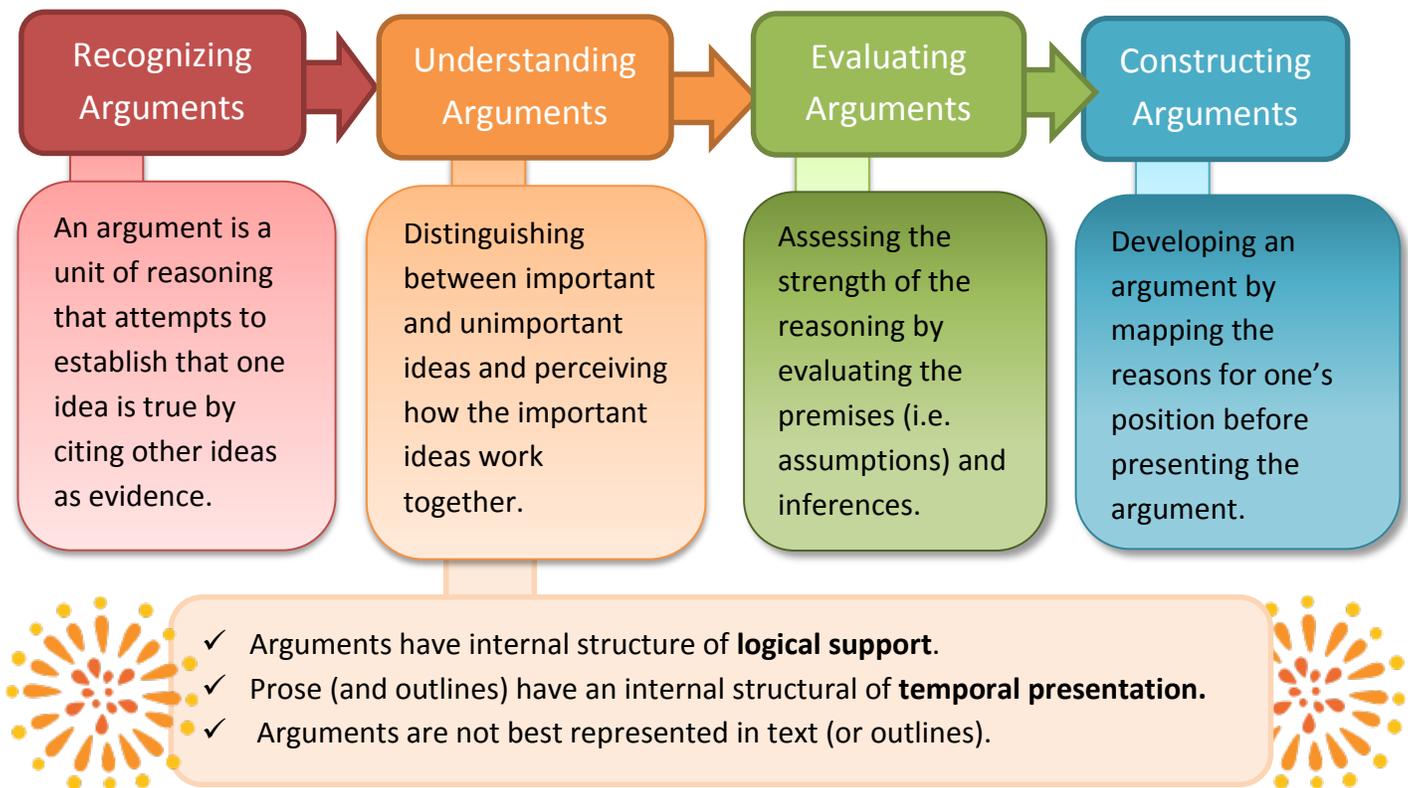
Outcomes for Critical Thinking FEGs to Address the Quality Initiative

To build faculty/staff knowledge and skills in teaching critical thinking in order to address the goals of our institution for student learning, as well as for our Quality Initiative, a Faculty Exploration Group (FEG) model is being proposed.
As a part of the Critical Thinking FEG, a series of sessions will be held in which the role of critical thinking in our courses/programs will be explored, including readings, discussion, videos, guest speakers, and workshops as desired by the FEG members.

As a result of participating in the Critical Thinking FEG, faculty/staff will:
- Explore what critical thinking is and develop a shared definition, building foundationally upon the development of argumentation skills.
- Explore and describe the role critical thinking plays in their particular course/discipline.
- Explore and develop a plan for how critical thinking can be developed within their course or across courses in their major (i.e., how it will be taught and scaffolded).
- Explore, develop, and utilize specific course activities/assignments that teach and scaffold critical thinking and provide students with opportunities to practice critical thinking skills in their course/discipline.
- Explore and develop a plan for assessing critical thinking in their course/discipline, including developing and utilizing assessment criteria to evaluate student learning.

## Proposed Framework (open to Disciplinary Content and Expansion)

Recognizing Arguments	→	Understanding Arguments	→	Evaluating Arguments	→	Constructing Arguments
An argument is a unit of reasoning that attempts to establish that one idea is true by citing other ideas as evidence.		Distinguishing between important and unimportant ideas and perceiving how the important ideas work together.		Assessing the strength of the reasoning by evaluating the premises (i.e. assumptions) and inferences.		Developing an argument by mapping the reasons for one's position before presenting the argument.

- ✓ Arguments have internal structure of **logical support**.
- ✓ Prose (and outlines) have an internal structural of **temporal presentation.**
- ✓ Arguments are not best represented in text (or outlines).

An Argument Presented in Text

"Thanks to advances in cloning technologies, it may be possible to resurrect extinct species. Faced with this potential, many people believe that we shouldn't bring animals back from extinction. But the lesson of the Tasmanian tiger is indisputable: we have contributed to the extinction of some animals. Obviously, if we've contributed to the extinction of some animals then we have an obligation to bring them back because justice demands that we try to repair the damage we've done. This is one reason to believe that bringing back extinct animals is a good thing. Additionally, learning more about extinct species would help us to better understand the process of evolution as a whole so it would benefit us to learn more about extinct species. There's no better way to learn more about extinct species than bringing one back. Of course, someone might say that utilizing computer models can be an equally effective way to learn about extinct species, but that's mistaken because computer models simply represent the knowledge that we already have."

- *What is the main conclusion?*
- *What other ideas are important and how do they work together to establish the main conclusion?*

The Same Argument Mapped

"Thanks to advances in cloning technologies, it may be possible to resurrect extinct species. Faced with this potential, ~~many people believe that we shouldn't bring animals back from extinction~~. But the lesson of the Tasmanian tiger is indisputable: [2] we have contributed to the extinction of some animals. Obviously, [3] if we've contributed to the extinction of some animals then we have an obligation to bring them back because [4] justice demands that we try to repair the damage we've done. This is one reason to believe that [1] bringing back extinct animals is a good thing. Additionally, [5] learning more about extinct species would help us to better understand the process of evolution as a whole, so [6] it would benefit us to learn more about extinct species. [7] There's no better way to learn more about extinct species than bringing one back. Of course, someone might say that [8] utilizing computer models can be an equally effective way to learn about extinct species, but that's mistaken because [9] computer models simply represent the knowledge that we already have."
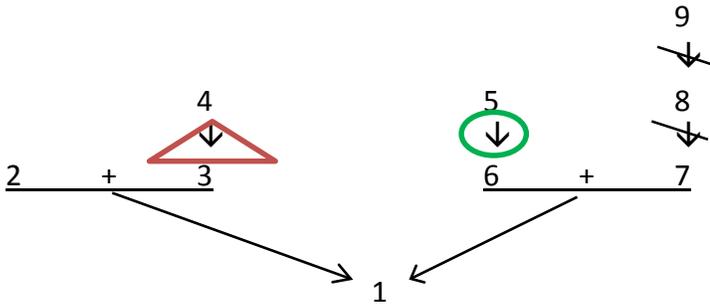
- *Ask of premises: "Is this true? Could someone who doesn't already believe the conclusion think this is true?"*
- *Ask of inferences: "If someone believes the ideas at the top of the arrow, how likely would he be to believe the idea at the bottom of the arrow?"*

Goals for Encountering an Argument

Whether or not a student maps the argument, the student will develop the habits of:

1. Identifying the main conclusion of an argument.
2. Tracking the reasoning as they read or hear the argument (i.e. correctly identifying which claims are part of the argument and the relationships between those claims).
3. Evaluating the reasoning more or less as they go (i.e. asking the right general and discipline-specific questions of premises and inferences).

Goals for Creating an Argument

Whether or not a student maps the argument, the student will develop the habits of:

1. Clearly stating his or her conclusion.
2. Clearly understanding how the claims that he or she is advancing to support that conclusion work together.
3. Clearly communicating those claims in a way that makes the relationships between them easy for others to track.

Timeline

Sum 2015	Obtained OPID Teaching and Learning Grant
Fall 2015	Pilots (First Year Seminar, Written Communication)
	Drafted Quality Initiative at LEAP Conference
Win 2016	Quality Initiative adopted by Common Council
Spr 2016	Phased implementation of argument mapping begins in required Oral Communication course
Sum 2016	D2L site established to support Faculty Exploration Groups
Fall 2016	Faculty Exploration Groups formed and developing a shared understanding of critical thinking, articulating the role that critical thinking plays in particular courses and disciplines
Spr 2017	Full implementation of argument mapping in required Oral Communication course
	Faculty Exploration Groups develop learning activities and assessment methods
Fall 2017	Faculty Exploration Groups continue to develop learning activities and assessment methods
Fall 2018	Full implementation at the Foundation Level of the GEP and other levels of the GEP as recommended and appropriate

Invitation

Participants of Critical Thinking Sessions -- April 28 and May 4, 2016

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