Topic & Slogan

**Topic:** Active learning

**Refined topic:** Problem-based Learning (PBL)

**Slogan:** Make It RREAL! Relevance + Reflection + Engagement = Active Learning.

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Student Learning Outcomes of the QEP

**Collaboration:** Students will actively engage with each other in accomplishing the group's common goal.

**Critical Thinking:** Students will investigate, analyze, and synthesize relevant information.

**Communication:** Students will communicate what they learned orally and in writing.

**Reflection:** Students will examine their learning process.

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Assessment Tools

Assessment will occur on both the course and college level.

**Course level assessment** instruments will include: General Education Assessment for Critical Thinking, Team Work, and Communication; rubrics for self- and peer-assessment of collaboration; and the Critical Thinking Assessment Test (CAT).

**College level assessment** tools will include: Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE); student achievement data such as course retention, withdrawal, and productive grade rate.

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QEP Calendar

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1—Pre-Implementation:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phase 2—Implementation:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phase 3—Post-Implementation and Evaluation:</strong></td>
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<td>Faculty in selected high-risk courses may apply for the first cohort of the PBL/QEP. 1st Annual QEP Summer Institute will provide members of the first cohort with professional development and resources to include Problem-based Learning in their classes.</td>
<td>The first and subsequent faculty cohorts will implement and assess Problem-based Learning in their classes. Professional development and support will be ongoing.</td>
<td>Faculty and administrators will evaluate the efficacy of PBL and the QEP, which will provide the basis for the 5-year report for SACS.</td>
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October 4-6, 2011—SACS Site Visit:
Representatives from SACS will come to campus to review and approve our QEP.
# Faculty Opportunities/Responsibilities

**Beginning in the spring of 2012,** faculty in certain high-risk courses may apply to become a member of a QEP/PBL cohort. Applications will be available online at the QEP website ([www.alamo.edu/pac/rreal](http://www.alamo.edu/pac/rreal)).

## Responsibilities

Faculty who are selected to participate in the PBL cohort will be expected to do the following:

- Attend the Summer PBL Institute.
- Implement a PBL activity in at least one course during the fall and one course during the spring semester.
- Participate in monthly teaching circles and other professional development activities during the academic year designed to provide support to PBL instructors.
- Present their PBL experiences to faculty at one college-wide or one departmental professional development activity.

## Opportunities

In return, faculty will receive extensive on-campus professional development and support, PBL resources such as books and articles, and credit for the committee service required of all full-time faculty. In addition, the college will provide registration and travel to each member of the PBL cohort to attend one professional development activity related to problem-based learning. Faculty will select the activity they wish to attend from a menu of three or four options designed by the QEP Director.

- Document their experiences in journal form and be willing to use their journal as the basis for an essay describing their implementation of PBL.
- Act as PBL ambassadors in their departments to model PBL activities and actively support other members of the department interested in PBL.

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## QEP FAQs

### What is a QEP?

A Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is a five-year project to improve the quality of our students’ education. The QEP is a required component of Palo Alto College’s accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; this accreditation authorizes the college to award degrees, ensure credits transfer, and grant federal student financial aid. Every 10 years, colleges and universities must undergo reaccreditation, a process in which we are currently participating. The QEP is part of that process.

### What is Palo Alto College’s QEP?

Palo Alto College’s focus for the QEP is a type of active learning, and our slogan is Make It RREAL! Relevance + Reflection + Engagement = Active Learning. As the QEP develops, our active learning focus means students will have more opportunities for hands on activities in the classroom such as group work and discussion.

### How was the QEP chosen?

The QEP topic was chosen based on input from the college community, which indicated that students wanted more opportunities to connect coursework to the “real world” and that students learn best by “doing.” After researching active learning pedagogy and best practices, the QEP Committee determined that Problem-based Learning (PBL) would be the best focus for our students.

### What’s Problem-based Learning (PBL)?

Problem-based learning is an educational strategy that attempts to connect course concepts and content to the real world. PBL traditionally involves a small group of students working together to solve a challenging, multifaceted problem related to a specific discipline. Students work collaboratively to analyze their problem, research their problem, and generate a workable solution.