QEP Topic
Mini-White Paper – Get HIP

**Individual or Group Proposing Topic**
This topic is being created under a partnership between PACE and WID, in association with members from CCE, EURECA, FYE, and the Honors College. Taking the lead in proposing this topic are Todd Primm (tprimm@shsu.edu) and Carroll Nardone (cfnardone@shsu.edu), Directors of PACE and WID, respectively.

**Overview of Topic**
Sam Houston State University has a record of employing High Impact Practices (HIPs) in order to build student retention and enhance learning in the undergraduate curriculum. For example, the WID (Writing-in-the-Disciplines) program, CCE (Center for Community Engagement), PACE (Professional & Academic Center for Excellence), EURECA (Enhancing Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities) Center, the Elliott T. Bowers Honors College, and the FYE (Freshman Year Experience) Office are all SHSU programs associated with strengthening undergraduate student achievements, however, these programs are not often consulted as faculty plan the majority of their courses, nor do they tend to be integrated across the entire university curriculum. Faculty could achieve more in their individualized courses were they made aware of and encouraged to use the resources available, and if the resources were enhanced to provide even more service to faculty. Further, learning outcomes for overall degrees and majors could be better achieved by aligning these programs with academic goals. SHSU has a reputation and history of focusing on teaching, as opposed to many universities, where faculty merit is based mostly or completely on research productivity. This proposal takes advantage of that distinguishing history, to leverage a faculty that cares about and invests in teaching, to enhance teaching effectiveness and therefore student learning through the well-proven HIPs.

This suggestion for a QEP seeks to integrate a variety of programs and initiatives already on campus to help these initiatives be responsive to faculty requests and to spark individual faculty to improve their classroom practices. The aim is for this plan to be a bottom-up option for faculty to become involved in deciding how to best meet their student needs within individual disciplines, rather than to stress a top-down mandate or a project layered on top of the general curriculum. This plan for enhancing faculty resources could be combined with any overall initiative the university chooses for its QEP.

“Get HIP” would allow faculty to create action plans to implement the high impact practices whose resources are already on campus, but often underused. The concept would be for faculty to collaboratively choose a strategy which involves one or more HIPs in order to strengthen the curriculum based on their own needs and curricular goals. The university centers, which have expertise and experience in the HIPs, will serve as coordinators of faculty who have chosen specific HIPs (for example, EURECA acting to coordinate faculty working with undergraduate scholarship as a HIP), and help in standardizing assessments, and hosting faculty learning communities, which share best practices. This approach has the major strength of inherent faculty inclusion and “buy in,” along with natural selection of practices most appropriate for each discipline. **In short, the “Get HIP” proposal is a very direct Quality**
Enhancement Plan, by focusing on increasing teaching effectiveness through demonstrated methods, resulting in improved student learning, the ultimate goal of a university. This should result in increased involvement of students in activities such as undergraduate research, community engagement, and the Honors College, with improved graduation rates and retention.

Recent Research and/or Best Practices

The Association and American Colleges and Universities (AACU) has collected research on practices in higher education, and supports the use of High-Impact Practices (HIPs). Data collected from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) from hundreds of institutions has been analyzed and summarized by George Kuh in his landmark 2008 publication from the AACU, *High-Impact Practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. HIPs are activities that educational research suggests increases rates of student retention, levels of student engagement, and student learning. Examples include first-year experiences, common intellectual experiences (connected courses or common readers), learning communities, writing-intensive courses, undergraduate research, service- and community-learning, and capstone projects. Kuh recommends that students be involved in at least one HIP in the first year, and one related to their major. Note that while SHSU already has a number of these programs, they need to be expanded and amplified. In addition, multiple non-programmatic teaching practices that can be applied in the classroom by instructors have evidence for effectiveness. Use of writing as a learning tool and scaffold for critical thinking is described by Bean (*Engaging Ideas*, Jossey-Bass 2011, 2e). Retrieval practice, prediction and feedback, interleaving, connection exercises, mindful practice, metacognition, the growth mindset, effective first day of class, and peer learning are all evidence-driven practices described by author James Lang (*Small Teaching*, Jossey-Bass 2016). The 2016 report *Instructional Quality, Student Outcomes, and Institutional Finances*, from the American Council on Education, finds that instructional quality is a key factor in student retention and graduation completion rates, and that increased university expenditures on instruction correlate with improving these outcomes. Faculty employment of active learning pedagogies positively impacts student mastery, course grades, and completion, and students involved in these pedagogies report higher levels of engagement and learning. Further, the more faculty participate in professional development, the more their student outcomes improved.

Institutional Data

The NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement, nsse.indiana.edu) includes a HIP report. Looking at the 2016 data from SHSU, HIPs have a clear presence, with 61% of first-year students reporting participation in one or more HIPs, yet there is still room for improvement, as the average from our THECB peer group for first-years is 68%. Similarly, with SHSU seniors the participation rate is 76%, while peer group is 84% (and the entire NSSE group is 88%). In all of the six categories of HIPs analyzed by the NSSE, SHSU students participate at lower rates than our peer group. SHSU has the CCE, Center for Community Engagement, and this focus on the HIP of service-learning has shown a clear effect, with SHSU senior participation at the highest rate (62%) for any of the HIPs, and very close to the peer group rate of 64%, suggesting that institutional investment and focus can significantly raise student involvement in HIPs at SHSU.

Resources Needed for Implementation
Specifics of resources required will vary according to the number of faculty who choose each HIP, and thus the size of the resulting communities of practice for each HIP. Funding will go to faculty in each HIP community of practice and to one or more university centers to assist in implementation of the selected strategy, along with assessments for enhancing the effectiveness of it.

Resources will also be needed university-wide for large-scale implementation and assessment. Faculty development in the HIPs will involve a combination of workshops, seminars, roundtables, and other best practice-sharing events, organized by PACE. Recent research shows that faculty participation in professional development activities positively affects classroom pedagogy and student learning (Faculty Development and Student Learning, Condon et al., Indiana Univ Press 2015), in agreement with the previously mentioned ACE 2016 report. The TIGs (Teaching Improvement Grants) program, where groups of faculty propose initiatives and are competitively funded (analogous to the existing internal ORSP funding for faculty research) will be a stimulator of faculty innovation across the disciplines in application of HIPs. Further innovation and novel strategies will be brought to campus by funding faculty to attend external professional development conferences and workshops, and then sharing implementation of what they learned on the SHSU campus. While WID hosts an annual summer faculty writing workshop, the implementation of writing for learning in the curriculum will be further increased by also holding periodic best practice sharing workshops during the academic year. While EURECA funds a number of undergraduate research projects annually, budget expansion would be needed to further support professional development of faculty for improved mentoring and to stimulate even more undergraduate involvement in faculty-led scholarship and creative activities.

University centers will need expanded infrastructure to support the faculty communities of practice. For example, PACE, EURECA, WID, and CCE would need funding to move from their current state of part-time to having full-time Directors, and some support staff, to have sufficient effort to build effective practices with all instructors. Faculty would need funding for professional development and resources.

Examples of how some HIPs are currently related to institutional centers.
**Institutional Participants**

Multiple centers at SHSU can coordinate and support efforts to broadly incorporate HIPs across the campus. PACE leads faculty development and improvement of pedagogy, and includes the WID Program, which promotes writing intensive courses. Within this QEP, PACE can help groups of faculty develop and share best practices related to application of HIPs in their disciplines, and assist departments and colleges in developing assessment and improvement plans. CCE leads in service and community learning, while EURECA promotes undergraduate scholarship. The Elliott T. Bowers Honors College leads in general enhancement of academic practices, including interdisciplinary seminars and senior honors theses. FYE promotes learning communities, freshman seminars, and the common reader program. The Academic Success Center promotes improvement of study skills, and peer learning, especially via the Supplemental Instruction program. Faculty, self-organized into appropriate HIP communities of practice, will be the central institutional participants of this QEP.

The mission of the CCE is to promote reciprocal community/curricular partnerships to enhance student learning and meet community needs. Our goal is to promote a culture of civic and community engagement on campus that is both locally and nationally recognized. Therefore, the Center prepares and supports faculty in adopting best practices of engaged pedagogy, and designing model Academic Community Engagement coursework. Additionally, the CCE promotes faculty scholarship associated with engaged teaching, outreach, and partnership activities. For the past three years, the CCE has nurtured the growth of a community of practice, dedicated to community engagement that now includes faculty members from every college and department at SHSU. Furthermore, the CCE facilitates contacts with hundreds of community-partner organizations to offer SHSU faculty and students rewarding applied-learning settings.

**Possible Outcomes and Challenges**

The primary outcomes will be specific for each HIP community of practice. One common piece of data will be the use of these HIPs by instructors and involvement in HIPs by the students will be monitored over time, with goals for increasing implementation. Since educational research has already demonstrated links between HIPs and student learning, student outcomes should also improve. Multiple methods may be employed to measure these outcomes (examples follow, as possible options). First will be NSSE data, which is already gathered by university. As mentioned previously, NSSE includes freshman and senior student reporting on involvement in many HIPs. The Teaching Practices Inventory (Wieman and Gilbert, *CBE-LifeSci*, 2014) is a faculty survey used to measure the extent of evidence-based practices being used in the classroom. The Classroom Observation Protocol (Smith et al., *CBE-LifeSci*, 2013), which includes direct observation in a classroom and focuses on how faculty and students are spending their time in the classroom, aligns with Teaching Practices data. SHSU has been using the CAT, Critical Thinking Assessment Test, with the current QEP, to measure increases in critical thinking of students across courses and entire degree plans. Concept Inventories (CIs) can be used in various disciplines, given to incoming and exiting students in appropriate majors, as a direct measure of student learning gains in major concepts in each field, and how students have gained expert thinking. Numerous CIs are available, such as the Force Concept Inventory in general physics, the Genetics Concept Assessment, and the Calculus Concept Inventory. SHSU can employ internally-developed surveys of students on which HIPs they have been involved and teaching practices they have encountered, stratified by College. The faculty merit review system should be altered to include involvement in HIPs to ensure recognition. Specifically for STEM departments, the PULSE (Partnership for Undergraduate Life Sciences Education) rubrics can be
used to measure the implementation of effective educational practices at the department level that are recommended by the National Science Foundation, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the National Institutes of Health. A goal that would support strong faculty involvement in implementation of HIPs and other effective learning practices would be that each newly hired tenure-track faculty would have one publication in education in their discipline within their first 5 years.

The HEDS (Higher Education Data Sharing consortium) Senior Survey asks graduating college seniors to evaluate teaching practices and institutional conditions they experienced as undergraduates, assess the impact of their college experience on their intellectual growth and development, and describe their plans following graduation. The HEDS Research Practices Survey is a short survey that assesses the extent to which college students can apply their information literacy skills to the practice of scholarly research. It asks students about their research experiences and assesses their skills in finding, evaluating, and citing sources. The Senior survey would relate to all HIPs, while the Research Practices Survey would relate to the employment of undergraduate research.

In addition to the outcomes specific to each HIP, several overall outcomes would be expected to improve, based on the literature. These would include retention and graduation rates. With the involvement of the entire campus, this would be a great opportunity to expand educational research, allowing comparison of the effect of different HIPs across different majors, thus making a great contribution to the ongoing enhancement and improvement of teaching and learning practices in higher education.