

“What Is All This Talk about Critical Thinking?”

By Belinda Smithey



Wilkes Community College is going through the process of reaffirmation of our accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). A large part of our reaffirmation centers around the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that

WCC develops to enhance student learning.

Many of you took part in our survey in Spring 2004 to identify areas for improvement in helping students learn. Upon analyzing those surveys, it was determined that by implementing critical thinking skills throughout the college community, which includes students, faculty, and staff, we could effectively enhance student learning.

So, what is Critical Thinking?

According to Dr. Richard Paul and Dr. Linda Elder, authors of the model of critical thinking WCC is using, “Critical thinking is that mode of thinking-about any subject, content, or problem-in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards about them.” In simpler terms, one could say that critical thinking is an awareness of one’s thinking while being open-minded and exploring perspectives through questioning and gathering information.

Everyone thinks and everyone uses many of the elements of critical thinking. The aim of the QEP is to improve thinking which will in turn improve learning. Our thinking directs what we do and don’t do. If we can improve our thinking, then we can improve our lives.

So, how will this take place at WCC? The details are being worked out this spring by a 25-member QEP Team. But overall, faculty and staff are being trained in the model. Eventually, students will be trained in the model and the skills will be used throughout the campus. Class assignments, activities, and instruction will begin incorporating the elements, standards, and traits of critical thinking. Staff members will conduct their work around the model. Everyone on campus will speak the same language in regarding to our thinking!

Critical Factors to Look for:

The move toward a critical thinking campus will take place over a period of about three to four years. You may start seeing some signs this spring! You may hear instructors talk the language and notice that you are even learning some of it. You may see some posters in the buildings later this semester. You will continue to see articles in the *Cougar Cry* about critical thinking.

In the meantime, visit the Foundation for Critical Thinking at www.criticalthinking.org and discover what critical thinking is about!

United We Stand

By Kelia Adams

Happy Red, White, and Blue American Valentines Day! Valentines Day should be a day when an American citizen thinks of one life, one love, one thought, one feeling, one perception, one sweet emotion...United we Stand!

American citizens and all of Mother Nature’s inhabitants are united like a spider web of fragile love. The spider web indicates that every being or inanimate object has some sort of connection. Unfortunately, the spider web of fragile love can be separated or broken. The United States’ fragile web of relationships may be broken due to several different types of communication breakdowns.

The spider web of love has several different types of relationships and connections. There are relationships with Homo sapiens, relationships with the oak tree, relationships with the geese, relationships with the dogs, relationships with the rivers, relationships with the biomes, and all these various types of relationships are connected. Has mankind ever thought about what it would be like to be a fish in a polluted river, an eagle inhaling pollutants, a river contaminated with toxins, or Mother Nature who has to put up with littering? Mankind may be the ruler of the roost on the food chain, but we are the lowest of low on the decency chain. Man continues to kill the chickens, to kill the cows, to cut down the trees, to pollute the waters, to pollute the soils, to pollute the air, and to show mother nature no R-E-S-P-E-C-T!

Are these choices a sin or just the norm of American culture? What is American culture? What does the all-American woman and the all-American man stand for? What is the American Dream? Is the American Dream to be united in holy matrimony forever and always? What does it mean to be American...one love, one life, one thought, one feeling, one perception, one sweet emotion...United We Stand!!!