To: QEP Steering Committee

From: Jennifer S. Schiff, Model UN Faculty Advisor

**Assessment Summary of Goals**

**Model UN Conference, October 22-23, 2010**

Public speaking/debate, knowledge of parliamentary procedures, comfort with collaborative writing, and familiarity with the salient issues of international politics are all necessary skills for Model UN conference success. The Charlotte conference provided a wonderful opportunity for WCU’s relatively inexperienced Model UN students, as it was a “learning conference” that allowed students to practice this unique skill set in a non-judgmental and low pressure setting.

Of course, the conference also provided students with an opportunity to assess their performance in all of these skill areas, and to that end, we engaged in a lengthy discussion regarding the conference at our first Model UN meeting after the Charlotte trip. During that meeting, I asked the members of our club to rate their conference performance on a scale from one to five (with one as “needs serious improvement” and five as “total mastery of the skill”) in each of the skill categories listed above.

A consensus over the results emerged quickly. The majority of the students felt that they needed improvement in the skill areas of public speaking/debate, collaborative writing, and issue familiarity (with each student rating their performance as a one or a two on the assessment scale). In contrast, they felt quite comfortable with parliamentary procedure, as the conference itself allowed for extensive instruction and practice in that regard (each student rated themselves a four or a five in this category).

Upon a discussion of the results, we made the decision to practice the low-rated skills in our weekly meetings, so that our group will feel better prepared by the time of the next conference. To facilitate our practice, I am going to ask the club members to arrive at each meeting having researched one particular international issue that I will assign them (for instance, the first will be the state of the current UN peacekeeping intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo). I will also assign each student to represent one of the UN member-states, meaning that each of our club members should arrive at our weekly meeting ready to debate that day’s issue from the perspective of their assigned country -- just as they would be required to do during an actual Model UN conference. This procedure should allow students to enhance their knowledge of international politics, while practicing their debating/oral presentation skills at the same time.

Then, during the following week’s meeting, the students will caucus with each other over that same issue to reach a consensus, at which point they will write a resolution that reflects that agreement – this will enable the students to familiarize themselves with the common terminology and structure of UN draft resolutions. Every two weeks, then, we will repeat this procedure with a new international issue of debate, and it is my firm belief that this plan will enable our club members to feel much better prepared for the next conference we attend.

The students seem energized about our new goals, and I am as well. They really enjoyed the Charlotte conference, but the conference also served as a sort of wake-up call to them regarding the skills they need to hone before our next (non-teaching) conference in the spring. I believe that the practice structure we’ve devised will help to enhance students’ comfort level with the necessary Model UN skills, and by practicing these skills on a weekly basis, we leave the door open for new members to feel more comfortable in joining the club because they too will have a chance to prepare fully for future conferences.