

Learning through Engagement: Service-Learning



To enhance student learning, the College of Coastal Georgia has selected Learning through Engagement: Service-Learning as the topic for its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The selected QEP fits well within the College's mission that clearly identifies service-learning as an integral part of the institution.

The College involved a broad range of constituents from across the entire campus – faculty, staff, students and administration – and the community in a year-long initiative of research and intense discussion to consider various ideas for the QEP. After identifying student engagement as a broad-based topic with a particular emphasis on service-learning, the QEP Steering Committee articulated the following service-learning goal: to integrate and enhance student learning and development through hands-on, experiential activities that also meet community needs. The four primary objectives undergirding the QEP goal are to: (1) develop critical and creative thinking and reflection skills in all students; (2) enable enhanced understanding of course content; (3) enable community engagement and promote leadership; and (4) promote social responsibility, global awareness, and openness to diverse perspectives.

The College chose service-learning as its QEP because of its proven strength as a pedagogical tool to help students achieve a broad range of important personal and academic outcomes. Service-learning will be a key mechanism to help the College's students develop the intellectual skills they need in a 21st-century context that requires adaptability, sophisticated knowledge, problem-solving capacities, and self-directed learning skills. Additionally, the College's commitment to service-learning enhances its broader institutional goals of encouraging civic engagement among students and increasing outreach to local communities.

The QEP implementation protocol provides a comprehensive blueprint for the broad-based institutionalization of service-learning in a way that will enable realization of the QEP's objectives and ultimate goal. The Plan encompasses a wide range of programmatic issues, including support for faculty development, incentives and rewards; community partner development and participation; and student involvement and leadership opportunities. Additionally, the plan provides assessable benchmarks and goals that will be used to guide and monitor the College's progress toward completion of the QEP.

Planned assessment methods include evaluation at the course-level and institutional-level, as well as annual performance reports and planning retreats. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness, working in conjunction with the Center for Service-Learning, will report annually to the President's Cabinet, Faculty Senate, Staff Assembly, Student Government Association, internal and external advisory boards, and the College community on the QEP's progress and use of results to make needed adjustments for the enhancement of student learning.

The intent of the QEP is to ensure that all students take at least one service-learning course before graduation. Students enrolled in baccalaureate degree programs will be expected to enroll in additional, upper-level service-learning experiences as the College's course offerings continue to expand over the next five years.

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