

Columbus State University
Quality Enhancement Plan: We Solve It!
Executive Summary

Columbus State University's (CSU) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), **We Solve It!**, focuses on strengthening the real-world problem-solving skills of our students. Based on broad-based input from students, faculty, staff, trustees, and alumni, the QEP Leadership Team selected 'creatively solving real-world problems' as the top need for improving teaching and learning at CSU. Enhancing student problem-solving skills aligns closely with CSU's institutional mission: "...we will continue to focus on skills that encourage life-long learning, including communication (written and oral), critical problem-solving and critical thinking."

Educational research has shown that with enhanced problem-solving skills, students are better able to perform in their academic pursuits and in their careers after graduation. As a result, enhancing problem-solving skills of students is a current area of emphasis for student learning in higher education across the nation. CSU will encourage the growth of creative, real-world problem solving skills in our students by offering new and enhanced opportunities for students to solve problems, both inside and outside the classroom. The QEP is grounded in current educational research demonstrating the benefits of better problem-solving skills for students, is aligned closely with our institutional mission to encourage life-long learning, and is based on input from numerous constituents on campus and in the community.

To strengthen the real-world problem-solving skills of CSU students, five specific student learning outcomes (SLO) were identified.

Columbus State University seniors will:

SLO 1. **DISCOVER**: Demonstrate high levels of analytical skills in identifying and diagnosing challenging, ill-defined problems in everyday settings and in critically exploring and evaluating many possible solutions.

SLO 2. **DESIGN**: Demonstrate high levels of logic and creativity in designing reasonable solutions to diagnosed real-world problems.

SLO 3. **DELIVER**: Articulate highly sophisticated and persuasive presentations of proposed solutions to stakeholders of diagnosed real-world problems.

SLO 4. **REFLECT**: Exhibit high levels of insight and awareness of what was learned from the completion of real-world problem-solving experiences and what should be done differently in the future to improve their DISCOVER, DESIGN, DELIVER, and REFLECT skill levels and performances.

SLO 5. **OVERALL PROBLEM-SOLVING ABILITY**: Demonstrate an enhanced ability to creatively solve real-world problems.

A standardized problem-solving report and rubric were developed to track growth in students as they participate in **We Solve It!** problem-solving activities and endeavors. CSU students will complete the **We Solve It! Report** after they engage in real-world problem-solving experiences. Completed reports will be evaluated by faculty and staff members using the **We Solve It! Rubric** (adapted from the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Problem Solving VALUE Rubric). Completed and evaluated reports will be compiled into a **We Solve It!** portfolio that will illustrate and highlight the growth of creative, real-world problem-solving skills in our students. Additionally, the Critical Thinking Assessment Test, developed by Tennessee Technological University will be administered annually as another measure to assess students' real-world problem solving skills.

Facilitating positive change for CSU's students requires that our faculty and staff have appropriate training, support, and recognition. The initiatives associated with **We Solve It!** will provide faculty and staff development experiences, financial support, and opportunities for recognition that encourage the use of pedagogical strategies that foster the enhancement of students' problem-solving abilities across all colleges and instructional departments. Students will also be recognized for their engagement and outstanding performance in creative real-world problem solving.

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