

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND A & M COLLEGE
Quality Enhancement Plan
LSU Discover — Undergraduate Research
Executive Summary

Louisiana State University and A&M College (LSU) has a rich history of undergraduate students participating in research through a variety of successful programs principally available to students in the STEM-Disciplines. No effort to coordinate or assess these disparate programs has been conducted, and these opportunities remained unavailable to many students. LSU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), *LSU Discover*, was designed to expand undergraduate research by integrating existing programs with new initiatives and offering research opportunities through planned interventions to more students.

Development of the QEP began in late 2011 with the appointment of a 27-member team charged with selecting a topic. The team surveyed the faculty, staff, students, and employer/advisory boards to determine their perspectives on the needs of students and graduates. A university-wide call for concept papers resulted in 22-brief papers on a variety of potential topics. These papers were evaluated by a committee and the authors of the highest scored papers were asked to submit detailed proposals. After all proposals were evaluated, the authors of the two highest ranked proposals made further presentations to the SACSCOC Steering Committee, the Deans' Council, and university administrators. Following this review process, the Team selected undergraduate research as the QEP topic

Two overarching *LSU Discover* goals that align with institutional strategic goals were developed: (1) Pedagogical Interventions – to provide undergraduate research learning experiences that improve students' advanced achievement of critical thinking, and communication skills; and (2) Cultural Transformation – to transform campus culture to recognize undergraduate research as an integral component of institutional identity. These goals are supported by four approaches to promote undergraduate research: mentored research, curricular transformation, co-curricular activities, and Discover Day, with each approach contributing to one or more of five student-learning outcomes specifically developed for the QEP.

In fall 2014, four teams of faculty members were appointed to design and implement the four principal approaches of *LSU Discover*. These teams set in motion basic co-curricular events; established a learning e-portfolio program to support and assess mentored research; planned workshops for faculty to transform undergraduate courses to emphasize research concepts and methods; and developed the logistics for a Discover Day event in which students will present their research to the university community. Staff from the *LSU Discover* office support the faculty teams.

The success of *LSU Discover* will be determined by the following performance indicators: 1) the number of faculty/student research collaborations (number of presentations, publications, or other creative works); 2) changes in student and faculty perceptions of undergraduate research and the QEP—determined by surveys or focus group discussions; and 3) improvement of students' ability to think critically and communicate effectively—determined through various assessments. The high impact educational practice of engaging undergraduate students in research will benefit students through enhanced learning outcomes, and will improve faculty-student relations and strengthen the educational experience.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Dr. T. Gilmour Reeve

Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Academic Planning

tgreeve@lsu.edu