

The Citizenship Project: Commitment to Community
Executive Summary of Lynn University's Quality Enhancement Plan

The Citizenship Project: Commitment to Community is Lynn University's Quality Enhancement Plan which is part of the first-year experience that provides students with an integrated learning environment centered on citizenship. *The Citizenship Project* is a collaborative effort of the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Student Life, and provides opportunities for all Lynn students, faculty, and staff to participate.

In *The Citizenship Project* first-year students take a course as part of the *Dialogues of Learning* core curriculum in the January Term that focuses on a civic issue, problem or topic and engage in experiential learning opportunities and community service work with local, community-based partners. Thematic areas for the courses include homelessness, environmental sustainability and urban renewal. The selected partner organizations include Gumbo Limbo, Habitat for Humanity, the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, the Solid Waste Authority and the United Way. These themes and partners were selected with sense of place in mind. Students address ongoing challenges facing our South Florida community which have both local and global dimensions. Within this framework, *The Citizenship Project* promotes further integration between first-year students' academic and co-curricular experiences. In addition, *The Citizenship Project* creates a common, required educational experience for all first-year students that links the thematic components of the *Dialogues of Learning* core curriculum—the *Dialogues of Self and Society*, the *Dialogues of Innovation*, and the *Dialogues of Justice and Civic Life*. The learning paradigm for Lynn's QEP is based upon the pedagogical structure successfully implemented in *The Dialogues of Learning* that is centered in common readings and assignments among multiple sections and different subject areas.

As a member of the *Association of American Colleges and Universities'* (AAC&U) Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Initiative, Lynn University's QEP is also part of our larger commitment to promoting civic learning as a necessary component of liberal education. The Citizenship Project provides all undergraduates with the opportunity to engage in what the AAC&U has defined in the Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric as the essential components of civic engagement, namely, those "actions wherein individuals participate in activities of personal and public concern that are both individually life enriching and socially beneficial to the community" (AAC&U, 2009, p. 1). Lynn supports the belief that "...it is not enough for students to engage in community; they must also engage in the skills, values, and knowledge development that educate them to be better citizens" (Finley, 2011, 1). Therefore, at Lynn University, as evidenced in the QEP, our definition of citizenship is having the knowledge, skills, and abilities to understand, take responsibility for, and to act within the political process and one's community.

Finally, *The Citizenship Project* assesses whether the integrative structure of classroom and experiential learning increases student learning relative to citizenship and the impact of the January Term within the first-year experience. A pre- and post-test assessment was designed and implemented based on a prepared survey instrument and common essay assignments with common measurements to assess both the knowledge and attitudinal components of *The Citizenship Project's* learning goals for continuous improvement.

For additional information contact: Dr. Anna Krift, Director- Center for Global Education and Citizenship, akrift@lynn.edu