

## Tennessee Tech University: Quality Enhancement Plan

### *EDGE: Enhanced Discovery through Guided Exploration*



#### Executive Summary:

Tennessee Tech University has developed *EDGE: Enhanced Discovery through Guided Exploration* as its five-year Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The overarching goal of *EDGE* is to enhance student learning by infusing creative inquiry throughout the undergraduate experience. We propose an integrated curricular and co-curricular plan whereby our students will develop the skills to formulate creative inquiry questions or problems, decide on proper approaches to address them, explore relevant evidence, and produce and present their findings or creations. We anticipate that active engagement in creative inquiry will improve our students' creative and critical-thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and communication skills.

The four goals of the plan are to (1) establish an undergraduate curriculum that encourages student success in creative inquiry, (2) expand student co-curricular opportunities for undergraduate creative inquiry, (3) support and acknowledge faculty and students who engage in creative inquiry, and (4) develop the infrastructure to support undergraduate creative inquiry.

In the process of selecting the topic and developing *EDGE*, the QEP Committee was motivated to (1) craft a representative process that valued input from a wide range of constituents, including faculty, students, staff, employers, and alumni; (2) promote the University's mission and institutional priorities; (3) identify opportunities for improved student learning via a thorough review of institutional needs; (4) complement or strengthen existing programs at Tennessee Tech; (5) consider best practices at other institutions; and (6) provide our graduates with the skills that employers and society value. *EDGE* embodies these objectives. Broad campus support for the plan is evident, as demonstrated by the participation of 21 academic departments from six schools or colleges in our pilot year.

Detailed student learning outcomes (SLOs) that are tied directly to institutional needs have been crafted to directly address the principal elements of creative inquiry while simultaneously including all disciplines. Tennessee Tech also anticipates improvement in program outcomes, including increasing curricular and co-curricular opportunities for students to engage in creative inquiry, and increasing faculty support of these activities. SLOs and program outcomes will be assessed with a mix of direct and indirect assessments. Direct measures include the Information Literacy Test (ILT), the Critical thinking Assessment Test (CAT), the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST), and the *EDGE* Rubric, which will be used by faculty for assessing student artifacts. A collection of surveys will be used as indirect measures.

Tennessee Tech will provide the financial, physical, and human resources to initiate, implement, sustain, and complete *EDGE*. The University is committing approximately \$4.1 million in total resources, including pilot-year investments, over the six-year implementation of the QEP. The organizational structure of *EDGE* has been created in order to make reporting responsibilities and oversight clear. Additionally, key *EDGE* personnel are in place.

As the project progresses, Tennessee Tech's new Office of Creative Inquiry will administer and carefully analyze all budget-related expenses. The project will proceed in accordance with a detailed timetable that establishes the implementation of various program elements, budgetary expenditures, and assessment plans over the course of a multi-year time frame.

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