

Executive Summary – Brick by Brick: Building Information Literacy

The University of Montevallo (UM) will establish “Brick by Brick: Building Information Literacy” as the Quality Enhancement Plan. The plan will improve student learning through an emphasis on improving information literacy skills, defined as the ability to obtain, evaluate, and effectively use information to become responsible informed scholars and citizens. This QEP is designed to involve all constituencies invested in student learning and is intended to enrich the campus climate with regard to inquiry and investigation. The integration of information literacy as a focus into both the General Education and major curricula supports the University’s mission to provide a “higher educational experience of high quality, with a strong emphasis on undergraduate liberal studies and with professional programs supported by a broad base of arts and sciences, designed for their intellectual and personal growth in the pursuit of meaningful employment and responsible, informed citizenship.” The topic was selected through an intensive, participatory needs-assessment process characterized by the identification of an area that required a higher level of emphasis in order to meet institutional priorities.

The program’s success will rely heavily on the strong devotion of faculty, staff, administration, and students to the principles and commitments outlined in the institutional mission, vision, and strategic plan, as well as the existing culture of collaboration and innovation throughout the campus. At its core, this initiative focuses on the following five educational goals related to the capabilities of information literate students:

- Goal I: Information literate students determine the nature and extent of the information required.
- Goal II: Information literate students identify and acquire sources for the information.
- Goal III: Information literate students assess the validity and the appropriateness of the information.
- Goal IV: Information literate students effectively use the information to accomplish a specific purpose.
- Goal V: Information literate students understand issues and benefits associated with the responsible use of information.

The goals will be achieved through a three-tiered developmental model that introduces information literacy at the foundational level in the General Education program, advances the skills through designated courses in the General Education program and in the majors, and focuses on mastery in upper-level courses within the majors.

Assessment of the IL goals and associated student learning outcomes will be accomplished through a variety of evaluation tools, and the evaluation process and philosophy will be aligned with the institution’s overall institutional effectiveness program. In addition to purposeful attention to existing indirect measures, two direct measures of student learning will be utilized:

1. Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS)
2. Course-embedded assessments in the General Education and major curricula, as well as in IL-designated courses.

The primary focus of the planning and assessment activities is to impact student learning in meaningful and measurable ways. Furthermore, the University has the capability and commitment to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP to improve the information literacy competency levels of its students. The QEP will be successful due to broad-based campus involvement, an effective leadership and management structure, and appropriate allocations of institutional resources. Informed by an extensive literature review and best practices in the field, the University has created a plan that is “uniquely Montevallo” and that will serve as a foundational program from which other innovative academic and co-curricular initiatives can be developed.

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