University of South Carolina, Columbia
Quality Enhancement Plan
Executive Summary

The University of South Carolina's (USC) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), *USC Connect: Integrating Learning Within and Beyond the Classroom* (SACS approved December 2012) focuses on students intentionally selecting and engaging in a broad array of within and beyond the classroom experiences and making productive **connections** between theory and practice to ultimately synthesize and apply learning to new, complex situations. We believe that integrative learning is critically important to enhancing education for *all* students and that USC is in a particularly advantageous position to develop and demonstrate how this can be accomplished at a comprehensive, research university.

The four learning outcomes of USC Connect are that students will:
1. Provide examples of beyond the classroom (BTC) experiences in which they have engaged and describe how one or more beyond the classroom experiences has contributed to their learning.
2. Articulate examples of BTC experiences that illuminate concepts/theories/frameworks presented in their coursework including a clear description of elements of the beyond the classroom experience that are consistent with or contradictory to the identified concept
3. Thoughtfully connect examples, facts, and/or theories from more than one experience, field of study, and/or perspective such as describing the similarities and differences across experiences, fields of study, or perspectives.
4. Pose solutions to problems that incorporate learning from both BTC and within the classroom experiences, articulate how their decisions are supported by what they have learned through their experiences and content preparation, and implement those solutions (if appropriate).

The vision of *USC Connect* begins with students *intentionally* selecting experiences which will enrich their lives and academic work. USC within and beyond the classroom experiences are framed by academic majors and USC's high impact activities (Community Engagement, Internships, International Studies, Leadership, and Research,). Experiences include (1) a broad array of brief or one-time experiences (e.g., attending a lecture or participating in a one day service activity) that provide breadth of exposure and introduce students to possible paths of greater involvement, and (2) extensive experiences (e.g., Living and Learning Community, Study Abroad, Undergraduate Research) that *systematically integrate student reflection with academic learning and assess student ability to make in-depth connections*. Innovative technology plays a key role in selecting, tracking, and assessing within and beyond the classroom experiences in *USC Connect.*

In-depth learning occurs as students construct meaning *across* experiences *over time*. Interaction with peers and the creation of unique products (e.g., e-portfolios, action research, performances, seminar presentations, poster sessions) challenge students to re-visit and re-assess what they know, value, and can do. Providing opportunities, incentives, and systems that support faculty and staff in investigating how they can best help students build connections and deepen learning in ways integral with their course or programs' goals (whether in students' first year or last) is a critical component of *USC Connect.* Ultimately, our goal is for USC students and graduates to be lifelong learners who effectively and creatively integrate and apply their knowledge, skills, and dispositions to new contexts in ways that result in personal and professional decisions that make a positive difference in their lives and communities (i.e., local, state, national, and international).

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