

Quality Enhancement Plan for Washington and Lee University

Revitalizing the Spring Term

Executive Summary

Following on a broadly inclusive process that generated more than 200 ideas, *Revitalizing the Spring Term* was selected as Washington and Lee University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). Currently, Washington and Lee's academic calendar consists of two 12-week terms (fall and winter) in which students typically take four or five courses, and a six-week Spring Term in which students typically take two courses. Recent reviews by the faculty affirmed the educational value of the more intensive Spring Term but also recognized that the structure of the shorter term was not optimized to realize the student outcomes that are espoused in the institutional mission statement. The heart of the QEP is to restructure Spring Term to become a four-week, educationally transformative experience. Students will take one, and only one, uniquely designed four-credit course that holds their undivided attention in a full-time endeavor of learning, enriched by a small group of peers and the personal mentoring attention of the professor. Since all 1,750 undergraduate students enroll in Spring Term, the QEP requires that the faculty develop about 140 new courses for the first year and about 70-80 additional the year after, that meet newly articulated, higher-order objectives for Spring Term. These courses will have the kind of innovative pedagogy and experiential learning that is possible only in this intensive, full-time-and-attention format. The objectives for student outcomes are the result not only of individual courses, but also derive from the additive effect of students' experience in four successive years in such courses. The overarching learning objective is to enhance students' critical and creative thinking abilities. The institution has committed up to \$250,000 annually to implement and administer the QEP, as well as for the unusual expenses associated with these novel course offerings, which may include class travel, speakers, special resources, class productions and the like. A rigorous assessment protocol that measures students' improvement in critical and creative thinking, as well as the effect of our new learning contexts for Spring Term courses and the cumulative effect of the Spring Term experience over four years, is an essential component of Washington and Lee's QEP.

The final QEP document may be accessed at <http://qep.wlu.edu/QEP.pdf>.

The website showing the QEP in action is <http://www.wlu.edu/x35936.xml>.

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