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Pathways to Success

Virginia Tech

Executive Summary

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), a Research I land-grant institution founded in 1872, is called *Pathways to Success* and is designed to increase undergraduate student engagement by means of comprehensive first-year experiences (FYE). At Virginia Tech *engagement* implies reciprocity between the university and its students. The university is responsible for initiating this process by welcoming students, recognizing them as valuable citizens who have much to offer, and creating environments in which the students can flourish.

*Pathways to Success* programs facilitate first year students' ability to make appropriate connections between and among the wealth of potential pathways available at Virginia Tech and in the professional world. Students assume ownership of their roles and responsibilities as active and engaged learners by seeking out and utilizing information about the university and its programs.

*Pathways to Success* programs are based in academic units (colleges and/or academic departments) and provide curricular and co-curricular activities that incorporate the required learning outcomes of problem solving, inquiry, and integration of learning that draw upon and customize current best practices with explicit reference to essential learning outcomes articulated and further refined for assessment purposes by the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) and Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) projects. A distinguishing feature of *Pathways to Success* programs is that each is embedded in and consistent with the mission, strategic directions, and culture of the academic units while maintaining the common learning outcomes of problem solving, inquiry and integration. Each program must have university partners outside of its academic area with at least one partner required from the Division of Student Affairs. A comprehensive assessment process incorporates both direct and indirect assessment strategies both at the program level and institution level. Further, all *Pathways to Success* programs incorporate the use of ePortfolios for pedagogical and assessment purposes. Importantly, portfolios serve as tools for facilitation and assessment of students' reflection on learning to more actively engage students in their own education throughout their college careers.

A phased implementation plan ensures that *Pathways to Success* programs eventually will be in place for the approximately 6200 new freshman and transfer students who will have had common intellectual experiences and will have all become proficient in developing their own ePortfolio.

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