

7.2

Quality Enhancement Plan

The institution has a Quality Enhancement Plan that (a) has a topic identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes; (b) has broad-based support of institutional constituencies; (c) focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success; (d) commits resources to initiate, implement and complete the QEP; and (e) includes a plan to assess achievement.

Judgment

Compliant Non-Compliant Not Applicable

Narrative

The University of South Carolina Columbia has decided to provide information regarding the institution's Quality Enhancement Plan with the Compliance Certification. A link to a copy of the University's (4) four page summary is available for the Off-Site Review team below:

[University of South Carolina Columbia QEP Summary](#)

The University looks forward to receiving and reviewing the feedback from the SACSCOC Off-Site team.

Sources

 USC Columbia QEP Summary

QEP Topic and Focus: Engagement and Reflection

University of South Carolina-Columbia and four Palmetto College campuses (Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Sumter, and Union): “UofSC”

QEP topic and its relationship to the institutional planning process:

UofSC’s QEP for this accreditation cycle has its overarching goal to ensure that all of our students engage beyond the classroom and reflect upon the learning resulting from that engagement. Since engagement has been shown to improve student success and we know from our own institutional data that there are groups of students who engage at lower rates than expected and also have lower graduation and retention rates, we will focus this QEP on those student populations. In particular, the focus of this QEP will be on engaging Underrepresented minority, Pell-eligible, Transfer and Male students. We are excited to extend our first QEP into one that is more inclusive and more impactful and that aligns well with the new university strategic plan established in 2020 ([Strategic Plan](#); see table for alignment).

UofSC’s first QEP, *USC Connect* ([QEP Five-year Report](#)), focused on integrative learning which is defined as being engaged beyond the classroom with an emphasis on making connections across within and beyond the classroom experiences through reflection (as adapted from AAC&U, 2009). Lessons learned in the first QEP included:

- i. the need to ensure all student groups participated in the engagements available at UofSC, and
- ii. the need to stratify reflection across a student’s career and not just as a capstone experience and to structure reflection in ways that can be used across a variety of curricular/co-curricular settings and academic disciplines.

This new QEP will address those two needs and evolve into a program that spans all engagements and uses reflection as a way to ensure impact.

In preparation for the next QEP, more than 20 QEP outreach meetings across faculty, staff, and student groups occurred during the 2019-2020 academic year. These efforts extend beyond earlier outreach on experiential learning and engagement topics initiated in 2018 (10+ events). In addition, five QEP Subcommittees consisting of 30+ faculty and staff met during the 2019-2020 academic year to explore strategies of supporting the next QEP (i.e., “Marketing”, “Assessment and Technology”, “Professional Development”, “Engagements”, and “Pilot Study”). A focus on Engagement and Reflection was positively received, especially in consideration of benefits to build upon early QEP successes and potential impact of Covid-19 on institutional resources (e.g., challenge of creating and implementing a “new” campus-wide initiative).

Engagement defined: The University of South Carolina defines engagement as purposeful student-initiated experiences occurring beyond the classroom during the collegiate career providing in-depth insights related to one’s academic, personal, and professional goals. Engagements can fall into one of three categories: traditional high-impact practices such as student research or internships (Kuh, 2008), formative experiences leading to greater engagement (e.g., workshops, one-day service events), and self-directed opportunities (e.g. off-campus internships, volunteering).

<i>UofSC Strategic Plan (Strategic Priorities)</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Indicators aligned with QEP focused on Engagement and Reflection</i>
<p>Priority 1: Attract, Inspire, Challenge, and Enable our students to become innovative thinkers and transformative leaders.</p>	<p>Attract and retain highly-qualified, diverse, and appropriately-sized student body at all levels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevate Freshman to Sophomore Retention Rate • Enhance 6-yr graduation rate • Improve post-graduate employment/graduate school placement and salary/debt ratio rates • Grow percentage of students participating in engaged and experiential learning • Increase percentage of graduates who have earned Graduation with Leadership Distinction (GLD) and expand the ways in which the requirements of the GLD pathways can benefit • Raise the participation rate of our student body in community engagement projects • Elevate the percentage of students participating in study abroad • In partnership between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, increase the number of certified, registered Student Affairs experiential experiences for student engagement and link these experiences more explicitly to academic majors. • Increase the percentage of students engaged in Student Affairs and Academic Colleges' experiential activities • In partnership between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, increase the number of career preparation and workplace readiness student life programs • Introduce and have students adopt for use in their employment searches their UofSC Experience transcript • Formalize and explore strategies and techniques to create a virtual, online experiential experience • Provide a voluntary Graduate with Leadership Distinction program for graduate students <p><i>(Additional Indicators)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise the participation rate of our student body in community engagement projects • Discover and expand curricular and co-curricular opportunities to address grand challenges and societal needs • Expand non-curricular opportunities to expose our students to inspiring thought leaders and role models.
	<p>Provide the highest quality of rigorous instruction and student-centric educational experience to all students</p>	
	<p>Create innovative, transformative, and collaborative life-long learners</p>	
<p>Priority 4: Cultivate a more diverse, equitable and inclusive campus culture, where every individual, regardless of background, has the full opportunity to flourish and thrive.</p>	<p>Equitable: Ensure that there is equitable access for all students, staff and faculty across key measures of success Inclusive: Create, promote, support and assess a campus culture/climate that embodies our Carolinian Creed and makes every member of our university community feel they are affirmed and valued.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase participation among undergraduate students from underrepresented, low-income and other marginalized groups in high-impact practices (HIPs) by enhancing the availability of, access to and support for internships, study abroad (grant-funded) research and other experiential learning opportunities • Support, promote, and track participation in existing programs intended to engage and inform our university community (e.g., programming and initiatives hosted by the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, the President's Dive-In lunches, the Provost's Finding Common Ground Forums, the Collaborative on Race and Reconciliation and its premiere program -- The Welcome Table SC, and the President's Commission on University History)
<p>Priority 6: Spur innovation and economic development through impactful community partnerships.</p>	<p>Community Partnerships: Expand Community Partnerships to create business opportunities, develop new relationships, and increase experiential learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase experiential learning opportunities for students to engage in real-world community research and service experiences (e.g. Cyber).

Focus of the QEP on enhancing student learning outcomes and/or student success:

UofSC has decided to focus on both student learning outcome performance (adaptations from AAC&U's [Foundations and Skills for LifeLong Learning VALUE Rubric](#) and the [DEAL Model for Critical Reflection](#); Ash & Clayton, 2009), as well as student success metrics identified through UofSC's strategic plan (see table). Rubrics will be applied to student work artifacts across curricular and co-curricular settings to evaluate learning outcome performance. Key performance indicators will be tracked to evaluate student success metrics.

Student Learning Outcome 1: Students will initiate engagement in purposeful beyond the classroom experiences related to one's personal, academic and/or professional goals.

Curiosity: Explore a topic in depth, yielding insight and/or information indicating interest in the subject.

Initiative: Identify and pursue opportunities to expand knowledge, skills, and abilities through successful participation in identified engagement.

Independence: Pursue substantial, additional knowledge and/or actively pursue independent educational experiences.

Student Learning Outcome 2: Students will develop and apply knowledge across learning environments and contexts (e.g., time, location, academic career).

Transfer: Recognize references to previous learning and show evidence of applying that knowledge and those skills to demonstrate comprehension and performance in novel situations.

Student Learning Outcome 3: Students will apply structured reflection principles through their learning experiences revealing insights to broader perspectives about educational or life events.

Emphasis on the DEAL Critical Reflection Model—Describe, Examine, and Articulate Learning--to guide reflection methods.

Student Success Metrics (with ties to UofSC's strategic plan)

- Relationship of engagement to institutional metrics (1st to second year retention, timely academic progression, graduation rates; analysis across student populations)
 - Includes exploring relationship between retention and successful continuation through the academic curriculum for sophomore to junior, junior to senior years
 - Includes exploring relationship between early-career Engagement experiences to additional and later Engagement experiences
- First-destination/employment (first post-graduation job)
- Pursuit of baccalaureate degree (successful academic transition of associates level/Palmetto College graduates to Bachelor's degree pursuit)

**Targeted undergraduate student populations identified through institutional data: Pell-eligible, Transfer students, Palmetto College students, Identified male populations, and Identified underrepresented minority populations. Graduate students will also be a focus through increased engagement opportunities and the development of a GLD recognition.*

-Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). (2009). *Integrative Learning VALUE rubric*. Retrieved from <https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/integrative-learning>

-Kuh, G.D. (2008). High-impact educational practices: What are they, who has access to them, and why they matter. *Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.*

A multi-prong assessment plan will capture formative progress and summative performance related to QEP success. Both indirect and direct measures will be utilized to evaluate identified student learning outcome performance and student success metrics. Examples include—

Indirect Measures

- NSSE (National Study of Student Engagement) survey
- Engagement student surveys (specific to Engagement experience)
- Student Exit Surveys (Career Center, college-level surveys)
- University Advising Center-sponsored student surveys
- Graduation with Leadership Distinction student participant surveys
- Faculty and staff beyond the classroom provider surveys
- Faculty grant and workshop participant surveys

Direct Measures

- Student artifacts/assignments originating from **Experiential Learning Opportunities** (identified through proposal process and vetted with a faculty and staff committee; includes credit and non-credit opportunities; formally recognized by the institution and marketed to students)
- Student artifacts/assignments originating from **Engagements**--three types: traditional high-impact practices (Kuh, 2008); formative experiences leading to greater engagement (e.g., workshops, Service Saturday events); and self-directed opportunities (e.g. off-campus internships, service sites)
- **Capstone courses** within colleges (culminating project or ePortfolio)
- Graduation with Leadership Distinction **ePortfolios** (through the Center for Integrative and Experiential Learning)
- **University 101 courses** (identified assignments originating from the first-year and other offered courses)
- Courses with **integrative learning/experiential learning grant** support (sponsored through the Center for Teaching Excellence in conjunction with Center for Integrative and Experiential Learning—expectation to participate in assessment included for grant recipients)
- Other courses as can be identified

*Considerations for appropriate sampling criteria will be key.

**Baseline metrics are being established for all components of the University strategic plan, including those listed in the provided table and linked to the QEP.

In summary, the University of South Carolina (UofSC) is poised to enhance student learning and student success through emphasis on quality beyond the classroom experiences originating from curricular and co-curricular environments. Parallel to these Engagements is the priority placed upon critical reflection to further advance students' understanding of the experience in the context of personal, professional, and academic goals. UofSC is building upon earlier successes of its first QEP, USC Connect, with plans to encourage Engagement for all students with a strategic focus on supporting identified student populations. Support will emerge through customized marketing and interventions from an established centralized office promoting Engagements, as well as robust campus partnerships providing quality student experiences and student support initiatives with the goal of closing identified achievement gaps, increasing student success, and extending efforts to deepen student learning.