

Quality Enhancement Plan  
Sophomore Success: Preparing Leaders for the Third Millennium

Ave Maria University

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The “*Sophomore Success: Preparing Leaders for the Third Millennium*” program focuses primarily on the growth and development of sophomores during a critical year of personal formation and decision-making related to education and professional life. Through the proposed SYE program, Ave Maria University will apply its efforts in two chief areas: first, enhanced student integration with the liberal arts tradition, and second, proactive career development facilitated by growth in self-knowledge. Each aspect of the “*Sophomore Success*” QEP is critical for the formation of leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> century; furthermore, each goal integrates clearly into Ave Maria’s curriculum and mission. Finally, the goals and outcomes of the QEP strongly embody the guiding document of the Catholic Church on Catholic universities, which states that “the education of students is to combine academic and professional development with formation in moral and religious principles and the social teachings of the Church” (John Paul II, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Article 4, Section 5).

By design, Ave Maria’s QEP is grounded in the newly formed sophomore year initiative. The sophomore year is more and more widely acknowledged to constitute a gap in the educational experience of today’s college students. As sophomores have moved beyond the apprehensiveness of a first year experience yet have not entered into the forward-looking intensity of their junior and senior years, the sophomore year is a natural liminal moment, one of significant decisions—about majors, career goals, and even persistence in college. It follows that the sophomore year is also a time of personal introspection, when students begin to take stock of their own strengths and weaknesses and attempt to see where they might fit into the professional world. Accordingly, for Ave Maria University the sophomore year is a time ripe with opportunity to help students more confidently embrace their education and begin to make the transition from student to young professionals prepared to be leaders in a wide range of fields, vocations, and industries. To achieve this, the various actions which the University has selected for the “*Sophomore Success*” QEP are designed to build upon each other in order to create a framework within which students’ sophomore year experience can be a fruitful period, one which will provide a more solid, more conscious foundation for student learning not only in the sophomore year but also in the junior and senior years and, it is hoped, beyond.