

Benedict College

Quality Enhancement Plan

Transforming the First Year Experience to Create an Effective Learning Community

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Benedict College is a co-educational, open enrollment college currently offering bachelor's degrees in 30 majors. The contemporary mission of Benedict College is to provide quality educational opportunities to all applicants interested in participating in its programs. The College admits many first generation, low income, socially disadvantaged and/or academically underprepared students. The College seeks to make a significant investment in the success of students so that they exit as "powers for good" in society.

The Quality Enhancement Plan, *Transforming the First Year Experience to Create an Effective Learning Community*, emerged from extended, college-wide discussions that included current students, alumni, trustees, faculty, staff, and business and community partners. Student effort, in the academic and non-academic domains, was identified as the focus for the QEP. This was based largely on institutional research that indicated that many of our students do not arrive to Benedict College committed to the effort or college-appropriate behaviors necessary to achieve success in the first year. The primary premise of our QEP is based on the belief that all students can maximize their learning if they maximize the required effort to learn and engage in college-appropriate behaviors.

The QEP will be implemented as the Freshman Institute in the fall semester 2011. First year students will be placed on teams based on their academic major. Each team will be led by an academic success coach with the help of student success trainers. In order to address student effort in the academic domain, a cohort of freshman faculty, who participated in extensive summer training, will be assigned to teach Freshman Institute students in Smart classrooms. These faculty members will be assisted by undergraduate teaching assistants. Additionally, a group of learning specialists, assisted by peer tutors, will provide support services in laboratories and in small group sessions throughout the campus. Student effort in the non-academic domain will be addressed through partnerships with community life, student activities, and athletics; and other units will be formed to provide a comprehensive support system for all Freshman Institute students.

Using an athletic analogy, each team will be assigned to a conference and school deans will act as the conference commissioners. The teams will compete on all effort indicators as a part of the Benedict College Association of Academics. A customized learning management system undergirds the data collection for the Freshman Institute and will provide the framework for instructional support. The project will be assessed continually throughout the five years using internal and external assessment instruments that measure the impact of activities and strategies on student behavior and the impact of these behavioral changes in student success.