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# GOING FURTHER FASTER: COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON'S FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE

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The College of Charleston's Quality Enhancement Plan focuses on strengthening students' first-year experience at the College and proposes the development of a well-planned, coordinated, comprehensive and unified First-Year Experience program. This plan is timely. The College of Charleston Strategic Plan, approved by the Board of Trustees in April, 2003, calls for the creation of just such a First-Year Experience program. Also, the College is now reviewing its long-standing general education program, and current recommendations based on this review include a proposal to require a well-defined first-year experience for all students as part of a new and strengthened general education program.

The Quality Enhancement Plan for a First Year Experience has been developed at the same time as the faculty has been conducting its review of the general education program. This has strengthened both processes, involving more people from more constituencies across campus, and resulting in well-coordinated plans. The QEP is designed to be consistent with – and indeed an enhancement of – the current general education program, but it is also designed to become a cornerstone of a new general education program for the College.

Two curricular elements are proposed for College of Charleston's First-Year Experience: a newly revamped First-Year Seminar and the addition of Learning Communities. The First-Year Seminar and Learning Communities will be supplemented by strengthened support services and programs for new students. Overall, the First-Year Experience offers important and exciting new opportunities for enhancing student learning and engagement at the College of Charleston.