
Distinction through Discovery:
Expanding the Culture of Undergraduate Research and Inquiry
Florida Atlantic University's Quality Enhancement Plan

The ***Distinction through Discovery*** QEP takes a multifaceted approach to improving student learning by expanding a culture of undergraduate research and inquiry at Florida Atlantic University (FAU). FAU is a comprehensive public university enrolling over 30,000 graduate and undergraduate students, with a student body that ranks as the most diverse in Florida's 12-institution State University System. Engaged in key partnerships with internationally renowned private organizations, and building upon FAU's growing strengths in research, FAU is poised to expand the culture of undergraduate research with the QEP *Distinction through Discovery*. Our faculty and students recognize "inquiry" to be a process and/or a product which encompasses intellectual traits that transcend subject matter divisions. We aspire to create an intellectual community of scholars who are engaged in questioning, exploring, and pursuing research in all their forms, and envision that engagement in discovery will distinguish FAU as a student-centered research institution.

QEP Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): The QEP Steering committee developed a set of six student learning outcomes which include: *Knowledge, Formulate Question, Plan of Action, Critical Thinking, Communication and Ethics*. The plan integrates research into all undergraduate programs and at all levels by scaffolding student development of these SLOs through exposure to research skills and content, targeted skill building practice, and intensive independent work.

QEP Goals: The QEP Steering Committee solicited input from stakeholders representing university constituencies regarding institutional data, programs and best practices. Their recommendations for expanding a culture of research and inquiry integrated with a review of the scholarly literature and other institutions' best practices framed our QEP plan. Four goals were identified:

1. Establish an undergraduate curriculum which provides students the intellectual skills necessary to successfully engage in undergraduate research and inquiry;
2. Expand student co-curricular opportunities for undergraduate research and inquiry;
3. Increase support and recognition for faculty and students engaged in research and inquiry
4. Enrich and strengthen an institutional climate that supports undergraduate research and inquiry.

QEP Assessment: As we implement our goals, assessment of *Distinction through Discovery* will focus on directly measuring six Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) within curricular and co-curricular environments, evaluating the expansion and enrichment of research opportunities and inquiry climate, and assessing the effectiveness of the initiative itself. The Committee will use the results of these assessments to continuously inform and improve the QEP initiatives. With the collaboration of FAU students, faculty, and our community, these action items are unified with the overall goal of distinguishing FAU students through the practice of discovery.

Contact us: For additional information, please contact Dr. Donna Chamely-Wiik, QEP Director, through the Office of Undergraduate Research and Inquiry at FAU at ouri@fau.edu, or visit our website <http://www.fau.edu/ouri/>