

**FGCUScholars: Think • Write • Discover**  
**Enhancing the Culture of Inquiry from Composition to Capstone  
at Florida Gulf Coast University**

Florida Gulf Coast University's next Quality Enhancement Plan - FGCUScholars: Think • Write • Discover - strengthens undergraduate student writing, critical thinking, and information literacy skills so that students become scholars within their major. FGCUScholars makes explicit use of student research, creative endeavors, and scholarly activities as ways to enhance and professionalize these skills of writing, critical thinking, and information literacy in students. FGCUScholars was designed to impact the General Education Program and all undergraduate programs, leading to stronger, scholarly capstone projects in each major. As majors engage different kinds of scholarship, each undergraduate program works to develop scholars of their students as appropriate to that discipline.

Chosen in an inclusive and thoughtful institution-wide process, FGCUScholars responds to a variety of internal learning outcome assessments that were conducted over the last several years at FGCU and to feedback from employers and needs of post-baccalaureate programs. We discovered through our internal assessments that students needed improvement in the ability to express themselves in a scholarly way through high-level writing, critical thinking, and information literacy, although they have been proficient in their disciplinary or content knowledge. In addition, regional and national employer surveys have indicated the need for students to develop critical thinking, complex problem solving, and written communication skills along with the ability to conduct research and use evidence-based analysis.

The goal of FGCUScholars is to strengthen undergraduate student learning in relation to the skills of writing, critical thinking, and information literacy within each major, with a specific focus on demonstrating these skills in senior capstone projects. Three Program Objectives used to determine the achievement of this goal include:

- Program Objective 1: Integration of the QEP vertically (across all four years) and horizontally (in multiple General Education courses and multiple courses in the majors) as it builds towards the capstone experience;
- Program Objective 2: Identification, refinement, or creation of coursework within each major, such as gateway courses and research methods courses, that allow students to explicitly develop the skills of writing, critical thinking, and information literacy within their disciplines; and
- Program Objective 3: Development of final scholarly projects in the capstone course that provide evidence of higher levels of writing, critical thinking, and information literacy.

To achieve these goals and objectives, the university has created an Office of Undergraduate Scholarship (which houses FGCUScholars: Think • Write • Discover) with a Director and a cohort of Faculty Scholars and QEP Lead Faculty across broad disciplinary areas. FGCUScholars also includes the refinement of curriculum and instruction based on assessments that demonstrate the level of value added between the Composition course taken in the first year in college and the Capstone course taken at the end of college. Importantly, assessment of student learning, which began the year before the implementation of the QEP and will continue through the five years of the plan, allows us to revise our teaching and learning practices continually to ensure the highest level of performance among students.

**Contact:** For additional information, please contact Dr. Charles (billy) Gunnels, Director FGCUScholars and the Office of Undergraduate Scholarship at Florida Gulf Coast University at [ous@fgcu.edu](mailto:ous@fgcu.edu) or visit our website at <http://www.fgcu.edu/ous>.

