

The Millsaps College Quality Enhancement Plan “Major Health: Enriching Students’ Lives Through Health Education”

The Millsaps College Quality Enhancement Plan is designed to enhance student learning by adding education, reflection, and goal-setting about the body and health to an existing educational curriculum that already deals thoroughly with the intellectual and spiritual dimensions of student lives. The selection and development of our plan was guided by an institutional process spanning 18 months, involving an examination of institutional assessment data, the broad-based participation and collaboration of all college constituencies, and a thorough analysis of relevant research.

Ultimately hoping to improve our students’ lives by promoting health and its many and varied associated benefits, the Major Health program has identified four overarching goals:

1. Improve students’ understanding of health (their knowledge);
2. Improve students’ ability to locate and interpret health information (their skills);
3. Improve students’ appreciation of health and its importance (their values);
4. Increase students’ engagement in healthful activity (their behaviors).

In order to promote these goals and to determine whether our plan, in fact, does promote these goals, we have designed Major Health to be a comparative study of the effects of a health education program. All freshmen at Millsaps currently participate in a required one-semester, one-credit course called Foundations. Foundations is intended to acclimate students to college life and inculcate various skills related to college success. For four years, the Major Health program will modify Foundations as follows:

When they arrive on campus, freshmen will be randomly divided into 2 groups—F1 and F2. Members of F1—the control group—will go through the regular Foundations curriculum. Members of F2—the experimental group—will go through the regular Foundations curriculum plus a series of health education modules and personal health-related goal-setting tasks.

To determine the effects of health education and goal-setting, both groups will undergo a set of pre-test assessments during the first few weeks of their first semester and a set of post-test assessments scheduled at three regular points throughout their college career. These assessments will measure students’ knowledge, skills, values, and (indirectly) behaviors related to health.

The specific desired outcome for the Major Health program is for students who undergo the health education version of Foundations and goal-setting tasks to demonstrate a statistically significant improvement in health knowledge and skills as measured by assessment instruments, with the experimental group scoring at least 10% higher on the post-test than the ordinary Foundations students.

It is our hope that this QEP will provide a significant and valuable addition to our curriculum, furthering one of the stated purposes of Millsaps College—to “provide a learning environment that increases knowledge . . . and inspires the development of mature citizens” (Millsaps *College Catalog*, p. 4).

For questions or more information please contact:

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