

**Questions Empower People: Enhancing Student Learning Through a Senior
Interdisciplinary Seminar
Salem College
Winston-Salem, NC**

The Salem College core values of learning that is grounded in excellence, in community and in responsibility to self and others, and the College's mission as a liberal arts college that prepares women to change the world, serve as the foundation of the quality enhancement plan. The Quality Enhancement Plan seeks to enhance student learning through an interdisciplinary senior course that empowers students to evaluate, appreciate and integrate multiple perspectives in a collaborative project as they prepare to be agents of change.

The Senior Year Interdisciplinary Seminar offers an integrative learning experience in which seniors assume an active role in exploring a critical question from multiple perspectives; developing a creative response to that question; and communicating that response effectively. The seminars will include a diverse group of scholars from a variety of majors to ensure an interdisciplinary lens through which seminar participants will define and research a central question. As participants in this capstone course, students will integrate various disciplinary perspectives to develop a multifaceted response to the central question posed in the seminar.

The QEP will serve as the capstone course of the College's new general education program, the Salem Signature Program. Through the Salem Signature, students participate in disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses and merge knowledge and practice through experiential learning opportunities. This senior seminar for the Salem Signature Program is designed to integrate disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives in the exploration of a critical question. The seminar will challenge students to participate as a community of active scholars in the in-depth examination of a critical issue from the perspective of multiple disciplines. As the capstone course in the Salem Signature, the seminar will serve as a key component of the general education program and the assessment of student achievement of learning outcomes defined as part of that program.

The senior year interdisciplinary seminar will strengthen the senior year experience of Salem College students. Currently, the academic emphasis of the senior year is the capstone course in the major. In 2008 following the articulation of the College's core values emphasizing the importance of community to the academic development of our undergraduates, the faculty instituted the Celebration of Academic Excellence. This new tradition, a day-long symposium at which seniors present their research projects and artistic achievements, provides the entire Salem College community the opportunity to celebrate academic excellence and the accomplishments of our students in their majors. The senior interdisciplinary seminar proposed in the QEP will complement this focus on the major through its emphasis on the integration of the liberal arts. The establishment of this interdisciplinary course will strengthen the senior year, providing students a comprehensive academic experience that integrates learning across the curriculum and merges knowledge and practice in the exploration of timely issues. Showcasing student achievement in the seminar at the annual Celebration of Academic Excellence will provide the full community a better understanding of the centrality of interdisciplinary collaboration in the analysis of and resolution to complex questions.

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