

Quality Enhancement Plan Executive Summary

QEP Title: “Undergraduate Student Research”

Institution: South Georgia State College

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Purpose and Outcomes of the QEP: The South Georgia State College (SGSC) Quality Enhancement Plan focuses on infusing the development of undergraduate student research skills into the curriculum. Particularly in its bachelor’s degree programs, but also within the scope of general education courses at the A.A. and A.S. levels, the college recognizes an obligation to help students achieve a solid foundation of research skills to prepare them for the future. In addition, the growing body of literature on undergraduate research demonstrates that student participation in this activity yields active student engagement and positive results for student achievement. Hence, teaching research skills in undergraduate courses can be an effective pedagogical tool.

The purpose of the QEP is reflected in the nine student learning outcomes: (1) to identify ethical research practices, (2) to generate answerable research questions, (3) to analyze prior research, (4) to develop a hypothesis from a research question, (5) to construct a research plan, (6) to collect relevant data, (7) to analyze relevant data, (8) to draw appropriate conclusions based on analysis, (9) to present research. While there are some differences in bachelor’s and associate’s level general education research expectations and outcomes assessment, all affected students are engaged with all or some of the nine QEP outcomes, depending upon the level of degree pursued. Consequently, all participating students of whatever classification, from freshman to senior, are demonstrating their level of research skill acquisition, which is the unifying focus of the initiative.

Definition of “Undergraduate Research”: As a member institution of the Council for Undergraduate Research (CUR), SGSC subscribes to the CUR definition of “undergraduate research,” but with the addition of one phrase (in boldface) to arrive at a definition that best suits the institution’s students and QEP purposes: Undergraduate Research is *“an inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline’ or that demonstrates clear and well-supported understanding of a fundamental aspect of the discipline.”* SGSC’s definition encourages originality and creativity but insists on clear and well-supported understanding derived from student application of specific research skills.

Assessment of the QEP: There are rubrics for each of the nine QEP outcomes. There is also a rubric for the bachelor’s degree capstone courses—the only rubric designed to measure all nine outcomes at once. The capstone rubric will not be employed in A.A. and A.S. general education courses. Rather, the general education courses will assess particular individual QEP outcomes, as appropriate to specific courses, using the nine individual QEP outcome rubrics. Surveys of both student and faculty opinions and attitudes about the effect of the QEP will also be administered throughout the entire five years of the plan’s implementation.