

Sullivan University
Career Literacies and Competencies: Putting Care Back into Career

Throughout much of its history, Sullivan University—from senior leadership down through faculty and staff—has embraced a caring approach on student development as embodied by the Sullivan University “I Care” initiative. Sullivan University faculty and leadership developed a growing concern that the “I Care” initiative, which had its origins in the early-1980s, had become diluted. In response, the Sullivan University community set about the development of a QEP that would revitalize the university’s caring approach, student-centered core values, and be realizable as an action plan going forward.

In the fall of 2012, university administration established a 46-person QEP committee with the approval of the Sullivan University Academic Council, the faculty governance body. The QEP committee represented all important institutional stakeholder groups, all major programs and service units, and included students, faculty, staff, and administrators. During the following 18-months, brainstorming sessions and open forum discussions yielded tentative ideas but slow progress. In the spring of 2014, however, the new *Sullivan University System Strategic Plan* was introduced, and the new strategic plan provided clear and incisive guidance for progressive institutional performance. Using the new strategic plan as a catalyst for rethinking the QEP, fresh input was gathered from the entire university community, and these new thoughts coalesced organically around the concepts of career literacies and career competencies as a topic for the QEP.

The QEP committee defined the overarching goals of *Career Literacies and Career Competencies: Putting Care Back into Career* as follows:

- **Career Literacies:** Through the development of multi-faceted career literacies, including expanded awareness and understanding of career fields and career options, and related financial literacy issues, students will be career-focused and engaged in a career-oriented and clearly relevant program of study.
- **Career Competencies:** Students will develop a set of career-relevant ancillary skills, materials, and experiences which complement their career-specific core education and enhance their abilities to compete successfully in their intended careers.

These overarching goals were elaborated into four specific, measurable student learning outcomes (SLO). The four SLOs are as follows:

- **SLO 1:** Students will demonstrate a general knowledge of career options, career pathways, and the process of making carefully considered, well-informed career decisions.
- **SLO 2:** Students will demonstrate a knowledge of typical career prospects, conditions, tasks, and responsibilities in their intended career fields.
- **SLO 3:** Students will demonstrate the knowledge and skills to make informed financial decisions.
- **SLO 4:** Students will demonstrate career-appropriate communication skills.

The selection of career competencies and career literacies as the primary focus of the Sullivan University QEP largely rested on Sullivan University’s: (1) culture as a caring career-oriented university, (2) the Sullivan University System Strategic Plan, which re-emphasizes the university’s historic position as a leader in career education, (3) metrics derived from both institutional data and Noel-Levitz SI data, and (4) a perceived trend toward greater homogenization of educational values and the desire to positively differentiate Sullivan University from other institutions of higher education.

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