

Tarleton State University – Quality Enhancement Plan

Title: **Keeping it R.E.A.L.: Real-world Experiences Applied to Learning**

Executive Summary: The essence of Tarleton's QEP addresses the age old question of, "When and how am I going to use *this?*" as it pertains to a student's college education, regardless of the content, whereby the student may not see the obvious future relevance. Tarleton's QEP, "**Keeping it REAL,**" is both creative in its balance between scope and manageability, and vital to the long-term improvement of student learning. The selected topic will dovetail with existing university initiatives as well as enable the creation of new efforts to transform the baccalaureate degree at Tarleton into a distinctive, experience-based, education.

The mission of Tarleton's Quality Enhancement Plan, "**Keeping it REAL,**" is to support the achievement of Tarleton's strategic goals, known campus-wide as the "Four E's," by engaging students in applied learning in order to broaden and strengthen their real-world connections to experiences inside and outside the classroom. This initiative will enhance undergraduate education by integrating applied learning experiences in the areas of undergraduate research, service learning, leadership, internships/practicum experiences, and/or study away into the students' baccalaureate education.

What makes "**Keeping it REAL**" initiatives different from many existing curricular and extracurricular efforts is the e-portfolio content related to applied learning. One of the requirements of an experience is that the student must submit a written reflection in his/her e-portfolio that addresses the following: describe how the applied learning experience helped you integrate your entire collegiate curriculum and experiences; and analyze the impact of the applied learning experience on the development of your academic, political, social, cultural and economic global view.

The student must also submit at least one additional artifact from the experience, such as a poster presentation or photo story. With the guidance and mentoring of faculty and staff, the students will think critically and articulate the broader impact of these activities, thus transforming their overall collegiate experience and better preparing them for life beyond college.

By successfully completing a number of these activities, students will be able to graduate with special recognition and will have a strong e-portfolio with which to market themselves to employers and graduate schools. Additional details may be found at www.tarleton.edu/real.

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