

ETEAL: Experiencing Transformative Education through Applied Learning

Executive Summary:

The purpose of the University of North Carolina Wilmington's (UNCW) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is to employ enhanced applied learning experiences to reinforce student learning in three of UNCW's eight learning goals: critical thinking, thoughtful expression, and inquiry. An auxiliary aim is to enrich the environment that supports student applied learning. Through a targeted approach, UNCW's QEP—[ETEAL: Experiencing Transformative Education through Applied Learning](#)—uses a three-part model to improve our students' ability to articulate thoughtfully their expectations and goals, to synthesize and apply classroom concepts to other settings, and think critically about the impact of these learning experiences at the levels of personal development and of their fields of study.

Within UNCW, applied learning is a pedagogical model that places students in experiences requiring them to integrate previously learned theories, ideas, and skills in new and challenging contexts, thereby extending their learning. UNCW enjoys a long-standing commitment to applied learning and today's UNCW students are immersed in a rich environment where thousands of applied learning opportunities are made available during the academic year. For instance, a QEP Task Force survey identified more than 7,700 applied learning experiences at UNCW in a single academic year. Moreover, all UNCW colleges, schools, and academic majors require "applied learning" for enrolled students, and the general education curriculum (University Studies) mandates at least one such experience in a component area entitled "Explorations Beyond the Classroom." ETEAL creates a systematic, university-wide process that provides professional development support for engaged instructors, implements new applied learning experiences for students, and captures evidence of the impact of enhanced applied learning experiences on key student learning goals.

In recognition of the widespread opportunities for applied learning at UNCW, the QEP intentionally focuses on improving the quality of applied learning experiences. ETEAL addresses three goals:

1. To improve student learning in applied learning experiences through enriching the environment that supports student learning.
2. To provide faculty and staff with information and resources about high-impact practices in applied learning pedagogy as appropriate to their disciplines and responsibilities.
3. To promote the incorporation and implementation of high-impact practices of applied learning throughout UNCW.

ETEAL employs a three-part model to both measure the impact of applied learning on student learning in the three aforementioned areas of critical thinking, thoughtful expression, and inquiry, and to improve the quality of applied learning writ large. Components of this model are:

1. Applied Learning Summer Institute, open to all instructors.
2. Applied Learning and Teaching Community, open to all instructors and students.
3. ETEAL-supported Pedagogy Initiatives, awarded based on proposals meeting specific criteria for implementing applied learning techniques and mechanisms for deepening and documenting student learning.

QEP website: www.uncw.edu/qep/index.html

Contacts:

University Accreditation Coordinators:

Sarah Barbara Watstein
University Librarian
910.962.327
watsteins@uncw.edu

Dr. Rob Morgan
Early College Coordinator & Liaison
910.962.2095
morganr@uncw.edu

QEP Director:

Dr. Jess Boersma
Associate Professor of Spanish
910.962.2608
boersmaj@uncw.edu