



TEAM USA: Team-Based Learning at the University of South Alabama

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TEAM USA, the name of the University of South Alabama's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), is aligned with the University's mission to "make a difference in the lives of those it serves through promoting discovery, health, and learning," and goal #1 of the University's strategic plan, to "Maintain and enhance an innovative and vibrant educational environment that supports teaching and promotes learning." There was broad-based involvement of constituents including students, faculty, administrators, community members, and alumni throughout the planning and pilot stages of the project. Feedback was solicited at several public hearings and through various data collection mechanisms. These constituencies will remain involved in the oversight of the project as it is implemented.

During the two-year planning stage of the QEP, multiple constituents served on several key committees listed here in chronological order beginning with the Leadership Team, the Concept Development and Selection Committee, the Implementation Team, and finally, the Advisory Council. During the data and feedback gathering process, an extensive review of all pertinent student assessment data was conducted and, as a result, it was determined that the areas in greatest need of improvement were related to the development of critical thinking and collaboration student learning outcomes. It was also determined that the greatest need for acquisition of these competencies was in STEM and STEM-Related courses. Based on this need, the decision was made to focus the QEP on improving learning outcomes in that group of courses.

The initial pedagogical strategy, selected as the one that appeared most conducive to the achievement of the aforementioned student learning outcomes, was a collaborative learning strategy called Team-Based Learning. This strategy was selected after a review of the research literature supported the use of this strategy to improve critical thinking and collaboration.

The overarching goals of the project are to improve critical thinking skills aligned with Bloom's higher order thinking domains; improve the collaborative skills of students; increase student engagement; and improve the persistence/retention of students enrolled in STEM and STEM-related courses. Content acquisition and application targeted in learning outcomes will be constructed around each student's ability to evaluate information, synthesize alternate versions of problems or issues, and base conclusions or solutions on applied information. The project will utilize multiple formative and summative assessments including individual and team tests, the California Critical Thinking Skills Assessment, pre/post critical thinking and collaboration surveys, student and faculty satisfaction surveys, course-embedded assessments, peer review and the Team Interaction Faculty Observation Report. These assessments will be utilized during the project to inform decisions and carry out project modifications.

The successful implementation and completion of TEAM USA is the responsibility of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. The QEP Director is responsible for day-to-day management and supervision of the project including participant recruitment and selection, professional development, fund management, management of the TEAM USA classroom, compiling and presenting annual assessments and project reports, chairing the QEP Advisory Council and serving as SACSCOC QEP contact.