

Virginia Highlands Community College

LearningPlus+: Communication. Professionalism. Problem Solving. Teamwork.

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Executive Summary

Virginia Highlands Community College (VHCC) has actively engaged in a thorough process of broad-based involvement and educational research to select its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), LearningPlus+.

This institutional process revealed the need for enhanced student learning through direct soft skills instruction across the curriculum. This quality enhancement plan represents a commitment to soft skills instruction through experiential learning opportunities that are developed, assigned, and measured by the College. The College intends to create an environment where communication, professionalism, problem-solving, and teamwork are celebrated as a vital part of its mission “to provide exceptional educational pathways to enrich lives and strengthen our communities.” This quality enhancement plan will lead to greater success for students who enter the world of work and students who transfer to a senior institution. Ultimately, these skills will serve all of our students well. As a result of improved soft skills, good students will become better students; VHCC graduates will not only be *good* employees or transfer students, but they will be *great* employees or transfer students.

The VHCC QEP will improve student learning by building soft skills through experiential learning opportunities:

In order to develop students’ soft skills and provide opportunities for students to apply those skills through the high-impact practice of experiential learning, VHCC will:

- Define soft skills to include effective communication skills, appropriate professionalism, flexible problem-solving skills, and constructive teamwork;
- Require every Transfer and Career Studies Certificate program to identify four courses that will include at least one documented soft skill assignment. Each assignment will assess one of the four soft skills of communication, professionalism, problem solving and teamwork.
- Require every program to provide at least one experiential learning opportunity to be completed with reflection by students as a Capstone Experience for the program.

In order to enhance the ability of faculty to provide intentional experiential learning opportunities that engage students in the application soft skills, VHCC will:

- Engage in campus-wide recognition of soft skills and experiential learning;
- Provide professional development for faculty on best practices for teaching soft skills; and
- Support faculty as they develop and employ best practices for delivering experiential learning.

As a result of the QEP implementation, soft skills will be taught through direct instruction and experiential learning, and improvement will be measured through strategically scheduled pre- and post-assessments.

Virginia Highlands Community College is capable of full implementation and has specific assessment strategies in place to support this QEP and ultimately improve the student learning experience. Implementation is supported by manageable timelines, clearly defined roles of responsibility, and thoughtful budget itemization for sustainability.