

See Change – Sea Change: **Improving Engagement through Expanding Experiential Learning** **Internships – Study Away – Research**

Quality Enhancement Plan
Virginia Wesleyan College
Norfolk, Virginia

See Change – Sea Change provides students with opportunities to undertake internships, to study away, and to conduct research in order to improve student engagement and learning. This Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) builds upon an array of experiential learning initiatives that have transformed Virginia Wesleyan over the past decade. With this QEP, we will channel substantial resources into **Internships, Study Away, and Undergraduate Research (ISR)** to foster a culture of engagement that prepares students for fulfilling intellectual, personal, professional, and civic lives.

Buttressing *See Change – Sea Change* is our commitment to the liberal arts. Virginia Wesleyan embraces the values inherent in a liberal education – an education dedicated to developing the open-minded, disciplined reflection necessary for a life of intellectual growth, personal accomplishment, and social commitment. We strive to cultivate humanist scholars who practice respect and intellectual humility. *See Change – Sea Change* builds upon our liberal arts philosophy to nurture students' independent thinking skills that they apply to their world. Indeed, our classroom is not bounded by four walls. Our approach connects learning inside the classroom with learning outside of it, a relationship we see as intrinsically dialectical.

While *See Change – Sea Change* expands opportunities for students to undertake immersive ISR experiences that typically occur during the senior year, we are mindful that preparation is needed to maximize the learning potential of these activities. To this end, we created a **Levels System** that lays out developmental pathways of experiential learning. Our Levels System directs students from **Developing Level** to **Mastery Level** experiences. It serves as a guide for students to hone essential cognitive and personal skills, to incorporate ISR experiences into their courses of study, and to plan accordingly.

To realize *See Change – Sea Change*, we developed nine implementation plans:

- 1) Designate resources for students, including grants and instructional support.
- 2) Establish the **Summer High Impact Practice Program (SHIPP)**: A competitive program that offers opportunities to students to undertake ISR experiences.
- 3) Establish **Port Days**: Campus-wide celebrations of students' ISR experiences.
- 4) Establish **On Deck**: A co-curricular program of speakers, cultural events, fairs, and hands-on experiences related to ISR experiences.
- 5) Establish a **Crew Program**: Student ambassadors who share their experiences.
- 6) Designate resources to faculty to weave experiential learning into the curriculum.
- 7) Establish a transportation program to assist faculty with off-campus experiences.
- 8) Create webpages to disseminate *See Change – Sea Change*.
- 9) Establish **The Lighthouse: Center for Exploration and Discovery**, which creates an office and administrative structure to implement *See Change – Sea Change*.

Virginia Wesleyan has developed an assessment plan to measure the impact of the QEP on student learning. Our plan integrates both formative and summative assessment at both the Developing Level and Mastery Level. It also includes instruments to evaluate the extent to which the learning environment supports *See Change – Sea Change*. Finally, it creates an administrative structure to oversee assessment and disseminate assessment results to encourage ongoing curricular, instructional, and programmatic modifications.

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