

Huntingdon College – QEP Executive Summary
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Title: Vocation and the Sophomore-Year Experience

Institution: Huntingdon College

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Synopsis: “Vocation and the Sophomore-Year Experience,” Huntingdon College’s 2020–30 Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), focuses on engaging students in their sophomore year, through the lens of vocation and calling. (We use “vocation” here in the sense of a calling to any ethical career path or set of values, rather than in the senses that pertain either to trade-school education or to specifically ecclesiastical work.) The plan proposes to engage sophomore students in three primary ways, each of which is rooted in research-based best practices:

1. through a new one-credit-hour General Education course, “Introduction to Ethics and Vocation” (CALL200), which all sophomore students will take;
2. through “Sophomore Year Is Calling,” a focused day of vocation exploration, in which all sophomore students will engage shortly before the start of the semester in which they take CALL200; and
3. by having each sophomore student identify a Sophomore Guide from among the faculty and staff, with whom they will engage in meaningful reflection on their life and career plans.

The Plan has been developed as part of an institutional strategic-planning process that began in 2017; that process itself took as its cue findings arising from ongoing institutional assessment over the past decade. In particular, a focus on vocation and the sophomore experience arises from:

1. an existing institutional commitment to vocation and calling, grounded in the College’s historic identity as an institution of the United Methodist Church;
2. internal assessment of existing curricular vocation programming, indicating that students wanted to begin examining this topic during the sophomore year;
3. data suggesting that, while freshman–sophomore retention has been largely improving over the last decade, in part through the success of our 2010–20 QEP, much of which focused on the freshman year, sophomore–junior retention has not improved;
4. research suggesting that sophomore-year programming contributes to student retention and success in general; and
5. research suggesting that vocation-based programming has a disproportionately positive impact on student persistence to graduation.

After engaging with QEP programming, students at the end of their sophomore years should have met two learning outcomes: students will be able to articulate a personal vocation, and students will demonstrate an ability to reason ethically, which is a key element of the concept of vocation. In tandem with additional retention initiatives across the College, we will also measure the success of the QEP against our Strategic Plan’s target of 60% 1st–5th semester retention.