

Quality Enhancement Plan Executive Summary  
**Transparent Instruction in General Education and Gateway Classes for Student Success**

Through multiple ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes, Lincoln Memorial University (LMU) has identified the topic *Transparent Instruction in General Education and Gateway Courses for Student Success* for this Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). High-need and underserved students comprise a large proportion of the LMU undergraduate student body. Transparent Instruction has been shown to bolster student success in several ways: by building students' confidence, increasing their sense of belonging, and mitigating feelings of bewilderment or inadequacy early-on when they are first faced with college-level work. Transparent Instruction will help LMU address continued challenges in reaching improved levels of student success, as measured by the following: retention rates of freshmen students, especially first-generation college students (FGCS); general education learning; and graduation rates.

Scholarly literature defines underserved college students as those who fall into one or more of the following categories: first-generation college student (FGCS); low-income/low-socioeconomic status; or ethnically underrepresented (Gionoutsos and Winkelmes, 2016). At LMU, more than 50% of our fall 2017 entering students could reasonably be classified as underserved: 52.6% (182/346) FGCS; 52% (180/346) Pell eligible; and 8.4% (29/346) ethnically underrepresented.

We expect that, through this QEP on Transparent Instruction at LMU, we can help our students by clarifying learning expectations and tasks in a simple pedagogical intervention, and thus enable all students to acquire academic confidence, metacognition skills, and a sense of belonging in college, all of which will enable them to persist in their college goals. By helping our students attain these skills and attributes, we will enable them to improve their General Education competencies, which ultimately will result in improvements in our overall student retention and graduation rates. Even students themselves have identified transparency as a strategy for enhancing their success (Lang, 2015; Sadowski et al., 2018), which helps persuade us that Transparent Instruction will benefit our entire LMU learning community.

After an extensive literature review and in-depth evaluation of our Strategic Goals, LMU's QEP Steering Committee proposes to help our students succeed and to meet these institutional goals as described in this Plan, in accordance with SACSCOC Standard 7.2 (a-e). Our Committee has defined the following outcomes for this Plan:

- Student Success Outcome #1 – The QEP will improve student success in Gen-Ed and Gateway courses by offering more transparent instruction and more transparent syllabi.
- Student Success Outcome #2 – Implementation of the QEP will improve student success by increasing students' overall sense of belonging to the general learning community at Lincoln Memorial University.
- Faculty Training and Development Outcome – Implementation of the QEP will increase student success through faculty training and development on improving course assignments, instructions, and syllabi by learning how to offer Transparent Instruction. Training faculty who teach Gen-Ed and Gateway courses to implement Transparent Instruction in these courses will be the primary activity of the QEP.

**Contact Information**

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