

University of Louisiana Monroe
Executive Summary of the Quality Enhancement Plan
FOCUS on Biology



Formulate Observe Communicate Use Synthesize

The primary goal of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) at the University of Louisiana Monroe (ULM) is to improve performance and success of STEM and pre-health sciences freshmen students in two gateway biology courses: BIOL 1014, Fundamentals of Anatomy and Physiology I; and BIOL 1020, Principles of Biology. The QEP, FOCUS on Biology, will use high-impact practices to implement an innovative strategy focused on improving student learning by enhancing critical thinking. It was developed through input from a variety of constituents including faculty, staff, students, and community members. It also came out of an examination of institutional research that showed a majority of incoming freshmen take one of these two courses, which historically have a low pass rate. Finally, FOCUS on Biology upholds the university mission and vision to be a top university of excellence with an emphasis on the health sciences. The premise behind the design of this QEP is supported through research on strategies of active learning, course redesign, and metacognition.

FOCUS on Biology integrates an additional contact hour into all sections of the two targeted courses. This additional hour will be called a FOCUS session and will be taught by a biology faculty member who also serves as the QEP Coordinator. FOCUS sessions will meet once-a-week per class section and will use active learning to enhance content understanding and application as well as critical thinking skills. It is intended that the didactic lectures for each course will remain the same with the content delivery at the sole discretion of the instructor. The success of the QEP will be measured by performance in the course, on the *Critical Thinking Assessment Test (CAT)*, and on a set of locally developed questions embedded on the final exams of the courses.

This QEP is a commitment by the university to its students and their future employers to help students develop their critical thinking skills by engaging them in active learning and increasing student success in introductory biology courses. FOCUS sessions will enhance the environment of student learning to promote the mission and vision of the university and create a student-centered learning experience.

For more information, please contact:

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