



“Success through Inquiry: Inquire-Discovery-Engage” Quality Enhancement Plan Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vernon College is a constantly evolving institution, dedicated primarily to effective teaching and regional enhancement. With this dedication to teaching and to the community, the college encourages open inquiry, personal and social responsibility, critical thinking, and life-long learning for students, faculty, and other individuals within its service area. The collaboration of regional community service, adaption to student success, and the pursuit of inquiry within this institutional philosophy has culminated into Vernon College’s “Success through Inquiry” Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)--a component of the of the college’s accreditation reaffirmation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC).

Definition. “Success through Inquiry” is a faculty-led, student-centered, inquiry-based learning Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) initiative designed to enrich student educational experiences at Vernon College. Vernon College has adopted a standardized definition of IBL that centers on students’ ability to 1) *formulate* a question or hypothesis, 2) *collect* relevant and appropriate information or data and thus 3) evaluate that information for accuracy/relevance. Armed with new knowledge, students subsequently 4) *share* their findings in a visible, disciple specific manner (demonstration, presentation, research paper, etc.).

Implementation. IBL is a “best-practice” teaching strategy designed to facilitate independent and collaborative knowledge building. The objective of this active-learning QEP initiative is to embed IBL learning strategies into courses across the curriculum for all students, thus creating a student-centered culture of inquiry at Vernon College. Throughout the 5-year implementation, 10 cohorts of selected faculty will participate in an 8-week hybrid professional development course that leads them through the IBL process. At the conclusion of the course, completers have an inquiry-based learning implementation plan (IBLIP) ready for implementation within their courses for the following term.

Assessment. Through both direct and indirect measures, assessment of the QEP will be ongoing and meaningful. The QEP Director and the Director of Instructional Assessment will coordinate QEP assessment efforts for 1) the *evaluation* of the extent to which the established QEP goals and student learning outcomes have been achieved, and 2) the *identification* of opportunities for improvement in subsequent rounds of IBL implementation.

Benefits. Courses enhanced with IBL learning strategies provide students with opportunities to engage with and generate material in new and innovative ways while visibly collaborating/sharing content with peers. Simply, IBL in the classroom offers opportunities for enhanced critical thinking, communication and collaboration, student motivation and engagement—whereby equipping Vernon College graduates with marketable, professional skills for success upon graduation.