

STUDENTS AS RESEARCHERS:
AN UNDERGRADUTE RESEARCH QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN
William Carey University

QEP Executive Summary

The 2019 SACSCOC Reaffirmation process gives William Carey University the opportunity to improve student learning through Students as Researchers: An Undergraduate Research Quality Enhancement Plan. The plan demonstrates, in part, the University's commitment to continuous improvement across the institution. The Students as Researchers QEP rests on the University's mission statement, which emphasizes challenging "the individual student to excel in scholarship." In addition, the QEP expresses the University's core values, which include the following:

- We value a broad, comprehensive education which prepares one to live an abundant life.
- We value a deep and practical education which provides the skills to earn a living.
- We value the model of education of Dr. William Carey, which integrates faith and learning with living within the context of global concern.

A broad, comprehensive, deep, practical education is one that values not only mastery of received knowledge and skills but also inquiry, creativity, and discovery. These values support an emphasis on undergraduate research.

The definition adopted for Undergraduate research is:

an inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline.¹

Students within majors will engage in co-curricular research projects under the guidance of faculty mentors. Students who participate will make formal proposals, which must be accepted by the student's major department. A faculty mentor will guide the student in carrying out the project, which can extend beyond a single term. It is the intent of the QEP to have completed, finished research projects of varying modalities across the disciplines. Research efforts will culminate with formal research papers, poster presentations, literary works, or performances or exhibits of original work in the arts.

In the first year of the QEP, a pilot project will be conducted, in which five undergraduate programs will invite students to participate in research projects. The pilot project will allow assessment of a complete cycle of the research experience for a limited number of students and faculty mentors. In the second year, all undergraduate programs that elect to participate will invite students to submit research proposals. Each year's assessment of the program, beginning with assessment of the pilot year, will help the University refine the QEP to achieve the maximum learning experience for students.

¹ Rowlett, R.S., Blockus, L., & Larson, S. (2012). Characteristics of excellence in undergraduate research (COEUR), 2. Hensel, N. (Ed.). Retrieved from The Council of Undergraduate Research at www.cur.org