



The Bulldog Connection

Using High Impact Practices to Link the TWU Experience to the Future

Tennessee Wesleyan University Quality Enhancement Plan

Tennessee Wesleyan University has a rich history of educating students in the tradition of the liberal arts with a goal of preparing students to be leaders in their chosen professions. To aid students in understanding, valuing, and articulating the outcomes of their liberal arts education and its applicability to their career aspirations, TWU designed **The Bulldog Connection: Using High Impact Practices to Link the TWU Experience to the Future**. TWU has long engaged students through High Impact Practices (HIPs) which include opportunities for students to actively participate in learning experiences outside the traditional classroom. These practices are widely considered to have a positive impact on retention and graduation rates, but most campuses lacked a systematic approach to encourage student engagement and reflection.

The Bulldog Connection ensures that all first-time, full-time freshmen at TWU participate in at least four HIPs in which they intentionally create tangible products targeted toward the next step in their career. These tangible products are placed in an e-portfolio to provide students with materials suitable for use in attaining graduate school admission or obtaining their first post-baccalaureate job. Students will also participate in guided reflection connecting their course experience to their future career.

The four required HIPs include:

- A freshman experience series focused on the liberal arts and the TWU Gen Ed program value
- A minimum of two Cultural Diversity courses embedded in the general education curriculum
- A minimum of one major embedded HIP course offered within the major
- A senior capstone course

The goals for this QEP include:

- Students will participate in a minimum of four HIPs and accumulate at least one tangible, career-related product in an e-portfolio for each HIP experience.
- TWU students will be able to articulate the connection between the TWU experience and their career goals.
- Retention and graduation rates will increase due to student engagement in the QEP.
- Graduate school acceptance and employment rates will increase as a result of the QEP.

In order to determine progress towards these goals, student reflection will be assessed in the senior capstone using a growth rubric designed by TWU. Student engagement in the high impact practice courses will be tracked as will retention rates, graduation rates, and graduate school acceptance and employment rates for all first-time full-time freshmen that graduate from TWU.

University investment in the QEP includes two part-time co-directors (one faculty and one staff), funding for faculty development, funding for high impact course development, and funding for high-cost courses such as research and study abroad.

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