



Trailblazing: Shaping the Undergraduate Experience through Experiential Learning VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Overview

Trailblazing: Shaping the Undergraduate Experience through Experiential Learning provides students a comprehensive offering of experiential learning (EL) opportunities reflecting the diversity of our university and the local/regional communities that we serve; the educational, research, and service disciplines of our outstanding faculty; and, most importantly, the needs of our students. Included is an array of opportunities that are recognized as High Impact Practices (HIPs) by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) including First-Year Seminars and Experiences, Common Intellectual Experiences, Learning Communities, Undergraduate Research, Diversity/Global Learning, Service Learning & Community-Based Learning, Capstone Courses and Projects. Each of these contribute to students' sense of belonging, as well as personal growth and academic success.

The funding and resources VSU will commit to the QEP demonstrate the importance, meaning, value, and significance of experiential learning, which is especially crucial in reducing equity gaps for under-represented, underserved, and first-generational students. The impact of experiential learning on student engagement is well-documented for all students, but it is especially significant for underserved and first-generation students, which we see as an ethical imperative.

Valdosta State University will centralize the promotion, tracking, and measurement of student participation in experiential learning with a scaffolded approach focusing on three distinct goals for undergraduate students. Building upon opportunities already provided to students, the QEP will formalize a student-centered design drawing from both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs activities with incentives for students completing one or more opportunities during their college experience. The centralized process will also connect students' experiential learning with 21st century work skills by having students reflect on their experience and articulate the connection between the experiential learning opportunity and skill development. Experiential learning opportunities are reviewed by a standing QEP Coordinator and Experiential Learning Advisory Committee to ensure compliance with thoughtfully crafted guidelines and outcomes. Experiential Learning Faculty Ambassadors and an Experiential Learning Seed Grant Program are two additional components supporting the QEP.

QEP Goals

The QEP goals support VSU's strategic plan and are intended to be broad enough to apply to curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular programming. The three goals are as follows:

1. *Research and Creative Inquiry*
To provide students with intentional opportunities to apply problem-based learning to disciplinary and interdisciplinary application of scholarship outside a traditional academic setting.
2. *Global Citizenship*
To provide students with intentional opportunities to participate, interact, and explore individual and cultural differences.
3. *Servant Leadership and Community Engagement*
To provide students with intentional opportunities to reflect on their participation and articulate their personal growth and development.

Contact Information

Dr. Colin M. Walker, QEP Coordinator and Associate Professor of Mass Media
qep [at] valdosta.edu
<http://qep.valdosta.edu>