

Executive Summary

Flight Ready: A Career Readiness Quality Enhancement Plan Winthrop University, Rock Hill, South Carolina

Preparing students for a career is at the core of higher education's mission. Winthrop University's alumni were critical in identifying that among our data-informed institutional areas for improvement, enhancing career readiness should be the priority opportunity, one that also aligns with our substantial Pell-eligible and first-generation student populations. Prior to the rollout of this Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), *Flight Ready*, structured career readiness opportunities exist, but vary greatly throughout the institution. The purpose of this QEP is to ensure a proficiency across colleges and majors at the foundational level of career readiness, from which individual faculty, programs, and/or colleges within Winthrop University will continue to build and/or evolve.

Making use of the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) definition, Winthrop's QEP will define career readiness as, "a foundation from which to demonstrate requisite core competencies that broadly prepare the college educated for success in the workplace and lifelong career management." NACE's eight career readiness competencies begin with "Career and Self Development," which is the focus of *Flight Ready*. This competency includes "proactive development of oneself and one's career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and without one's organization." Simply, Winthrop graduates will understand both that they need to, and how to, manage their careers.

Flight Ready enhances career readiness through (1) the First-Year Experience (FYE), (2) faculty training, and (3) alumni mentorship. In Part One, a dedicated unit within the FYE "Principles of the Academy" course will provide instruction on the concept of career competencies and the principles of career and self-development; furthermore, all incoming students will complete The Strong Interest Inventory® in their first semester. In Part Two, Winthrop faculty will complete the Association of College and University Educators' (ACUE) Career Concentration training which informs both teaching strategies and faculty advising conversations. Finally, in Part Three, the Alumni Office and the Center for Career Development and Internships will lead the establishment of a university-wide alumni mentorship network open to all Winthrop students.

Flight Ready's student learning outcomes assure that students will be able to (1) connect relevant careers with identified personal strengths and interests and (2) develop themselves through continual learning and the navigation of career opportunities. The planned assessment of these student learning outcomes, along with assessing program outcomes, will support the institution's ability to gauge student learning and increase program effectiveness yearly, as well as beyond the five-year initiative. Assessment of student learning includes, but is not limited to, the following: a signature writing assessment within the FYE program (First Year), NSSE's Career & Workforce Preparation Topical Module (First Year and Senior Year), and alumni mentorship focus groups. Moreover, in addition to providing directly for student career and self-development, implementing *Flight Ready* strengthens the connections the institution has among its students, faculty, staff, alumni, and employers, making visible the interdependencies between college and workplace preparedness.

For questions regarding *Flight Ready*'s development or implementation, contact Dr. Meg Webber, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, at webberm@winthrop.edu.