



Seahawks Advancing Interdisciplinary Learning QEP Executive Summary

University of North Carolina Wilmington



Our Quality Enhancement Plan features thoughtful use of interdisciplinary learning to improve student learning in the areas of critical thinking, diversity, and global citizenship. It focuses on improving our students' higher-order thinking skills—especially their ability to examine complex local, global, and intercultural issues from multiple perspectives, analyze their own and others' assumptions, discuss how culture and society influence such assumptions, evaluate the relevance of context when presenting a position, provide evidence in support of that position, and acknowledge competing viewpoints.

Longitudinal assessment of general education data has shown that upper-division courses that address critical thinking, global citizenship and diversity fail to reach their target score (of 3 or 4 out of a 1-4 scale of benchmark-milestones-capstone), and this trend has been consistent every year for the past three cycles of assessment for these three learning goals. Our undergraduate students' work in upper-level courses does well in meeting the foundational factual knowledge component (understanding and describing facts about a theme or issue tied to global citizenship or diversity), but it fares poorly at the higher-order thinking skills associated with these complex concepts.

Our QEP addresses this student learning gap in higher-order thinking skills by encouraging the use of interdisciplinary learning across the curriculum. Our goal is to use interdisciplinary learning to improve undergraduate student learning about critical thinking, diversity, and global issues, specifically enhancing the following dimensions of three university-level student learning outcomes (SLOs):

1. Critical thinking
 - a. Influence of context and assumptions; and
 - b. Student's position: position, perspective, thesis, or hypothesis.
2. Diversity
 - a. Knowledge of diverse perspectives and their roots; and
 - b. Evaluating claims and theories about diversity.
3. Global citizenship
 - a. Knowledge of connections within systems; and
 - b. Use of diverse cultural frames of reference and alternative perspectives.

To meet this goal, our QEP:

1. Funds interdisciplinary teams organized around crucial questions that require integrative, interdisciplinary learning and that directly address one of the three targeted learning outcomes: critical thinking, diversity, or global citizenship.
2. Offers grants for individual initiatives in interdisciplinary pedagogy and curriculum development around these three outcomes.
3. Organizes workshops and presentations that explicate how successful strategies and best practices in interdisciplinary learning can address critical thinking, diversity, and global citizenship.
4. Facilitates and encourages interdisciplinary collaborations among faculty, staff, and students.

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