



UofL's 2017 Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP):

Find Your Fit in the Second Year: Inquire, Explore, Discover

Those who are interested in learning more about how to participate in the development of the QEP, including faculty who are interested in teaching one of the QEP-related, second-year seminars, are invited to send an email to QEP2017@louisville.edu

WHAT IS A QEP?

Developing a quality enhancement plan, or QEP, is part of our institution's commitment to the reaffirmation process for SACS-COC to be completed in early 2017.

The 2017 QEP Development Committee began meeting in early 2015 to examine and analyze university data with a focus on the specific hurdles faced by many undergraduate students: navigating the challenges of the second year and successfully transitioning into the third year, which appears to be a moment of critical weakness in the university's persistence plans.



THE SECOND YEAR AS A CRITICAL TRANSITION POINT

The second year is a crossroads at which many students struggle with indecision around their academic major and career choice, lack of connectedness, and intensified academic standards; these struggles can lead to general dissatisfaction with, and disengagement from, academic life.

The QEP Development Committee identified a noticeable persistence pattern in our second year undergraduate students. Between the second and third year, our exploratory students are retained at a significantly lower rate than students with declared majors.

At UofL, we use the term “exploratory” to identify students who have not declared a major (“undecided”) or who have not earned admittance to the academic unit that shelters the program of their choice (“pre-unit”).

Research on this subset of students demonstrates that the typical challenges around “academic fit” and satisfaction in the second year can be exacerbated for students like our exploratory students who have not yet clarified a meaningful academic course of action, including declaring a suitable major.

The Find Your Fit project is an opportunity to foster a campus-wide conversation about student learning and student success in the crucial second year that can have long-term implications for the support of our undergraduate population inside and outside the classroom.

The data suggests that approximately 25% of UofL students (and nearly 50% of students in Arts and Sciences) enter our institution each year as exploratory students and stand to benefit from a structured learning opportunity in order to enhance their ability to thrive academically, to discover an appropriate disciplinary home at the university, and to persist through critical transition points and challenges of the second year and beyond.

The Find Your Fit initiative is a project with a 5-year span to design, implement and assess a 3-credit seminar course focused on academic and personal development of exploratory students.

Exploratory students will be recruited for and advised into the seminar, but the course will be open to other second-year students. The QEP course will initially be offered as an elective seminar in the Department of Counseling and Human Development.

Overall learning goals of the seminar: *Students will self-author their own learning through demonstrated confidence in their reasoning abilities, articulated awareness of habits of thinking and critical thinking dispositions (which are essential to their academic success), reaching a level of decidedness regarding their major/career path and be interested/invested/engaged in ownership of their own learning.*

These two subgoals will be the formulation of learning outcomes:

- 1. Intellectual Independence** – Demonstrate confidence in their reasoning abilities, become aware of habits of thinking that are essential to their success, and be interested in their own learning.

Students will:

- Exhibit increased self-efficacy for academic development/learning (*academic self-efficacy*) and social integration (*sense of belonging*);
- Focus on thinking for themselves through ongoing critical reflections about their thinking in relation to an academic task;
- Explain self-regulatory behaviors that increase self-directed learning through application in class activities and group presentations (*Make a psychological investment in their learning*);
- Engage and think proactively about their own thinking/reasoning process in relation to personal decision-making (*academic self-efficacy*).

- 2. Major and Career Clarity** – Students will gain a greater sense of meaning of decidedness and purpose through the exploration of their own major and career choices.

Students will:

- Exhibit increased feeling of acceptance and membership in a group (*belonging within an institution*);
- Actively engage in educationally purposeful tasks (*we want students to self-identify their own learning in academic tasks*);
- Recognize vocation as the development of one's self for and beyond career;
- Engage in strategic planning to create multiple pathways to reach academic and life goals by completing group and individual planning projects.

Integrated into the seminar activities and assessments will be individualized academic and career advising delivered by experts on campus.



GET INVOLVED

Faculty who want to assist with the project design, help develop the curriculum, or teach the new QEP seminar are encouraged to contact Patty Payette or Riaan van Zyl, co-chairs of the QEP Development Committee, at the QEP email address below.

For more information about the QEP in development, including an online survey for members of the UofL community to provide feedback, visit uofl.me/QEP2017.

Contact us at QEP2017@louisville.edu