

Birmingham-Southern College



Enhancing learning through experiential learning – student-faculty research, internships, service-learning

Birmingham-Southern College has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan that aligns with the institutional mission and reinforces the student-centered focus of the College's strategic plan. Broad campus involvement facilitated the identification of a topic, the development of a plan, and the implementation of an initiative to enhance student learning. The College's QEP provides students with opportunities to engage in experiential learning through student-faculty research, internships, and service-learning. Named **rise³**, the acronym reflects the initiative's components – research, internship, service – while highlighting the “experience” aspect of the College's overall branding of “Explore, Experience, Excel” (**e³**).

Rise³ engages students to think critically and creatively within an experiential learning opportunity, deepening learning and intensifying the educational impact of the experience. Courses and projects are intentionally designed to engage students in critical reflection, integrating the critical lenses of academic knowledge, personal growth, and civic engagement. Guided by measurable student learning outcomes, rise³ allows students to explore the broader implications of experiential learning.

Every aspect of the initiative has been purposefully and strategically designed to allow for maximum impact on student learning and long term sustainability. Informed by an extensive review of the experiential learning literature, analysis of best practices, and attendance at appropriate conferences and institutes, the initiative has a solid foundation. Rise³ is operationalized by enhancing the number and quality of experiential learning opportunities for students, supporting faculty and staff with professional development, and fostering an institutional infrastructure to support the initiative.

Success of the initiative is measured through an assessment plan that addresses student learning outcomes, program outcomes, and alignment with institutional effectiveness. Direct and indirect measures, which gather quantitative and qualitative data, assist in formative and summative assessment. Additionally, the plan was developed with a realistic understanding of the institution's human resource capacity and fiscal realities, thus contributing to the viability of the initiative.

The College has embraced rise³ as a transformational initiative. Experiential learning enables BSC students to appreciate the value of a liberal arts education and its application to real world experiences. Building upon these experiences, students refine their academic and career goals, as they prepare for life after BSC. Long-term sustainability of this enhanced collegiate experience will distinguish the institution and its graduates.

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