

## **“Strengthening the Quality of the Freshman Year Experience through Student Engagement”**

### **Johnson C. Smith University**

Beginning Fall 2006, Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU) implemented its Quality Enhancement Plan to *Strengthen the Quality of the Freshman Year Experience through Student Engagement*. The overall goal of the JCSU Quality Enhancement Plan is “to improve academic achievement and persistence by strengthening student engagement.” To meet this goal, the University committed itself to the following objectives:

1. Increasing student engagement in active and collaborative learning.
2. Increasing student engagement-based learning activities in critical thinking in freshman year courses.
3. Increasing student engagement in assessment.
4. Increasing student engagement in linking current learning to planning for the future.

Presently, the freshman curriculum is organized into the Freshman Academy and has at its core Learning Communities and active learning. The JCSU Quality Enhancement Plan provides a new and innovative dimension to Freshman Academy activities and outcomes by directing more intentionality toward increasing student engagement. Learning outcomes expected from increased engagement in the four objectives include higher scores on cross-course integrated assignments, improved higher order thinking skills, the ability to self-assess one’s level of learning and take appropriate actions for improvement, and a clearer understanding of the relevance of freshman year courses for future individual success. The University views these learning outcomes from increased engagement to be transformative and empowering for its students.

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