



Loyola University New Orleans announces its Quality Enhancement Plan, **Discerning Minds: Experience. Reflect. Transform.**

(<http://www.loyno.edu/qep>). The QEP is designed to improve student learning experiences within four high impact experiential learning activities to which large numbers of Loyola students have access: Collaborative Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities (CRSCA), Internships, Service Learning, and Study Abroad. The overarching goal of the QEP is to offer students the opportunity for active, hands-on learning, and to reflect on these activities to help them understand the transformative nature of learning through

experience. Experiential learning encourages a deeper understanding of subject matter than is possible through classroom study alone and builds students' capacity for critical thinking and knowledge application. While students currently have access to these experiential learning activities, some areas are stronger than others and all can benefit from strengthened infrastructure, planning and assessment. The QEP will build on strong areas while purposefully targeting less-developed programs, significantly strengthening all with faculty professional development, resources and data driven improvements.

Student Learning Outcomes are: (1) Students will describe their experience, including observations, reactions, and feelings generated. (Examples include, but are not limited to: critiquing the assumptions and attitudes they and others bring to the experiential learning component; comparing and contrasting their expected learning with their actual learning derived from experiential learning activities.); (2) Students will reflect on and articulate connections between experiential learning activities and coursework. (Examples include, but are not limited to: connecting/integrating classroom theories with real-world experiences, critically examining academic knowledge in light of evidence and experience, and/or critically reflecting on the relationship between experiential learning and their academic experience.); and (3) Students will reflect on the impact that experiential learning activities have had and will have on their relationships to the world in which they live. (Examples include, but are not limited to: applying theories and ideas studied and/or skills developed at the university in new and different contexts; examining how this experience has broadened their understanding of the discipline and the world of themselves as learners; synthesizing the meaning of the experience with their current and future learning; integrating experience as a means to shape and frame vocational and career direction and life goals.)

Discerning Minds uses a variety of assessment strategies, including both direct and indirect methods aligned with each Student Learning Outcome (SLO). Faculty and students participated in preliminary activities to determine feasibility of assessment methods. The Loyola community is eager and energized to grow students' abilities to connect course material within experiential learning activities. Through improved teaching and instruction, purposeful activities and reflection assignments, student learning and academic performance will be maximized.