

Research that Reaches Out – Integrating Research and Service at Mercer University



<http://qep.mercer.edu>

Mercer University is pleased to present ***Research that Reaches Out***, a Quality Enhancement Plan that advances the mission and strategic plan of the University while significantly enhancing the student learning experience. The QEP is specifically designed to equip students in our traditional residential undergraduate program with the skills required to engage in sophisticated research aimed at solving real problems facing humankind. The guiding goals are to (1) *Enhance student learning through service-focused research* and (2) *Foster a culture of civic engagement through scholarship and service*. We believe that the successful implementation of this plan will help us achieve our ultimate aim: to inspire students to use their gifts and talents to live lives of meaning and purpose.

Research that Reaches Out was chosen through a rigorous screening process. A slate of committees reflecting broad-based University involvement, under the leadership of the QEP Director and the Associate Director, will guide its implementation.

The fundamental model supporting ***Research that Reaches Out*** is a curricular approach entitled **Expose, Explore, and Express**. Implemented over the four-year undergraduate curriculum, this model will move each student cohort through a three-step progressive sequence: 1. *Exposing 95 %* of the students to the process of analyzing and solving community-related problems; 2. Guiding at least **50%** to *explore* the application of research to problems facing humankind; and 3. Engaging at least **25%** of the students to *express* through additional research a solution they have developed to such a problem. Expose, Explore, and Express is designed to be developmental in nature. Student learning outcomes achieved at one level should be demonstrated at any subsequent level. Expectations for student performance on the outcomes also increase as students move up through the levels.

Two methods created to unify Expose, Explore, and Express across the traditional undergraduate population are Grand Challenges and Signature Assignments. A series of annual "Grand Challenges" - broadly conceptual curriculum themes - will focus the entire Mercer community on issues that are relevant on a global scale but can also be translated into both classroom and integrated service and research opportunities for students. Grand Challenges include Social Responsibility, Economic Well-Being, and Personal Well-Being. Signature Assignments for first-year students can be targeted at the current Grand Challenge theme and are intended to demonstrate student knowledge of a specific concept or skill related to the goals of the QEP.

Mercer is confident that ***Research that Reaches Out*** will be a transformative experience in the education of Mercer's traditional undergraduates and will contribute new best practices to the higher education community.

For more information, contact: Dr. Bridget Trogden, QEP Director and Associate Professor of Chemistry, trogden_bg@mercer.edu