



Quality Enhancement Plan Title: *Life Beyond PC – Inquire, Decide, Engage, Achieve (IDEA)*

Institution: Presbyterian College

Contact: J. Alicia Askew, Dean of Academic Programs, jaaskew@presby.edu

Executive Summary:

Presbyterian College's Quality Enhancement Plan, *Life Beyond PC*, is designed to enrich the student learning experience by providing very focused opportunities to develop problem-solving skills. This QEP integrates academic and vocational exploration via a revised first-year exploration course, a new second-year exploration course, and a senior-year Signature Work.

Curricular changes related to the development of problem-solving skills are vital when a liberal arts education is under increasing pressure to respond to the needs of the rapidly changing workplace. Individuals who are sufficiently comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity, who have a high need for cognitive stimulation, and who have advanced integrative skills typically are better problem solvers than those lacking in such orientations and skills. While intellectual resilience is a skill developed over the course of a lifetime, the seeds of its evolution may be sown through an exploration of self and vocational potential in the first years of young adulthood. According to institutional assessment data, the freshman and sophomore years of the college experience are the years during which the College should focus its efforts in teaching and building problem-solving skills if it is to deliver better results for students at their senior level.

The cornerstone first-year exploration course at PC has been modified to include consideration of self and vocation as a “complex problem” to be addressed and successfully managed during the college years. In this course, students will be formally introduced to effective problem-solving practices. A keystone one-credit second-year seminar has been added to the curriculum to reinforce the knowledge, values, and skills developed in the first-year exploration course, to apply the problem-solving process to an issue in a field of interest, and to explore vocation and career choices. The capstone Signature Work provides students the opportunity to apply knowledge from a major field of inquiry to a complex issue in the field in which they plan to work after graduation. One new staff position been created: a QEP Director will manage the implementation and assessment of the QEP, with the assistance of the QEP Implementation and Assessment Team.

College students question who they are, what they want to do, and which academic fields of inquiry will support their individual pursuits. Even for the most resolute student, these concerns inevitably contain uncertainty and ambiguity. The QEP provides students ways to engage directly with their uncertainty and, from this engagement, explore and make plans for their futures. The uncertainty and ambiguity involved in making academic and vocational decisions provides students both practical means and direct incentives for developing problem-solving skills. The short-term benefit is the integration of vocation-based assignments and problem-based learning into the curriculum, starting from a student's first year at the College and extending for the duration of their PC tenure. Students will gain value from their experiences at PC as they develop problem solving skills over the course of their college career. It is expected that long-term benefits to the College itself include increased retention, especially of sophomore-year students, and an improvement in the abilities of all students to identify, analyze, and manage complex problems.