

SHENANDOAH UNIVERSITY
Executive Summary of the Quality Enhancement Project

Going Global: First Year Seminar

The Going Global First Year Seminar's mission is to deepen and expand a feeling of belonging to the global community whereby Shenandoah University's students realize their personal contribution to a community and the world. In alignment with the university mission statement to "educate and inspire individuals to be critical, reflective thinkers... committed to making responsible contributions", the first year seminar imbeds the university core value of "respect for diverse cultures, experiences, and perspectives." This seminar is a required course in the "Individual in the World" domain of the General Education Program. Three learning objectives utilized for the course include Multiple Perspectives, defined as the ability to remember, understand, and apply cultural traits that are different from one's own; Global Awareness focused on interdependence, i.e., reliance on cultural traits, knowledge, natural resources, and/or physical objects from around the world; and Personal Engagement concentrated on the development of world-view mindfulness.

Although there are multiple sections of the seminar (over 20 sections per term) with a different topic and faculty member, each course must meet the learning outcomes and objectives. A variety of assessment instruments will be utilized such as objective tests, essays, papers, final projects, common readings and assignments along with program-wide rubrics. A random sampling of student final projects from all sections of the First-year seminar will be reviewed by the First Year Seminar Advisory Board (FYSAB). Direct behavioral and affective measure of personal engagement will be realized through the creation of a student plan of action for "world view mindfulness." Students choose among the variety of university academic and co-curricular activities which support the development of world view mindfulness within the student action plan (i.e., Global Citizen Project, Global Experiential Learning, Mission trips, International, Education Week, etc.). Consequently, the student action plan serves as a direct measure of multiple perspectives and global awareness while demonstrating application and analysis of those learning objectives as a stated part of the general education electronic portfolio.

Assessment of the First Year Seminar will be part of the institutional effectiveness program administered by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment which encompasses both indirect and direct methods of assessment using a mixed method approach. Using assessment tools (i.e., GPI, NSSE, MAPP) and longitudinal cohort data on first-time full-time students, Shenandoah University will close the loop and demonstrate its commitment to continuous improvement in the areas of course, program, and institutional effectiveness. Data will continue to be collected throughout the students' college experience to provide longitudinal tracking to measure the extent learning outcomes are attainable. Finally, an important measure of the overall success of the first year seminar will be an external review by two consultants.

Finally, faculty participants undergo training in assessment, active teaching strategies, student learning styles and demographics, and creative use of technology in the classroom. Preparation for the fall semester includes faculty training during May and June. At this time, assessment results are reviewed and evaluated with efforts to further refine learning outcomes. Participating faculty receive numerous incentives as part of the program: stipends for the training, budgets for class field trips or guest presenters, and a student mentor as an assistant in the classroom.

This learning assessment project will impact up to 500 first year students annually. The QEP program will take place over a period of 5 years (fiscal year 2009-10 to fiscal year 2014-15), beginning with an implementation phase in Year One, ending with full implementation by the end of Year Five.

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