

**Engaged Learning Beyond the Classroom - Executive Summary**  
Southern Methodist University  
Quality Enhancement Plan  
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The focus of SMU's Quality Enhancement Plan is on student learning beyond the classroom. Engaged Learning Beyond the Classroom (Engaged Learning) provides all undergraduate students, while they are at SMU, opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills of their SMU education in extensive experiential learning activities. Activities include scholarly research, community service, professional internships, or other creative, entrepreneurial endeavors of their choice.

***Vision:** SMU undergraduates will build on their formal classroom education through participation in structured experiential learning beyond the classroom, which will help them develop a significant and sophisticated understanding of the ways in which the context of the world community intersects with disciplinary knowledge.*

***Mission:** Engaged Learning provides an institutional framework for undergraduate students to complement their classroom education through engagement in research, service, internships and other activities with the people and organizations of the Dallas-Fort Worth community and beyond.*

Engaged Learning complements the SMU strategic plan which includes university-wide efforts to improve the undergraduate University Curriculum, Residence Life and SMU Abroad programs, emphasizing the increasingly interdisciplinary, reciprocal and experiential nature of higher learning. Engaged Learning coordinates and connects existing undergraduate experiential learning activities and provides services to enhance students' engagement activities, intellectual maturity, personal growth and possible career development. Engaged Learning helps the university strengthen and expand partnerships through student involvement in projects in the local and global communities.

The distinguishing feature of Engaged Learning is the Unbridled Learning Project program. It takes Engaged Learning to the next level, challenging students to consciously connect and deepen their learning in the classroom through practical experiences in real world settings. The projects can happen anywhere as long as they include extensive involvement with an individual, organization or community outside of SMU.

The projects may be initiated by any member of the SMU community, but it is the student who develops and drives the project. The projects may be new or ongoing. Students are asked two questions: What do you care about? and What are you going to do about it? Then students are encouraged to make it happen if new or make it count if ongoing.

The Unbridled Learning Project has five essential components: (1) involvement of a mentor, a SMU faculty, staff or other qualified external field expert in the discipline or professional area of the activity, (2) well-developed proposal, addressing the activity, expectation for impact on the host organization and the learning objective of the student, (3) engagement in the proposed activity plus regular mentor contact and responses to active reflection prompts, (4) presentation of the results at the Engaged Learning Forum or other professional venue, and (5) preparation of a final report suitable for publication.

All Unbridled Learning Projects, approved by the Engaged Learning Advisory Committee, are eligible for funding via the Unbridled Learning Grants program. Students who successfully complete projects have their work published by Central University Libraries Digital Repository and receive recognition of their accomplishment on their SMU transcripts.

Through careful program evaluation and student project assessment, SMU will be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the initiative throughout the 5-year implementation period, 2011-2016.

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