

Quality Enhancement Plan
University of Houston

Executive Summary

As a diverse metropolitan research university, the University of Houston recognized the need to develop a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that links our research and education missions. We further recognized that we must equip traditional and non-traditional students with the skills necessary to be life-long learners in order to compete in a changing world. We have embraced the opportunity to develop a student-centered QEP that is transformative and addresses the needs of the University's diverse student population. The *Learning through Discovery Initiative* will promote an undergraduate research culture on campus by enriching the quality of education for our students while engaging alumni and the Houston community.

Broad-Based Community Involvement

The UH QEP evolved as a result of a multi-year, campus-wide topic selection and planning effort involving faculty, staff, students, and alumni. The broad-based community involvement in the planning process ensures that the programs will benefit all of our students, both traditional and non-traditional, and will receive widespread support and participation. Key partners and stakeholders on and off campus continue to play significant roles during the implementation phase.

Transforming the Undergraduate Experience through Research

The comprehensive *Learning through Discovery Initiative* aims to enhance student learning by 1) providing research-related skills training and 2) expanding undergraduate research opportunities. The training and research experiences that the QEP fosters will address each stage of the research process, and will lead to improved competencies in several areas of student learning, including critical thinking, information literacy, research ethics, and communication skills. Through participation in research-based courses, research-related team projects, and a growing number of interdisciplinary research opportunities, students will learn how to manage and work collaboratively on team projects. Students will have a fundamental understanding of research and its importance in society through participation in new research awareness core courses and co-curricular activities. Moreover, the *Learning through Discovery Initiative* will positively impact student recruitment and retention by engaging students in active learning while building mentoring relationships with faculty and connecting them to the rich resources of vibrant metropolitan Houston.

The UH QEP is multi-tiered and includes efforts to expand and support mentored research as well course-based research. In an effort to extend the reach of the QEP to the majority of our undergraduates, programs and resources will be developed at the department, college, and university level. The cornerstone of the QEP initiative is a Research-Supportive Curriculum Development Grant Program designed to encourage faculty, departments, and colleges to initiate curricular innovations focused on research-based pedagogies. The program supports integration of research into the core curriculum, writing-in-the-discipline courses, and courses in major fields of study including capstone and practicum courses. The program enables faculty to bring the real world into the classroom - introducing students to the excitement of discovery, innovation, and research, and increasing the opportunities for them to participate in hands-on projects. Through undergraduate research, faculty-student mentoring relationships will help students better understand the research process and develop a deeper appreciation of their area of study. Moreover, co-curricular activities and programs, such as a Work-Study Research Internship Program, a guest speaker program, expanded venues for research dissemination, a travel fellowship program, and student workshops and tutorials will provide additional reinforcement of research-related skills. Thus, both curricular and co-curricular programs will enhance the research-readiness of our students – strengthening their research-related skills, preparing them to engage in undergraduate research, and ultimately giving them the skills needed to compete and succeed in today's world.

For information on the development and implementation of the UH QEP, please visit our website or contact:

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