University of South Carolina
Quality Enhancement Plan Proposal (Summary)

USConnect: Student Empowerment through Integrative Learning*

The University of South Carolina's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), USConnect, focuses on empowering students through integrative learning in which they synthesize a strong general education background, preparation in their major area, and beyond-the-classroom experiences. At USC, integrative learning focuses on engaging students in a broad array of in- and beyond-the-classroom experiences and supporting students in making productive **connections** between theory and practice. Students' grounding in diverse learning experiences and real world contexts orients students to consider a variety of perspectives as they apply their learning and experiences to solve problems, make sound decisions, and create unique solutions.

As defined by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU), integrative and applied learning is an "understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus".

The first step in the process is to assist students in selecting experiences which will enrich their lives and academic work. While USC students are already engaged in a wide variety of beyond-the-classroom experiences, this means making learning opportunities, and the connections between them, transparent so that students select experiences *intentionally*. So, for example, it would be easy for a student interested in the Mediterranean to be aware of the Spanish Language House (a Living and Learning Community), faculty members who have connections to the region, relevant course work, upcoming events (e.g., seminar on Greek cooking, visiting scholar lecture), and opportunities for study abroad in the region. Support for making and tracking beyond-the-classroom experiences at USC is provided through an innovative technology platform that draws from databases of experiences, academic resources, user interests, and other information to provide access and make recommendations to users regarding opportunities that meet their needs and interests.

Beyond-the-classroom experiences at USC include two major categories. The first is the broad array of experiences that may be brief or one-time occurrences such as attendance at a lecture by a world leader in community involvement or participation in the Martin Luther King Service Day. These experiences provide breadth of exposure to students and introductions to many possible paths. They are primarily assessed through student self reports and surveys. The second category of experiences includes those which are more extensive, systematically integrate student reflection on the experience with academic learning, and assess student ability to make in-depth connections. These experiences are organized under the four main pillars of USC's undergraduate education (Research, Service Learning, International Studies, and Leadership) and discipline-specific experiences (e.g., internships).

Faculty and staff support students in constructing meaning from their experiences over time by creating opportunities for comparing, analyzing, and evaluating classroom and beyond-the-classroom experiences. Ultimately students are challenged to apply the learning from their experiences to making personal and professional decisions at the culmination of their academic careers. The broader view developed by students who have engaged in diverse experiences in ways that support reflection, analysis, and synthesis of experiences equips graduates to assume leadership roles both during college and as they move beyond their undergraduate experience.

* QEP working title August 2010

USC Columbia QEP Assessment

Student Performance Assessments:

Learning Outcome	Year 1 Students	Years 2 Students	Year 3 Students	Year 4 Students	Post-Grad
Students will engage in and reflect on learning opportunities within and beyond the classroom in the context of academic experiences.	-Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) -aggregated data from UNIV 101, First Year Reading, and/or Orientation assessments (re knowledge of beyond-the-classroom options and integrative learning and dispositions to participate)	-n and % students beyond-the-classroom (BTC) participation in courses and other venues including those that structure reflection on integration of learning experiences (include demographic data) -students' survey ratings or other assessments of their experiences (e.g., MLK service day survey, internship surveys) -selected performance data (e.g., aggregated data on evaluation of course assignments) of students ability to make connections between BTC and academic experiences (possibly assessment data from CC VESR* outcome) -student focus group data -assessment/survey of BTC providers -course evaluation data (targeted items on BTC experiences)	-n and % student participation in BTC courses and other venues including those that structure reflection on integration of learning experiences -students' survey ratings or other assessments of their experiences -selected performance data of students ability to make connections between BTC and academic experiences -student focus group data -assessment/survey of BTC providers -course eval. data	-National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)	
Students will synthesize USC-within-and-beyond the classroom experiences over time and apply resulting knowledge, values, and skills to personal and professional decision-making.		-student focus group data -assessment/survey of BTC providers -course evaluation data (targeted items on integration of experiences) -survey of advisors	-student focus group data -assessment/survey of BTC providers -course evaluation data -survey of advisors	-culminating exp. data of student ability to synthesize exp. & apply to decision-making (including data from CC Integrative Courses such as data comparison w/Yr. 1-2 VESR data) -student exit survey data -Career Center data	-post-grad survey

*CC VESR: Carolina Core learning outcome on *Values, Ethics, and Social Responsibility* which is to "examine different kinds of social and personal values, analyzing the ways in which these are manifested in communities as well as individual lives".

Process Evaluation:

Institutional Objectives	Methods of Assessment	Criteria for Success
1. Identify existing beyond-the-classroom (BTC) experiences and coordinate (i.e., enhance, reorganize) in order to optimize high quality beyond-the-classroom experiences offerings	Numbers, types, and descriptions of BTC experiences Existing USC resources: Offices of International Studies, Leadership, Service Learning, UG Research; Compilation of University Engagements—pamphlet and http://www.sc.edu/outreach/; Data from application for Carnegie Community Engagement.	Database reflecting BTC experiences by campus, college, university division, etc.: x* number experiences. Feedback from BTC leaders (e.g., Div. of Student Affairs, faculty) indicating strong awareness of the overall context of BTC experiences and indicating changes to enhance experiences
2. Create and implement user-friendly system to help students identify appropriate experiences, connect to others with similar interests, and collect artifacts	Aggregated data on student use of developed systems Existing USC resources: Center for Digital Humanities, University Technology Services, Computer Science faculty, Registrar's Office.	Well-established system incorporating x% of available experiences and a thorough keyword/search function x% students with access to system and x% students utilizing system (include demographic information on participants/non-participants)
3. Create an effective system(s) for tracking student participation (e.g., course designators, co-curricular transcript, recognitions of distinction)	Faculty, staff, and student feedback via USC governance structures (e.g., Campus Advisors Network, Student Senate) and surveys of faculty, staff, and students regarding awareness and use of system(s) and recommendations for change Existing USC resources: Registrar's Office, Academic Program Liaisons, Assoc/Asst Dean's Council, Career Center (and technology sources listed in #2).	Well-established systems x% of students enrolled in designated courses, and/or reflecting BTC experience in academic and co-curricular transcripts, and/or receiving recognitions x% of faculty, staff, students familiar with systems and rating systems as purposeful/useful Positive committee reviews
4. Revise UNIV 101, First Year Reading Experience, and/or Orientation to provide (a) introduction to BTC opportunities and integrative learning, and (b) baseline data on student knowledge of same.	See student performance assessments Current USC Resources: Offices of UNIV 101, First Year Reading Experience, and Orientation.	

Institutional Objectives	Methods of Assessment	Criteria for Success
5. Provide professional development (PD) for faculty/staff related to integrative learning, BTC experiences, methods of assessing student learning that integrate within and beyond classroom experiences (e.g., e-portfolios).	Number and variety of workshops and professional learning communities offered Participation rates via the Center for Teaching Excellence, UNIV 101 training, and other venues Faculty survey on effectiveness of PD Current Resources—Center for Teaching Excellence, UNIV 101 Training	x number professional development experiences offered with x % faculty participating PD offered on all QEP topics (e.g., integrative learning, assessing BTC) x% faculty responses indicating increased knowledge/use of integrative learning and BTC experiences
6. Identify existing culminating/capstone experiences that assess the integration of within and BTC experiences by major, increase the number of majors which use these assessments, and enhance the quality of assessment	Numbers, types, and descriptions of assessments (e.g., portfolios, research projects, papers, examinations)	x number/percentage of majors that include culminating assessment, x number/percentage of students assessed, student performance data indicating substantive assessment of student ability to synthesize and apply experiences.

Notes: *x serves as a place holder which will be replaced with target numbers pending review of benchmark data and additional input from the Carolina community (i.e., faculty, staff, students)