

Connect, Reflect, Project: Communication for Career Preparation

University of Central Florida Quality Enhancement Plan Concept Paper

Executive Summary

Description: Students' career preparation, whether their first destination is the workforce or continued education, is a crucial part of students' education. Rather than added-on training that students access only upon approaching graduation, career preparation should be integrated across their learning experiences and span throughout their time in college.

This proposed QEP would focus on communication (writing, speech, and multimodal) as both a set of competencies that are valuable in every discipline and field and as a means of fostering and integrating students' learning across curricular, student involvement, and other contexts (Knoblauch and Brannon, 1983).

Vision: QEP initiatives would encompass and connect three major dimensions of undergraduates' education: 1) synthesis of learning across the GEP with the aid of an e-portfolio; 2) more specialized disciplinary and professional training, including experiential learning; 3) additional support structures for career exploration and preparation. In addition to emphasizing communication as a set of competencies and a mode of learning, QEP initiatives would leverage several of UCF's acclaimed programs and capabilities; these include Writing across the Curriculum, experiential learning, and simulation technologies such as TeachLivE simulations. Key partners in implementing this QEP include academic programs, support offices such as Career Services and the Center for Distributed Learning, and co-curricular programs such as those sponsored by the Office of Student Involvement.

This QEP topic would address a clear workforce preparation need, integrate and extend existing initiatives and infrastructure, build on the previous QEP's emphasis on information fluency, and enable focused yet broadly applicable learning and assessment.

Congruence with university's mission and strategic plan: Working toward the strategic goals of offering Florida's best undergraduate education and strengthening the quality of community and business preparation, the vision of this QEP is for UCF to produce Florida's best-prepared graduates for the workforce and to become Florida's premiere communication and writing university.

Foundation: Students' career preparation in college can increase their engagement and success on the job. A recent Gallup-Purdue (Great, 2014) national study of college graduates found that career preparation in college made them nearly three times as likely to be engaged at work, but that less than a third "strongly agree" that their education prepared them for life outside of college. A number of employer surveys have found that respondents view communication and other "soft" skills to be the most important for workplace success, including the ability to learn on the job (Berrett, 2013; NACE 2012; College Board 2004). At the same time, employers have found graduates to be under-prepared in communication skills, recommending that colleges teach these skills through an integration of traditional and experiential learning (*Chronicle* 2012; AACU, 2010).

UCF students need additional opportunities and support for learning to communicate effectively; for using writing and communication to synthesize and apply the learning they do across the GEP, degree programs, and co- and extra-curricular activities; for adapting their communication skills to professional contexts; and for effectively conveying their communication and other skills to employers and other audiences.