

**Enhanced Student Engagement**  
University of Central Florida  
Quality Enhancement Plan Concept Paper

Executive Summary

**Description:** When students are provided opportunities to engage in their communities, the end result is a well-rounded citizen who has the necessary soft skills and academic knowledge to succeed in life. Engagement opportunities provide students with life-changing experiences that improve their socialization, communication skills, cultural competencies, and as a result, their career preparedness.

Providing students with engagement opportunities will also help to create citizens who continue to be engaged and active in their communities long after graduation. As an institution, we can succeed in both academic and civic pursuits that will enhance our students' overall university and academic experience.

**Vision:** UCF's vision statement notes that our institution is "to become a new kind of university that provides leadership and service to the Central Florida city-state," and our values statement includes both "scholarship" and "community" among other things (<http://www.ucf.edu/strategic-planning/strategic-plan-key-elements/>). As such, the university should be committed to ensuring that each UCF graduate participates in significant engagement opportunities. It is this committee's suggestion that an engagement component for all undergraduate students be required in order to graduate.

**Congruence with university's mission and strategic plan:** UCF has established itself as *America's Leading Partnership University*™ and is an integral part of Central Florida, the Sunshine State, and the world beyond. Part of UCF's mission is in "broad-based and experience-based learning, [...] enriched student development and leadership growth, [and] public service initiatives that address pressing local, state, national, and international issues in support of the global community" (<http://www.ucf.edu/strategic-planning/strategic-plan-key-elements/>).

**Foundation:** A report from the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement titled *A Crucible Moment: College Learning & Democracy's Future*, confirms

that civic learning and learning in traditional academic disciplines are complementary, rather than competitive. The report points to research findings that suggest that students who participate in civic learning opportunities are more likely to persist in college and complete their degrees, obtain skills prized by employers, and develop habits of social responsibility and civic participation (Kanter & Ochoa 2012).

The report also notes current tensions between "labor market needs, [...] an increase in 'degree outputs'" (9), research efforts, and civic education. Through enhanced student engagement all of these efforts can positively affect students, faculty members, and our local, national, and global community partners.