

NSULA Student Media

Experiential learning for undergrads

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LYDIA WILLIAMS

KAITLYN KNIGHT

Contributing Reporters

On Feb. 22, NSU celebrated the launch of its new Quality Enhancement Plan, a program to reaffirm the school's accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

NSU began to curate an executive committee and a task force to discuss and develop the QEP last year. Committees went through a process of determining the area in which they wanted to enhance education at NSU.

"The focus came to experiential learning, the idea that there should be substantial and identifiable undergraduate experiences that help students prepare for their future in very direct ways," task force member Dr. Curt Phifer, said.

The tagline of NSU's QEP is "Learning for Life: Experience Your Future." This involves each degree program developing either an internship, capstone course or research project for senior students to gain practical, valuable experience in their chosen field.

"Research shows that there are 10 impact practices that employers look for. Three of the highest impact practices were internships, undergraduate research and a capstone course," Executive Committee member Reatha Cox said.

Currently, there are six degree programs that already have some of these procedures in place, such as CAPA and the Louisiana Scholars' College. These programs will serve as models for other departments developing their own undergraduate experiences.

Although changes regarding curriculum will not happen overnight, department leaders seem enthusiastic.

"They're ready to jump on board as soon as next year," QEP Executive Committee member and Vice President of Academic Affairs Vickie Gentry said. "They want to start redesigning their curriculum. I think we're going to see that, in the next three years, we're probably going to have a very high success rate."

Psychology Professor Brittany Broussard said that she thinks the QEP will prepare students for research in graduate school.

“I did research as an undergraduate, and I think it really helped me get into graduate school because I was able to discuss my research during the interview process,” Broussard said.

Abby Hinds, junior health and exercise science major, thinks that the QEP will allow students to graduate with valuable experience needed to qualify for jobs in their chosen careers.

“I think by having the time to have that hands-on experience, it’s really going to prepare college students for their future and make them more marketable,” Hinds said.

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