

QEP Compliance Report

Submitted September 5, 2022

Executive Summary

The University has been planning its approach and strategy for the 2023 Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) since the fall of 2017. In October 2020, a QEP Exploratory Group was formed. The Exploratory Group concluded its work in April 2022 with a report recommending a QEP having the following objectives: improving connections between courses and real-world issues; improving students' engagement with application and analysis; and infusing high-impact educational practices across curricula. The Exploratory Group combined these goals under one topical construct: Experiential Learning (EL). Based on the strategic goal to "improve student success through access to quality experiential education" we have organized our QEP planning process into three different categories: (a) what we currently know; (b) what we hope to discover during the QEP process; and (c) what we hope to accomplish at the end of the QEP that can be folded back into institutional planning and operations.

A terse summary of the status of these categorical planning processes is as follows:

Current Knowledge:

- We know that EL in various forms is taking place in many forms, programs, courses, units, and environments at the University
- We know that there is inconsistent student access to EL opportunities and experiences
- We know that providing EL is important in fulfilling our institutional [mission](#) and will be an integral part of the University's new [strategic plan](#) (tentatively titled ClemsonELEVATE) that is currently being drafted
- We know that EL is important to our students
- We know that there are research-based connections between experiential learning opportunities and student success

Aspirational Knowledge to be Obtained Through the QEP Process:

- Identification of barriers to student participation in EL opportunities and activities
- Identification of best practices for supporting current, and developing new, EL facilitators
- Identification of which populations and subpopulations of students are participating in which activities, and when, during their Clemson degree trajectory
- Insights into which supporting resources (e.g., a central organizing hub, types and intensity of faculty development, programmatic and student financial support, *etc*) related to EL are most impactful on student success
- Enhanced insights into how to connect student EL activities with workforce needs

Concluding Knowledge:

- Types of support needed for facilitators to sustain robust EL opportunities and offerings and for the University to sustain a comprehensive EL culture and infrastructure
- How a central location like a "hub" can be best used to continue sustaining impactful EL opportunities
- What efforts, resources, and tactical initiatives implemented during the QEP were most impactful on student success
- How to continuously and better align a comprehensive University-wide EL framework with employer needs

In the following sections, we (a) define the conceptual terms that will be used in our QEP such as experiential education, experiential learning, and student success; (b) provide evidence from the literature concerning the benefits of EL for student success; (c) describe our steps to a QEP implementation; and (d)

conclude with connections between our plan and our University [mission](#) and new [strategic plan](#) currently under development and finalization.

Strategic Goal Statement Definitions

As noted in the executive summary above, the strategic goal of our QEP is to: Improve student success through access to quality experiential education. Currently, we are operationalizing the term "improve" to be enhancing: the volume, availability, accessibility, barrier removal, and relevance of EL opportunities at the University.

Regarding quality, we regard a "quality" EL experience as one that meets a threshold of (a) incorporating reflection activities, (b) requires students to think abstractly or analyze their learning; and (c) includes opportunities for active experimentation for the purpose of learning, discovering knowledge, creating tangible or intangible works, developing skills, or clarifying values (Kolb, 1984).

Experiential Learning versus Experiential Education

Our plan acknowledges that experiential learning is a popular theme within the frame work of innovative and high-impact teaching practices. However, the approach to our Clemson QEP considers the subtle, yet distinct, difference between experiential learning and experiential education. We define learning as “the process of acquiring new skills and understanding” and education as “an organized system of learning” (Robinson & Robinson, 2021, p. 39). Based on these definitions from the relevant literature, we conceptualize experiential learning as those (often discrete) activities that happen at the individual student level; in distinction, we conceptualize experiential education as describing and capturing the larger, more encompassing aggregation and/or culmination of individual EL activities in which our students engage.

A practical and robust definition of experiential learning, modifying and combining the definitions and framework of Kolb (1984) and the Association for Experiential Education, is:

deliberate and thoughtful student engagement in direct concrete experience in combination with (a) reflection/observation, (b) abstract thinking or conceptualization or analysis, and (c) active experimentation for the purpose of learning, discovering knowledge, creating tangible or intangible works, developing skills, or clarifying values.

Student Success

To inform our conceptualization of student success, we refer to the work of Dr. Joe Cuseo who advocates for considering a holistic (whole-person) approach to defining student success. Cuseo’s work also informed the development of our draft [strategic plan](#), thus providing alignment between the theoretical underpinnings of our QEP and our institutional strategic plan priorities. Cuseo claims, “promoting student success, such as persistence to graduation and academic achievement, requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond strictly the academic or intellectual dimension of student development to address the student in a holistic (whole-person) fashion” (Cuseo, 2015, p. 1).

Beyond this general view of student success, Cuseo (2011) offers the following dimensions of student success organized into “traditional” (or academic) indicators of student success in higher education and “holistic” one.

Academic Indicators:

- Student retention
- Graduation rates
- Academic performance (e.g., GPA)
- Student advancement (e.g., career or graduate school readiness)

Holistic Indicators:

- Intellectual development
- Emotional development
- Social development
- Ethical development
- Physical development
- Spiritual development

Benefits of EL for Student Success

[Our QEP Assessment + Research Subcommittee](#) reviewed the literature to identify evidence-based EL student benefits in the context of the student success framework of Cuseo (2011). Their Subcommittee's findings are summarized in Table 7.2-1 below.

Table 7.2-1 Evidence-Based Student Success Benefits of Experiential Learning

Student Success Benefits of Experiential Learning	Supporting Research
Improves (general)	Kozar & Marcketti, 2008; Metzger, 2006; Prussia & Wies, 2004
Enriches learning	Kozar & Marcketti, 2008
Improves academic success	Cheng, Armatas, & Wang, 2021; Finley & McNair, 2013; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Shiflet & Hodges, 2020; Sutton & Rubin, 2010
Improves external motivation to stay on track	Bradberry & DeMaio, 2019
Sense of belonging	Bradberry & DeMario, 2019; Chamberlain et al., 2019; Hawkins, 2017
Improves graduation rates	Bloomington: IU Press, 2009; Bhatt et al., 2022; Malmgren & Galvin, 2008; Scheider & Thornes, 2018; Sutton & Rubin, 2010
Improves minority graduation rates	Shiflet & Hodges, 2020
Knowledge and skill development	Cisneros-Donahue et al., 2012
Cognitive development	Engberg, 2013
Social development	Engberg, 2013; Tos, 2015

The two dimensions (academic and holistic), and corresponding subdimensions, of student success from Cuseo (2011) are listed in Table 7.2-2 below. The academic dimensions of student success include retention rate, graduation rate, GPA, and career readiness. The holistic dimensions include intellectual development, emotional (mental wellbeing) development, social (multicultural) development, ethical development, and physical development. In a further examination of the holistic subdimensions that appear in Table 7.2-2, our QEP team has conducted a comprehensive literature review to identify for which subdimensions there exists evidence suggesting that students could derive benefits by engaging in EL activities (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010). This mapping is contained in Table 7.2-2, where the Clemson QEP team has identified the following alignments between student success metrics, evidence-based EL benefits, our institutional [mission statement](#), and our forthcoming [strategic plan](#):

Table 7.2-2 Alignment of Student Success, Experiential Learning, and Institutional Mission and Planning

Student Success Dimension	Connection to Experiential Learning in the Literature	Connection to University Mission Statement	Connection to New Institutional Strategic Plan
Academic Dimensions			
Retention Rate	✓	✓	✓
Graduation Rates	✓	✓	✓
GPA	✓	✓	✓
Career Readiness	✓	✓	✓
Holistic Dimensions			
Intellectual Development	✓	✓	✓
Emotional Development (Mental Wellness)	✓	✓	✓
Social (Multicultural) Development	✓	✓	✓
Ethical Development		✓	
Physical Development			✓

Our QEP will initially address at least one academic dimension and one holistic dimension. Subsequently, we expect to continue to work with faculty, staff, and student stakeholders to gather feedback and narrow the specific subdimensions that the QEP can and should address. Feedback will be gathered through the University's recognized governance bodies: the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and Undergraduate and Graduate Student Governments. Broader University feedback will be welcomed and solicited via a dedicated QEP website via announced opportunities and continuously live intake.

A working QEP retreat was held in early June 2022 to begin the transformation of the topic to a strategically-oriented and tactical plan. This retreat brought together [QEP leadership](#), staff and faculty representatives, administrative leadership, current students, and University alumni. Our aim was to achieve a broad representation of [stakeholders across campus](#) (and outside of campus), and secure diverse insight, feedback, and wisdom on our proposed topic and tactical options. Overall, students and alumni voiced issues with equitable access to EL experiences. Students and alumni noted the major of study as a barrier to opportunity for EL. For example, an architecture major reported her perception that her friends majoring in engineering had more EL opportunities than she and her fellow architecture majors. Finally, students noted the importance of centralizing all of the information and resources related to EL and “making the opportunities well-known beyond freshman orientation...with representatives to provide guidance on what would be best for [their] specific situations and career goals.”

These qualitative accounts may shed light on discrepancies identified in the University's 2016 and 2018 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data, which indicated 84% of our students planned to “Participate in an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement” before they graduated. However, only 7% and 6% reported completing or current involvement in such experiences in 2016 and 2018, respectively. These data suggest that students clearly value EL opportunities such as those listed in the NSSE survey instrument. Unfortunately, by their senior year, students who actually are able to follow through with participating in these activities represent less than a mere 10% of the aspirational

prospective population. The focus group-type feedback generated at the June 2022 QEP retreat has illuminated possible barriers to participation in EL activities that Clemson students are experiencing. Specifically, we identified equity of opportunity across baccalaureate majors and ease of access to (and information about) EL opportunities as two key foci for our QEP to address.

Steps to Implementation

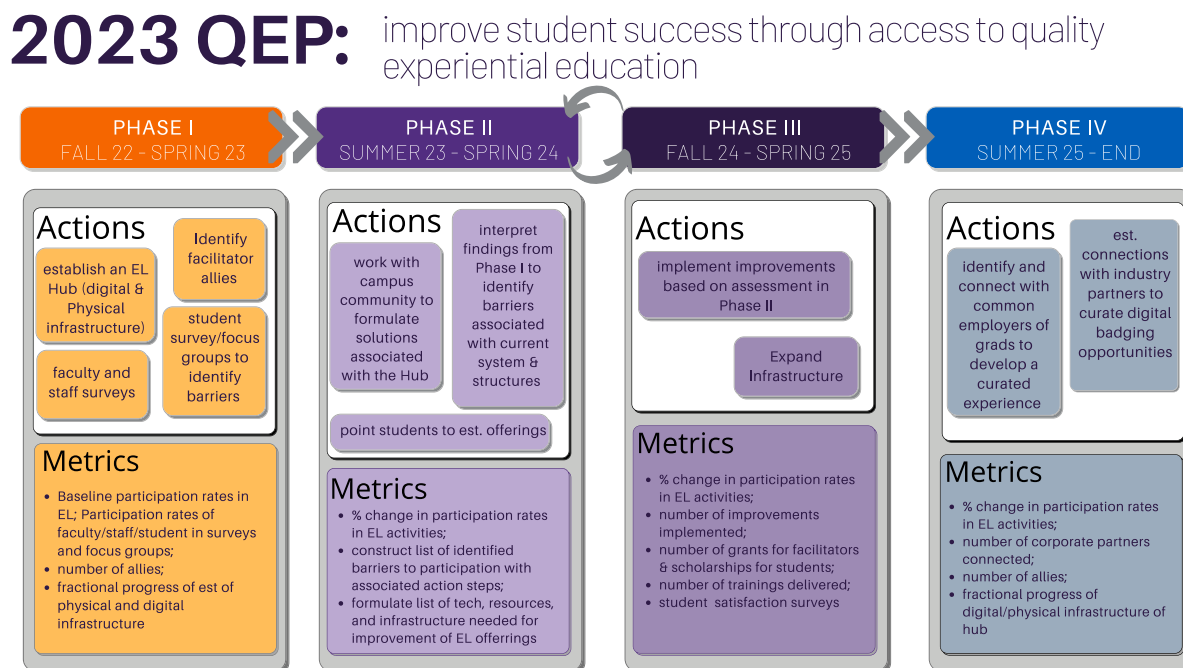
In response to these QEP Retreat findings and to achieve our goal of improving student success through access to quality experiential education, we have a four-phased plan. This longitudinal plan is intentionally structured to achieve the strategic objectives discussed above with maximum buy-in from the University community and significant support for those impacted. This implementation plan is outlined in Table 7.2-3 below.

Table 7.2-3 Prospective Implementation Plan

Phase	Planned Actions
Phase I (Fall 22 - Spring 23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an EL Hub (digital and physical infrastructure) • Identify faculty and staff (facilitator) allies • Faculty surveys • Student survey/focus groups to identify barriers to participation in EL
Phase II (Summer 23 - Spring 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point students to established offerings • Interpret findings from Phase I to identify barriers associated with current systems and structures (e.g., technology, finances, relevancy, attractiveness, awareness, etc.) • Work with campus community to formulate solutions associated with the Hub
Phase III (Fall 24 - Spring 25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement improvements based on assessment in Phase II • Expand infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ e.g., mini-grants for faculty to pursue curriculum-based, EL experiences and opportunities that align with student needs/feedback; guidance, training, and administrative support for faculty and staff implementing opportunities “in the field” like service learning; financial support for student participation in personal development opportunities that pursue a more holistic view of student success; curating/grouping experiences that align with student needs
Phase IV (Summer 25 - end)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish connections with industry partners to curate digital badging opportunities • Recognition that the Hub is a long-term establishment that supports EE (i.e., continue to improve Phase III efforts) • Identify and connect with common employers of grads to develop a curated experience attractive to both students and employers

Because of the reliance of Phases II and III on assessment results, we consider these two steps to be

largely iterative, allowing for the repeated identification of barriers and implementation of solutions before (and after) progressing into Phase IV. This graphic below visually summarizes the implementation plan along with some of our planned formative assessments of the QEP. The summative assessments of student success have not yet been identified at the time of this narrative. The summative assessments will be identified once the subdimensions of student success comprised by our QEP are finalized.



Alignment with University Mission and Strategic Plan

University Mission

Clemson University is a public, land grant institution that aims to educate students who can generate, preserve, communicate, and apply their knowledge obtained through their Clemson experience. More specifically, the University's [mission](#) states that our primary purpose is “educating undergraduate and graduate students to think deeply about and engage in the social, scientific, economic, and professional challenges of our times.” In line with our QEP goals, our mission states that the University “is committed to the personal growth of the individual and promotes an environment of good decision making, healthy and ethical lifestyles, and tolerance and respect for others.” This QEP supports the University’s mission by focusing efforts on connecting students with opportunities to apply their knowledge through engaging, real-world experiences. The QEP considers the whole student and celebrates experiential activities inside and out outside of the classroom, ultimately recognizing actions that engender academic and holistic success at Clemson and beyond.

ClemsonELEVATE Strategic Plan

This QEP benefits from being developed simultaneously and alongside the new [ClemsonELEVATE](#) strategic plan. These parallel planning processes assure alignment between the QEP and strategic University priorities. This alignment is manifest in three forms described below.

Holistic Methodology

ClemsonElevate aims to meet the goal of offering the #1 Student Experience in the country using a holistic approach. Our [QEP framework](#) encompasses facets of a student educational experience that

ultimately develops the "whole person" rather than one that exclusively develops traditional academic accomplishment.

Authentic Learning Experiences

One of ClemsonElevate's strategic goals, which the QEP could tactically achieve, is a focus on developing, enhancing, and expanding inherently authentic learning through real-world or situated learning experiences. The QEP seeks to identify and develop the tools, business processes, and personnel necessary for achieving this goal.

Student Wellbeing Through EL

Our QEP's development phase has identified experiential learning and associated measures of student success related to wellness, activity, and play. If our QEP identifies a method to track and evaluate these experiences, it would further demonstrate the University's commitment to valuing and encouraging student wellbeing—this too is aligned with the strategic objectives of ClemsonELEVATE resident in its "Clemson Experience" subcomponent.

Welcomed Feedback

This Compliance Certification Report narrative is intended as an informative status report regarding our QEP planning. As we continue developing operational and tactical elements of the QEP plan for presentation to the on-site visiting committee in spring 2023, we welcome the comments, questions, and concerns of our peers kindly serving on our off-site review committee and examining this narrative.

In particular, we welcome feedback from our peer reviewers on the following:

- This is a QEP that addresses student success through access to experiential-learning opportunities. Are there any special concerns or considerations that come to mind regarding an experiential-learning-focussed QEP that primarily assess student success outcomes and not student learning outcomes?
- Are there any considerations that come to mind regarding the winnowing of our student success dimensions that we plan to address in the final QEP?

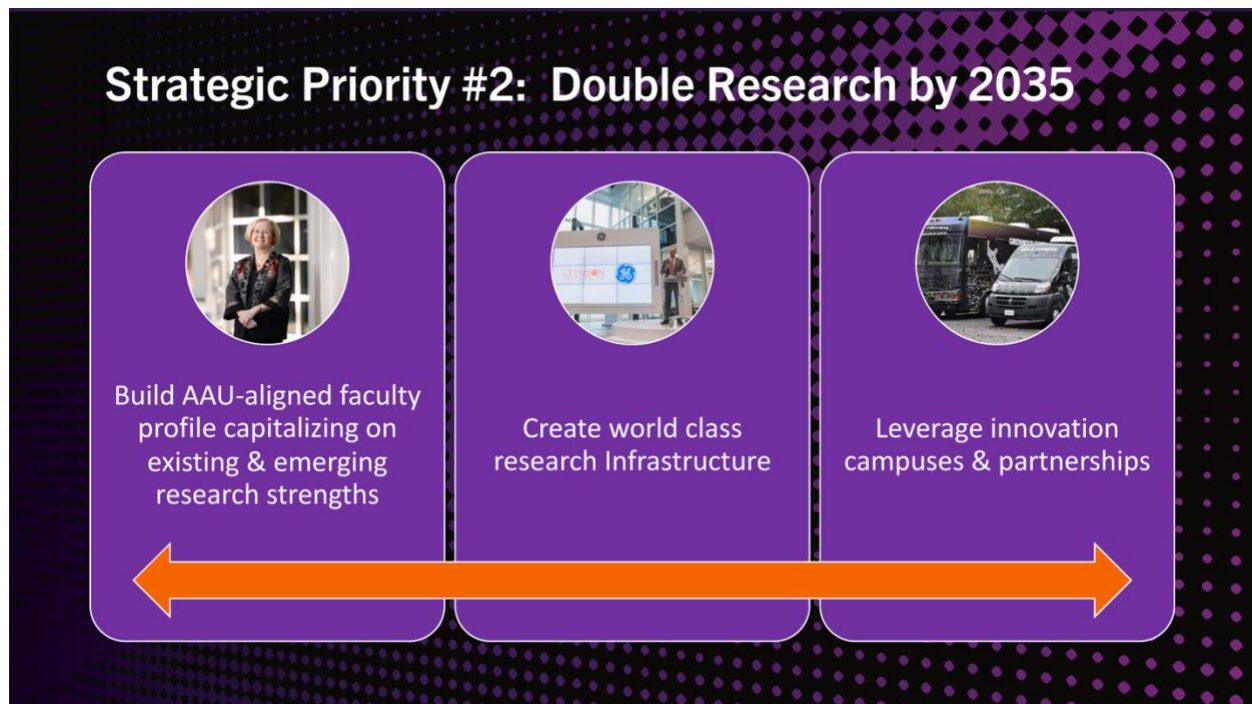
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Appendix A

Strategic Plan (ClemsonElevate) 3 Strategic Priorities



Strategic Priority #3: Service & Impact to help Communities Flourish



Enhance educational and economic opportunities for South Carolinians



Promote agricultural and natural resources excellence and lead animal health issues for the state



Improve the health outcomes of South Carolinians



Appendix B

QEP Committee Structure



Appendix C

QEP Leadership

Name	Subcommittee	Institutional Role
Dr. Abby Baker		QEP Interim Director
Dr. Brian Dominy	Assessment + Research	Assoc. Dean for Academic Policy & Program Effectiveness, Graduate School
Kayla Payne	Assessment + Research	Chief of Staff, College of Agriculture, Forestry, & Life Sciences
Dustin Foxworth	Resources	Chief Business Officer, Office of the Provost & Academic Affairs
Dr. Ashley Fisk	Reporting, Compliance, Marketing, & Communication	Asst. Director, Pearce Center for Professional Communication, Pearce Center for Professional Communication
Zack Flathmann	Reporting, Compliance, Marketing, & Communication	Senior Business Analyst, Office of Finance & Operations

Appendix D

QEP Stakeholders' Retreat Guest List

Name	Title/Stakeholder Role
Abby Baker, Ph.D.	QEP Interim Director
Altheia Richardson, Ph.D.	Assistant Vice President for Strategic Diversity Leadership
Ashley Fisk, Ph.D.	Director of Pearce Center for
Bart Swecker, Ph.D.	Executive Director, Data Science & Analytics
Brian Dominy, Ph.D.	Associate Dean for Academic Policy & Program Effectiveness, the Graduate School; & QEP Subcommittee Chair
Catherine Kirby, O.D.	Alumni, Optometrist
David Blakesley, Ph.D.	Faculty Senate Vice President
David Frock, Ph.D.	Director of Campus Recreation, Student Affairs
Donna Robertson	Senior Director, Strategic Execution Institutional Excellence
Dustin Foxworth	Chief Business Officer, Office of the Provost & QEP Subcommittee Chair
Jeremy King, Ph.D.	Associate Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness
Josh Barnes, Ph.D.	Executive Director, Center for Student Leadership & Engagement Student Affairs
Katie Vogl	Strategic Project Manager, Office of the Provost
Kayla Payne	Chief of Staff, CAFLS & QEP Subcommittee Chair
Khris Kirk	Alumni - Architecture
Kristin Walker-Donnelly, Ph.D.	Director of Assessment, Student Affairs
Kristine Vernon, Ph.D.	Faculty Senate President
Latoya Daniels	Strategic Consultant, (Human Resources)
Lisa Knox	Director of Institutional Excellence
Liz Whaley	Talent and Organizational Development, Human Resources (Facilitator)

Lori Kinley, Ph.D.	Associate Director for Online Development, Clemson Online
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Appendix E

QEP Framework

