The QEP Topic Selection Task Force invites proposals for the University’s new QEP from all members of the University community.

Every 10 years, as part of our reaffirmation of accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), Southern Miss has the opportunity to develop a new Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) to improve an area of student learning or student success in a significant way through a university-wide, multi-year initiative.

The University is now in the process of selecting the new QEP. The QEP Topic Selection Task Force, comprised of 24 members (15 faculty, 3 students, and 6 staff) has designed a multi-phase process to identify the topic of focus. In the first phase, all members of the Southern Miss community were invited to submit topic ideas for consideration. Over 600 responses were received and the top ten categories are listed below.

1. Retention, graduation, and student success
2. Experiential learning (student research, service learning, internships, etc.)
3. Critical thinking and problem solving
4. Career preparation and professionalism
5. Student health and well-being
6. Advising and academic planning
7. Tutoring, study skills, test-taking, and time management
8. Math, quantitative reasoning, and statistics
9. Sustainability education
10. Tied: Financial literacy and success; Global connections

The second phase in the process is the Call for Proposals. All members of the Southern Miss community are invited to participate. Proposals from the top ten categories noted above are encouraged, but are not limited to these categories. The proposals are intended to be brief (approximately 3 – 5 pages). The top proposals will be identified by the QEP Topic Selection Task Force and will receive from $500 - $1500 with at least three proposals receiving awards, including at least one student award. Individuals or a team may submit proposals. For proposals submitted by teams, the award will be divided among the team members. Payment will follow USM policies and procedures. In addition, the top 3 proposals will be shared with the President and Executive Cabinet.
Please read the Frequently Asked Questions, Evaluation Criteria, and Guidelines before submitting your proposal. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Julie Howdeshell, Director of Quality Enhancement, at Julie.Howdeshell@usm.edu, or Dr. Kathy Masters, Chair of the QEP Topic Selection Task Force, at Kathleen.Masters@usm.edu.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a QEP? A QEP, or Quality Enhancement Plan, is a plan of action to improve student knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, or behaviors, or to impact the student learning environment and student success. For example, the first QEP at Southern Miss focused on improving students’ speaking and writing skills through faculty development seminars, establishment of the Speaking Center, expansion of the Writing Center, and improved assessment.

Why is Southern Miss developing a new QEP? A new QEP is required with each reaffirmation of accreditation by SACSCOC (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges). Southern Miss is scheduled for reaffirmation in 2016.

Can I submit more than one proposal? Yes, you may submit more than one idea individually or as part of a team.

What is my commitment if my proposal is selected? We understand that you may be wondering how involved you will be if your proposal is selected and want to assure you that just because you submit a proposal, you are not responsible for developing the complete plan or for coordinating or implementing the plan. When the official QEP is selected, there will be broad-based involvement in the development of the topic, including committees to assist with the literature review, assessment, budget, publicity, etc. While those submitting a proposal may be asked to serve on a committee, as will others, they will not be responsible for any large portion of the work themselves. This will be a widely shared University effort with support from the Department of SACS-Quality Enhancement Programs.

What happens to my proposal after I submit it? Who will see it? How will it be shared? Proposals will be shared with the QEP Topic Selection Task Force and will be posted on the QEP Web site (www.usm.edu/qep) for public commentary. Proposals will be discussed at focus groups and at various University meetings. The name(s) of the individual(s) submitting the proposals will not be shared or posted during the discussion phase. The focus of these discussions and the public commentary is to determine the best fit for the University’s new QEP.
Evaluation Criteria

In submitting your proposal, keep in mind that you are not being asked to provide a fully detailed plan. Your proposal will be reviewed by the QEP Topic Selection Task Force in light of how the idea might be developed in terms of the following expectations outlined by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

1. Is the QEP focused on student learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning?
2. Is there evidence that a focus on this area is needed at Southern Miss?
3. Is the QEP focus aligned with the University’s mission?
4. Are the goals and outcomes of the QEP achievable within a 5 to 6 year time period?
5. Are the goals and outcomes measurable?
6. Does the institution have the financial capability to implement the QEP in 5 to 6 years and sustain the initiatives long-term?

Guidelines

Directions: In a separate word document of approximately 3 to 5 pages, include as much of the following information as possible. (The Task Force understands that all information might not be available to you and that some components will need to be more developed later, so it is acceptable to submit the proposal without completion of all sections.) Send to qep@usm.edu as an attachment no later than February 26, 2014. In submitting the proposal, it is understood that you have read the Overview, FAQs, and Evaluation Criteria. Proposals will be posted on the QEP Web site and will be shared for feedback by the University community. The names of the persons submitting the proposals will not be included during the discussion phase.

Working Concept: Provide a short but descriptive title.

Rationale for the Topic/Problem Statement/Opportunity for Growth: Briefly explain why this topic is particularly important to The University of Southern Mississippi at this time and how Southern Miss students and the overall institution would benefit. Include any related USM data. (Data is available on the Institutional Research website at http://www.usm.edu/institutional-research. You may also contact QEP@usm.edu for assistance.)
Expected Outcomes/Impact on Student Learning or the Student Learning Environment: Briefly explain the expected outcomes of the plan in terms of students’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and/or behaviors. What impact would the plan have on students?

Strategies/Actions to Be Implemented: Briefly describe how you would go about improving student learning or the student learning environment for the proposed topic. What initiatives or strategies would be employed?

Student Cohort: Briefly explain which students would be affected by your plan. For example, undergraduate students, graduate students, first-time full-time freshmen, first year students, at-risk students, etc. (The QEP does not have to affect every student, but, as noted by SACSCOC, “the topic does need to be sufficiently broad to be viewed as significant to the institution and as a major enhancement to student learning” and be manageable in terms of institutional capability.)

Measurement/Assessment: How would we know if this plan were successful? How might this evidence be captured and measured?

Resources: What departments would need to be involved in implementing this idea successfully? What resources would they need (additional staff, software, physical space, etc.)?

Name(s) and Contact Information: List the name(s) and contact information for the person(s) submitting this proposal.

Name
Relationship to the University
Email Address
Phone Number