

What's Your Big Idea?

The University of Southern Mississippi

Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Call for Proposals



Every 10 years, as part of our reaffirmation of accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), Southern Miss develops a new Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) to improve student learning or student success in a significant way.

After a review of institutional data and input from the University through the Strategic Planning Survey, the QEP Topic Selection Task Force is seeking brief proposals from members of the University community focused on **the first-year student experience** with the goal of **supporting students' transitions to the second year**. First-year student experiences lay the foundation for a student's educational journey and the opportunity for further learning and development. First-year students can be first-year freshmen and/or first-year transfer students. **Proposals might consider factors such as academic and career planning, academic support, financial planning, health (physical and/or mental), sense of belonging, student engagement, or other topics that impact first-year students' transitions to the second year.**

After a review of proposals, the QEP Topic Selection Task Force will share recommendations with the President and Senior Officers. Please read the Frequently Asked Questions, Evaluation Criteria, and Guidelines before submitting your proposal. Additional resources are on the [QEP Topic Selection website](#). If you have any questions, please email QEP@usm.edu.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a QEP? A QEP, or Quality Enhancement Plan, is an action plan to improve student learning or student success. Student learning is defined broadly to include student knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or values. Student success is also defined broadly to include student outcomes such as persisting or continuing one's education through to graduation.

What QEPs has USM already implemented? The first QEP focused on improving students' speaking and writing skills through faculty development, the establishment of the Speaking Center, and the expansion of the Writing Center. The second QEP focused on improving student learning outcomes at two critical stages: gateways and pathways. Faculty engaged in professional development to use active learning strategies and embed career readiness in their courses, students were provided peer support through Learning Assistants (LAs) and individualized support through the Center for Pathway Experiences, and students used reflection tools to analyze their learning gains and career readiness competencies.

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

What happens to my proposal after I submit it? Proposals will be shared with the QEP Topic Selection Task Force and may be shared with the University community. Names of individuals submitting proposals will not be shared during the review phase. The top proposals will be shared with the President and Senior Officers. The plan will be further developed during the 2024-25 academic year. There will be broad-based involvement during the development phase, including a committee to assist with the research and design. 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 broad-based effort with administrative support.

Evaluation Criteria

Your proposal will be reviewed by the QEP Topic Selection Task Force based on the following:

1. Is the QEP focused on the first-year experience (freshmen and/or transfer) with the goal of supporting students' transitions to the second year?
2. Is there strong evidence that the initiatives proposed support first-year students' transition to the second year?
3. Are the goals of the QEP achievable within 5 years?
4. Are the goals and outcomes measurable?
5. What evidence is there that the initiatives are financially reasonable and sustainable?

Guidelines

In a PDF 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 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 **March 31, 2024**. The names of the persons submitting the proposals will not be included during the discussion phase.

1. **Working Concept:** Provide a short but descriptive title.
2. **Evidence of Impact:** Provide evidence on how the proposed initiative(s) support first-year students' transition to the second year. (USM-specific data is available on the [Institutional Research website](#) and [QEP Topic Selection webpage](#).)
3. **Expected Outcomes:** Briefly explain the expected outcomes of the plan. What impact would the plan have on students?
4. **Strategies/Initiatives:** What strategies or initiatives would be employed?
5. **Cohort:** Briefly explain which students would be the primary focus of the enhancement plan. *For example, first-time full-time freshmen, first-year transfer students, or specific cohorts of first-year students, such as at-risk students, etc.*
6. **Measurement/Assessment:** How would we know if this plan were successful? How might this evidence be captured and measured?
7. **Resources:** What departments would need to be involved in implementing this idea successfully? What resources would they need (additional staff, software, physical space, etc.)?
8. **Name(s) and Contact Information:** List the name(s) and contact information of the person(s) submitting this proposal. Include name, relationship to the University, and email address.

Resources

Additional resources are on the [QEP Topic Selection website](#). Student proposers are encouraged to work with faculty or staff to access data or contact qep@usm.edu or 601.266.4525 for assistance.