Planning VCU’s next QEP to connect all students to transformative, mentored experiences

What would it take to “Level up!”?
Agenda

Overview of the planning process for the QEP
- What is a QEP?
- Phases of the QEP development
- Theme of the QEP - “Level up!”
- Timeline

Discussion and feedback
- Reaction to “Level up!” theme
- Topic selection process
- Faculty engagement in the QEP Planning and Development Committees
A Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is an integral and required part of the SACSCOC 10-year reaffirmation process. It is a future-oriented, time-bound project that allows the university to demonstrate its commitment to the continuous improvement of student learning and success.

Requirements of an acceptable QEP

- Identifies key, emerging issues for action based on institutional data and assessment
- Aligns with and supports the institution’s strategic plan
- Focuses on student learning outcomes and the environment supporting student learning
- Reflects broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in its development and implementation
- Demonstrates an institution’s capability to implement and complete the QEP
- Includes clear and measurable goals and a detailed plan to assess their achievement
What is a QEP (in practice)?

There is no cookie-cutter template for what a QEP is. In practice, QEPs look different based off the needs and circumstances of the institution developing them.

**A QEP must:**
- Connect to the institution’s strategic plan and priorities
- Be data informed and inquiry driven
- Be realistic and assessable

**A QEP can:**
- Target specific student populations
- Focus on experiences outside of the classroom
- Leverage existing and ongoing initiatives
- Connect to a prior QEP

**A QEP should:**
- Enhance student learning
- Focus on a bounded question
- Reflect broad-based input through a phased development

🌟 Above all, QEPs must have students at the center.
VCU’s QEP Development Process

By the numbers...

5 Phases: Initial planning through implementation
3 Years: Academic Years 2021-2022 through 2023-2024
2 Teams: QEP Planning and QEP Development
1 Topic: Emerges following campus engagement with a common theme
QEP Development: A Phased Approach

ACADEMIC YEAR 2021-2022
Phase 1: Initial planning
QEP Planning Team with broad representation convened to develop a list of potential QEP topics for further analysis. A broader, data-driven QEP theme will also be identified through comprehensive institutional planning and evaluation.

Phase 2: QEP topic selection
Selected topics assessed for feasibility, depth of support by research, capacity for institutional assessment, and connection to broader QEP theme. Recommended topics are provided to leadership for final selection.

ACADEMIC YEAR 2022-2023
Phase 3: QEP development
Move from examining the feasibility of the QEP topic to developing the actual plan.

ACADEMIC YEAR 2023-2024
Phase 4: QEP pilot and submission to SACSCOC
Fall 2023 pre-implementation pilot and awareness campaign; Spring 2024 SACSCOC On-Site Visit

SPRING/SUMMER 2024 - FALL 2029
Phase 5: QEP implementation
Activate implementation plan immediately upon SACSCOC approval
Theme to guide QEP topic identification

Level up!: Connecting all students to transformative, mentored experiences

- The Level Up idea purposefully leans on the playfulness of gamification, but also references VCU’s commitment to improving our students’ social and economic status.
- Students from historically minoritized populations are not participating at the same rates as their majority peers in higher level REAL experiences, and mentored experiences are unequally distributed throughout the ecosystem.
- The focus on the “Level up!” theme allows VCU to respond intentionally and collectively to gaps in participation in the kinds of experiences data suggest connect with positive outcomes for social mobility and post graduation readiness.
Why this theme

Alignment with key themes of the recalibrated Quest 2025 strategic plan:

- Student success (academic, professional, personal)
- National prominence through impactful research and institutional excellence
- Collective urban and regional transformation through economic development
- Diversity driving excellence

Leverages the momentum gained through the REAL initiative:

- Development of the REAL Taxonomy and REAL Framework
- Broad stakeholder engagement through the REAL Council
- Benchmarking and identification of emergent institutional issues:
  - Barriers to access
  - Gaps in opportunities and offerings

An opportunity to continue our REAL work in a focused and intentional way.
So... where are we?

Engaging stakeholders on the proposed QEP theme, “Level up!,” plan for QEP topic selection, and a timeline for the QEP’s development.

The “Level up!” theme leverages lessons learned through designing and preparing for the REAL requirement.

The topic will be determined through a process engaging faculty, staff, and student input.

The timeline reflects an action plan developed to ensure broad stakeholder engagement.
What we know

Value of experiential learning: Equity, access, and student success

Research shows experiential learning:

- Serves as an equalizer, benefitting all students but having particularly strong benefits for students from traditionally marginalized communities
- Are especially efficacious in moving student success outcomes when they engage quality mentoring and reflection
- Provides students with the transferable skills highly valued by employers including problem solving, critical thinking, teamwork and oral & written communication
- Prepares students for a future workplace where changing careers is more common (and lifelong learning is more important)

Of Virginia’s R1 institutions, VCU enrolls the highest percentage of students from the lowest economic quintile, and ranks among the highest in the state at improving student social mobility.

Experiential learning gives VCU the potential to transform future trajectories and rewrite the narrative for many of our students.
What we know: Student barriers

Student barriers to Level 3 and 4 experiential learning

#1 - Money

#2 - Time

#3 - Information

The goal: high level experiential learning that is embedded in the student experience in order to reach all students and address widening the gaps in access.
What we know: Program barriers

Program barriers to developing Level 3 and 4 activities

#1 - Resources

#2 - Competing priorities

#3 - Information

The goal: high level experiential learning that is embedded in the student experience in order to reach all students and address widening the gaps in access.
“Level up!” as a theme:

- Acknowledges both sides of the student learning equation: student and institutional readiness
- Invites proposals for topics that embed the practices, pedagogies and experiences that correlate with post-graduation success and the development of deep knowledge.
- Provides direction and context while allowing broad flexibility to potential proposal topics
Timeline Overview: Phase 1

Dec. 2021 - Jan. 2022
- **QEP development process initiated**
  - QEP Planning and Development presentations to key stakeholder groups

Feb. 2022
- **QEP planning team convened**
  - Representatives appointed to a QEP Planning Team
  - QEP Planning Team orientation

Mar. 2022
- **Call for pre-proposals**
  - QEP Town Hall
  - Call for pre-proposals

March - May 2022
- **Selection of proposals for development**
  - One-page pre-proposals published online
  - Feedback survey launches
  - Top 2-3 proposals identified for development
  - Champions notified and Evaluation Team identified
Timeline Overview: Phases 2-4

Summer - Fall 2022

Topic selection and development
- Full proposals due May 31
- QEP Proposal Evaluation Team assembled
- Leadership engaged on recommendations (Aug.)
- QEP topic announced (Sept.)
- QEP Development Team and Chair identified (Fall 2022)

AY 2023 - AY 2024

QEP developed and submitted to SACSOC

Fall 2023
- Draft of full QEP circulated for comment/review
- Small, localized pilots of rubrics and assessments begin

Spring 2024
- Draft of full QEP circulated for comment/review
- Small, localized pilots of rubrics and assessments begin
A topic will be selected from proposals submitted via an RFP process.

Pre-proposals will be evaluated based on their addressing specific criteria.

The top 2 to 3 ranked proposals will be invited for further development.

A QEP Evaluation Team will be responsible for evaluating proposals and announcing the topic.

The ranking criteria will include:

- Alignment with REAL pedagogic pillars:
  - Hands-on learning experience
  - Guided reflection, and
  - Mentored component
- Alignment with VCU’s Strategic Plan
- Support from stakeholders
- Focus on student learning and/or student success
- Support by institutional data
Discussion and Feedback

- Reaction to “Level up!” theme
- Topic selection process
- Faculty engagement in the QEP Planning and Development Committees