

Aggies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime
Texas A&M University's Quality Enhancement Plan--Executive Summary

“Agies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime,” Texas A&M University’s quality enhancement plan (QEP) designed for our institutional reaffirmation of accreditation in 2012, aims to enhance student learning through individual and collective purposeful commitment to skills and qualities that foster lifelong learning. It builds on Texas A&M’s history of commitment represented by its origins in 1876 as the state’s first land-grant institution under the Morrill Act (with later designations as space-grant and sea-grant), its military tradition of providing personnel for the nation’s armed forces, and its continuing identity as an institution recognized for producing graduates dedicated to service to others. The university’s mission statement affirms its goal to educate students “to assume roles in leadership, responsibility, and service to society”, and one of Texas A&M’s six stated “core values” is “selfless service.” The idea of commitment is central to Texas A&M University’s institutional identity.

As the sixth-largest institution in the U.S., with more than 50,000 students in ten academic colleges and two branch campuses in Galveston, Texas and Doha, Qatar, our challenge was to design a QEP that simultaneously cohered around a central theme and purpose and also allowed the flexibility needed for colleges and academic and administrative support units to tailor their projects to suit our wide range of academic and support programs. Our QEP theme was chosen deliberately to challenge our campus to accomplish two overarching goals: (1) create a culture of commitment to high-impact learning, ensuring that opportunities for engagement are pervasive; and (2) ask students to make commitments to high-impact curricular and co-curricular practices that lead to habits of life-long learning. The commitments are mutual: the institution commits to fostering the culture, and the students commit to taking the opportunities available to them. “Agies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime” asks our students to make a commitment to purposefully engage in high-impact learning experiences and thoughtfully reflect on these experiences in order to develop the habits and skills for integrative and lifelong learning. It calls for our institution to create a culture with opportunities and support for student engagement and reflection.

Texas A&M’s QEP grew from our Academic Master Plan and is positioned as the central component of Aggies Commit, a university-wide focus on intentionality. Extensive discussions and broad input from our university community led to the focus on integrative and lifelong learning achieved by intentional engagement in high-impact learning experiences and to a flexible, college / branch campus-based implementation process. Our QEP also aligns with Texas A&M’s student learning outcomes, which were identified and approved as part of the academic master planning process.

A QEP Advisory Committee chaired by the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs oversees and coordinates the QEP implementation process, which includes guidelines for planning, annual review, and funding allocations. Academic support units provide professional development for faculty, advisors, and others. Our goal is to weave the aims of the QEP into the culture of our institution, reinforcing them with events such as academic convocation and orientations for new students and faculty. We will generate awareness through on-campus marketing and by asking students to discuss their learning experiences through social media tied into our QEP website. The website will post proposals, instructive examples of high-impact learning experiences, and assessments. Planning for a tangible symbol of achievement to be awarded to students who fulfill their commitments as part of the QEP is in process. Progress toward our student learning goals is being measured primarily by collecting and assessing student reflections on learning. VALUE rubrics will help us evaluate progress toward student learning goals, and inventories of high-impact practices and their effectiveness will assist in measuring institutional goals. QEP implementation will be an adaptive process driven by feedback from assessment. Implementation Years 1 and 2 will serve as a pilot test of our implementation plans, support and IT infrastructure, and assessment processes, and these will be modified as appropriate for Implementation Years 3 – 5.

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