Quality Enhancement Plan Proposal: Fostering Global Engagement

First-year students entering the University of South Carolina emerge from a public school system whose curriculum focuses overwhelmingly on national issues and institutions; both global challenges and state and local issues are relatively neglected. Their understanding of the world reflects this distortion. Even the most engaged and enlightened seldom arrive with a full appreciation of these multiple layers—local, state, national, global—and particularly, do not understand the complex interrelationships between them. Understanding global phenomena is no longer optional: advances in science and technology are products of international collaboration, and the gravest challenges facing the world, from epidemics to climate change to terrorism, are interrelated and require transnational responses. It is imperative that leading institutions of higher education fulfill the task that we set for ourselves in the USC Mission statement, to provide "the highest quality education, knowledge, skills, and values necessary for success and responsible citizenship in a complex and changing world."

The reality is that South Carolina is a global society, shaped by peoples and cultures from around the world; it leads the country in jobs owed to foreign investment, and scores of languages are spoken in its schools. It is no accident that the International Business program has flourished in the Palmetto State, and that program's success can serve as inspiration to develop complementary initiatives across the entire University, strengthening the whole. USC can foster understanding, inspire participation, and expand opportunities for our students and faculty.

A **Quality Enhancement Plan** focused on **Global Awareness** would reflect the historical and demographic reality of our state, enhance our graduates' abilities to function effectively around the world, and align our current and ongoing efforts with the trends that have driven South Carolina's economic and cultural development for decades. USC can expand the international horizons of all students, support those who want deeper engagement, and expand the participation of underrepresented groups. Critical to the success of a Global Awareness QEP is a strong focus on four key goals:

1. **Strengthening international curriculum**

2. **Expanding access to international experiences**

3. **Expanding foreign language competency and offerings**

4. **Strengthening the recognition, coordination and communication of USC's international efforts**

These ends can be accomplished by integrating documented best practices in internationalization with our own innovations. USC can become a true national leader in this critical domain. We build on a **well-established**

foundation of both nationally renowned programs--including the International Business program, the award-winning Walker Institute, the English Program for Internationals (EPI), and the First-Year Experience—and broad expertise not only in the College of Arts and Sciences, but throughout the full range of professional schools as well.

These four goals will be discussed in turn, and unifying them would be a cross-campus, undergraduate Global Engagement Program (GEP), which would support students' international engagement and be recognized through transcript certification. Students who add the "Global Engagement Program" to their regular degree would fulfill at least three of these four complementary components:

(I) **Academic**: one year of advanced foreign language courses (beyond the Gen-Ed requirement) and three globally-oriented courses from different programs,

(II) **International Experience**: study abroad, or international internships or service-learning opportunities,

(III) **International Inquiry** (e.g., the Magellan Program), and

(IV) **Portfolio of International Engagement** (documentation of substantial extracurricular activities that could include, e.g., service with refugees or in K-12 schools, living in an international or foreign language residence, involvement in international campus clubs, lectures, and other international events).

The proposals in the following are derived from best practices noted in journals, from contributors, and from campus visits, but the large number of creative faculty members at USC guarantees that other great suggestions will emerge that have not yet even been considered. For these reasons, these suggestions are tentative starting points, open to improvement; a fully-inclusive process for developing the complete 70+ page QEP will cull the best suggestions from the full range of faculty, students and staff on each campus while carefully surveying University strengths and needs in order to craft the most effective strategic plan and deployment of resources.

1. **Strengthening international curriculum for all students**

Students need systematic exposure to global issues, and USC has initiated critical reforms: related goals exist in the General Education plans, USC's Mission Statement, the newly revised Gen-Ed documents, Focus Carolina, and many college Blueprints for Excellence. Three paths available to this goal include: (1) expanding international offerings; (2) requiring some coursework of all students, while encouraging more in-depth engagement; and (3) providing support for faculty who wish to strengthen the international content of their courses.

Circumstances are favorable on each point. (1) Experience with new international offerings at USC suggests that the enrollments materialize when such courses are offered. We can explore innovative ways to

support the development and offering of such courses. (2) Requiring students to have courses dedicated to international issues is already part of the Carolina Core plan for General Education requirements and its Global Citizenship category, but it could easily be expanded to include a two course requirement for every undergraduate, one within the major or college and one from outside. We could require that one course be rooted in developing countries, or non-Western societies. (3) The Center for Teaching Excellence could be expanded to assist faculty who wish to augment the international content of their courses. In addition, the broad diffusion of international expertise across the university could allow departments or colleges to offer a course-release to qualified faculty members who were chosen to offer such field-specific service within their units.

2. **Expanding access to international experiences**

With creative responses, we can dramatically build on Study Abroad's recent successes, which increased participation from 292 students in 2004 to 834 in 2008. While many proposals will advance foreign study opportunities for all undergraduates, a special effort is critical for those students who are least likely to study abroad: low-income students, minority students, students in STEM fields (Science/Technology/Engineering/Math) and the professional schools. These groups are particularly important at USC: our university has the highest enrollment of African-Americans of any flagship state university; our state had the greatest percentage increase in Spanish-speaking immigrants over the last decade; and our professional schools and STEM fields include many potential participants who often feel that such traditional semesters abroad are not feasible within the steady progression of their programs. Developing programs that address the curricular needs of students in STEM disciplines and professional schools and offering need-based scholarship support for study abroad could boost student participation across groups and help to make global experiences universally available to students.

Prohibitive cost is a barrier we could attack by emphasizing programs in developing and non-English speaking countries in our hemisphere, where travel costs and living costs are considerably lower. We can promote hybrid programs, where intensive advance work prepares for a shorter visit (e.g., eleven-day spring break visits, and Maymester courses) and use follow-up debriefing to help students interpret their experiences and reflect on their meaning. We can experiment with small incentives, where as little as $300 may be sufficient to encourage students to participate in an experience they otherwise would not have considered.

To reach and engage the majority of students, however, we must also strengthen international experiences on our campuses and in the community. Our EPI and international students are an untapped resource. Service

opportunities (e.g., conversation partnerships, the Carolina Cultural Partners peer advisor program and the Study Abroad Virtual Advisor Network) and inquiry projects (interviewing international students about their schooling experiences in their native countries) on USC campuses can enhance the social integration of international students and increase their satisfaction, which can enhance recruitment, revenue, and diversity on campus. Working with internationals in the city and state can further improve our relations across the community.

3. **Expanding foreign language competency**

Foreign language proficiency, beyond basic requirements, propels students' intercultural understanding, confidence to travel in non-English speaking lands, inclination to study abroad, and access to media and other patterns of thought. A key priority will be supporting students' advancement into higher levels of language coursework and understanding. Better fluency improves the quality of study abroad experiences, which are well documented to have life-long effects. Critical to our students' advancement in this area is the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, which offers much of USC's international coursework as well as advanced study in a dozen languages, and whose faculty direct most of USC's area studies programs.

We wish to expand the number and extent of foreign language offerings and, for purposes of curriculum enrichment, to explore alternative modes of language acquisition. Tutorial models, such as the University of Iowa's ALLNET (Autonomous Language Learning Network) will permit the study of languages not already taught at USC. We would employ Michigan State University's "Guidelines for Tutorial Language Instruction." Potential funding for expanding foreign language instruction exists with the U.S. Department of Education's Title VI Program. (This model also expands income-generating opportunities for international students.)

4. **Improving University-wide recognition, coordination and communication**

USC's international offices and faculty are diffused across the university and its campuses, which creates opportunities to improve access for all students even as it creates challenges of coordination and communication. There are 165 internationalist faculty among Walker Institute affiliates, and many more not included; USC lacks a comprehensive survey of its international resources, and there is no handy resource to see which faculty have research interests, experience or contacts in understudied places—e.g., Burkina Faso, Laos, Guyana, etc. As a result, we are often unable to connect current and prospective students, colleagues, and job candidates with other USC faculty who have interests and experience in the places in question. Effectively surveying and communicating the full range of international resources, courses and expertise across the USC campuses will help all students and

faculty make valuable connections, pursue collaborations and grants, and pursue advanced study; this great potential has not yet been tapped.

University Wide Innovations

Internationally-oriented faculty members have already suggested exciting initiatives in addition to those discussed above. Among the most intriguing were: (1) interdisciplinary, team-taught, global awareness courses that target undergraduates in the professional schools and STEM disciplines and an "Internationalizing the Professions" proposal for funding through the U.S. Department of Education's Title VI Program that would provide seed money for this effort; (2) an FEI-like program that is rooted in a critical needs assessment related to the envisioned internationalization of the curriculum and of research; (3) working closely with Student Affairs to expand living-learning, foreign language and exchange opportunities; (4), engaging students campus-wide by declaring a particular theme or focus for the year, whether it be a country or region (e.g. China or North Africa) or a critical issue (e.g. hunger, climate change)—students could vote on the options, and participate in the planning and implementation of the year's events, which could also build upon internationally-oriented books for the First-Year Reading Experience; (5), using technology to extend opportunities on all of the University's campuses; (6), establishing competitive seed travel grants for students who wish to pilot international research projects so that they may compete more effectively for Fulbright fellowships and other prestigious grants.

ASSESSMENT

The Office of International and Comparative Education and the Office of Program Evaluation have identified 32 instruments for evaluating the internationalization of higher education. Through the broad QEP process, a multifaceted evaluation plan will be developed for QEP initiatives that clearly links goals with outcomes in order to track their success and identify areas that require programmatic adjustments. We are especially interested in assessing attitudinal changes and post-graduation behavioral outcomes. We anticipate using surveys of in-coming first-year students, seniors, and alumni to measure the cumulative impact of these initiatives as well as their individual effectiveness. In addition, Study Abroad-International Programs is working with other universities to develop an assessment tool for measuring attitudinal change from participation in study abroad programs. Currently in the pilot stage, this assessment should be fully operational prior to the QEP implementation.

Note: This proposal was developed through the collaboration of many colleagues, through two meetings, and through electronic communication.

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Sources for this proposal were include:

An examination of recent similar QEPs from several other institutions, including Wake Forest University, the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, University of Kentucky, Texas A&M University, Florida International University, Kennesaw State University, Western Carolina University, and the University of North Florida. We also reviewed USC's report and recommendations on international programs, conducted in 2006. Preparation of that report also incorporated site visits to the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and the University of California-San Diego.

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