

Social Entrepreneurship at George Mason University: Everyone a Changemaker

Quality Enhancement Plan

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Section 1: Vision

Share your vision of how your proposed topic has the potential to transform an issue related to student learning at the institutional level. Consider your audience of the Mason community members – why should we embrace this topic and how will it enhance student learning at Mason?

The rapid pace of technological, social, political and organizational change emerging in the early part of this 21st century is coupled with an increasing number of national and global challenges. Innovative, entrepreneurial solutions will be required to address these most intractable problems. As an innovative and entrepreneurial university, situated within minutes of the nation's capital, George Mason University is uniquely positioned to inspire and prepare students to be leaders in a world of change. Students need to be able to think critically, identifying problems at their root causes and coming up with comprehensive and thoughtful solutions to problems of global, local and personal magnitude.

Among the approaches to craft and implement solutions to global challenges, one of the most effective and broadly applicable tools is social entrepreneurship. The typical definition of an “entrepreneur” is one who undertakes to solve a significant challenge, problem, or need, without the resources yet in hand to achieve the solution. Social entrepreneurship is the use of these same entrepreneurial strategies to advance some kind of social benefit, or solve some larger challenge facing society. In the words of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, with which Mason is informally affiliated via *Innovations* journal, “social entrepreneurs drive social innovation and transformation in various fields including education, health, environment, enterprise development or civic engagement. They pursue goals with entrepreneurial zeal, business methods and the courage to innovate and overcome traditional practices.”

Vision Statement:

A university-wide commitment to the principles and practices of social entrepreneurship

Social Entrepreneurship at George Mason University: Everyone a Changemaker

Quality Enhancement Plan

throughout the curriculum and co-curriculum will fulfill Mason's mission to cultivate “the new generation of leaders for the 21st century.” Through the development of capacity for social entrepreneurship across the curriculum, Mason students will become the “men and women capable of shaping a global community with vision, justice, and clarity” (University Mission Statement). The University’s close proximity to a major center of global social change presents opportunities to enhance student learning in and outside the classroom by linking the student community to the wealth of talent and knowledge in our region. Our location also affords us the unique opportunity to become a global leader in research, practice, support and promotion of entrepreneurship for the public good.

Enhancing Undergraduate Education:

Today, students need “a greater scope and depth of learning experiences in order to acquire the complex constellation of talents needed to participate in the rapidly changing, high performance, knowledge economy.” (Continuous Improvement in Undergraduate Education, Dr. Henry Kelly). To compete and collaborate in a globalized world, educational institutions must transform to meet the growing demands of students and employers in the for-profit, not-for-profit, and public sectors. More emphasis must be placed on actively helping students to apply the knowledge, skills and abilities they gain on campus to the tangible, everyday problems they will face as the leaders of tomorrow. Through a curriculum that challenges all scholars to apply their disciplines to today’s most pressing local and international concerns, students can learn the vital skills of critical thinking, problem solving, risk assessment, practical management, leadership and innovation, while simultaneously cultivating a spirit of social responsibility and civic engagement.

Opportunity of Location:

Mason is arguably positioned at the very center of national and global change. The Greater Washington Region is home to the largest concentration of nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations, representatives of the world’s nations, the many branches of the U.S. Federal government, and leading institutions in science, education and the arts. These institutions present opportunities for students to directly engage with innovators and entrepreneurs in virtually every field. As a university, we can and must capitalize on the resources inherent to our geographic location by facilitating close relationships with these innovative organizations and leaders in ways that build the capacities of our students. Our location creates a rare opportunity to actively engage our students in a wide array of learning possibilities in and outside the classroom through internships, partnerships, fellowships, mentoring, study abroad, lecture series, etc...

Diverse Student Body:

George Mason University’s diverse student body contains a wealth of differing ideas, cultures, and skill sets. Our campus community is an available resource for facilitating understanding, leadership, collaboration, and innovation around the world. By leveraging existing programs on leadership and entrepreneurship we can develop dialogue across the disciplines and amongst faculty, staff, and students to encourage more critical and innovative thinking. By developing

Social Entrepreneurship at George Mason University: Everyone a Changemaker

Quality Enhancement Plan

these competencies, our university can increase its positive impact on the world.

Faculty Roles:

Social entrepreneurship at George Mason University emphasizes the connection between people and organizations that apply scholarly knowledge across the disciplines in innovative ways to the world's most pressing problems. We envision scholars, administrators, and student affairs professionals across the Mason community identifying entrepreneurial leaders in their fields and finding ways to engage students with the methodologies and practices of these innovators and communities of practice through service learning, independent study, co-curricular activities, study abroad, internships, and research opportunities. This pedagogy will emphasize civic engagement and the development of the entrepreneurial spirit in the lives of all Mason students.

Section 2: Congruence with Mission and Goals

Demonstrate how your proposed topic is consistent with Mason's mission and 2014 Strategic Plan.

- One of our university's core strengths, as outlined in George Mason University's Mission Statement and Strategic Plan, is an encompassing entrepreneurial ethos. Social entrepreneurship broadens the idea of entrepreneurship beyond purely commercial and consumer enterprises to incorporate an emphasis on the public good. This would increase opportunities for faculty across the disciplines to engage in the entrepreneurial spirit.
- Goal One of the Strategic Plan states that George Mason aims to: "raise our profile as a nationally ranked research university." Applying our research capacities - both quantitative and qualitative - to solving today's most pressing social problems is a key in garnering public support for our institutional research goals. As faculty in the disciplines come together to collaborate in identifying, investigating, and addressing the tremendous challenges of our time, students, too, will have greater opportunities to apply their knowledge to further the public good.
- Mason has an institutional goal in both fostering understanding of global issues and encouraging students to address them. The Mason Strategic Plan likewise holds that "George Mason will continue to emphasize global roles and the importance of promoting global understanding in the educational process. Articulating and meeting the relevant challenges of globalization including environmental challenges will define a significant portion of the University's agenda during the coming period." The concepts of social entrepreneurship are vital to understanding a wide variety of social problems, and can help students go further to develop the capacities required to create sustainable change with measurable impact.

Social Entrepreneurship at George Mason University: Everyone a Changemaker

Quality Enhancement Plan

- Our university mission statement asserts that: “George Mason University is innovative and entrepreneurial in spirit and utilizes its multi-campus organization and location near our nation’s capital to attract outstanding faculty, staff and students.” Remaining innovative and entrepreneurial requires constant adaptation, dialogue, and vision. Clearly, current trends and paradigms are evolving and we must stay ahead of these changing patterns. Being responsive and flexible will allow us to attract “outstanding faculty, staff and students” and best capitalize on our location. President Merten’s Vision for the New Century states that: “George Mason will be the university needed by a region and world driven by new social, economic, and technological realities.” By focusing on developing the capacities of empathy, teamwork, critical thinking, and leadership across the disciplines, every student can participate in making this vision a reality.

George Mason’s Mission also highlights our need to: “Maintain an international reputation for superior education and public service that affirms its role as the intellectual and cultural nexus among Northern Virginia, the nation, and the world.” By empowering students to apply their education to solving pressing societal problems and emphasizing critical thinking and problem solving as essential to all parts of our campus community, Mason will blend a superior academic experience with a concrete commitment to public service.

Section 3: Student Learning Outcomes

Identify at least four measurable student learning outcomes that your proposed topic expects to address. Specifically, if your plan were to be adopted, what would students know and be able to do as a result?

Goals for students’ individual learning and lessons include:

- Students will have an increased understanding of the concepts of teamwork, critical thinking, problem solving, empathy, and leadership as exemplified through social entrepreneurship, and will be able to apply these concepts in the context of their disciplines.
- Students will identify examples and role models for social entrepreneurship in their particular disciplines.
- Students will have a greater understanding of the entrepreneurial process, and the role of entrepreneurs historically in society.
- Students will experience greater opportunities for inter-disciplinary study of entrepreneurship as applied to societal challenges.

Social Entrepreneurship at George Mason University: Everyone a Changemaker

Quality Enhancement Plan

- Undergraduate students will have increased opportunities to participate in the research process, including grant writing, partner building, problem identification, fieldwork, laboratory work, analysis, as well as the presentation of research findings via multi-modal composition, research articles, posters and conference presentations.
- Undergraduate students will have greater access to training and instruction in research methods through mentoring, internships, fellowships, and global engagement.
- Undergraduate students will have increased opportunities to design, organize and participate in funded research.
- Students will have increased opportunities to integrate the communication skills that are essential to social entrepreneurs in curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular settings, including creative and effective oral and written communications.
- Students will have increased opportunity to participate in cross-cultural communication.
- Students will understand the opportunities and challenges of being a social entrepreneur.
- Students will have increased opportunity to work with recognized innovators and social entrepreneurs in and outside of the Mason community, both in the immediate vicinity and internationally.
- Students will exercise a greater amount of social responsibility through both their actions and careers.

Section 4: Possible Avenues for Implementation

Describe how your proposed QEP topic relates to an issue where there is momentum building on campus or an issue that would be significantly strengthened through added attention and resources. Include your ideas about possible strategies for implementing this topic so that we could obtain meaningful results. Where possible, highlight opportunities to build on current institutional initiatives and resources.

Academic Curriculum:

- Integrate examples and methods of social entrepreneurship into pre-existing courses across the disciplines, adding to students' understanding of topics by examining innovators in their field. There are numerous examples at the undergraduate level where

Social Entrepreneurship at George Mason University: Everyone a Changemaker

Quality Enhancement Plan

teachers have used social entrepreneurship to teach subjects including English, Global Health Sciences, Sports Management, Humanities and Social Sciences, Management, and Engineering.

- Provide new courses within various disciplines that discuss or teach the concepts of social entrepreneurship as they relate to that discipline.
- Support faculty to be able to actively engage students in the ideas of social entrepreneurship through faculty seminars that equip professors with the skills and understanding necessary to effectively educate their students.
- Create a campus-wide understanding and awareness of social entrepreneurship through a speaker series that invites leaders from around the globe to come share their experiences.

Research:

- Institute more research opportunities for undergraduates, possibly through the Mercatus Center or other research-based entities at Mason. This emphasis on research will promote programs and ideas that will center upon needs in both global and local areas. A new emphasis on undergraduate research will encourage innovation in all fields, including economics, biology, chemistry, business and management, policy programs, conflict analysis and resolution, philosophy and others.

Study Abroad:

- Expand study abroad and international study programs to engage students in actively working with social entrepreneurs to understand national and international issues and experience the work being done by these leaders first-hand.
- Increase awareness of existing funding for study abroad programs and encourage students to apply. Increase scholarship opportunities for study abroad as well.

Internships:

- Set-up more internships opportunities in all fields of study that send students to work with social entrepreneurs locally and internationally.
- Create a more defined support system for students choosing to study and work under a social entrepreneur during a semester away.

Cross-cultural Integration:

- Support and develop more cross-cultural programs that create more awareness of diverse cultures, climates, languages, and problems facing our global community.
- Teach students how to get involved in helping people in their local communities.

Social Entrepreneurship at George Mason University: Everyone a Changemaker

Quality Enhancement Plan

Living Learning Communities:

- Create a living learning community that will gather students who are interested in making a sustainable, effective impact on the world through innovation, research, and creative problem solving.

Career Options:

- In the student and faculty communities, create more awareness of new career paths like starting and supporting businesses and non-profit endeavors.
- Provide more tools for students who are interested in entrepreneurial endeavors.
- Provide resources for the career center to help students pursue careers as social entrepreneurs.

Mason's National and International Partnerships:

- Establish more national and international partnerships with social entrepreneurial programs such as the Ashoka Foundation: Innovators for the Public, The Skoll Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, The Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship.
- Establish more partnerships with social entrepreneurs both nationally and internationally.

Service-Learning:

- Increasing the productivity and positive social impact of co-curricular service learning projects by encouraging and supporting students and faculty to use the core concepts of social entrepreneurship such as innovation, critical thinking, problem identification, problem solving, grassroots implementation, empathy, teamwork, and leadership.