

## **Panel Simulations and Self-Directed Learning as Part of Quality Enhancement Programs**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Accrediting bodies that are regional such as Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and international bodies like the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) are looking at teaching practices in an effort to improve educational effectiveness at the College level. This movement known as Quality Enhancement Programs (QEP) is launching in business schools everywhere. This symposium offers a discussion of an example of a Quality Enhancement Program (Enriching Educational Experiences at Coastal Carolina University) and a way to define experiential learning that allows for implementation, measurement, and tracking of quality improvement over time through the use of simulations.

### **BACKGROUND**

Accrediting bodies that are regional such as Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and international bodies like the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) are looking at teaching practices in an effort to improve educational effectiveness at the College level.

This movement known as Quality Enhancement Programs (QEP) is launching in business schools everywhere. In the United Kingdom, the University of Leeds has pioneered what has been named the Ripple project. This effort is directed at understanding how internet and communications technologies (ICT) affect higher order learning by the whole student as young as preschool. In the United States, there has been a growing interest in this issue as evidenced by using behavior-based software to harness individual student strengths in grade schools.

Mintzberg [4] said that business managers in the work place dealt with people, information, and decisions. In extending this approach to active learning [2], talked about three types of interactions: those between faculty and student, those between student and course content type, and those between students themselves. Courses with an active learning component are perceived as more useful to post-graduate employment, even though it had no effect on grades, satisfaction, or perceptions of how a course is conducted [6]. McCarthy and McCarthy [3] show that experiential learning has impact on self-efficacy [1] which leads students to learn new skills on their own. Finally, Nentil and Miller [5], argue that simulations as an active learning component helps maximize student focus and motivation to learn.

More recently, the University of Southern California has created the Institute for Creative Technologies whose mission is:

“The University of Southern California Institute for Creative Technologies is revolutionizing learning through the development of interactive digital media. Collaborating with entertainment industry neighbors, ICT is a leader in producing virtual humans, computer training simulations and immersive experiences for making decisions, cultural awareness, leadership and health. ICT is also exploring how video games can be used to revolutionize learning. This unique approach combines state-of-the-art technologies, evidence-based educational designs and engaging immersive user experiences. The end result is a learning experience that the player doesn't want to end.”

This approach has been used to teach social skills to autistic children among other applications.

## **PURPOSE**

Currently, the authors of the Coastal Carolina University QEP team are planning to focus upon what they call the four pillars of ‘experiential learning’:

1. Undergraduate research
2. Internships
3. International experiences
4. Service learning

Experiential learning is defined as "the direct discovery of knowledge and the development of skills through the intentional selection of and participation in applied activities, culminating in the reflective demonstration of learning." On our campus, the primary goal of the Quality Enhancement Program is to "have Coastal Carolina University students explore and critically reflect upon the relationship between their university education and the world in which they live."

This panel is in support of the proposition that another pillar of experiential learning can be found in the use of simulations in courses such as GLO-BUS, the Business Strategy Game, FINGAME, ADSIM, and Market Share among others. Simulations require self-directed learning in an active form as well as reflective demonstration of learning through competition and presentations about performance. Each symposium participant will discuss how the use of a simulation impacts self-directed learning, supports QEP goals, and provides an opportunity for student creativity, critical thinking and problem solving to be developed.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The symposium participants reflect membership on the CCU QEP team, the Wall College of Business Assessment team, the faculty who use simulations and the administrators who oversee academic programs. Thus, this symposium offers a discussion of an example of a Quality Enhancement Program (Enriching Educational Experiences at Coastal Carolina University) and a way to define experiential learning that allows for implementation, measurement, and tracking of quality improvement over time through the use of simulations. The hope is that seeing what Coastal is doing will spark discussions about ways to implement QEP that lead to self-directed learning involving creativity and experiential learning.

## **REFERENCES**

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