As an innovative and entrepreneurial university, situated near the nation’s capital, George Mason University is uniquely positioned to inspire and prepare students to be leaders in a world of change through the development and use of knowledge and skills associated with social innovation and social entrepreneurship.

“Social Innovators and Social Entrepreneurs: 21st Century Leaders of Change” emphasizes the people, ideas, organizations, and movements that lead to measurable and lasting social gains, and the innovative application of scholarly knowledge in the arts and sciences to the world’s pressing problems. We envision scholars, administrators, and faculty 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 through curriculum, service-learning, independent study, co-curricular activities, study abroad, internships, and research opportunities. This QEP further aims to include a larger segment of the university population in Mason’s entrepreneurial mission. We also hope to further Mason’s goal of “raising our profile as a nationally-ranked research university” through the creation of additional research opportunities for students that will increase faculty-student interaction and students’ civic engagement.

According to data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the current undergraduate experience at Mason does not meet student expectations in important areas of engagement and practical experience. When the data for Mason seniors was compared to our peer institutions, there was notable underachievement in the following areas:

1. Participating in community service or volunteer work
2. Participating in a practicum, internships, field experience, co-op or clinical assignment
3. Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
4. Working on research with faculty members outside of course or program requirements

The goal of this Quality Enhancement Plan is to improve student learning at Mason by addressing several critical needs within the Mason community, such as the desire for civic engagement opportunities and faculty-student interaction, as illustrated by national research data. In order to meet these needs, and prepare Mason students for success in an increasingly competitive, interconnected, and globalized 21st century, we propose an increase in curricular and co-curricular activities that apply the knowledge and skills they are learning to the pressing social challenges of our time. Through the revision of pre-existing courses and the introduction of new courses and co-curricular activities, students will build proficiencies in effective leadership, strategic problem-solving, and critical and creative thinking, while also developing a deeper commitment to civic engagement.

As a result of the activities proposed in this QEP, the following learning outcomes can be expected:

**Develop Knowledge of Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

1. Students will identify the historical & contemporary applications of disciplinary knowledge used to address local, national and global challenges.
2. Students will understand the competencies associated with social innovation and social entrepreneurship, such as leadership, critical and creative thinking, ethical conduct, and civic engagement.
3. Students will use critical and creative thinking to investigate local and global challenges.
Learn Experientially
4. Students will use and integrate knowledge acquired in the classroom to address, inform others about, and/or better understand real world social problems & global challenges.  
5. Students will gain experience communicating new and complex ideas in compelling ways.

Acquire Leadership and Teamwork Skills
6. Students will understand, develop, and demonstrate the qualities associated with effective leadership.  
7. Students will work cooperatively with individuals from across disciplines/fields.

Engage with Faculty Mentors and Communities of Practice
8. Students will work closely with faculty, mentors, innovators and social entrepreneurs to address, inform others about, or better understand social problems or needs.  
9. Students will participate in innovative research projects and ventures and will discuss findings in public forums.

The implementation plan of the QEP addresses these goals by leading our dynamic and diverse student population towards the achievement of a specific set of learning outcomes. The implementation plan is designed to develop students’ content knowledge (knowing that) and strategic knowledge (knowing how) by learning about and applying innovative and entrepreneurial solutions to pressing global challenges and highly complex social problems through four areas of activity:

1. Knowledge of Social Innovations and Entrepreneurship  
2. Experiential Learning  
3. Leadership and Teamwork  
4. Mentoring and Research

Specifically, we propose to engage students in this learning through two major activities, which, in turn, will be supported by a number of other activities. We aim to do this throughout students’ entire education by targeting particular segments of Mason’s population (i.e., freshmen, transfer students, non-traditional students, upper division students, and seniors who are close to graduation) at strategic points in their undergraduate experience.

The first major activity included in this QEP involves providing course development grants to faculty (adjunct, term, tenure-track, and tenured) to revise existing courses and introduce new courses that link disciplinary knowledge to the growing range of social problems that exist in the world, and which engage students across the disciplines in thinking about the application of their learning to the world’s problems in new ways. In addition to these grants, we also propose the formation of Interdisciplinary Learning Ventures, which will provide funding to faculty leaders who involve students in researching and advancing solutions to global challenges and intractable social problems in six major areas: learning and education, health, economic development, human rights, the environment, and civic engagement. The implementation plan of this QEP is designed to promote the development of student leaders, to broaden Mason’s entrepreneurial and innovative vision, and to infuse the entire campus with a focus on innovation and civic engagement.