Stetson’s Quality Enhancement Plan
Transitions:
Enhancing Student Learning and Success through Transitional Programs

Over the past 18 months, several groups of faculty, students and staff have developed a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) designed to improve student learning outcomes as well as retention and graduation rates. By enhancing students’ transitions into and through Stetson, we believe they will be more successful in their studies and more successful in their lives after graduation. The plan has two major initiatives: Hatter Trek and Hatter Quest.

Hatter Trek is a summer transition program consisting of voluntary retreats for incoming students in the summer months before they begin at Stetson in the fall semester. Beginning in the summer of 2011, approximately 50 incoming students will join Stetson staff, faculty, and returning student orientation leaders for four-day retreats designed to help them form community, gain a better understanding of the academic expectations we have of them, become familiar with resources to help them achieve their goals at Stetson, and begin to create a vision for their success at Stetson. **Summer 2011 Hatter Trek Locations: Atlanta; South Florida.**

Hatter Quest is a revised approach to fall orientation for incoming students. Beginning with the fall of 2011, we will intentionally include an academic component into our fall orientation by having students meet with their first-year seminar (FSEM) classes several times before they begin the rest of their schedule. During this time, and throughout the semester, instructors will be intentional about integrating academic support services with assignments in the class to help students learn how to use those resources throughout their time at Stetson. We believe using these resources on a regular basis, as part of their normal academic routines, will enhance student learning and student success from the time they arrive until the time they graduate. The FSEM courses will then end in November allowing first-year students to focus on their other courses during finals.

*Please stay tuned for upcoming forums and website information providing more details about the QEP. For more information, contact the Student Success Center or Academic Affairs. [studentsuccess@stetson.edu](mailto:studentsuccess@stetson.edu)*
Executive Summary

Stetson University's mission is to provide an excellent education in a creative community where learning and values meet, and to foster in students the qualities of mind and heart that will prepare them to reach their full potential as informed citizens of local communities and the world. As Florida’s first private university, Stetson has long practiced the art of teaching through programs solidly grounded in a tradition of liberal learning that stimulates critical thinking, imaginative inquiry, creative expression, and lively intellectual debate. The art of learning is enhanced through small interactive classes and close student-faculty alliances. For many Stetson students, affectionately known as “Hatters”, these collaborative approaches provide the foundation for rewarding careers and advanced study in selective graduate and professional programs. However, too many students do not successfully complete the Stetson experience as measured by the average six-year graduation rate of approximately 65 percent and first-to-second year retention rate of approximately 77 percent. While both of these important indicators are complex with many related influences and factors, improving the results on these measures is an institutional goal that will reflect an improvement in an environment supportive of student learning.

Over the past 18 months, Stetson has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) designed to improve student learning outcomes as well as retention and graduation rates. By enhancing students’ transitions into and through Stetson, we believe they will be more successful in their studies and more successful in their lives after graduation. The plan has two major initiatives: Hatter Trek and Hatter Quest.

The first initiative, Hatter Trek, is a summer transition program that involves conducting voluntary retreats for incoming students in the summer months before they begin at Stetson in the fall semester. Beginning in the summer of 2011, approximately 50 incoming students will join Stetson staff, faculty, and returning student orientation leaders for four-day retreats designed to help them form community, gain a better understanding of the academic expectations we have of them, become familiar with resources to help them achieve their goals at Stetson, and begin to create a vision of what success at Stetson would look like for them.

The second initiative, Hatter Quest, is a thoroughly revised approach to fall orientation for all incoming students. Beginning with the fall of 2011, we will intentionally include an academic component into our fall orientation by having students meet with their first-year seminar (FSEM) classes several times before they begin the rest of their schedule. During this time, and throughout the semester, instructors will be intentional about integrating academic support services with assignments in the class to help students learn how to use those resources throughout their time at Stetson. We believe using these resources on a regular basis, as part of their normal academic routines, will enhance student learning and student success from the time they arrive until the time they graduate.