



Prepared for the Commission on Colleges
of the
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
As a Component of Reaffirmation
for Stephen F. Austin State University
February 2021
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**Lowering Student Debt:
A Quality Enhancement
Plan from Stephen F. Austin
State University**

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Executive Summary

The problem of student debt is a growing concern across the United States. Undoubtedly, a college degree is among the best means of escaping poverty and promoting social mobility. Student debt puts this important pathway at risk. At Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA), the topic of “Reducing Student Debt” was identified by the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) committee as an opportunity to improve student success, and it was chosen as the consensus topic through a campus-wide process involving students, faculty, and staff. Efforts aimed at reducing student debt have been underway for some time related to SFA’s strategic plan. These include reducing the cost of educational materials, significantly restructuring tuition and fees, and promoting financial literacy. **In an effort to build upon this momentum, this plan will focus on timely degree completion as a means of reducing student debt.**

Specific Focus on Student Success – Lowering Student Debt by Reducing Time to Degree

Among college graduates, student loan debt is the greatest regret.¹ Nationwide, 44.7 million Americans owe a collective \$1.56 trillion in student loans, an amount that has doubled in 12 years (Figure 1, below). This amount surpasses all other household debt, including automobile loans and credit card debt. Only mortgage debt is higher. Worse, defaulted student loans have surpassed all other types of household debt classified as "severely derogatory." In fact, futurist Bryan Alexander² and journalist Derek Thompson³ have called college costs and student debt the consequential bubble of the current economy.

On August 30, 2019, the Department of Education finalized student debt restrictions designed to make canceling student debt harder for federal loan borrowers.⁴ This leaves the onus on the student, as well as parents. Parental contributions complicate how parents (and in many cases grandparents) save for their own futures, as well as how they pay up front for their child's development.^{5,6}

In response to the student loan crisis, Americans from the Millennial Generation & Generation Z are delaying their future plans. People in these generations wait longer to get married,^{7,8} wait longer to have children,⁹ and wait longer to purchase a home (see Figure 2, below).¹⁰ While the human cost is enormous, it is estimated that the American economy suffers as a whole.

Of those under age 35, just 37% own stocks. As a point of reference, this figure held at 55% in 2001.¹¹ Debt affects wages, as well. Students with debt are less "choosy" on the job market, and this leads to lower wages.¹² Defaults cost the government \$170,000,000,000.¹³ This is nothing new.¹⁴ In fact, there is a growing belief that a loan-funded college degree no longer makes financial sense.¹⁵

Student debt has affected the housing market, with 400,000 Americans in their 20s and 30s from 2005 to 2014 delaying a home purchase.¹⁶ Student debt not only affects home ownership, but

¹ (Gruver 2019)

² (Alexander 2013)

³ (Thompson 2017)

⁴ (Rummler, DeVos finalizes student debt restrictions 2019)

⁵ (Rummler, The financial risks parents take to pay for college 2019)

⁶ (Zaloom 2019)

⁷ (Min and Taylor February 2018)

⁸ (Bozick and Estacion 2014)

⁹ (Nau, Dwyer and Hodson 2015)

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ (Norman 2018)

¹² (Gervais and Ziebarth 2017)

¹³ (Girouard 2018)

¹⁴ (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau 2013)

¹⁵ (Morgan and Steinbaum 2018)

¹⁶ (Ingraham, Student debt has kept home ownership out of reach for 400,000 young families, Fed reports 2019)

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also small business creation. The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia found “a significant and economically meaningful negative correlation” between rising student loan debt and falling small-business formation.¹⁷

Student Loan Debt affects every facet of an adult’s life. A 2014 Gallup Poll¹⁸ identified five main areas in which students with high levels of debt fall behind their counterparts without loans:

- Purpose, or being motivated and liking what you do every day;
- Social, or having beneficial relationships in your life;
- Financial, or being able to manage your economic life;
- Community, or having pride in where you live;
- Physical, or being in good health with high levels of energy.

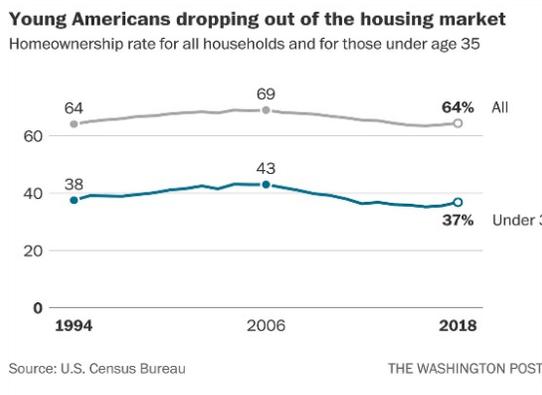


Figure 1: Student Debt and Housing

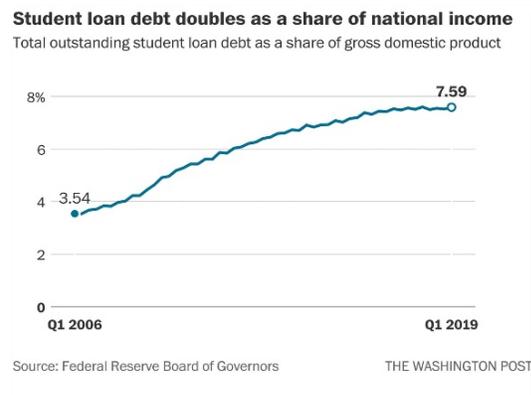


Figure 2: Student Loan Debt - National Income

To make matters worse, student loan debt in Texas places an undue burden on Black students, Latinx students, non-traditional students, and first-generation students. On average, every additional year of age at the start of entry to postsecondary education is associated with an additional \$790 in cumulative undergraduate debt. Black and Latinx students, on average, borrow \$7,124 and \$453 more than their white peers, while Asian students borrow \$3,155 less. When controlling for the other student characteristics, women borrow \$323 less than men, while students who had at least one parent with a bachelor’s degree borrowed \$692 less (compared to peers who had no parents with a bachelor’s degree).¹⁹ The results from this are shocking. On average, white students who graduated from Texas state universities have a debt-to-income ratio of 68 percent, compared to 117 percent for Black students who graduated from state universities in Texas.²⁰

The State of Texas created an overarching plan to increase college credentials among the populace to be implemented by all state institutions of higher education (influenced by the

¹⁷ (Ingraham, 7 ways \$1.6 trillion in student loan debt affects the U.S. economy 2019)

¹⁸ (Dugan and Marken 2014)

¹⁹ (Baker 2019)

²⁰ Ibid

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Lumina Foundation²¹).²² The plan, *60x30TX*, holds the overall goal of increasing state postsecondary credentials to 60% of the population aged 25-34 by 2030. The *60x30TX* plan includes multiple measures of success for institutions. One of these key performance indicators is the student debt load carried by graduates: debt should be no more than 60% of first year earnings.²³ According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), SFA sits above this mark, and is 10th worst for student debt levels among 36 public four-year universities in the state.²⁴ Moreover, 69% of SFA graduates carry debt; this is the 3rd highest percentage among Texas universities. Figure 3 offers a visualization of the THECB comparison.

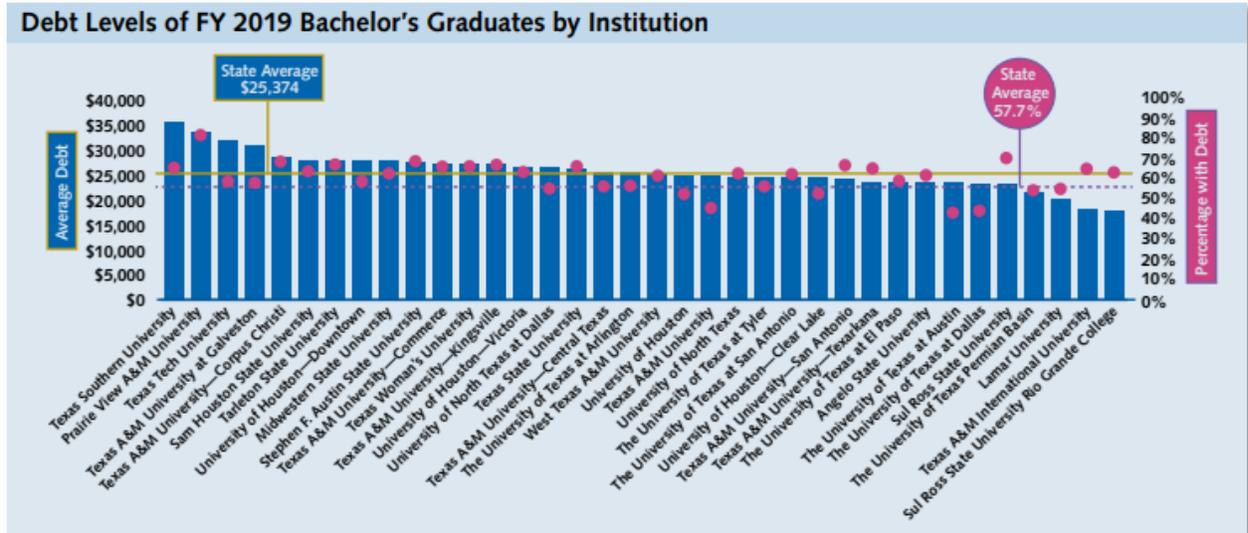


Figure 3: Texas Public University Student Debt

The debt burden cap goal (DCBG) obliges SFA to focus on student debt as keenly as we attend to time-to-degree, graduation, or retention rates. This is a general problem for most institutions in the state (and nation), but Stephen F. Austin State University graduates many teachers and nurses, who typically do not earn a high enough first-year salary to eclipse 60% of their student debt. Further, SFA serves a large population of first-generation students and students coming from a low socio-economic status background. Capping debt burdens at 60% of a smaller first-year professional income makes the DCBG more challenging.²⁵ Today's student debt is juxtaposed with the following prescription from the THECB, "The health of Texas depends on an economically healthy population that has discretionary income. College affordability is key."²⁶

²¹ (Lumina Foundation 2013)

²² (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board 2015)

²³ Ibid, p.vi

²⁴ (THECB 2020), p.11

²⁵ (Baker 2019)

²⁶ (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board 2015)

SFA's Student Debt Issue

Student debt has been a problematic issue for the SFA campus community. Earlier this decade, SFA's default rate rose to over 15%. In response to this, SFA was informed by the United States Department of Education that student loans would be subject to a student loan holding period of 30 days. The penalty lasted three years (AY 15-AY17).

The 30-day hold kept textbooks out of students' hands—especially students who were economically vulnerable. New first-time, full-time students could be left without textbooks for the entire first month of school, putting them in jeopardy of failing their courses. SFA tried to mitigate the effect with short-term loans, but there were not sufficient funds to handle all cases. These situations affected the students, specifically, but they affected SFA as a whole. Downward pressure on grades, retention, and (ultimately) graduation were imposed by these student loan rules.

The three-year penalty was finished by 2018, and that hold no longer applies to SFA students. However, the current overall debt level for SFA graduates is higher than the state average—significantly higher. Thus, the problem continues to fester, and it is no surprise that reducing student debt rose to the top of student, faculty, and staff concerns when the QEP selection process was opened up to the SFA community.

Topic Identification and Broad-Based Institutional Constituency Support

For a Quality Enhancement Plan topic to move forward, it needs to have three qualities: (a) it has to emanate from our mission (through our Flexible Strategic Compass); (b) there needs to be relevant baseline data for comparison purposes; and (c) there must be support from a large constituency of the SFA campus community. The QEP topic was chosen in a very transparent process. A QEP Topic Selection Committee (TSC) was convened, with representatives from all campus communities. [1] With the three requirements as filters in mind, the TSC met and determined to request input on all possible topics.

This process began with an open survey requesting ideas for a QEP. [2] These suggestions were paired with data collected by the Office of Institutional Research, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, and other data-focused personnel at SFA. All topics that met the requirements were presented for discussion at a first Town Hall meeting on November 15, 2018. [3] The SFA community—including faculty, staff, and students—was invited to participate. [4] There were twelve general topic areas proposed to the attendees, but the floor remained open for other ideas, as well. The meeting was recorded and posted online by SFA's Center for Teaching and Learning.

A second survey was administered following the first Town Hall and results compiled. [5] This survey offered respondents a choice of topic areas, as well as open options for anything new. A second town hall was scheduled and announced to the SFA community, including faculty, staff, and students [6]. The survey responses [7] [8] were tallied in time for a second Town Hall

meeting in February of 2019. [9] [10] From the survey and the Town Hall, the QEP Topic Selection committee determined meaningful combinations of the most popular and feasible options. These were the three finalists:

1. Lowering Student Cost & Debt
2. Critical Thinking through Writing
3. Engaging Students in Their Chosen Discipline

In each survey, separate mailing lists were used between SFA students [11] and SFA faculty/staff. This ensured we were able to determine “the voice of the students” in the deliberations. Students immediately pointed to cost and debt. These responses did not waver with the possible exception of mental health care improvement requests. Faculty and staff were generally split, with nearly identical numbers between the top three topic options.

One last Town Hall meeting took place, giving culminating input to the TSC. The following week, the TSC met and made a final decision to choose Lowering Student Cost & Debt. [12] Before final approval from upper administration, the topic was narrowed to focus solely on student debt.

SFA is focusing our QEP efforts toward a push to graduate students on-time, with the fewest excess hours possible, as the most consequential means to reduce their debt.

Our efforts may be the most effective means of offsetting students’ debt accumulation. Even one extra year at college can have enormous costs. Indeed, the extra year creates a double effect, incurring cost while deferring a first salary. As the brilliant Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes once asked:

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun . . .
Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

PayScale, a compensation software and data company, places the early career salary for SFA graduates around \$47,600. PayScale defines early career salary as the typical median salary for those with 0-5 years’ experience in the field.²⁷ With annual full-time undergraduate SFA tuition at \$10,600 and room and board costing about another \$10,966, *the financial turnaround for an extra year in college is \$69,166.*

With this in mind, we will lower SFA student debt through a series of data-driven, integrated approaches, designed to increase SCH attainment and decrease the time it takes to graduate a Lumberjack. These are outlined below.

²⁷ (PayScale 2021)

We tell students that college is four years; That's what students and families plan for and expect."²⁸

The Plan

Strategy 1 – Ideal Degree Sequences

SFA will develop and maintain eight-semester degree sequences (e.g., degree map or academic pathway) for all undergraduate degree programs and their associated concentrations. We plan to follow Complete College America’s (CCA) approach, working with all academic programs to *delineate the most efficient path to graduation and highlight significant milestones that contribute to student success in a clear and comprehensive format.*²⁹ Using Ad Astra Solutions, a course offering analytics software suite, we can conduct extensive analysis of our degree sequences and identify structural issues that contribute to delays in degree progression.

Figure 4 below is a comparison of the Geology and Kinesiology degree sequences indicating the number of unique courses and the number of courses that are absolute requirements. In other words, the Kinesiology sequence has 86 courses with 24 absolute requirements no other course can fulfill. The remaining 62 courses are one-to-many choice options available within groups of courses for the sequence. Absolute requirements tend to create bottlenecks, potentially delaying student progress. Unique courses, on the other hand, tend to make too many options available to students, making it difficult for the department to offer all course options efficiently and often leading to many of them not being offered in a predictable manner. If a student chooses a concentration based on a cluster of unique courses, the student might have to delay graduation by a year or more if all of the courses for the concentration are not regularly offered. The chart also indicates the number of courses that are overloaded (seat supply is less than student demand), which creates access problems for students.

Pathway	Total Course Enrollment	Total Course Seats Offered	Course Enrollment Ratio	Average Course Enrollment Ratio	Total Requirements	Course Group Requirements	Absolute Requirements	Total Unique Courses	Overloaded Course Offerings
Geology, Bachelor of Science	10,140	13,594	75%	89%	38	7	31	67	14
Kinesiology, Exercise Science	2,052	16,478	73%	84%	33	9	24	86	23

Figure 4: Degree Sequence Analysis Tabular

In addition to employing Ad Astra Solutions, we will analyze the degree sequences using Curricular Analytics, an open-source tool for the study of curricular complexity, to identify the impact of curricular structure on student progression. This analysis will allow us to identify the level of complexity of each course sequence by identifying those courses that delay (e.g., sets of courses that require a specific sequence) or block (e.g., specific gateway courses that prevent progression in the pathway until successfully completed) a student’s progression. The linear combination of the delaying and blocking factors provides a numerical value indicating the

²⁸ (Seliger, et al. 2016)

²⁹ (Complete College America 2014)

structural complexity of a curriculum. Results of the curricular analysis will be used to simplify, where possible, those curricula that have high levels of complexity (CurricularAnalytics.org 2020). When this strategy is fully implemented, the schedules will *contribute to degree progression and meet the needs of all students.*³⁰

Complexity matters. Lower complexity scores correlate with increased program quality³¹ and higher graduation rates.³² SFA will focus on structural complexity for the duration of this Quality Enhancement Plan with an aim at creating curricula that are student-centric. To visualize the structural curricular complexity measure, consider the following two curricula (Figure 5). The first curriculum has a complexity score of 256 because of the numerous courses depicted in the diagram that serve to potentially delay and block students (i.e., the multiple lines emanating from one course that connect to other courses in complex patterns), as compared to a score of 84 in the second example. The scores reflect the sum of each curriculum’s delaying and blocking factors.



Figure 5: Curricular Analytics Tables

Strategy 2 – Course Demand Analysis

SFA will harness the power of data to determine which courses and the number of seats per course our students will need to graduate on time (Figure 6, below). This is accomplished by modeling demand for each course using the pathways of currently enrolled and simulated first-time and transfer students combined with historic enrollment and projected growth trends for each academic term. The results of the analysis inform the creation of an academic schedule based on student course demand. Through this model, we can determine projected student demand for courses tailored to students’ positions along their respective academic pathways. The results of the course offering analysis provide information on candidate courses that require additional seats or sections, courses that need fewer seats or sections, and courses that have potential meeting pattern conflicts with other courses. The recommendations enter a workflow (Figure 6 below), where they are reviewed by the university level Course Availability Team

³⁰ (Complete College America 2014)

³¹ (Heileman, Free, et al. 2020)

³² (Heileman, Abdallah, et al. 2018)

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(CAT) and academic unit heads. Initially the results are reviewed by the CAT, which begins an iterative workflow including data evaluation, review and adjustment by the academic units, approval by the CAT, and finally scheduling by the academic units.

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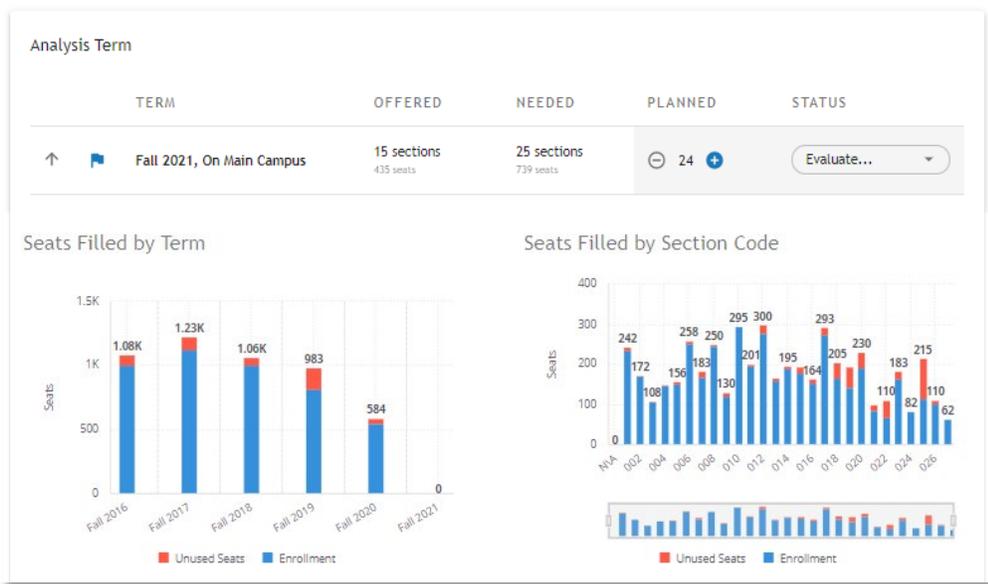


Figure 6: Example Ad Astra Course Demand Analysis Data and Recommendation

COURSE	OFFERED	NEEDED	PLANNED	STATUS
ANTH 2351 - Cultural Anthropology Fall 2021, On Main Campus	3 sections 124 seats	1 section 33 seats	1	Reviewed
ENGL 4368 - Creative Writing Senior Thesis Fall 2021, On Main Campus	4 sections 61 seats	2 sections 17 seats	2	Reviewed
ENGL 5389 - Thesis Research Fall 2021, On Main Campus	3 sections 3 seats	4 sections 4 seats	4	Approved
FREN 1311 - Elementary French Fall 2021, Virtual	3 sections 75 seats	2 sections 33 seats	2	Scheduled
GOVT 2302 - Intro Amer Gov: Struc Func Fall 2021, Online	4 sections 195 seats	2 sections 83 seats	4	Evaluate...

Figure 7: Example Ad Astra Course Offering Analysis Workflow

This process supports the creation of data-informed schedules that provide students with the opportunity to complete 15 credit hours each semester.

Strategy 3 – Student-Centric Schedules

Once the results of the course offering analysis are published and reviewed using the workflow described above, academic unit heads and program coordinators will incorporate the results of the analysis into future schedules. This process also includes analysis of potential scheduling conflicts depicted in Figure 8 below.

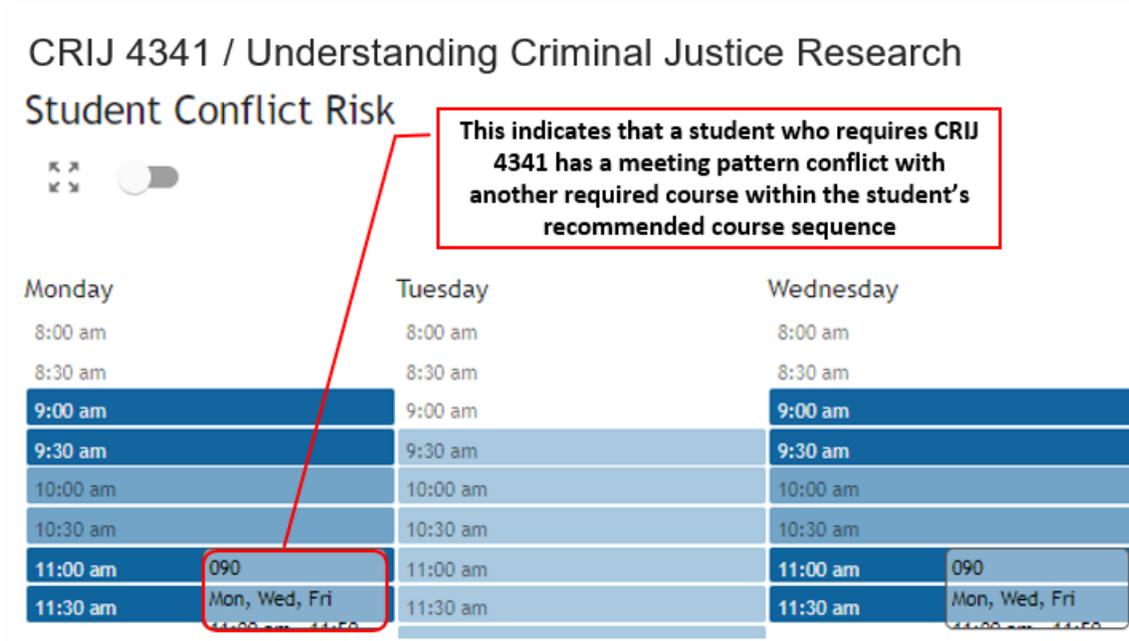


Figure 8: Example of Ad Astra Schedule Conflict Analysis

The schedule build process will be actively monitored using the workflow depicted above in Figure 7 to identify deviations between analysis recommendations regarding the numbers of course section and seat projections and what is scheduled. Deviations between the two will be negotiated through collaborative tools within the software and existing administrative schedule approval processes and forums (e.g., committees, conferences, meetings).

Strategy 4 – Informed Intrusive Advising

Using the degree sequences created in Strategy 1, the course demand data generated in Strategy 2, and the data informed schedules developed in Strategy 3, we will synthesize the benefits into our 4th strategy—Informed Intrusive Advising (IIA). Professional and faculty advisors will work with students to keep them on track with informed course selection. IIA involves intentional student-advisor contact with the goal of developing caring and beneficial relationships. These relationships lead to



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increased academic motivation and persistence.³³ Research literature on student retention suggests that contact with a significant person within an institution of higher education is a crucial factor in a student's decision to remain in college.³⁴ When this type of proactive advising is combined with data informed academic schedules, it provides us with the opportunity to conduct Informed Intrusive Advising (IIA). SFA plans to adopt the philosophy put forth by Complete College America:

Require advisors to take a preemptive approach that anticipates and helps eliminate concerns, roadblocks, and barriers affecting student success. Through strategic and consistent outreach, ensure advisors are a resource for students, working with them to create a holistic plan for a timely graduation.³⁵

Strategy 5 – Active Registration Monitoring

Registration is the culmination of the four previous strategies. Active registration monitoring allows SFA to make real time adjustments to course offerings based on student registration patterns and allows us to account for subsequent variables and events not triggered by our modeling or actual student choices. Figure 9 (below, from our monitoring tool) indicates the course level enrollment ratio as depicted by the horizontal bar and section enrollments depicted by the dots to the right of the bar. As courses fill above 85% of offered capacity, the color of the bar changes from blue to red, indicating that the course potentially needs additional seats or sections. Monitoring course and section level fill rates and enrollment ratio thresholds during registration allows us to adjust course offerings to meet unanticipated demand and prevent wasting resources on sections that are not needed.

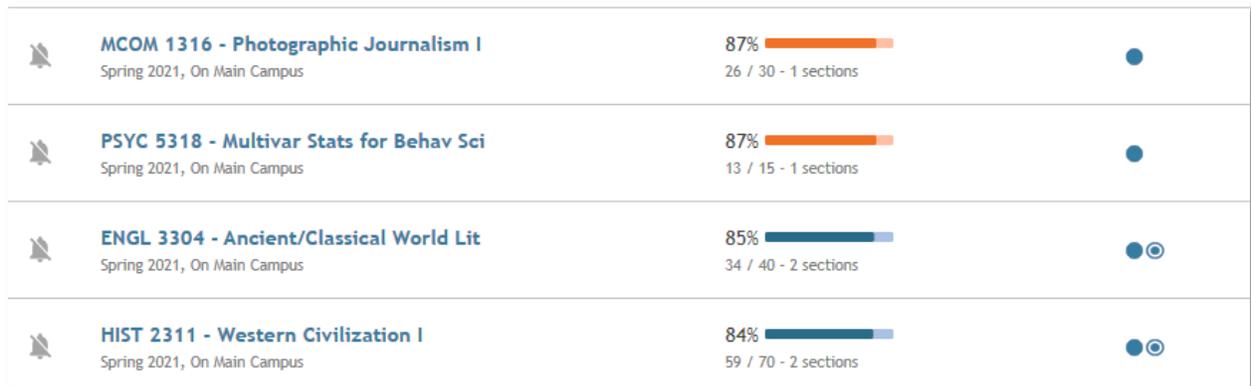


Figure 9: Ad Astra Registration Monitoring Tool

Additionally, we have the ability to drill into each course (Figure 10) to get information on course enrollment progression, seat capacity adjustments, and fluctuations in enrollment.

³³ (Varney 2007)

³⁴ (Heisserer and Parette 2002)

³⁵ (Complete College America 2014)

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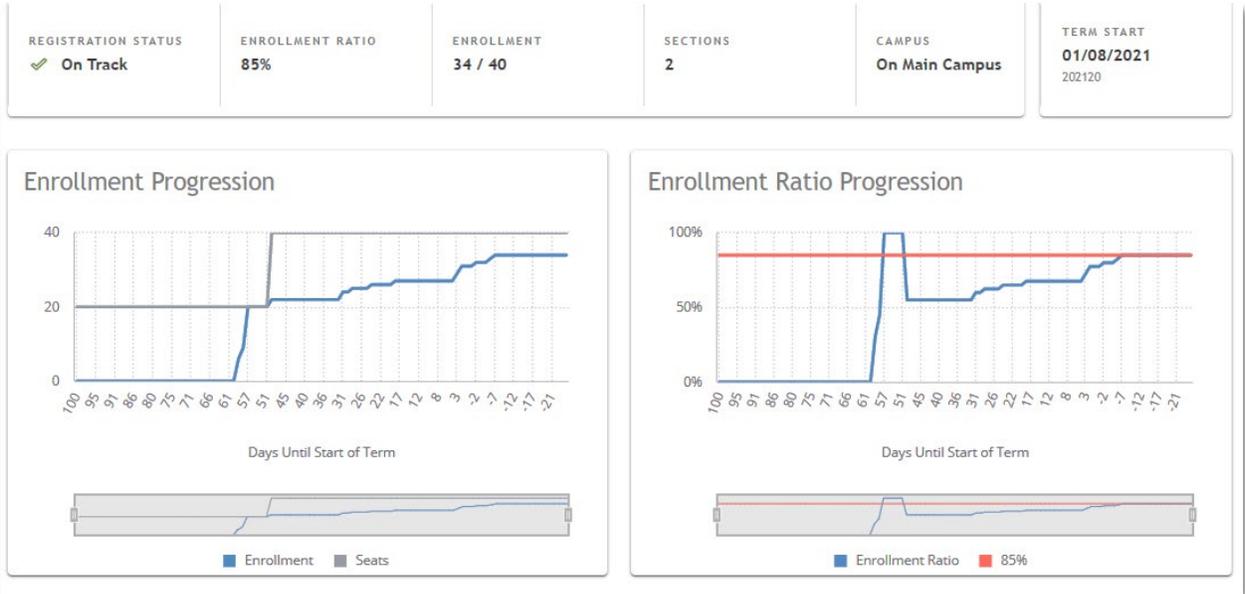


Figure 10: Ad Astra Solutions Course Enrollment Detail

Components of the QEP were put in place beginning in March 2020 after topic selection was finalized. This includes the purchase of Ad Astra Solutions, the formation of the Course Availability Team (CAT), creation of the recommended course sequences, and the initial preparations for the curricular complexity analysis. University-wide training on both Ad Astra Solutions and Curricular Analytics remains an outstanding task, as well as full integration with professional and faculty advisors.

Resources to Initiate, Implement, and Complete the QEP

Organizational Structure

QEP Organizational Structure

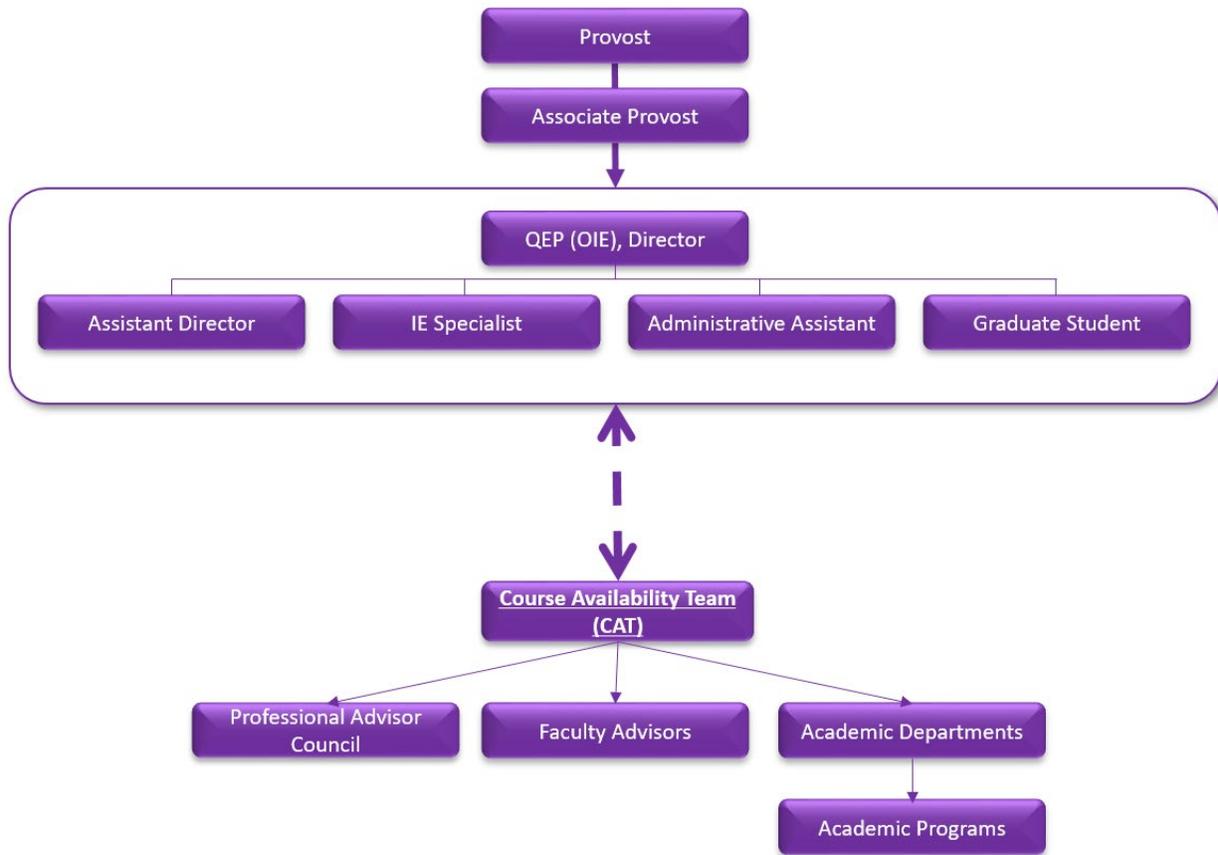


Figure 11: QEP Organizational Structure

SFA will use existing organizational structures to execute the plan. The Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost is the executive sponsor of the QEP. Operational direction and guidance for the QEP will be provided by the Associate Provost, and daily operations and management of the QEP will reside in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE). Multiple components of the strategies we have outlined are currently performed by OIE, and this office is best equipped to manage the plan. The OIE Director will serve as the QEP Director and will be responsible for implementation of the QEP, oversight of fiscal and programmatic requirements of this effort, and communication with stakeholders. The OIE Assistant Director will aid the QEP Director and will have primary responsibility for coordinating and implementing the assessment and evaluation portions of the project. The Institutional Effectiveness Specialist will be responsible for coordinating course sequence development and refinement and course offering analysis processes. The OIE Administrative Assistant will provide administrative, programmatic, and accounting support. Finally, a part-time graduate student worker will assist with curricular

complexity programming and analysis. Additional data analytics and consultation will be provided by the Office of Institutional Research.

The most important organizational component of the QEP is the Course Availability Team (CAT). The purpose of the CAT is to effectively meet the needs of SFA students to enroll in courses and laboratories through highly-focused leadership actions at all levels of the university. This team has the leadership and authority to move from recommendation to reality through the implementation of the strategies outlined above. Membership includes:

- Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs – Committee Chair
- Associate Provost
- Director, Institutional Effectiveness
- Director, Institutional Research
- Director, University Partnerships
- Director, Administrative Services
- Registrar
- Budget Analyst, Academic Affairs
- Dean, James I. Perkins College of Education
- Dean, Nelson Rusche College of Business
- Dean, College of Sciences and Mathematics
- Dean, College of Fine Arts
- Dean, College of Liberal and Applied Arts
- Dean, Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture

Budget and Institutional Capability to Support the QEP

Budget Item	Year 1 2021-22		Year 2 2022-2023		Year 3 2023-2024		Year 4 2024-2025		Year 5 2025-2026		TOTAL
	Base	FTE Level of Effort	Base	FTE Level of Effort	Base	FTE Level of Effort	Base	FTE Level of Effort	Base	FTE Level of Effort	
1. QEP Director		0.33		0.33		0.33		0.33		0.33	
12-month Salary	\$84,722	27,958	84,722	27,958	87,264	28,797	87,264	28,797	89,009	29,373	\$142,883
Benefits (est. @27%)	\$22,875	7,549	22,875	7,549	23,561	7,775	23,561	7,775	24,032	7,931	\$38,579
		35,507		35,507		36,572		36,572		37,304	\$181,462
2. Assistant Director		0.40		0.40		0.40		0.40		0.40	
12-month Salary	\$61,146	\$24,458	\$61,146	\$24,458	\$62,980	\$25,192	\$62,980	\$25,192	64,240	\$25,696	\$124,997
Benefits (est. @27%)	\$16,509	\$6,604	\$16,509	\$6,604	\$17,005	\$6,802	\$17,005	\$6,802	17,345	\$6,938	\$33,749
		\$31,062		\$31,062		\$31,994		\$31,994		\$32,634	\$158,746
3. IE Specialist		0.35		0.35		0.35		0.35		0.35	
12-month Salary	\$42,267	\$14,793	\$42,267	\$14,793	\$43,535	\$15,237	\$43,535	\$15,237	44,406	\$15,542	\$75,603
Benefits (est. @27%)	\$11,412	\$3,994	\$11,412	\$3,994	\$11,754	\$4,114	\$11,754	\$4,114	11,990	\$4,196	\$20,413
		\$18,788		\$18,788		\$19,351		\$19,351		\$19,738	\$96,016
4. Administrative Assistant		0.25		0.25		0.25		0.25		0.25	
12-month Salary	\$33,336	\$8,334	\$33,336	\$8,334	\$34,336	\$8,584	\$34,336	\$8,584	35,023	\$8,756	\$42,592
Benefits (est. @27%)	\$9,001	\$2,250	\$9,001	\$2,250	\$9,271	\$2,318	\$9,271	\$2,318	9,456	\$2,364	\$11,500
		\$10,584		\$10,584		\$10,902		\$10,902		\$11,120	\$54,092
5. Graduate Assistant		0.50		0.50		0.50		0.50		0.50	
9-month Salary	\$9,225	\$4,613	\$9,226	\$4,613	\$9,227	\$4,614	\$9,228	\$4,614	\$9,229	\$4,615	\$23,068
		\$4,613		\$4,613		\$4,614		\$4,614		\$4,615	\$23,068
6. Software											
Ad Astra		\$79,500		\$79,500		\$79,500		\$79,500		\$87,450	\$405,450
7. Marketing		\$8,000.00		\$6,000.00		\$5,000.00		\$5,000.00		\$5,000.00	\$29,000
8. Travel											
Conference Travel e.g., SACSCOC, CCA, AAC&U, etc)		\$5,000		\$5,200		\$5,400		\$5,600		\$5,800	\$27,000
9. QEP Workshop											
Materials, refreshments, Facilitator Stipends		\$3,000		\$3,000		\$3,000		\$3,000		\$3,000	\$15,000
10. Office Expenses		\$2,000		\$2,000		\$2,000		\$2,000		\$2,000	\$10,000
TOTAL	\$198,054		\$196,254		\$198,333		\$198,533		\$208,660		\$999,834

Table 1: QEP Budget

The QEP budget presented in Table 1 [13] above demonstrates SFA’s commitment to lowering student debt by reducing time to graduation. Projected expenses relate to overall administration of the plan. All financial commitments have been reviewed by the Academic Affairs Budget Analyst, have been approved by the Provost, and will be funded from the appropriate recurring and non-recurring funding sources. Whenever necessary, in-kind support will be provided by offices on campus (e.g., Institutional Research to support unique data analysis requirements).

A significant aspect of this plan involves leveraging existing processes, job functions, and personnel to create new processes and procedures. As such, we did not deem it necessary to create new positions to support this effort. However, the levels of effort of personnel charged with the daily operations and maintenance of the plan have been adjusted to ensure successful execution. For example, the Assistant Director and Graduate Assistant have historically devoted 10% or less of their work effort on tasks associated with the QEP. Moving forward, they will spend 40% or more of their effort on this project.

As mentioned earlier, the university purchased Ad Astra Solutions software in March 2020. This five-year contract will expire in 2025 and will require renewal. We have budgeted for a 10% increase in pricing.

Marketing materials promoting 15 semester credit hours, advising sessions, on-time graduation campaigns, and conference travel and workshops focused on streamlining course sequences and

doing informed intrusive advising have also been budgeted. The majority of the work associated with the QEP will be electronic, using existing equipment, but an additional \$2,000 has been budgeted to offset office expenses associated with document reproduction and printing.

Plan to Assess Achievement

Student Debt

SFA's mean student debt is \$27,319. Currently, the lowest official mean debt load is \$17,747.³⁶ This is nearly \$10,000 less than SFA graduates' current debt burden.

Definition/Calculation:

The Texas Higher Education Accountability System defines student debt as "Median of individual student loan debt as a percentage of first year wage for students awarded a certificate, associate degree, or bachelor's degree in a given year from a Texas public institution. Individual must have student loan debt at time of award and wages in first year following award. Each student's loan debt includes loans reported in the THECB financial aid database (FADS) report by any institution for that student in the last 15 years, excluding parent loan debt. First year wages are based on UI wage data reported to the Texas Workforce Commission. Bachelor's degrees awarded at community colleges are not included."³⁷

Goal: SFA will have the lowest average student debt when compared to other Texas 4-year public universities.

Time to Degree

SFA's current time to degree is 4.4 years. As mentioned previously, each year a student spends in college results in a loss of \$63,556. Holding all ratios steady, SFA's current excess (0.4 years) costs an average of \$25,422.40. Considering SFA's mean debt of \$27,319, halving our excess TTD could decrease the average student debt by 46.5%.

Definition/Calculation:

Median and percentage distribution of number of months from first enrollment to bachelor's degree completion.³⁸

Goal: SFA TTD will be 4.2 years.

Four- and Six-year Graduation Rates

In Fall 2019, 35.2% of SFA students graduated in four years, and 52.1% graduated in six years. Recently reported Fall 2020 graduation rates are: four-year 36.5%; six-year 53.4%.

³⁶ (THECB 2020), p. 20

³⁷ (THECB Accountability System n.d.)

³⁸ (National Center for Educational Statistics 2017)

Definition/Calculation:

Four-Year Graduation Rate is the percent of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking undergraduates who earn a baccalaureate degree within four academic years. The four-year graduation rate is calculated by taking the number of first-time undergraduates in the base period cohort who have earned a baccalaureate degree divided by the total number of first-time undergraduates in the base period cohort. First-time includes students who take courses as first-time undergraduates during the summer session and continue as full-time students during the following fall semester. Full-time is defined as taking 12 semester credit hours.³⁹

Six-year graduation rate is the percent of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking undergraduates who earn a baccalaureate degree within six academic years. The six-year graduation rate is calculated by taking the number of first-time undergraduates in the base period cohort who have earned a baccalaureate degree divided by the total number of first-time undergraduates in the base period cohort. First-time includes students who take courses as first-time undergraduates during the summer session and continue as full-time students during the following fall semester. Full-time is defined as taking 12 semester credit hours.⁴⁰

Goal: SFA will continuously improve four-year and six-year graduation rates and increase the reported rates at least two percentage points each year through fall 2026.

Excess Credit Hour Accumulation

Each excess credit hour costs students, parents, and taxpayers more than \$600 at SFA. Further, excess credit hours take physical time, and this leads to increased time to degree for affected students. The average SCH accumulation stands at 130. Some degrees at SFA have permission to require more than 120 hours. Thus, SFA will never be able to drive the number down to 120. However, currently, SFA has an average excess credit hour rate of 10 SCH for a 120 SCH degree, so there is ample room for improvement.

Definition/Calculation:

Excess credits are those that do not apply to a student's degree plan⁴¹ and are defined as the average number of semester credit hours (SCH) attempted by graduates of bachelor's degree programs from Texas public 4-year institutions in excess of the degree plan. Excess credit hour accumulation includes all college-level SCH attempted for up to 10 years prior to the time of graduation. Developmental and dual-credit SCH are not included. Excess credit hour accumulation can be expressed as the average attempted SCH accumulated by graduates who began and graduated at the same institution and the average attempted SCH accumulated among graduates who began at another public institution and graduated from SFA.⁴²

Goal: SFA will lower excess credit hour accumulation from 10 SCH to 8 SCH.

³⁹ (Legislative Budget Board - The State of Texas 2018)

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ (Seliger, et al. 2016)

⁴² (THECB Accountability System n.d.)

Leading Indicators

The preceding assessments yield lagging indications of student success. That is, they are indicators that more often than not maintain an existent trend for some time after a situation has turned onto an opposite trend.⁴³ To determine short-term success and inform practice, a series of leading indicators need to be calculated. Leading indicators are indicators that more often than not show a change in direction prior to a corresponding change in the state of the situation.⁴⁴ Thus, lagging indicators confirm long-term trends, but do not predict them, whereas leading indicator can be used to predict changes that become long-term effects. It will take some time before we know if our processes are working. As a partial remedy to (a) determine short-term success; (b) monitor process implementation; and (c) implement adjustments and interventions, as necessary, SFA will use a set of leading indicators. Most of these indicators are self-explanatory, and they will involve all full-time undergraduate students at SFA. All of the leading indicators will provide actionable data each term, as well as valuable insight regarding overall QEP health.

Productive Semester Credit Hours (SCH) per Semester

Completing a 120 SCH degree requires an average completion of 15 productive credit hours per semester, or 30 productive credit hours per year.

Definition/Calculation:

Productive credits are those that fulfill requirements in each student's degree plan. Productive credits include credits associated with the core curriculum, college foundation credits, major credits, minor credits, and specified general electives within each student's degree plan.

Metric: The percentage of full-time undergraduate students taking 15 productive credits or more in a semester will increase annually.

Degree Velocity

Definition/Calculation:

Degree Velocity is a ratio comparing total productive credits to expected degree progress (credit hours applied toward degree to credit hours required for the degree). This is calculated by dividing the Total Productive Credits per year by the Expected Credits/Year (normally 30). If all students in a 120 SCH degree program were taking 15 productive credits per term, the degree velocity would be 100%.

Metric: Degree velocity will increase annually.

⁴³ (Merriam-Webster 2021)

⁴⁴ (Merriam-Webster 2021)

Productive Credit Ratio

Definition/Calculation:

Productive credits are those that count towards a student's degree plan. The productive credit ratio compares degree plan credits taken to all credits taken. This will be calculated by semester and by academic year, and in total when SFA reports full results in 2026.

Metric: The productive credit ratio will increase annually.

Conclusion

Stephen F. Austin State University is committed to reducing student debt by reducing time to completion. This topic was identified through our ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes and has broad-based support of our institutional constituencies. The topic was identified by the Quality Enhancement Plan committee based on analysis of institutional data as an opportunity to improve student success, and it was chosen as the consensus topic through a campus-wide process involving students, faculty, and staff. Our singular focus on timely degree completion as a means of reducing student debt will benefit students now and well into their future. Our plan leverages executive sponsorship and existing organizational structures to create positive synergy for our students and our university. Employing existing personnel with deep experience in the components of the plan allows us to minimize learning curves typically associated with new initiatives. The commitment of financial and technical resources ensures we will be able to complete the plan, while continually assessing the resulting data through the use of timely leading indicators and incorporating the analysis into our continuous improvement processes will allow us to realize our objectives.

“If your college career is stretched out to extra semesters, extra years, there’s a huge financial cost associated with that.”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ (Free 2019)

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**Stephen F. Austin
State University
Quality Enhancement
Plan Addenda**



QEP

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN

Functional Responsibilities

STEP 1

Create Ideal Degree Sequences

- Academic Departments
- Office of Institutional Effectiveness
- Registrar

STEP 2

Continually Analyzing Course Demand

- Office of Institutional Effectiveness
- Course Availability Team
- Academic Departments

STEP 3

Creating Student-centric Schedules

- Academic Departments
- Course Availability Team

STEP 5

Actively Monitoring Registration

- Academic Departments
- Office of Institutional Effectiveness
- Course Availability Team

STEP 4

Informed Proactive Advising

- Advisors





QEP

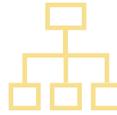
Quality Enhancement Plan



Lowering Student Debt

Positional Responsibilities

Executive Vice President and Provost:



- Executive Sponsorship
- Course Availability Team
- Leadership

Associate Provost:



- Operational direction and oversight

Director, Institutional Effectiveness:



- Daily operations and management
- Course offering analysis and interpretation
- Data Interpretation consultations

Assistant Director, Institutional Effectiveness:



- Assessment data collection and analysis
- Annual report development

Institutional Effectiveness Specialist



- Degree Map QA/QC
- Data analysis and publication
- Data interpretation consultations

Course Availability Team:



- Review course offerings recommendations
- Trend identification
- Resource review
- Lead college level discussions

Academic Departments:



- Data analysis
- Schedule Creation

Advisors:



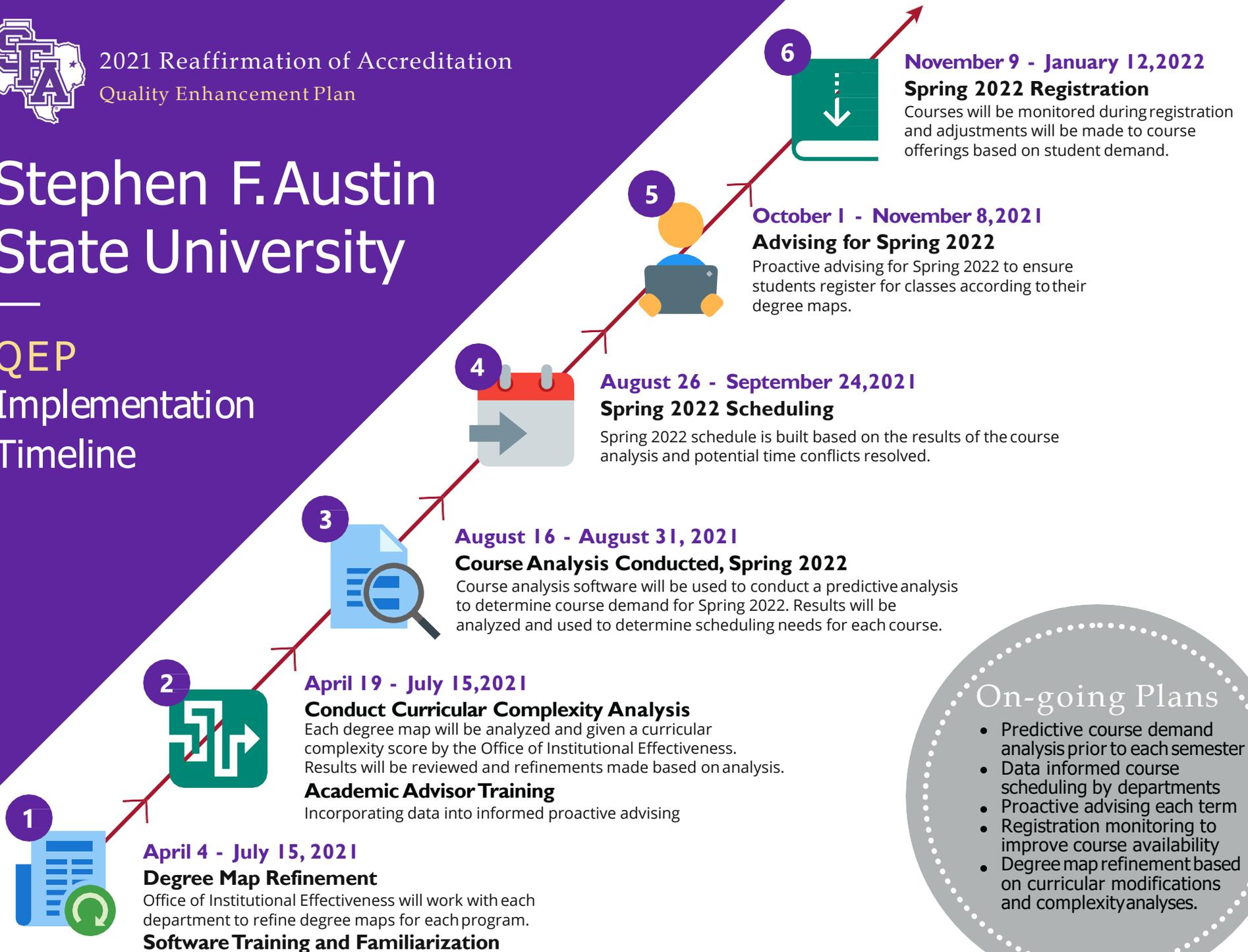
- Deliberate, structured student interventions
- Purposeful involvement w/students
- Reach out to students before they ask for help
- Inquiries into causes of the students' challenges



2021 Reaffirmation of Accreditation
Quality Enhancement Plan

Stephen F. Austin State University

QEP Implementation Timeline



On-going Plans

- Predictive course demand analysis prior to each semester
- Data informed course scheduling by departments
- Proactive advising each term
- Registration monitoring to improve course availability
- Degree map refinement based on curricular modifications and complexity analyses.

SFA QEP Assessment Timeline for Lowering Student Debt

			Leading		Lagging					
AY	Approx. Date	Milestone	Productive Credit Ratio	Momentum Year Objectives	Excess Semester Credit Hours	Time to Degree	4-year Graduation Rate	6-year Graduation Rate	Student Debt	
AY22	8/15/2021	AY22 QEP Kick-off (Analysis for Spring 22)								
	3/30/2022	Establish Baseline (AY21 Data)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	5/15/2022	Spring Productive Credit Report AY22 Momentum Year Report	✓	✓	✓					
AY 23	9/15/2022	Initial Fall Productive Credit Assessment	✓							
	12/20/2022	Fall Productive Credit Report Fall Momentum Year Report	✓	✓						
	2/15/2023	Initial Spring Productive Credit Report	✓							
	3/30/2023	AY22 Assessment Report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Spring / Summer	AY22 Assessment Insights and Actions Workshop	Close the Loop							
	5/15/2023	Spring Productive Credit Report AY22 Excess SCH Report AY23 Momentum Year Assessment	✓	✓	✓					
AY 24	9/15/2023	Initial Fall Productive Credit Assessment	✓							
	12/20/2023	Fall Productive Credit Report Fall Momentum Year Report	✓	✓						
	2/15/2024	Initial Spring Productive Credit Report	✓							
	3/30/2024	AY23 Assessment Report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Spring / Summer	AY23 Assessment Insights and Actions Workshop	Close the Loop							
	5/15/2024	Spring Productive Credit Report AY23 Excess SCH Report AY24 Momentum Year Assessment	✓	✓	✓					
AY 25	9/15/2024	Initial Fall Productive Credit Assessment	✓							
	12/20/2024	Fall Productive Credit Report Fall Momentum Year Report	✓	✓						
	2/15/2025	Initial Spring Productive Credit Report	✓							
	3/30/2025	AY24 Assessment Report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Spring / Summer	AY24 Assessment Insights and Actions Workshop	Close the Loop							
	5/15/2025	Spring Productive Credit Report AY24 Excess SCH Report AY25 Momentum Year Assessment	✓	✓	✓					

AY	Approx. Date	Milestone	Productive Credit Ratio	Momentum Year Objectives	Excess Semester Credit Hours	Time to Degree	4-year Graduation Rate	6-year Graduation Rate	Student Debt	
AY 26	9/15/2025	Initial Fall Productive Credit Assessment	✓							
	12/20/2025	Fall Productive Credit Report Fall Momentum Year Report	✓	✓						
	2/15/2026	Initial Spring Productive Credit Report	✓							
	2/15/2026	5th Year Report Due to SACSCOC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	3/30/2026	AY25 Assessment Report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Spring / Summer	AY25 Assessment Insights and Actions Workshop	Close the Loop							
	5/15/2026	Spring Productive Credit Report AY25 Excess SCH Report AY26 Momentum Year Assessment	✓	✓	✓					
AY 27	9/15/2026	Initial Fall Productive Credit Assessment	✓							
	12/20/2026	Fall Productive Credit Report Fall Momentum Year Report	✓	✓						
	2/15/2027	Initial Spring Productive Credit Report	✓							
	3/30/2027	AY26 Assessment Report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Spring / Summer	AY26 Assessment Insights and Actions Workshop	Close the Loop							
	5/15/2027	Spring Productive Credit Report AY26 Excess SCH Report AY27 Momentum Year Assessment	✓	✓	✓					

SFASU QEP Topic Selection Committee

Marc Guidry – Associate Provost

Paul Henley – Assistant Director, Institutional Effectiveness

Anthony Espinoza – Chief Information Officer

Hollie Smith – Assistant Dean of Student Affairs

Jeremy Stovall – Chair, Faculty Senate

Jessica Barrett – Budget Analyst

Lesa Beverly – Chair, Department of Mathematics

Sabina Adhikari – Student

Veronica Herrera – Custodial Services Supervisor

Karyn Hall – Director, Institutional Research

John Calahan – Director, Institutional Effectiveness

Default Question Block

Introduction

SFA is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Our accreditation enables us to give federal and state financial aid. Accreditation is necessary if SFA credits are to be accepted by other institutions.

One substantial aspect of our SACSCOC reaffirmation is the development of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). A QEP is a major effort on our part to improve an area of student learning or student success in a meaningful way through a university-wide, multi-year initiative.

Assurance

Before you complete this form, it is important to consider the requirements set forth by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. The specific principle (7.2) reads as follows:

The institution has a Quality Enhancement Plan that:

- (a) has a topic identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes;*
- (b) has broad-based support of institutional constituencies;*
- (c) focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success;*
- (d) commits resources to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP; and*
- (e) includes a plan to assess achievement.*

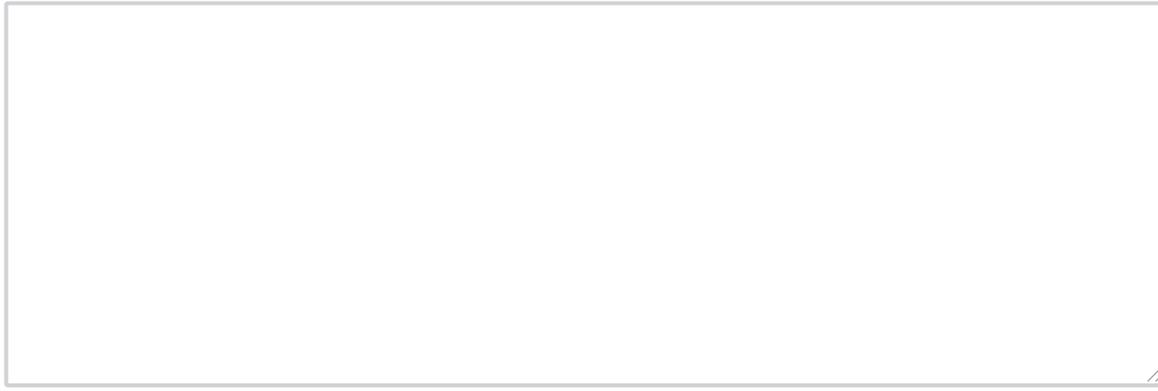
I have read and I understand the above statement from SACSCOC.

Please describe your topic area or idea succinctly. This will be used as the name of the topic area you propose.

Describe at least one direct and strong relationship between this QEP topic and the strategic plan of SFA. How would implementation of this idea improve student performance or student success?

What are some potential measurable goals associated with this QEP topic?

What specific skills and abilities would key personnel need for implementation of this topic as a QEP?



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QEP Town Hall Notes

15 November 2018, 3 pm

Issues addressed during open mic discussion:

1. (32:30) Mr. Perry Moon
 - a. Experiential learning is very closely related to current QEP (High Impact Learning)
 - b. Would like to have written communication expanded to literacy in general. (tied to critical thinking)
2. (33:55) Melissa Clark
 - a. Proposed Social and Emotional learning (inclusive of all topics).
 - b. Social & emotional learning would improve the student's ability to interact with others
 - i. How to communication could be different depending on the situation/audience,
 - ii. Handling failures and how to navigate a solution (metacognitive skills)
 - iii. Enhancing emotional maturity and decision making skills.
 - c. Information literacy – in favor of this topic
 - d. OER – the librarians can help with those needing resources or how to find them.
 - i. Dr. Henley explained that the process of collecting the QEP topics and how they were narrowed down. The proposed topic was grouped into Mental Health & Wellness.
3. (37:55) Rachele Garrett
 - a. Financial Literacy would require campus wide effort.
 - b. There are some efforts being made at the high school level to address this issue.
 - c. Student Finances also needs to address the financial cost of education to the students.
 - d. Financial literacy will aid in lowering the loan default rate (currently around 9%, which is lower than the state average; 3 years ago we were at 15.8%)
 - i. Dr. Guidry - Part of our memorandum with high schools for dual credit students is the requirement to provide assistance in this topic
4. (41:15) Dr. Buddy Himes
 - a. All topics are excellent and would be great to pursue.
 - b. Mental Health and Wellness would also address the national trend of increasing number of mental health related incidences/crises.
5. (42:36) Dr. Randi Cox
 - a. Agreed that all topics are good ideas.
 - b. Under-represented and/or Marginalized Populations - recommended an increase in the diversity of the faculty and staff.
 - c. Mental Health & Wellness – a number of the topics could contribute to this one by creating less stress for the student by giving better strategies for dealing with financial literacy, communication and writing.
 - d. Information Literacy – not just to include writing, but overall literacy.

6. (46:25) Dr. Jane Long
 - a. Student Finances – math department’s efforts could fit well into this topic.
 - b. OER – huge fan of this topic and recommended more university support of faculty for authoring OERs. (more time)
7. (50:39) Dr. Steve Bullard
 - a. Financial literacy ties directly to our institutional strategic plan.
 - b. OER includes the ability to rent books or lowering the cost of books with early ordering from the faculty.
 - c. Marshmallow Test video – children that waited longer to eat the marshmallow were more likely to succeed
8. (54:28) Dr. Michael Janusa
 - a. Transformative learning experience – undergraduate mentored research
 - i. Complete learning experience inside and outside the classroom
 - b. Retention Rates have increased from 50% to over 80% for chemistry majors.
 - c. Need an overarching umbrella that encompasses many topics.
9. (57:06) Ms. Megan Weatherly
 - a. Recommended that Information Literacy include Data literacy. (Information and Data Literacy)
 - b. Information literacy would be less costly to implement and more scalable than undergraduate mentored research.
 - c. Concerned that financial literacy would be a tough topic to address in a History class. Financial literacy could also be addressed in Information and Data literacy.
10. (1:01:07) Professor Christopher Talbot
 - a. Topic needs to address more than one issue.
 - b. OER – creating ways to make learning less costly
 - c. SFASU could become a university that does things differently and at a lower cost to students.
 - d. Another way SFA is different - There is pressure on the faculty to retain and recruit students. In turn, he spends more time with his students (mentoring). We could use this to our advantage.
 - e. Financial Literacy – introduce students to the realities of entering the real world. They might rethink incurring \$40,000 of debt.
11. (1:05:45) Dr. Marc Guidry
 - a. OER - College of Liberal & Applied Arts are redeveloping their core classes and writing textbooks for online distribution to the students free of charge.
 - b. They are rethinking the whole course and coming up with the big ideas that students will remember 10, 20 years after they take the course.
 - c. Students not having books is a big issue. (OER)
12. (1:08:15) Ms. Molly Moody – Assistant Director for Student Engagement
 - a. All issues could be addressed if we focus more on relational aspects with students.
 - b. More involvement and mentoring by faculty and staff with students.
 - c. Mentorship

13. (1:10:35) Mr. Herbert Midgley
 - a. OER – we are already using some forms of these (Wikipedia, videos)
 - b. More one-on-one with students
14. Kyle Ainsworth - (Special Collections Librarian)
 - a. Information Literacy - Proposal by the library was meant to be all inclusive, campus wide effort.
 - b. Written Communication – the student doesn't have clear direction on how to proceed if having difficulty (where to go for help, path for them to continue to improve, will they take the next step?)
 - c. Texas Southern addresses this topic in their English Classes
 - d. Library would like to be more involved.
15. (1:15:13) Janie Richardson - (Librarian)
 - a. Library proposal was meant to be all-inclusive.
 - i. Dr. Henley – minimum number of responses was 3 when considering whether or not to include a topic. He understood that there were more people included in the proposal, therefore it was given more weight.
16. (1:17:23) Dr. Perry Moon
 - a. Fear that the QEP will become amorphous. Needs to be very clear and intelligible to everyone.
 - i. Dr. Marc Guidry – we have experience with a very broad QEP topic (High Impact Practices).
 1. It was very scattershot.
 2. Control group without high impact practices scored higher on critical thinking than group with students with high impact practices.
 3. Only 3% of faculty and 2% of students participated
17. (1:20:17) Mrs. Alisha Collins (recent graduate)
 - a. Student Cost – textbook cost was a huge issue. Often had to wait to buy books, and if she had to sell books back, sometimes it was done at a loss.
 - b. Mental Health & Wellness – tied into the finance topic because the financial stress was major factor in her success as a student.
18. (1:22:33) Dr. Michael Janusa
 - a. Trend in topics is mentoring.
 - i. Identity of SFA – mentoring of students (we care about students)
19. (1:23:30) Dr. Christina Sinclair
 - a. Too broad of a topic becomes a measurement issue. It is critical to think about how we capture the data.
20. Dr. Marc Guidry
 - a. Mentoring – GenJacks very helpful to the students. Help students with all kinds of issues (getting into the right class, emotional issues, and financial issues).
 - b. Next step is Qualtrics survey and narrowing down the topics to the Top 3.

http://www.thepinelog.com/news/article_daf54924-e2b8-11e8-a1e8-871f730d3d9f.html

SFA to hold meeting for QEP, accreditation

Taylor Antwine, Contributing Writer

Nov 8, 2018

A town hall meeting to discuss SFA's accreditation and Quality Enhancement Plan will be held from 3 to 4 p.m. Nov. 15 in the Turner Auditorium.

The QEP is a documented strategy that can be up to 100 pages, and directly impacts students' education.

"[The QEP] is a very detailed plan that focuses on an issue where we can improve student learning and our success in some significant way," said Dr. Marc Guidry, associate provost of academic affairs. "And by students' success, in this context, what we mean is things like student's persisting, being retained, coming back, not dropping out, and graduating, and other things like the job placement rate, our graduate school placement rate... So anything that significantly impacts the ability of our students to learn and achieve success, that's what the QEP's supposed to be about."

In order to get representation from all parts of the campus, a committee of students, faculty and alumni has been put together to pick the topic for the QEP.

"We have student representation, we have a student from SGA who's on it," said John Calahan, director of institutional effectiveness. "We have faculty representation. We have staff representation at different levels. We've got alumni representation. Once we pick the topic, we're going to create a separate team to develop the QEP...and it's a five- year project, by the way. It would start in Fall 2021 and run through 2026."

There will be a process in which the committee will go through the next steps for the QEP.

"We decided that we need to have the topic decided by the end of February and then, once we have the topic picked, we start to decide how to approach that topic," said Paul Henley, assistant director of assessment. "We'll consider multiple

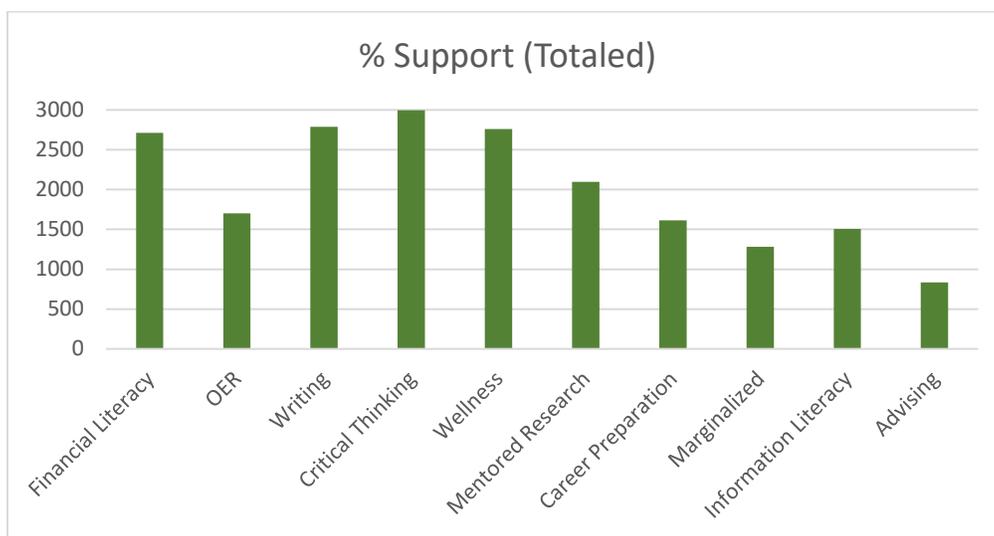
approaches to addressing whatever the topic is." The process of completing accreditation takes place every 10 years and goes through an outside group.

" ... SFA completes a systematic and thorough self-study for SACSCOC [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges] and applies for reaffirmation of accreditation," Dr. Steve Bullard, provost and vice president for academic affairs, said in an email to students. "One substantial aspect of our SACSCOC reaffirmation is the development of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). A QEP is a major effort on our part to improve an area of student learning or student success in a meaningful way through a university-wide, multi-year initiative."

There are specific criteria set by the SACSCOC that must be met by the QEP in order for it to be accepted.

According to a document provided by Guidry, "The institution has a QEP that (a) has a topic identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes; (b) has broad-based support of institutional constituencies; (c) focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success; (d) commits resources to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP; and (e) includes a plan to assess achievement."

Staff/Faculty Responses:



Comments:

No Comments

QEP should be focused. Trying to cover everything will keep us from doing anything well.

Transformative experiences in research/mentoring should become a top priority with support from all administrative levels to ensure proper career training and increase public perception of our university.

"Nationally there are more than 51 percent of students affected by poverty. This number is higher in Texas. More and more of our SFA students are affected by poverty. There is also a push to make SFA a Hispanic institution.

We need to focus on how to meet the needs of these students."

"I would suggest the University prioritize Critical thinking COUPLED with problem solving. The follow-through to Critical Thinking is the concrete problem-solving that students sometimes lack.

Additionally Financial Literacy needs to be addressed - my understanding is that Financial Aid offers little to no financial counseling when offering loans. Students just have to read (or not) a very wordy online "Financial Agreement" and click a check box on "I agree". It's kind of like clicking on the software or app agreement to use it. That is NOT Financial Counseling, and certainly not holistic - that is taking all factors (including ability to repay) into account when offering financial aid.

Experiential learning (mandatory internships), career preparation (a mandatory course built into the degree requirements of the curriculum) and mentoring also all have my support. "

Our objective must be clear and measurable.

What is being done to support graduate students at SFA? SFA needs to invest resources for its graduate students as well; currently recruitment and retention of quality graduate students is difficult. Small stipends and lack of tuition waiver really make this difficult to recruit students outside SFA. If one of the goals of the QEP is to increase

diversity, wouldn't we want this for the graduate student body as well. Recruiting students from outside institutions would create an atmosphere of diverse perspectives and experiences that can really bolster and strengthen the graduate student experience here at SFA while simultaneously meeting a potential goal of the QEP. If one of the goals is mentored student research, recruitment of high quality graduate students would assist faculty members in mentorship and guided research of undergraduate students. Faculty can't mentor/develop research projects for every single undergraduate student, it's impossible. Some of these goals need to ground in reality.

It seems like some could be combined. For example, financial literacy could be part of informational literacy.

"The problem of #fakenews is only going to multiply in significance as time goes on. We must teach our students how to ferret out truth from propaganda. Critical thinking and analytical skills are a necessity. As a highly educated adult, I find it increasingly more of a challenge to recognize what ""news"" out there is actually true and what is a lie.

The problem of macro money management in regard to college expense has been, is, and always will be an issue for the traditional college student. Most of them, prior to entering college, have never had to make money decisions in excess of a thousand dollars. Now, they are making decisions that could easily eclipse \$100K. They are unprepared for the reality of paying off loans of this magnitude. In all likelihood, most of them have never had to pay off a single loan of any size prior to entering college. They are being thrown into the deep end of the pool without even knowing how to dog-pedal!"

"Some of the topics from the prior page fit nicely together. For example student financial literacy and mental health fit together in my mind. In a similar manner, does critical thinking and written communication and information literacy.

I do not see some (at least to me) really important topics which need to be addressed on campus on the list. Who are we? How will we grow? We know that if we do not grow we will have less state support. Also, I do not see that the administration is in the least bit concerned about these pressing issues. I'm a little scared. In ten-fifteen years, can SFA exist as it does now? I do not think so.

I thought the academic provosts push a few years ago to define ourselves is unfinished. More precisely, I think the academic provost got us academics excited, but did not have buy in from his peers or those above him. For instance, Patellio is sick and the academic provost does not get the nod to step up?

Old boys guarding their territory is not going to get us through the changes we need to make. New ideas will. Bullard has the ideas and experience to grow SFA; however, others are going to have to step out of the way. "

Making sure under-represented populations are recruited, retained and succeed is key to SFASU contributing to the greater good of society and combatting local and regional generational poverty. All the other issues fall under this umbrella.

A common thing I see today is people don't know how to solve problems. I don't mean they don't have the answers to their problems; I mean they don't know how to find the answers when it is often as simple as using Google. They want someone to do it for them. Which is why Critical Thinking gets the majority of my support.

I know SFA's enrollment is approaching Hispanic-serving status, and achieving that status will allow the university access to some resource and grant programs that will benefit these underserved students and others. I think "critical thinking" is dated and has passed its prime. I'd like to see the university do more to help students get job ready through a combination of practical experiences (mentoring, internships, assessment and self-reflection, research, service, campus employment, etc.) and opportunities to learn and practice "soft skills." An increased emphasis on these things would help all students, and it might counter some things we can't control--like our rural location's relative lack of internships and the rising debt burden facing so many of our students.

This was difficult, because all of these topics are worthy ones. I rated mental health and wellness highly (that is my area, so I'm biased) but it's a very broad topic and would need specific sub-goals.

"In my opinion, the financial side of college is the most important and stressful for students. If students are unable to pay for college or don't see it as a worthy investment, they won't attend SFA and there won't be a student population. Speaking as someone who incurred almost \$70,000 in student debt for a terminal masters degree here at SFA, this subject is deeply personal and important to me.

During the QEP meeting, someone noted that student mental health is greatly affected by finances and that is completely accurate. College is already stressful enough, but having an immense amount of student debt hanging over your head in a very uncertain job market amplifies that depression and anxiety.

College degrees don't guarantee well-paying jobs anymore, so if students don't think that their monetary invest in college (not to mention the potential years of paying off student loans) is worth it, they won't attend and will go to a trade school or a community college instead. Making college affordable for students should be one of our highest priorities. This, of course, is only my opinion as a recent graduate and doesn't reflect anything upon my department, employers, or the university. SFA is a great school and I enjoyed my time here as a graduate student (and as an employee), but I really wish that education was cheaper and more accessible to students of all financial backgrounds.

I hope this was of some help. Thank you for taking the time to read this."

As a member of the Library Faculty that came up with the Information Literacy plan, I am in support of it. I have already begun to look into possibilities of what could be done to enhance students knowledge in this area without having to give up precious class time. I would be excited to be a part of this QEP initiative.

"I thought the first town hall, though not as well attended as I hoped, was a good event. I enjoyed hearing multiple perspectives and the exchange of ideas

But next time let those poor folks who were on stage not have to sit on stage. :)"

Although all topic areas are important and valuable, the student finance topic appears to be one of the most important based on institutional feedback and student need. The open educational resources topic addresses the enhancement of student learning and serving all students. With the large populations of first generation students and others with financial needs, the open educational resource development project would likely have the broadest affect to the total student body. All disciplines would also be able to participate in this topic. The topic would involve a large and varied group across campus and fits well with SFA's mission and institutional strength of a personalized learner-centered environment.

My strong preference is for Information Literacy, with Written Communication as a second choice.

If we educate our students to write and think, as well as give them more financial knowledge, I feel we are preparing them for their future.

"I understand that we have to do something like this, but this sounds like yet another initiative that might increase my work load, complicate my pedagogy, siphon away resources, and do absolutely nothing for our students. Therefore, I hope you all select the one that interferes the least with faculty doing their primary job: educating students.

And before you dismiss this as some cynical rant, let me ask this: can anyone name SFA's last QEP and provide evidence that it benefited students? I found this document at <http://www.sfasu.edu/iao/pdf/qep.pdf>. After perusing it, I still don't understand what our last QEP was. Something about thinking, I believe.

I supported the topics related to learning outcomes. Several of the topics had nothing to do with learning outcomes or accomplishing the mission of the university as required by SACS.

Our university is remarkably behind in serving the needs of our under served populations. In order to become an HSI our university needs to put these students first. At this time, other than programs offered by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, there is no indication that meeting these students needs is a priority at the university.

High impact practices such as mentored research/creative discovery have a strong positive impact on learning, retention, and connection to the professional careers. We have data on multi years through the NSSE report for research with faculty for seniors at 23%. This is an area that has great potential growth. Additionally, we show 51% for internships/field experiences for our seniors.

I believe the students that are being educated now are completely ill-equipped to handle real life jobs and situations. They need to be taught the importance of money, how to think more independently instead of rely on someone else to make their decisions for them as well as what it will be like in the workforce. There are no "warm fuzzies" and trophies.

"First, according to the discussion notes, I don't think that OER is well understood. Sure this has something to do with the cost of an education, but it is more. Open textbooks under either a Creative Commons license or a GNU Free Document license are not only freely available but can also be modified to fit the needs of our students and faculty. I.e., they can be better. They can be updated quickly, and there is the ability to include many additional features since copyright is not an issue. The one thing that OER is not is a rent-a-book.

If we provide support for faculty writing quality OER materials, we will not only be doing a service for our students, but we will also have an opportunity to make a difference beyond SFA."

"I think we need to educate our students (and parents) on the cost of a college degree. Most parents think they qualify for more scholarships/grants than what they actually do, this pushes them towards loans. We need to educate the students/parents on the different kinds of financial aid and what each one means in terms of repayment. We also need to explain what happens after college when things have to be paid off. Then go one step further and go over the different ways to save for their children's future.

I also think that the Open Education resource is an important topic that can be tied to the first topic (Student Finances - Financial Literacy). If we can cut the cost of books this will help with student's finances. The cost of books is outrageous and from what I've been told, not useful. Some professors don't use them enough to justify the cost. "

I think we as a university should take this QEP as an opportunity to establish an identity for SFA that we can market and help us grow as an institution. We need something to answer the question "why come to SFA over other institutions". A QEP is not a wish list of items that we want to address, but instead a well-defined plan that enhances student learning and complements the institution's ongoing academic strategic plan and vision. It is clear in SFA's strategic plan and vision that transformative learning experiences is a key component to the education of our students. It is also clear that our QEP should reflect that vision in some way and prepare our students with the soft skills (critical thinking, problem solving, adaptability, quantitative reasoning, communication, personal and time management, professionalism, collaboration, and responsibility) they need to be successful after graduation. We want to build a reputation of giving students a complete education both inside and outside the classroom. The QEP should be directed at giving our students the experiences they need to grow and build the skills we are not developing in the classroom. The QEP should be about transformative learning and teaching opportunities through such things as mentored research, internships, engagement activities, study abroad, leadership workshops, peer mentoring, advising, etc. We need to establish ourselves as a university that builds relationships with students through mentored experiences with faculty, staff, and peers. If we develop these experiences for our students, we will be on our way to establishing an identity for SFA to answer the question as to why to come to SFA "Come to SFA where we work together to give you a complete educational experience that prepares you for a career, not just a degree. We can easily measure the effectiveness of three to five of the selected mentored opportunities for the overall QEP "Mentored Experiences". Building a mentored reputation could lead to students selecting SFA for the support group that many students desire and need to be successful. Underrepresented groups could be targeted in our effort to recruit students since we would have the typical mentoring opportunities needed for them to be successful.

"If we miss this chance (probably our last) for institutional implementation of processes to engage students within the discipline from the freshman year, we are fools.

On the list provided, mentored research/internships is the only item that comes close to this.

N/A

xdfirtgzE tg

OER can reach all students regardless of major, but UG mentored research--while a very worthy initiative--lends itself best to majors with a strong science/lab component. We definitely need improved advising and mentoring for our students, especially underrepresented populations.

Our overall efforts, as an institution, to promote and develop initiatives specifically for marginalized groups and students of color is embarrassing when comparing us to other institutions. This should be a focus of us, especially if our enrollment goals include increasing enrollment amount hispanicx/latinx students.

"As a faculty member in the liberal arts/humanities the most serious problem I see for the university is the lack of preparedness our students have for the academic rigors of the college classroom. Certainly, much of this is due to the lack of preparation the students receive at the k-12 level, but whatever the reasons we, as an institution, must do a better job in assuring these students have the tools to be successful. Currently, much of the focus for such endeavors comes from the SSC and the AARC. There are a few problems with such an approach in its current form: 1) Both the SSC and the AARC are woefully underfunded. If we are really interested in creating opportunity for students, that needs to change; 2) Both of those entities also need to find a proper mission. The SSC has a number of potentially great programs--Gen Jacks, for example--but it seems limited to a select few student and it is administered, it seems to me, to attract and only focus on students who already have some of the skills necessary to succeed. It should not be a program designed so the administrators can crow about their success, but one that identifies and aids the students most directly in need. The AARC is another entity that seems to have lost its focus. The way it administers SI sessions is antiquated and does not employ cutting-edge tools. Most SI sessions are ""answer feed"" forums that is not much more than the poor examples of the way standardized testing has ruined public schools. What we desperately need are programs that teach students how to study, how to assimilate information, and how to gain the tools to succeed in an academic environment. Current research says that comes from academic coaching programs, more individualized and targeted ""skill-based"" initiatives, and tutoring. Currently, the director of the AARC is more interested in quantitative measurement--student visits, use of the facility, etc.--than the actual work of helping students gain skills. The Program Directors of the AARC need to be freed to implement and utilize methods that help their specific disciplines, not ""one size fits all"" instructional models that do little more than give students tips on taking exams and do not prepare them for actual learning. Again, some more focused programs like academic coaching would be much more effective.

In the end, we should be concerned about making sure our students have the skills they need to succeed. That is quality, and that is enhancement. Let's implement programs that do that. "

I was at the forum November 15th and heard a lot of advocacy for three topics: student finances, student mental health, and information literacy. I think all three are worthy of funding, but I think information literacy stands out as a QEP from which SFA can develop targeted learning outcomes that can be applied across disciplines. Information literacy is something we know can be rigorously assessed. I also think that aspects of information literacy in some way address just about every other QEP topic. SFA can be very intentional with its focus on information literacy and see a trickle-down of student success on other fronts.

"Students do not read despite reading being a course requirement and necessary to perform well in the courses I teach. Doing a flipped class is impossible because students do not read. There should also be a university-wide ban of personal cell phone use in class. Students have limited attention spans, which I believe is partly a function of technology. Student cannot multiple 2 digit numbers because they are so heavily reliant on calculators. Frankly, there has been a breakdown at the high school level and lower-levels of education - students don't have assigned textbooks and many do not study and do not know how. Students will often admit that they got through high school by engaging in some form of cheating. Students seem to lack the desire/motivation/ability to read course materials and assigned chapter readings. Additionally, based on their written assignments, many students are borderline

illiterate. The distance between where students ought to be and where they are has only widened over the last decade.

For those who continue to fail courses every semester, they should be encouraged to learn a trade (e.g., plumbing, carpenter, steel worker, etc.). Apprenticeship programs are more appropriate than a pattern of D's, F's, and WD's. Many students are receiving some form of financial aid, such as federal loans. They have lost sight that these loans must eventually be paid back. For students who cannot make it through, we are doing them a serious disservice by trying to retain these students. We need to recruit higher caliber students."

So many of the choices on the previous list are important. The way you have asked to rank these is absolutely ridiculous. There must be a better way to show support.

Think some of the topics listed do not relate to all majors, We need topics that all can participate.

"I suggest Information Literacy (IL) as an overarching QEP topic because IL is broad enough to allow related subtopics to be incorporated. For example, financial literacy, data literacy, digital literacy, critical thinking, research strategies, and written communication are just some of the related topics that can be folded into the broader IL topic.

Additionally, information literacy is analogous to teaching students to fish to prepare them to navigate the challenges of living in the global community. The IL QEP can be structured to benefit students across all disciplines and can have a lifelong impact on our students.

I think that the topics that more fully integrate the participation of faculty and staff across a variety of departments are stronger. For example, mentored research and internships involves every academic unit, Center for Career and Professional Development, Center for Teaching and Learning, the Library, and relevant campus offices that can sponsor on campus internships and/or sites of research. Topics like this would create a more cohesive campus and help with the culture of the campus, the success and resume-development/building of students, and identification of students with faculty/staff/university.

"What happened to experiential learning?"

Internships and Career preparations seem very similar.

SFA needs an identity so that we have a concise answer to the question from students, "Why should I pick SFA over other universities?" I believe a QEP that includes an overarching theme of mentoring that would include undergraduate research, creative activities, internships, and leadership training would be able to provide an answer to the question above. As I reviewed the options on the QEP survey, many of the proposed topics are actually natural benefits from strong mentoring environment. Since I am personally involved in mentored undergraduate research, I know first-hand that it develops critical thinking skills as well as improved written and oral communication skills since students are required to present their research. Improved written and communication skills are crucial professional skills that are needed by our graduates. In addition, the time spent with students in mentored undergraduate research lead to discussions about many topics including advising, career goals/preparation, and even personal finances. Studies of mentored undergraduate research clearly indicate the faculty mentor does not need to be of the same race, culture, or gender to effectively mentor students; therefore, mentored undergraduate research can also be utilized for increasing participation from underrepresented groups in various disciplines. My recommendation is to focus on mentored experiences (research, creative endeavors, internships, leadership skills, etc.) at SFA that enhance the quality of education students received.

"In my opinion information literacy is not just about research and good grades. It's about so much more than that and has application towards any of the other topics up for consideration in this survey.

If we as faculty and staff can make a push towards implementing an information literacy program on campus, grades will not only improve, but so can financial literacy as well as mental health, wellness, etc. There should also be a social and emotional learning component included as part of the information literacy push as well. "

I believe this would include not only current students, but also incoming students, perhaps as part of outreach in high schools and for parents. Additionally, financial literacy may include filling out forms, basic banking, check writing, understanding interest rates, and payment plans.

"Career readiness is critical for graduates and includes emotional intelligence (social and emotional learning), transferable skills (i.e. critical thinking, oral/written communication, self control, tenacity, etc.), financial knowledge, information/data literacy, decision making, etc. Some of this may already be in courses/activities on campus. For example, the catalog shows a personal finance course that could be used potentially for financial literacy by adding more information regarding loans and ultimate interest cost, personal budgeting, etc. There are no prerequisites on the course. It (or something like it) might be better as a 200 level course that is designed specifically to help students learn about managing their personal finances to make better financial decisions. Research increasingly shows employers are frustrated with graduates who give up at the first sign of difficulty or who don't work well on a team despite the extensive use of teams in university courses.

Research and mentoring are both good concepts but hard to scale and measure beyond a few students due to limits on faculty time (especially junior faculty) and possibly faculty skill set or motivation. Finding ways to make earning a degree less costly by getting creative is interesting but ultimately does this specifically help the student. Instead is it part of financial literacy that as they gain knowledge about finances and degree costs, they learn to push all of us to find creative/cheaper solutions for tuition/fees, materials (OER), housing, student services, financial aid, etc. "

"Advising if very important. Done properly, it will help the student be more efficient and not be frustrated with wasted class hours.

Financial knowledge is important. It can help the student use their limited resources for efficiently and cost effectively.

Job experience is a great teacher for hands on knowledge.

I feel that there is a lack of support for our students from the under represented populations and that needs to change. These students will tell you that they are not wanted on this campus because of the people we bring to campus and how our certain events are policed. Our students in this demographics will tell you that they are either involved on campus or playing sports if they are on this campus.

Written communication is a key component to future success in the workplace. As we have many first-generation students, successful written communication is even more important. If students can not effectively present their ideas in a written format, a college degree will not carry the weight that it should have.

"At the department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, through undergraduate research, students :

- 1) get marketable skills for their careers
- 2) develop strong problem-solving skills
- 3) improve oral and written communication skills
- 4) get opportunity to meet/connect people in the field through publications, patent, and conferences

"

"Financial Literacy is extremely important for our campus. Our students need to understand all available resources, how to budget, and what to expect.

I am also concerned with the mental stability of our students. I hear many students say things like overwhelmed, lonely, depressed, anxiety, afraid to be alone. I know we offer help for free but some are afraid to go.

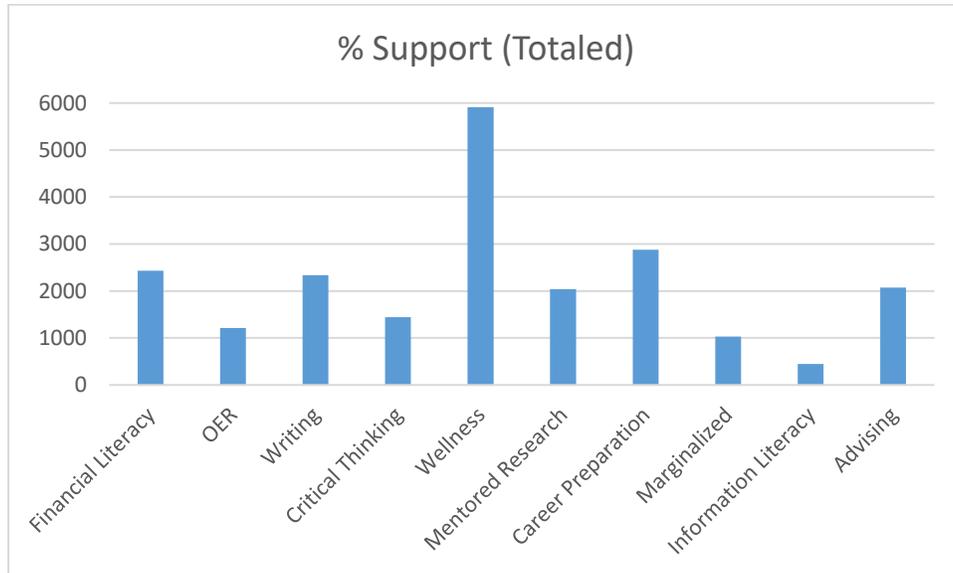
This is not a well-formatted survey.

The ability to critically think and communicate in writing seems the key to success in most of the other areas mentioned.

Thank you for considering this.

Our students (in my experience) continue to be ill prepared on many levels when they enter the university environment. They barely read and their writing is even worse. We all know that these two things are connected. As far as critical thinking, they are also in desperate straits. Again, this all relates to their inability to engage with books and write. Unless these issues are addressed, we will continue to have to remediate and that is not what I signed up for.

Student Responses:



Comments:

Wellness and mental health is very important for all of us to support along with tutoring.

The amount of hours to stay off campus should be lessened. Because of the changes to the residence halls students should be able to stay off campus after freshman year.

Students need to be prepare to communicate efficiently and enter the workforce

"rising prices of textbooks is an issue.paying \$100-\$300 for a book is ridiculous when 99% of students use it for that one semester only. There must be a way for maybe a textbook sharing program so that there is not waste of money or books.

Mental health is also a huge issue. Students are not being taught how to handle real life situations when then cause sometimes tragic events. If parents are not raising their children to cope with life, we should try to help so that they can succeed in college and post-college. "

"Providing more information and access to undergraduate research is something that is important to me, and I would like to see more opportunities provided.

I believe this is an important topic to consider and is crucial in giving students who are preparing for graduate school and jobs to be more real world ready and have an upper hand compared to other applicants. "

Other communities and programs are already in place for the majority of these, but I have not yet seen communities/programs dedicated to financial literacy and prep for the work force in our particular fields/prep for real life.

Not sure exactly what you mean by the first two selections. I am taking it that you would offer input/ training on how students can manage their money???. I think teaching people how to manage their finances is huge. I am a big fan of Dave Ramsey. He is someone who was bankrupt, but is now a millionaire. Her has curriculum that would be a

great resource to kids just starting out. He has a daily radio show and podcasts. Financial stress can lead to mental health issues like anxiety and depression. I think my selections of teaching kids about finances and mental health kind of go hand in hand.

None

none

Music Majors are dying. Being overloaded with some many classes. It is greatly affecting many of our mental health. I know that we chose our major for ourselves but it simply isn't fair that while most other majors are taking 5-6 classes that equals 15 hour with we are taking about 10 classes to equal that. Help the music majors.

MENTAL HEALTH IS A HUGE THING ON OUR CAMPUS. We need to have a large focus and lots of funding towards it. From experience, it seems as though SFA has no clue the toll that students take on their mental health, and having a family member succumb to their mental health while in college, I cannot express the importance of this that SFA seems to not recognize.

It is difficult to determine rankings when topics are blanket titles without details regarding what the topics (titles) entail.

"If this survey was something for the administration to consider in their future endeavors, then I filled this survey out incorrectly.

I believe that the topics I chose are areas that the school needs to better prepare/ educate the student body on. "

I would like to see the family nurse practitioner program set up and secure clinical sites for their students. I believe this would give the program an edge over other programs such as UT Tyler or UT Arlington. I also think that the BSN online program could be more competitive as the program is more expensive than other online programs around the area. I would honestly like to see the college be more straightforward with the tuition rates. I was expecting to pay one tuition rate and had it all calculated and found out there were tons and tons of fees. This is terrible especially for an online student who may not use the on-campus resources. The library needs to be quieter. I go there to study and every floor there are students talking like they are having a gathering or party. I wish the online library website and resources were easier to manage, they are very difficult at times just to access and article. I also wish the librarians were open and available for drop in and assistance. I still am not exactly sure how to meet with one for researching a paper. I lastly would advise the college to reform their parking policy. When I completed my undergraduate education, I lived on campus and therefore did not have a car. I believe that commuter students need to have better parking as they have no choice but to drive and park their car. On-campus students do not need a car and should be either told they can't have one or should have to pay a high premium for it as it is not necessary. Thank you for reading my thoughts. I enjoy SFA. You have the best teachers of any college around, and they are very responsive to email and want the students to do well. Thank you.

I think the hardest thing for most college students is figuring out what to do after they graduate (where to go, what resources are available, what kind of jobs to look for, etc.) The point of college is to prepare you for a career or vocation, so I think adding more ways to gain real-world experience and knowledge of different routes one could take would be incredibly helpful. I also think finances are very important and can be complicated and confusing, especially being on your own for the first time. Adding more resources and education on finances would help a great deal of people, both those who need to know what to do once they can no longer rely on scholarship money and those who need to figure out how to support themselves while also paying off student loans.

"I think SFA has done an excellent job of providing resources, internships, and support for the STEM programs and Political Science areas. However, increased opportunity, resources, internships, and guidance are needed in Human Sciences and Liberal Arts.

With the polarized state the United States is currently in, mental health is a huge priority. Especially in Texas where votes on both political sides were very close. Increasing the awareness of proper mental health and strong

communication skills, SFA could continue to be a close-knit community where respect for our peers and human decency remains a top priority.

I LOVE the feeling that I am part of the class.

I feel like students with disabilities should be better represented and should be better accommodated when it comes to our education. As a student with a disability I feel like some professors are not prepared at all to work with me or accommodate me.

I cant move the circles. computer graphics and engineering?

Hi

Focus on academics and good professors please.

Fix the parking so i dont have to ride my bike in 30 degree weather anymore

"Financial literacy is huge. Many people do not understand what they are getting themselves into when they take out loans, obtain credit cards, etc.

The advising at SFA is weak. Advisors do not always know whatâ€™s going on. I ended advising myself and friends while in school because it was more reliable. I meet with an advisor because it was required.

Mental health is so important. Suicide is on the rise and people need to know itâ€™s ok to not be ok. "

By focusing on Academics, financial literacy and minority cultures, SFA can provide the student population greater understanding of the post-academic world they will encounter upon graduation.

As an educator in public schooling my two cents is that you focus on a huge problem - today's students seriously struggle with critical thinking, and written communication overall.

As an education major ensuring that I am ready to enter the workforce as a competent teacher is by far the biggest concern I have. Having an increase in better cross departmental advising would be a huge improvement.

Advising and tutoring are crucial for academic success. Mental health is one of the most important areas of health

" I think our culture on campus is very socially oriented and finding other students who are academically driven and HAVE to work hard is incredibly rare. Most majors just do not relate to hard work, and an intense work ethic. There is a reason SFA is not considered a prestigious school and its obvious walking around on campus.

I wish more emphasis was placed on QUALITY teaching, and academic presitge. I want more quality study spaces and resources and quality professors. Basically I wish our schools money was more invested in academics and less in athletics atc."

From: Office of Academic Affairs
To: ALLFACSTAFF-L; ALLSTUDENTS-L; Addison Himes; Brian Murphy; H Williams; Janet Tareilo; Jonathan Helmke; Judy Abbott; Kimberly Childs; Marc Guidry; Pauline Sampson; Shirley Dickerson; Timothy Bisping
Subject: Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)
Date: Tuesday, January 29, 2019 2:33:25 PM

SFA will hold its second town hall to select a topic for our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) on Wednesday, January 30, from 3:00-4:30 in Turner Auditorium in the Griffith Fine Arts Building.

The final topics for the QEP, which is dedicated to improving student learning and success, are:

Engaging Students in Their Discipline (which combines mentored undergraduate research, various forms of experiential learning, and internships)

Lowering Cost and Debt (which combines financial literacy training for students with lowcost instructional materials including free textbooks, an initiative sometimes called open educational resources or OER)

Critical Thinking through Writing (which combines separate focuses on writing and critical thinking into one topic)

All students, faculty, staff, and alumni are invited to attend the town hall. I hope to see you there.

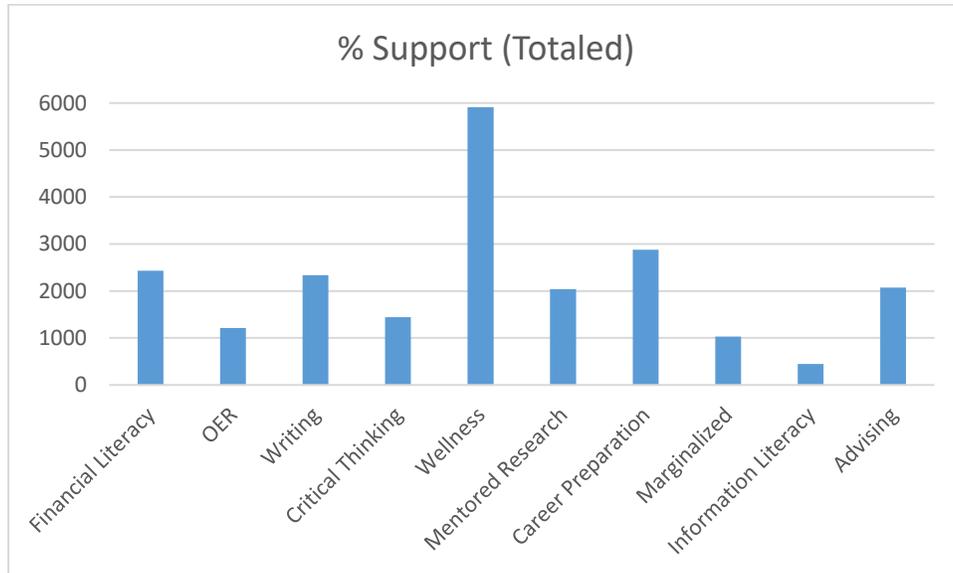
Best,

Marc

Marc Guidry, Associate Provost

Office of Academic Affairs
309E Austin Building
Stephen F. Austin State University
P.O. Box 6079, SFA Station
Nacogdoches, TX 75962
Office (936) 468-2707
Email: mguidry@sfasu.edu

Student Responses:



Comments:

Wellness and mental health is very important for all of us to support along with tutoring.

The amount of hours to stay off campus should be lessened. Because of the changes to the residence halls students should be able to stay off campus after freshman year.

Students need to be prepare to communicate efficiently and enter the workforce

"rising prices of textbooks is an issue.paying \$100-\$300 for a book is ridiculous when 99% of students use it for that one semester only. There must be a way for maybe a textbook sharing program so that there is not waste of money or books.

Mental health is also a huge issue. Students are not being taught how to handle real life situations when then cause sometimes tragic events. If parents are not raising their children to cope with life, we should try to help so that they can succeed in college and post-college. "

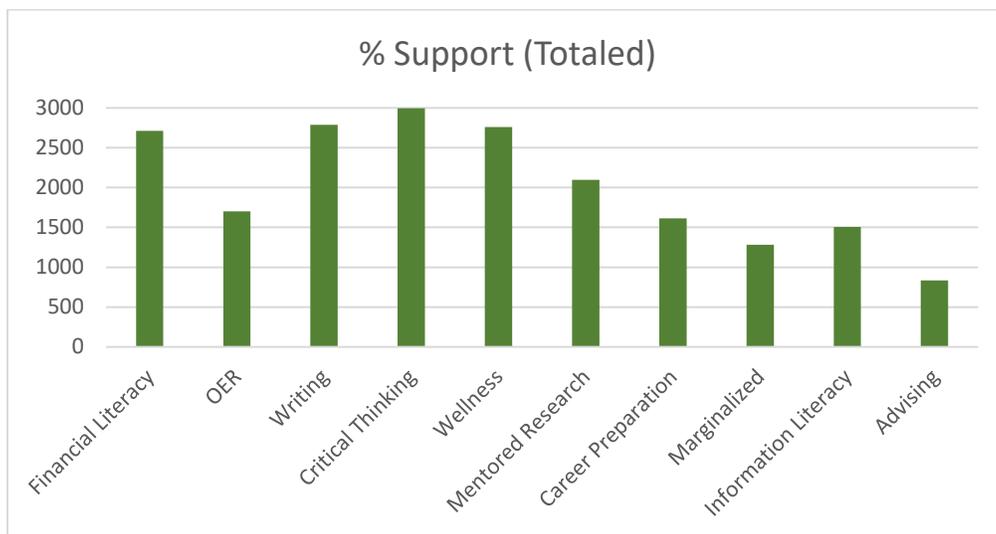
"Providing more information and access to undergraduate research is something that is important to me, and I would like to see more opportunities provided.

I believe this is an important topic to consider and is crucial in giving students who are preparing for graduate school and jobs to be more real world ready and have an upper hand compared to other applicants. "

Other communities and programs are already in place for the majority of these, but I have not yet seen communities/programs dedicated to financial literacy and prep for the work force in our particular fields/prep for real life.

Not sure exactly what you mean by the first two selections. I am taking it that you would offer input/ training on how students can manage their money???. I think teaching people how to manage their finances is huge. I am a big fan of Dave Ramsey. He is someone who was bankrupt, but is now a millionaire. Her has curriculum that would be a

Staff/Faculty Responses:



Comments:

No Comments

QEP should be focused. Trying to cover everything will keep us from doing anything well.

Transformative experiences in research/mentoring should become a top priority with support from all administrative levels to ensure proper career training and increase public perception of our university.

"Nationally there are more than 51 percent of students affected by poverty. This number is higher in Texas. More and more of our SFA students are affected by poverty. There is also a push to make SFA a Hispanic institution.

We need to focus on how to meet the needs of these students."

"I would suggest the University prioritize Critical thinking COUPLED with problem solving. The follow-through to Critical Thinking is the concrete problem-solving that students sometimes lack.

Additionally Financial Literacy needs to be addressed - my understanding is that Financial Aid offers little to no financial counseling when offering loans. Students just have to read (or not) a very wordy online "Financial Agreement" and click a check box on "I agree". It's kind of like clicking on the software or app agreement to use it. That is NOT Financial Counseling, and certainly not holistic - that is taking all factors (including ability to repay) into account when offering financial aid.

Experiential learning (mandatory internships), career preparation (a mandatory course built into the degree requirements of the curriculum) and mentoring also all have my support. "

Our objective must be clear and measurable.

What is being done to support graduate students at SFA? SFA needs to invest resources for its graduate students as well; currently recruitment and retention of quality graduate students is difficult. Small stipends and lack of tuition waiver really make this difficult to recruit students outside SFA. If one of the goals of the QEP is to increase

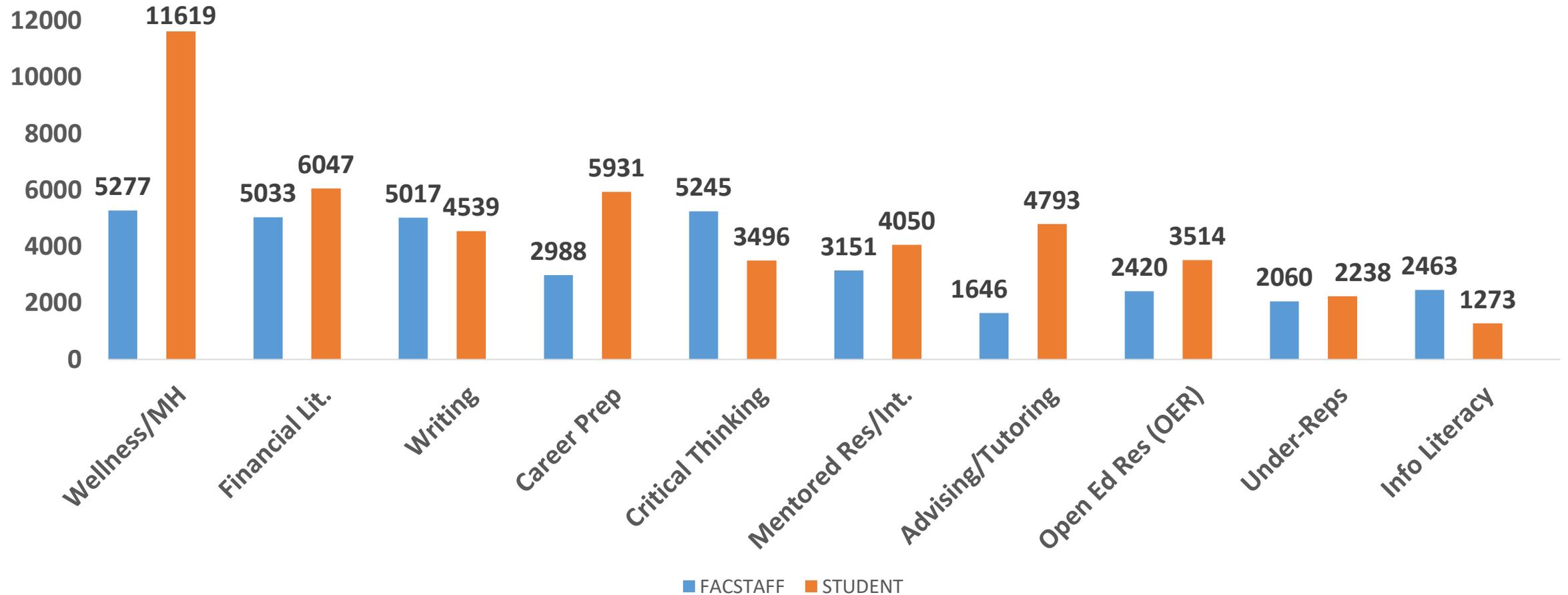
Town Hall Two

January 30, 2019

Second QEP Survey

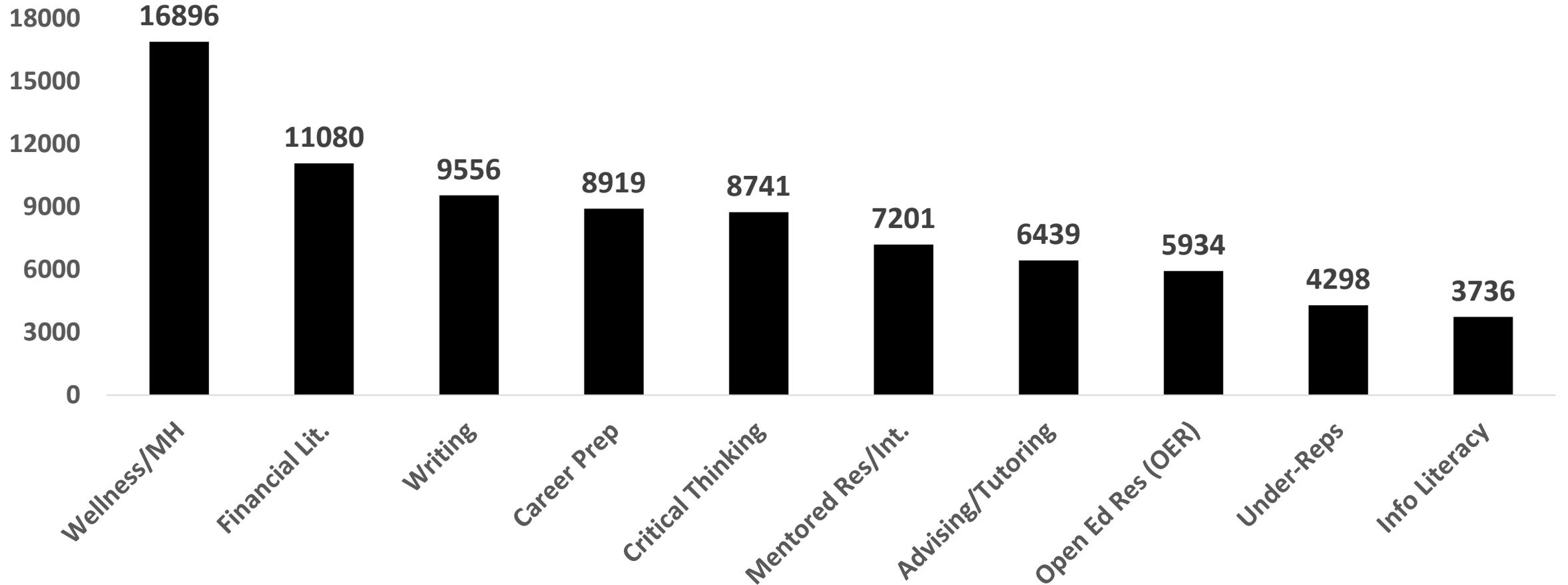
- 464 Faculty/Staff Responses ($\approx 27\%$)
- 825 Student Responses ($\approx 6\%$)

Results from the Survey



Results from the Survey

Totals



Topic areas removed from consideration

Potential Topic Area	Reason for Non-Selection
Wellness & Mental Health	Implementation Issues. Finding data & tying to Strategic Plan may be more difficult than other options.
Career Preparation	Implementation Issues. Resources already being invested in increasing career/professional development services.
Under-represented Populations	Not popular as a QEP topic. Limited scope.
Information Literacy	Last in survey interest, overall.
Advising/Tutoring	This was mentioned, usually, as a part of another topic, such as UG mentored research.

Topics still under consideration

Initial Topic Area	Pros	Cons	Action
Financial Literacy	Popular w/Faculty, Staff, Students. Fits into Strategic Plan via committee. International data for comparison.	Implementation Issues. How does this happen?	Merged into Lowering Student Cost & Debt
Low-Cost Instruction Materials	Most popular at Town Hall. Ties into SP via committee. Easy to "win."	Lower survey scores (bad question?) Needs a new name.	
Writing	Very good initial data. We're monitoring already. Other institutions have done this.	Implementation Issues. Difficult to quantify.	Merged into Critical Thinking Through Writing
Critical Thinking	Very good initial data. We're monitoring already.	Implementation Issues. Too vague? Previous QEP. Difficult to quantify.	
Mentored Research/Internships	Seems effective for retention. Can revitalize academic programs.	Implementation Issues. Most effective placements already commenced?	Renamed, Engaging Students in the Discipline

Three topic areas for consideration

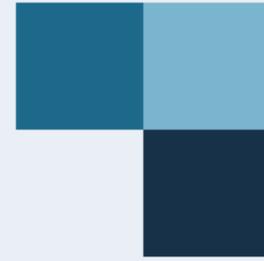
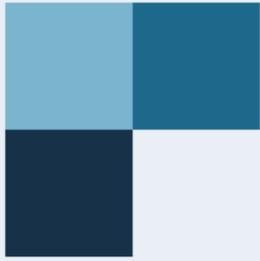
- **Lowering Student Cost and Debt**
- **Critical Thinking Through Writing**
- **Engaging Students in Their Discipline**

Give us your input, *Right Now*

- Get your smart phone/tablet/laptop/device, and go to

www.pollev.com/sfasuctl344

- Complete the seven-question survey.
- All submissions are anonymous.
- For questions 2-7, be sure to click “submit” after entering your response, then click “next.”



To show this poll

1

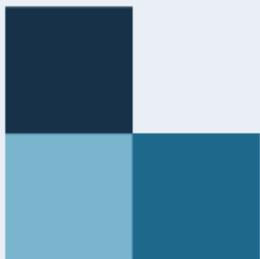
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QEP Town Hall Notes

20 January 2019, 3 pm

Poll Results:

- 1. Rank order: 1st – Lowering Cost and Student Debt, 2nd – Engaging Students in Their Discipline, 3rd – Critical Thinking Through Writing**
 - a. Word Clouds**
 - i. Opportunities – Engaging Students in their discipline**
 1. Internships came up the most
 2. Research
 3. Retention (Guidry - Chemistry department has had success in undergraduate mentored research in increasing retention. The idea is that as a freshman students become engaged in activities in there discipline beyond the classroom, more than just internships, research, etc.)
 4. Career preparation,
 5. Networking with instructors and alumni
 6. Better GPA
 - ii. Challenges – Engaging students in their discipline**
 1. Students (sometimes they don't want to be engaged. Will take a lot of mentoring.)
 2. Limited opportunities
 3. Engagement
 4. Budget Resources (this will be issue with all topics)
 5. Undecided majors
 - iii. Opportunities – Thinking critically through writing**
 1. Students (opportunities to prepare them better)
 2. Career Prep
 3. Growth among students
 - iv. Challenges – Thinking critically through writing**
 1. Faculty (getting active participation)
 2. Assessment
 3. Ability
 - v. Opportunities – Lowering student cost and debt**
 1. Retention
 2. OER
 3. Better grades
 - vi. Challenges – Lowering student cost and debt**
 1. Results weren't represented in word cloud

Topics discussed during open mic discussion:

1. Dr. Marsha Bayless – Chair and Professor of Dept. of Business Communication and Legal Studies
 - a. Open source books – concerned that these are not of excellent and equal quality as conventional textbooks, especially for specialized fields. How do we interpret free books for all?
 - b. Not sure if some students would read a book if it was free or not.
 - c. John Calahan – This topic is more than free books, it's about lowering student cost and debt.
 - d. Dr. Marc Guidry – includes financial literacy (teaching students how to budget), helping students with FAFSA, making students more aware of scholarship opportunities, tapping into existing textbook - open access (Rice University), faculty-written textbooks and course redesign (CLAA)
2. Rachele Garrett – Director of Financial Aid
 - a. Opportunities of Lowering Student Cost/Debt - decrease in cohort default rate which affects how we disburse loans. SFA is one of the top schools statewide with the highest student debt rates.
 - b. Challenges (lowering cost) – Buy in across campus.
3. Tammy Mitchum, Assistant Director – Scholarships
 - a. Advantage of Lowering Student Cost and Debt – Financial Literacy to gain skills that students are not receiving at home or in high school.
 - b. Lower student limits on what they are taking from Financial Aid – students will have a better understanding of what they are accepting.
 - c. Financial Aid presents in classrooms when they are asked to, but would like to see a more widespread approach.
 - d. Better opportunities to get to life events sooner (buying homes, starting a family, etc.)
4. Kathy Bryson – Writing Program Director, AARC
 - a. Critical Thinking through Writing – Since the roll out of the online writing lab, the writing program has doubled their business.
 - b. Students know they need to write better and know how to write well to advance in their career.
5. Chris McKenna, Assistant Professor of Business Communication and Legal Studies
 - a. Critical thinking through Writing – more writing than critical thinking.
 - b. Sensitive to the student debt issue, however, one way to reduce student debt is to give them skills that make them more marketable.
 - c. Currently, it's possible for students to graduate in some degrees without having to write a critical analysis paper.
 - d. Challenge is implementing it across the curriculum in every program.
 - e. In the College of Business, in the assessment at the graduate level, critical thinking is the biggest weakness.

- f. Dr. Guidry – critical thinking is also the #1 area students have been underperforming in the core assessments.
- 6. Pauline Sampson – Dean of Research and Graduate Studies
 - a. Engaging Students in Their Discipline – we already have data that this helps students connect with faculty, as well as, each other.
 - b. Students are more successful in the workplace if they can experience their career field while they are here.
- 7. Kathleen Young – Student, Multi-disciplinary Studies major
 - a. Her advisor is her only source of information.
 - b. More experiences for students in fields of study that don't get that much attention.
- 8. Chay Runnels – Associate Professor of Human Sciences
 - a. Engaging students in their Discipline
 - i. School of Human Sciences is already implementing this with experiences for their students built into courses.
 - ii. There are many opportunities in our geographical proximity to major cities (Houston, Dallas, etc.)
- 9. Gary Wurtz – Director of the School of Music
 - a. Engaging Students in Their Discipline – this is easy for the Music Department to implement because their students already do this.
 - b. Lowering student debt and cost – this would have the most impact on students.
 - i. Proposed the use of block tuition. (Students could take more classes without paying more money to do it.)
 - c. Dr. Guidry – block tuition has been discussed in the Retention Committee. Students do better when their schedule is fuller, and they graduate sooner, and enter the workforce sooner to start making more money sooner.
- 10. Marsha Bayless
 - a. Advocates that whatever topic we choose, it should be something that every student can be involved in.
 - b. Critical Thinking through Writing and Engaging Student in Their Discipline would be able to encompass all students.
- 11. Dr. Michael Janusa – Chair of the Chemistry Department
 - a. QEP needs to be enhancing student learning somehow and connected to the strategic plan of the University.
 - b. Critical thinking through writing and Engaging Students in Their Discipline
 - c. Dr. Guidry – Engaging students in their discipline might pose a challenge, but there are lots of possibilities with this topic, too.
- 12. Mark Ludorf – Professor of Psychology
 - a. The key thing will be selling this to the faculty. It could be viewed as something on top of what the faculty already have to do.
- 13. Dr. Guidry – Associate Provost
 - a. In February, Dr. Westbrook will announce the chosen topic.
 - b. A plan will be developed following the announcement, which is usually written within 75-100 pages. It has to be well thought out, included in the budget.

- c. A committee will be formed to develop the plan and they will be thinking of ways to leverage the activities that are already taking place and not adding something totally new.
 - d. Faculty and department could also figure out ways to do something better or redo something they are already doing.
14. John Calahan – Director of Institutional Effectiveness
- a. QEP director will be selected to run the QEP.
 - b. QEP will have its own budget.
 - c. We are required to submit the names of 3 people that are subject matter experts in the topic that we pick that are not residents of Texas.
 - d. SACSCOC will select one of those people to visit SFA and assess our QEP plan. That person will give a recommendation to SACSCOC based on their visit as to the ability of SFA to execute the plan.
 - e. The previous QEP - the control group did better than students that participated in high-impact practices. The QEP was unsuccessful because we were spread so thin in the implementation of the plan.
 - f. This topic needs to be focused and actionable.
15. Dr. Steve Bullard – Provost
- a. Lowering costs also includes early adoption of textbooks, decreased time to completion through guided pathways and advising (15 to finish program), using freely available articles and other info, renting texts, dual credit program will also decrease time to completion, and having students develop instructional materials.
 - b. Students writing instructional materials creates an opportunity for students to develop writing and critical thinking skills.
 - c. Remember our mission statement includes “engage students.” (2nd sentence)
16. Kyle Ainsworth – Special Collections Librarian
- a. Suggestion for the next survey – define the topics and explain some of the issues addressed within the topic.

Closing – Dr. Guidry

- **Another survey will be sent out**
- **Results will be reviewed, as well as, feedback from Town Hall by the Committee**
- **Recommendations will be made to the VPs and President**
- **President will pick the final topic and announce in early February**
- **New committee will be formed to develop ~100 page plan that will be blueprint on implementing the QEP**
- **Director will be hired, full time position**
- **QEP will begin in 2021, run past our 100th anniversary to 2026**
- **Report then written on our results to SACSCOC**

From: [Office of Academic Affairs](#)
To: [ALLSTUDENTS-L](#)
Cc: [Marc Guidry](#); [Paul Henley](#); [John Calahan](#); [Sharon Brewer](#)
Subject: We need your input!
Date: Thursday, November 29, 2018 11:00:11 AM
Attachments: [QEP First Town Hall Notes.docx](#)

Dear students:

SFA is in the process of selecting a topic for our **Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)**, which is a major initiative to improve student learning and success. We held a town hall on Thursday, November 15, to discuss various topics being considered for the QEP. We are now sending out a survey to get your feedback on which topics we should further develop. **Feedback from the survey linked below is a major step toward choosing the community-wide QEP we will be doing. The survey is brief— please take just a few minutes to fill it out. Your input is very valuable to us.** Thank you for your participation in this vital effort to improve student learning and success at SFA.

If you missed the first town hall, you can watch a recording of it [here](#). You can also read the attached notes about the town hall, which cover every point of discussion raised by the audience members.

We will use feedback from the survey to narrow down the potential QEP topics to a top 2-4, which we will discuss at **the second town hall on Wednesday, January 30, from 3:00-4:30, in Turner Auditorium**. We hope to see you there.

QEP survey link: http://sfasu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4Mi9xhC7mLHC68d

Best,

Dr. Marc Guidry

Marc Guidry, Associate Provost

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309E Austin Building
Stephen F. Austin State University
P.O. Box 6079, SFA Station
Nacogdoches, TX 75962
Office (936) 468-2707
Email: mguidry@sfasu.edu

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Email: mguidry@sfasu.edu

From: [Office of Academic Affairs](#)
To: [ALLSTUDENTS-L](#)
Subject: QEP Survey
Date: Monday, February 04, 2019 4:28:50 PM
Attachments: [QEP Town Hall Notes 30 Jan 19.pdf](#)

Dear students:

We have concluded our second town hall on the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), which is a major initiative to improve student learning and success. Now, we would like to get your feedback on which of the final three topics we should select as our QEP. **Please take just a few minutes to complete this brief (4 question) survey on which QEP topic we should select:**
http://sfasu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ah0pPEedDFBI7LT

Thanks for your input!

If you did not get to attend the second town hall, I have attached notes of the meeting.

Best,

Dr. Marc Guidry

Marc Guidry, Associate Provost

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Nacogdoches, TX 75962
Office (936) 468-2707
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Report of the Quality Enhancement Plan Topic Selection Committee

Stephen F. Austin State University

February 13, 2019

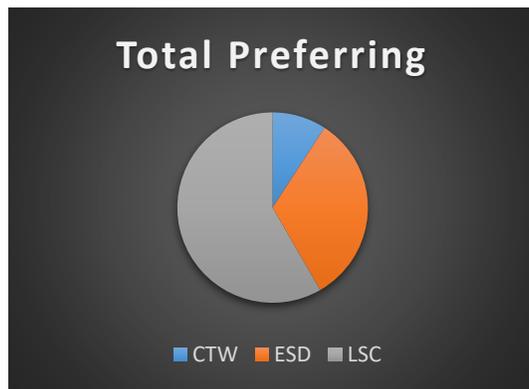
The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Topic Selection Committee was tasked with choosing the topic area for the QEP. To that end, the committee worked to inform the campus community of every step in the process, soliciting input throughout. Significant outreach efforts included poster stands, bathroom mirror clings, an article in the *Pine Log*, bulletin board posters, *SFA Today* announcements, direct outreach to Alumni Board members, and multiple email contacts with every faculty member, staff member, and student at SFA. The committee met five times as a full committee, along with various subcommittee meetings. The committee issued three surveys to the full campus community and held two public town hall meetings.

At the first meeting, possible topics were discussed and further ideas were solicited. After that, preparations were made for the first town hall meeting regarding the QEP and a follow-up survey. The first full set of 11 topics was selected from (a) existing data at SFA; (b) suggestions from the committee members; and (c) suggestions from the QEP Suggestion Form survey. A second campus-wide survey sent out after the first town hall elicited responses on these 11 topics.

In January, the committee considered responses from both the town hall and the second survey, removing some topics from consideration due to either a lack of interest in the topic or a poor fit with the university's mission and/or the purpose of the QEP. Other topics were combined to create three final topic areas for consideration:

- *Lowering Student Cost & Debt* (LSC)
- *Critical Thinking Through Writing* (CTW)
- *Engaging Students in Their Discipline* (ESD).

A second town hall focused on only these three topics. Of the final three options, LSC was preferred by the majority of attendees, with ESD and CTW sharing less than half of the support. Results from the third and final QEP topic survey were similar to both town hall meetings:



The final meeting of the committee took place on February 12. Based on feedback from the Final QEP Topic Survey, the committee eliminated CTW as a focus area since it received the lowest level of support among the final three topics. After full deliberation, a slight majority of committee members favored moving forward with **Lowering Student Cost & Debt**.

Further Considerations

Two key topics of interest/concern were expressed throughout the selection process. Although not chosen as the primary topic area, these topics should be addressed in one form or another by those in position to effect positive change.

Mental Health and Wellness

This topic gathered *strong* support from both students and faculty/staff in the second survey. In fact, it had by far the largest support of all potential topics on the second survey. This topic was removed from consideration due to fit considerations, i.e. hiring more counseling staff does not constitute a QEP plan, other approaches seemed nebulous, and demonstrating success would be difficult. Committee members from Student Services informed the committee about an ongoing effort to increase counseling options for students (including plans to hire a part-time psychiatrist for SFA). The Student Government Association has recently funded two new full-time counseling positions in the Office of Counseling Services on behalf of the student body. These efforts are commendable, albeit not complete. **The overwhelming response to our mental health needs calls for further attention.**

Engaging Students in Their Discipline

This topic had significant support among a strong minority of QEP Topic Selection Team committee members and other interested parties. Notably, the student representative on the committee favored this initiative over lowering student cost and debt as more important. Indications from four academic programs—Chemistry, Music, Theatre, and Orientation and Mobility—hold that early (first-year), direct engagement in students' chosen disciplines outside of the classroom, where students frequently work one-on-one with faculty on research or applied skills, improves program retention. Implementation issues were one factor in this topic's final elimination from consideration, but these issues might be addressed in a manner consistent with our Strategic Compass and similar to the work of campus committees that have addressed topics like one-stop visitor centers, financial education, and leadership development. **In particular, the committee urges the administration to pursue the creation of the proposed Center for Student Research and Creative Discovery.**

Budget Item	Year 1 2021-22		Year 2 2022-2023		Year 3 2023-2024		Year 4 2024-2025		Year 5 2025-2026		TOTAL
	Base	FTE Level of Effort	Base	FTE Level of Effort	Base	FTE Level of Effort	Base	FTE Level of Effort	Base	FTE Level of Effort	
1. QEP Director		0.33		0.33		0.33		0.33		0.33	
12-month Salary	\$84,722	27,958	84,722	27,958	87,264	28,797	87,264	28,797	89,009	29,373	\$142,883
Benefits (est. @27%)	\$22,875	7,549	22,875	7,549	23,561	7,775	23,561	7,775	24,032	7,931	\$38,579
		35,507		35,507		36,572		36,572		37,304	\$181,462
2. Assistant Director		0.40		0.40		0.40		0.40		0.40	
12-month Salary	\$61,146	\$24,458	\$61,146	\$24,458	\$62,980	\$25,192	\$62,980	\$25,192	64,240	\$25,696	\$124,997
Benefits (est. @27%)	\$16,509	\$6,604	\$16,509	\$6,604	\$17,005	\$6,802	\$17,005	\$6,802	17,345	\$6,938	\$33,749
		\$31,062		\$31,062		\$31,994		\$31,994		\$32,634	\$158,746
3. IE Specialist		0.35		0.35		0.35		0.35		0.35	
12-month Salary	\$42,267	\$14,793	\$42,267	\$14,793	\$43,535	\$15,237	\$43,535	\$15,237	44,406	\$15,542	\$75,603
Benefits (est. @27%)	\$11,412	\$3,994	\$11,412	\$3,994	\$11,754	\$4,114	\$11,754	\$4,114	11,990	\$4,196	\$20,413
		\$18,788		\$18,788		\$19,351		\$19,351		\$19,738	\$96,016
4. Administrative Assistant		0.25		0.25		0.25		0.25		0.25	
12-month Salary	\$33,336	\$8,334	\$33,336	\$8,334	\$34,336	\$8,584	\$34,336	\$8,584	35,023	\$8,756	\$42,592
Benefits (est. @27%)	\$9,001	\$2,250	\$9,001	\$2,250	\$9,271	\$2,318	\$9,271	\$2,318	9,456	\$2,364	\$11,500
		\$10,584		\$10,584		\$10,902		\$10,902		\$11,120	\$54,092
5. Graduate Assistant		.5		.5		.5		.5		.5	
9-month Salary	\$9,225	\$4,613	\$9,226	\$4,613	\$9,227	\$4,614	\$9,228	\$4,614	\$9,229	\$4,615	\$23,068
		\$4,613		\$4,613		\$4,614		\$4,614		\$4,615	\$23,068
6. Software											
Ad Astra		\$79,500		\$79,500		\$79,500		\$79,500		\$87,450	\$405,450
7. Marketing		\$8,000.00		\$6,000.00		\$5,000.00		\$5,000.00		\$5,000.00	\$29,000
8. Travel											
Conference Travel e.g., SACSCOC, CCA, AAC&U, etc)		\$5,000		\$5,200		\$5,400		\$5,600		\$5,800	\$27,000
9. QEP Workshop											
Materials, refreshments, Facilitator Stipends		\$3,000		\$3,000		\$3,000		\$3,000		\$3,000	\$15,000
10. Office Expenses		\$2,000		\$2,000		\$2,000		\$2,000		\$2,000	\$10,000
TOTAL		\$198,054		\$196,254		\$198,333		\$198,533		\$208,660	\$999,834