MCLENNAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
Quality Enhancement Plan



2021

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# Abstract

Peer Assisted Student Success (PASS) is the McLennan Community College (MCC) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). It is a five-year plan that aims to increase student perceptions of belonging on campus, pass rates in Learning Framework and gateway courses, and persistence from Year 1 to Year 2 for first-time-in-college (FTIC) students through a combination of peer-led academic and social support systems. To provide FTIC students with peer-led academic support, we will work to create standardized training and evaluation systems for all peer leaders, which includes tutors, Learning Framework mentors, and supplemental instruction leaders; we will then integrate and promote these peer-led academic support programs campus-wide. To bolster peer-to-peer social support for FTIC students, we will integrate and promote peer social support programs and foster the development of relationships among students and mentors in Learning Framework sections.

# Overview of McLennan Community College

McLennan Community College (MCC) was established in 1965 by the citizens of McLennan County in Waco, Texas. For more than 55 years, the College has been serving Waco, McLennan County, and the surrounding areas to help community members achieve their educational goals.

MCC is located on a scenic 250-acre campus adjacent to Cameron Park and the Brazos River. Nestled among rolling hills and large trees, MCC has been recognized statewide for its natural beauty and outstanding architecture. The College also owns Highlander Ranch, a 200-acre horse farm located about five miles from campus, and has an Emergency Services Education Center, a 42-acre educational complex near the Waco Regional Airport.

Students enrolling at MCC may choose from academic course offerings that will transfer to four-year universities or technical career training that prepares students to enter the workforce. Training is offered in more than 40 technical fields, health professions, business and computer fields, commercial music, emergency services, and human services programs. MCC also partners with four-year universities to offer bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees on MCC's campus through the University Center. All University Center courses are taught on campus or online by the faculty of the partner schools. The two primary partners at the University Center are Tarleton State University and Texas Tech University.

MCC’s Fall 2020 enrollment of 7,742 included 1,189 first-time college students, 408 new transfer students, 1,993 dual credit students, and 4,152 returning students. Seventy-eight percent are from McLennan County. Sixty-eight percent of students are female, and 54% are

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Fall 2020 Enrollment Profile | | |
| Total Enrollment | | 7,742 |
| Student Type | First Time in College:  New Transfers:  Dual Credit:  Returning: | 15%  5%  26%  54% |
| Gender | Male: Female: | 32% 68% |
| Ethnicity | Hispanic:  African-American:  White:  Other: | 34%  13%  47%  7% |
| Course Load | Full-Time:  Part-Time | 28%  72% |
| Major Type | Transfer: Workforce: | 76%  24% |
| Table 1. Fall 2020 Enrollment Profile | | |

members of racial or ethnic minority groups. Thirty-seven percent of students are in the age range of 18-21, with an overall average age of 22.9 years at the beginning of the fall term.

Seventy-six percent of students are enrolled in academic majors designed to transfer to a four-year school. Using the state definition of full-time (which excludes courses beginning after the term census date), 28% are full-time students. The overall average credit hour load excluding flex classes is 8.2. If flex classes are included, the percentage of full-time students jumps to 38% percent, and the average credit hour load is 8.8. The top five areas of study include Liberal Arts & Sciences, General Studies, Registered Nursing, Transient non-degree seeker, and Business Administration and Management.

**Mission.** The mission of MCC is “*to educate our students - improving their lives and enriching our community.”* MCC's mission statement addresses four key directives of the College's operations: 1) Help all students succeed at the highest level possible; 2) Take care of our people; 3) Impact the community; 4) Develop resources to fund success. To further support the mission and key directives of the institution, MCC has five core values.

1. **People matter** - We will be honest, humble, respectful, and gracious to our students and to each other. We best serve our students, colleagues, and community when we work as a team.
2. **Inclusiveness matters** - We will seek to appreciate and understand our students and each other, actively seeking different viewpoints. We will work to create a civil, welcoming environment where our diverse community of students and employees learn, teach, and work together.
3. **Integrity matters** - We will work with the highest level of integrity, taking responsibility for all of our actions. We will tell the truth and seek to be fair in our decision-making and actions.
4. **Communication matters** - We will be open, collegial, and courageous in our communications with students and with our colleagues. We will listen before we speak. We will communicate decisions and the reasons for them.
5. **Excellence matters** - We will strive for excellence in all that we do. We will actively plan for the future, seeking new and innovative ways to accomplish our mission.

## Previous Quality Enhancement Plan

MCC’s 2012 QEP introduced, built, and sustained many of the points MCC will expand upon in their 2021 QEP. Below is an overview of the previous QEP to outline where MCC’s processes began.

In Fall 2012, MCC embarked on its five-year Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) titled Learning Environment Adaptability Project (LEAP). LEAP focused on increasing First Time in College (FTIC) student retention and success by teaching students self-awareness and self-efficacy. LEAP introduced emotional intelligence (EI) skills in the curricula with the aim of helping students more quickly adapt to the college environment and succeed during their first year at college. MCC used the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s (THECB) definition for First Time in College (FTIC) students as its standard. Among FTIC, LEAP focused additional attention to at-risk students (students with two or more developmental needs based on the results of the Accuplacer (2012-2014) or Texas Success Initiative (TSI)).

LEAP was built around two strategies: enhancing the first-year experience and providing faculty and staff professional development opportunities on working with students. LEAP goals included:

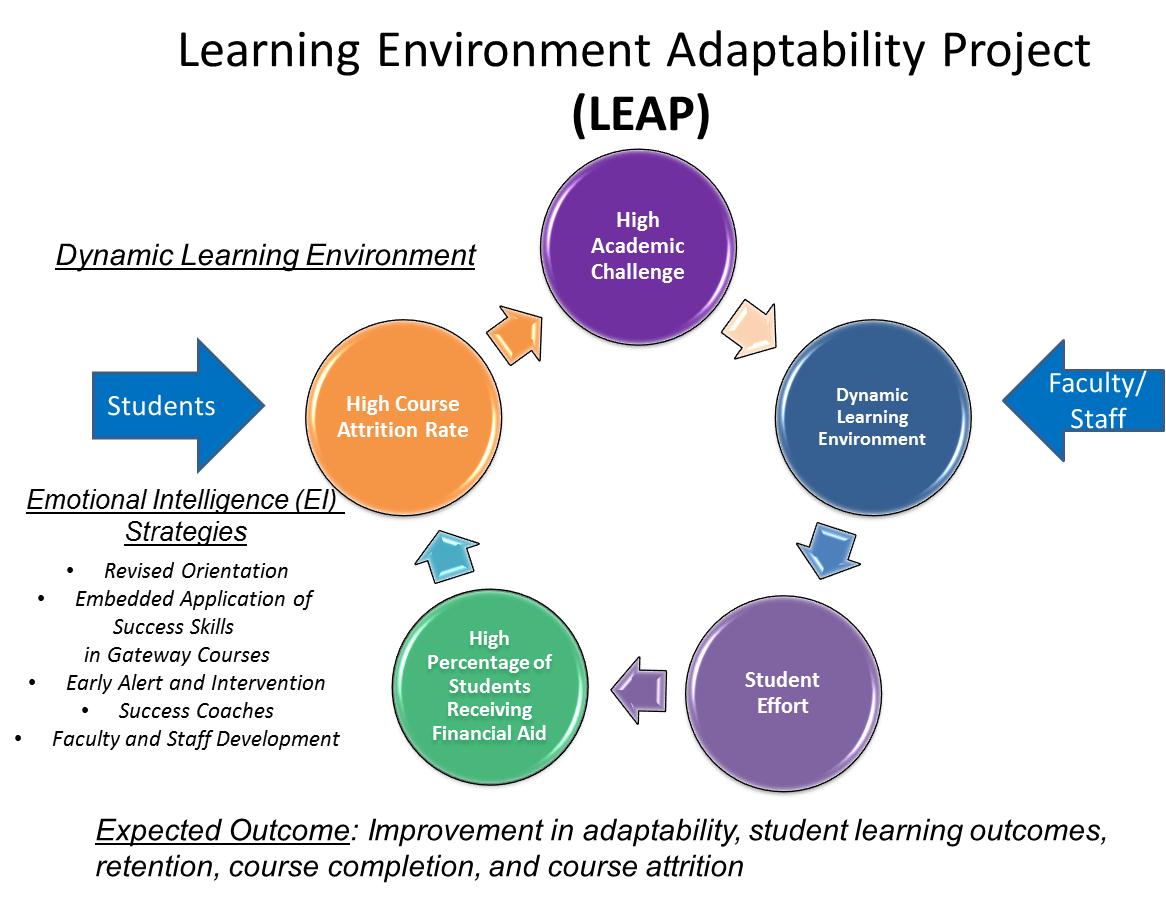
1. Improve EI and other adaptability skills among entering students.
2. Improve course completion rates among entering students.
3. Improve course completion rates among students enrolled in EI embedded gateway courses.
4. Improve critical thinking skills among entering students in EI-embedded courses.
5. Improve student engagement in the learning process.
6. Improve student rating of satisfaction with educational experience at MCC.
7. Improve Fall-to-Spring retention rates among new students.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of LEAP

Upon the conclusion of the five-year QEP, MCC found:

1. The LEAP program has transformed the College, and all the initiatives launched for the QEP are now part of the College culture:
   * The first-year experience and Learning Framework (LF) courses are now required for all FTIC students.
   * LF courses are part of most academic and workforce degrees.
   * LF and Emotional Intelligence (EI) curricula continue to be contextualized to support our six academic pathways.
   * EI training continues as a regular offering by our professional development program.
   * Lessons learned from the Gateway Faculty Cohort training continues to evolve and now includes all courses.
   * Assessments developed for LEAP are now part of the College’s regular analytic process.
   * The LEAP data repository is available to all faculty, and our goal is to continue adding to it for the benefit of our students.
2. Modifications made to existing LEAP initiatives have proven to be effective and are a testament to the collaboration that has taken place among multiple departments over the last four years.
3. Spring FTIC students consistently performed more poorly than Fall FTIC students across several measures. While not an initial component of LEAP, this finding has helped identify an area of need at MCC, and there is ongoing research on the issue.
4. The LEAP program impact is visible in many of our ongoing student success initiatives across campus, including the use of Student Planning and Insight software for advising and registration; the creation of the Completion Center; the fielding of two Emotional Intelligence professional development certificates; and our growing involvement with our ISD partners to better prepare high school students for college. LEAP also prompted the College to seek new ways of promoting student success. This included the College opting to participate in Success by the Numbers in 2013-14 before joining Achieving the Dream in 2015.

# Process of Identifying a Topic

Beginning in March 2020, Dr. Phil Rhodes, Vice President of Research, Effectiveness, and Information Technology, and Dr. Laura Wichman, Director of Institutional Research, initiated a series of Town Hall meetings with various departments and constituencies across campus to create opportunities for open, candid discussions of potential QEP topics. Meetings began with Dr. Wichman presenting the QEP requirements and three major topics MCC institutionally chose to focus on to support its strategic plan: Completion Rates, Zero Credits Earned, and Retention and Graduation Rates. Dr. Wichman then presented current data on the three topics.

On the topic of Course Completion Rates, Dr. Wichman discussed the overall all course success rates (grades of A, B, C, CR) of MCC students from fall 2015 through fall 2019 by instructional mode. The data presented shows face to face courses have seen an increase in successful course completions from 75% in fall 2015 to 77% in fall 2019. Increases were also seen in internet courses as success rates increased from 63% in fall 2015 to 66% in fall 2019. There was a slight decrease in success of students in blended courses, with a decrease from 72% in fall 2015 to 71% in fall 2019. Figure 2 below illustrates the success rates of students from fall 2015 through fall 2019 by instructional mode.

Figure 2. Trends of Success Rates by Instructional Mode

The second topic presented, Zero Credits Earned, touched on the issue MCC has identified among first-time-in-college (FTIC) fall students; large percentages of students in their first term at MCC do not earn any credits in their courses. While there is a percentage of non-FTIC students who also do not earn credits, a higher percentage of FTIC students earn zero credits. The data presented in Figure 3 below shows a 4% increase from fall 2015 through fall 2019 in the number of FTIC students who are earning zero credit at the end of their first term.

Figure 3. Trend of Zero Credits Earned

The third and final topic presented discussed the minimal changes MCC noticed in the fall to fall retention of FTIC students from fall 2013 through fall 2018. As Figure 4 below shows, over the last six years, the fall-to-fall retention of MCC FTIC students decreased by one percent. When the data were disaggregated by race and ethnicity, African American male and female students retain at a rate of more than 10% lower than their Hispanic and White peers. In addition to retention data, three-year graduation and transfer data were also presented to attendees. While MCC has experienced an increase in three-year graduation and transfer rates, from 25% in fall 2011 to 34% in fall 2016, the institution believes there is still room for improvement and believes increasing fall to fall retention rates would positively impact graduation and transfer rates.

Figure 4. Trend of Fall to Fall Retention

During and after the presentation of data, attendees engaged in an open conversation to solicit feedback for potential ways to address the topics. Note takers were present at the meetings and took notes anonymously for later analysis.

In all, Drs. Rhodes and Wichman held 13 Town Hall meetings open to employees and five sessions for students between March 2020 and May 2020. Over 150 employees attended the employee sessions. Upon completion of the Town Hall meetings, the Office of Institutional Research compiled the notes taken and performed text analysis to identify common suggestions (the executive summary of the findings is available in Appendix A). Within each of the three areas presented, ideas and suggestions for improvements from participants included but were not limited to:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Topics | Suggestions |
| Completion Rates | * + There should be consistency in online classes (common navigation, structure, features, etc.).   + Students do not understand what an online class entails (time, motivation, course expectations, etc.). Can we advertise this better to students? Can advisors/orientation cover?   + Faculty should engage with students regularly and consistently, especially in online classes.   + Online students need an orientation that answers different questions than the traditional orientation.   + Students do not have the technological skills to succeed. Do all students need computer classes? Do faculty have the technology skills to help students be successful?   + Students do not have access to technology or technology resources, such as WiFi and printing. Can we provide students with a technology bundle? |
| Zero Credits Earned | * + Community engagement/outreach is important. Connect with people in their communities to advocate for education; do not bring in someone you hire that looks like them but can't relate with them.   + Students do not have access to technology or technology resources, such as WiFi and printing. Can we provide students with a technology bundle?   + How can we catch struggling students earlier in the term?   + Supplemental Instruction (SI) may be able to support students so they do not feel like they are getting behind and then drop out. SI makes the resources available when needed.   + Do we need to offer after hours resources (food pantry, counseling, success coaches, etc.)?   + Students do not understand the demands or expectations of college. |
| Retention and Graduation Rates | * + Involve parents in the discussion of college early in K-12 (importance of college, impact education has on students and families, consequences of dropping out, etc.).   + The attendance policy should be revised to adapt to current learning/teaching environments, especially for online courses.   + Develop a community outreach program. |
| Table 2. Three themes and suggestions from 2020 Town Hall meeting | |

In September 2020, the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE) sent a survey to all employees to gather additional feedback and suggestions (see survey analysis in Appendix B). Employees were asked to rank the three topics from most important to least important. 45% of participants selected Retention and Graduation Rates as the most important topic, followed by Completion Rates (41%), and Zero Credits earned (14%). Employees also provided suggestions on how to implement their top-ranked topic on campus:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Topic Rankings | Implementation Suggestions |
| #1 Retention and Graduation Rates | * Increase student support services * Increase academic support services * Create Family/Community outreach programs |
| #2 Completion Rates | * Increase student support services * Increase academic support services * Provide additional professional development * Increase Student/faculty interaction * Implement online course consistency |
| #3 Zero Credits Earned | * Implement Supplemental Instruction in courses |
| Table 3. Employee Ranking of Topics and Employee Implementation Suggestions | |

The analysis of the results revealed that many of these suggestions aligned with the College’s recently awarded Title V grant. Dr. Wichman presented the findings of the QEP Topic Survey to the SACSCOC Steering Committee on October 16, 2020. At the October 2020 meeting, the suggestion was made to integrate the QEP with Title V to further explore the similar suggestions collected from employee survey findings. The meeting concluded with Dr. Wichman indicating that she would meet with Ms. Paula Unger, the Title V Project Director, to discuss how Title V might serve to support and enhance the QEP. Ms. Unger agreed the QEP and Title V had closely aligned goals and could mutually benefit one another.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Committee Member | Position |
| Laura Wichman, Chair | Director of Institutional Research |
| Annette Bigham | Program Director of Business |
| Madison Schick | Social Media & Communications Specialist |
| Samantha Dove | Assistant Professor of Medical Lab Technology |
| Laurice Jones | Assistant Professor of English |
| Kevin Lightfoot | Collections & Resource Management Librarian |
| Jovvanta Mason-Gray | Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Specialist |
| Kayla Molnar | Student Development Intern |
| Kelly Parker | Professor of Theatre |
| Corey Stone | Student Life Coordinator |
| Emily Stottlemyre | Professor of Child Studies and Education |
| Paula Unger | Professor of Sociology and Title V Project Director |
| Bryant Windham | Supplemental Instruction Specialist |
| Table 4. MCC’s QEP Steering Committee | |

In October 2020 the MCC QEP Chair was identified and the QEP Steering Committee was formed in November 2020. The committee, shown in Table 4, consisted of faculty and staff representatives from a variety of areas throughout the campus community. The Steering Committee met in November of 2020 with the SACSCOC liaison, Dr. Rhodes, to discuss the importance of a QEP to campus and outline QEP requirements per the SACSCOC standards, the topic selection process, the charge of the committee, and the timeline for committee work and plan completion.

## QEP Recommendations from On-Site Review Committee

In November 2021 MCC was visited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) on-site review committee for the Reaffirmation of Accreditation. Upon completion of the visit, the on-site review team made the recommendation that MCC demonstrate a broad-based support of the redesigned QEP, specifically the support of students and community/workforce.

### Student Support

As a result, OIRE surveyed all first time in college (FTIC) students in December 2021 to gather student feedback on the goals and objectives we are proposing in the proposed QEP edits. Of the 1,182 FTIC students surveyed, 62 responded to the survey for a 5.2% response rate.

When asked to select the level of importance in providing for each of the following at McLennan Community College, 90% rated peer-led academic support for first-time-in-college students as extremely important/very important, 89% rated standardizing the training and evaluation of tutors, Learning Framework mentors, and Supplemental Instruction Leaders as extremely important/very important, and 88% rated integrating and promoting peer-led academic support programs campus-wide as extremely important/very important. Ninety-seven percent believed bolstering peer social support for first-time-in-college students is extremely important/very important, 72% believed fostering relationships among students and mentors in Learning Framework sections to be extremely important/very important, and 86% believed integrating and promoting peer social support programs is extremely important/very important.

Participants were asked how likely they would voluntarily engage in listed activities, and results found the following percentage of respondents were extremely likely or somewhat likely to:

* Engage with a peer mentor within a Learning Framework class for assistance or guidance on assignments and class-related concerns: 75%
* Engage with a peer mentor outside of class for social events/activities: 71%
* Participate in tutoring outside of class in person: 69%
* Participate in tutoring outside of class online via Zoom: 63%

One respondent provided the following comment: “*I had a peer mentor in learning framework this year and I loved her! She was so kind and welcoming. She made me excited to go to class and to study groups. She was truly such a good friend to me during a hard semester. I was asked to be a student instructor for a biology class, and I’m so excited. I can’t wait to help other students succeed, and make learning more fun*!”

### Community/Workforce Support

In January 2022, OIRE surveyed 54 McLennan County Workforce Advisory Council members to gather feedback from local employers on the goals and objectives proposed in the Quality Enhancement Plan. Of those 54 surveyed, 17 responded for an overall response rate of 31.5%. When asked to select the level of value they saw in implementing each of the following at McLennan Community College, 100% found all three of the following to be extremely valuable/very valuable: peer-led academic support for first-time-in-college students, standardizing the training and evaluation of tutors, Learning Framework mentors and Supplemental Instruction Leaders, and integrating and promoting peer-led academic support programs campus-wide. Additionally, 100% found fostering relationships among students and mentors in Learning Framework sections to be extremely valuable/very valuable. Eighty-two percent believe bolstering peer social support for first time in college students to be extremely valuable/very valuable, and 76.5% found integrating and promoting peer social support programs to be extremely valuable/very valuable. We believe the results of these surveys, in conjunction with input and participation from faculty and staff campus wide, provide evidence of broad-based support for PASS.

# Literature Review

The major objective of the College’s QEP is *to build a framework in which students assist students through peer leadership and supplemental instructional teams to a) increase student perceptions of community and belonging on campus and b) promote first-year pass rates and persistence*. To accomplish this objective, this QEP has the following two goals:

* To provide FTIC students with peer-led academic support
* To bolster peer-to-peer social support for FTIC students

The following literature review examined extant literature and best practices related to these goals, including *peer mentorship* and *supplemental instruction*. This literature review revealed that both peer leadership and supplemental instruction influence learning, persistence, and academic success. This literature review, as part of a larger research process (e.g., conducting focus groups among MCC’s campus community, website content analysis, site referrals, pilot tests at the College and participating in professional development opportunities, such as relevant conferences and workshops), resulted in the identification of two primary strategies for promoting first-year student success outcomes as pursued by MCC in this QEP: to (a) provide students with well trained, peer-led academic support in developmental, Learning Framework, and gateway courses and (b) to foster peer-to-peer social relationships by embedding peer mentors in Learning Framework classes. Each strategy supports student learning and persistence, as shown in the literature review below.

## Peer Leadership

Peer leadership may be defined as select, experienced students serving as a resource for other less-experienced students to assist them in reaching their academic, personal, and professional goals (Newton & Ender, as cited in Skipper & Keup, 2017; see also Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Haber, 2011; Shook & Keup, 2012). What peer leadership looks like across college campuses varies widely (Collier, 2017; Shook & Keup, 2012; Skipper & Keup, 2017). For example, peer leaders may serve other students in small groups or one-on-one, or in curricular or co-curricular settings, such as residential life or new student onboarding (Haber, 2011; Latino & Unite, 2012; Shook & Keup, 2012; Skipper & Keup, 2017; Wooten, Hunt, LeDuc, & Poskus, 2012). To serve as a peer leader, students generally must apply, be selected, and be trained to serve students using particular knowledge, skills, and abilities as defined by an institutional department (Newton & Ender, as cited in Skipper & Keup, 2017). Peer leadership may also be referred to as peer mentoring or student coaching (Bettinger & Baker, 2011; Crisp & Cruz, 2009).

Peer leadership is regarded as a high-impact practice with the potential to increase student engagement and persistence (Bettinger & Baker, 2011; Collier, 2017; Shook & Keup, 2012; Esplin, Seabold, & Pinnegar, 2012; Keup, 2016). Extant literature recognized peer leadership as an important, influential factor in students’ undergraduate experiences, including their intellectual and interpersonal development (Astin, 1993; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010; Haber, 2011; Shook & Keup, 2012; Wooten et al., 2012; Young, Hoffman, & Frakes Reinhardt, 2019). Peer leadership has been shown to provide opportunities for students to “develop a strong sense of community, greater social and academic integration, and a rich network of resource and referral agents dedicated to their [current students’] success” (Shook & Keup, 2012, p. 7).

Peer leadership is recognized as a viable option to increase students’ learning, persistence, and academic success for community colleges, in particular. Especially relevant to the College’s QEP, one study indicated that the integration of peer leaders into first-year learning communities increased students’ awareness of college resources, co-curricular campus activities, degree planning, and career services (Hill & Rosolo, 2018; see also Latino & Unite, 2012). Additionally, one study showed increased development of academic and intrapersonal competencies for peer mentors, as well as greater outputs in course earnings and retention rates for underrepresented students-many of whom are served at community colleges (Good, Halpin, & Halpin, 2000). Advantages to peer leadership that make this student support strategy advantageous for community colleges also includes its affordability, appeal to students looking to invest in developing their community and leadership skills, and its effectiveness in communicating the resources available to students from a student’s perspective (Bettinger & Baker, 2011; Collier, 2017; Shook & Keup, 2012).

The literature focused largely on the benefits of peer leader programs (Bettinger & Baker, 2011; Collier, 2017; Colvin & Ashman, 2010; Good, Halpin, & Halpin, 2000; Haber, 2011; Keup, 2012; Shook & Keup, 2012; Skipper & Keup, 2017). The benefits of peer leadership for mentees vary. Peer leadership, according to the extant literature, can positively impact academic success, such as course completion and retention rates, in addition to impacting students’ sense of belonging and adjustment to college (Bettinger & Baker, 2011; Collier, 2017; Haber, 2011; Metz, Cuseo, & Thompson, 2013; Shook & Keup, 2012). Other benefits included the transference of social capital, or “college knowledge,” essential for students’ academic, personal, and professional success, such as information on how to navigate the campus, creating awareness of campus resources, and offering support during challenging seasons of the semester (Metz, Cuseo, & Thompson, 2013; Shook & Keup, 2012).

The benefits of peer leadership for mentors also vary. Past literature revealed serving as a peer leader can have both positive and negative effects on academic performance (e.g., course earnings, GPA), intra- and interpersonal development, and oral and written communication competencies (Shook & Keup, 2012; Skipper & Keup, 2017). Other benefits of serving as a peer leader include increased knowledge of course content, a heightened sense of belonging to the college campus, and opportunities to develop career-related competencies important professional success, such as critical thinking or civic engagement (Shook & Keup, 2012; Skipper & Keup, 2017).

The integration of peer leaders within first-semester courses (e.g., Learning Framework, developmental, and gateway courses)--as the College’s QEP suggests--could serve as a source of social and academic connection for students, leading to increases in learning, sense of belonging, persistence, and academic success (Astin, 1984; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Latino & Unite, 2012; Milem & Berger, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012; Watkins, 2020).

## Supplemental Instruction

Although variances exist regarding the definition and operation of supplemental instruction (SI), SI generally consists of a partnership between faculty and peer leaders who have demonstrated success in a course or subject to facilitate structured group study sessions to support students’ learning in a particular course (Dawson, van der Meer, Skalicky, & Cowley, 2014). As part of this partnership, SI leaders meet regularly with their faculty partner to perform a variety of functions, including constructing a session plan, attending classes, and offering multiple iterations of a session each week to accommodate students’ schedules. Although often referred to as SI, synonyms, such as peer mentorship, peer-assisted learning, or peer leadership may also be used to describe SI (Dawson et al., 2014; Latino & Unite, 2012).

SI partnerships are often created for what are considered “high-risk courses,” including those courses with characteristics such as sizable reading assignments, comprehensive examinations, no attendance requirement, or high student-to-teacher ratios (Arendale as cited in Dawson et al., 2014). Examples of high-risk courses include first-year courses and, particularly those subjects related to science, technology, engineering, and math (Dawson et al., 2014; Latino & Unite, 2012). However, SI partnerships are not reserved only for these types of courses or disciplines (Dawson et al., 2014).

SI is recognized as a viable option to increase students’ learning, persistence, and academic success for community colleges, in particular. Several studies focused on the community college as a point of reference for data collection and analysis. Extant literature revealed SI participation increased course earnings and course assignment completion rates (Goomas, 2014). Demographics (e.g., gender, ethnicity) of students enrolled at community colleges also impacted the influence of SI on academic success (Rabitoy, Hoffman, & Person, 2015). Of particular importance to the College’s QEP, one study indicated embedded tutoring, a form of SI, yielded increased retention rates, higher GPA earnings, and greater academic skill development for students enrolled in gateway courses (e.g., English, math) who participated in SI sessions (Channing & Okada, 2020).

Extant literature focused mainly on the effectiveness of SI based on numerous variables, such as student demographics and motivation, course earning and completion rates, and graduation and retention rates (Dawson et al., 2014). Literature has supported the effectiveness of SI in increasing final course grades, course completion rates, and retention and graduation rates, particularly for underrepresented minority students (Buchanan, Valentine, & Frizell, 2019; Dawson et al., 2014; Edlin & Guy, 2019; Skoglund, Wall, & Kiene, 2018; Yue, Rico, Vang, & Giuffrida, 2018). However, the validity of these claims remains debatable, as other factors, such as self-selection, academic ability, and/or context, could influence whether it is SI interventions or it is the student and/or their context that increase learning, persistence, and academic success (Dawson et al., 2014).

The academic and social benefits of SI for student-learners vary. SI is regarded as a high-impact practice with the potential to enhance study productivity, facilitate greater curricular involvement, and improve retention and persistence among students (Astin, 1975, 1999; Latino & Unite, 2012; Johnson, 2009; Johnston et al., 1984). A review of the literature revealed the claims regarding the benefits of SI on academic skills development, such as time management or developing study strategies, are not well-supported in research (Dawson et al., 2014; see also Latino & Unite, 2012). However, research does support the claim that SI can enhance students’ formation of friendships (Dawson et al., 2014).

The benefits of SI participation for SI leaders remain underexplored in the literature. However, some documented benefits of SI participation for SI leaders included increased knowledge of course concepts and professional skills (Latino & Unite, 2012; Lozada & Johnson, 2019; Riser, da Silva, & Clarke, 2021; Skipper & Keup, 2017). Other benefits included increased opportunities for making interpersonal connections and increased levels of institutional engagement and a sense of belonging to the campus community (Lozada & Johnson, 2019). Extant literature revealed these benefits are particular to instructional/SI-type peer leadership roles (Skipper & Keup, 2017). These studies indicated that SI participation for SI leaders themselves might enhance these students’ learning, persistence, and academic success, as well as social and professional skills.

The following is a brief review of recent studies of SI as it aligns with the College’s QEP mission and goals.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Increase learning, persistence, and academic success* | |
| James, A., & Moore, L. (2018). Understanding the supplemental leader. *The Learning Assistance Review*, *23*(1).   * SI leaders’ leadership and learning styles did not affect SI participation attendance | **Skoglund, K., Wall, T. J., & Kiene, D. (2018).** Impact of supplemental instruction participation on college freshman retention. *The Learning Assistance Review*, *23*(1). 115+.   * High SI participation for low-GPA students yielded increased semester-to-semester retention rates |
| Yue, H., Rico, R. S., Vang, M. K., & Guiffrida, T. S. (2018). Supplemental instruction: Helping disadvantaged students reduce performance gap. *Journal of Developmental Education*, *41*(2), 18-25.   * SI participation amount and student demographics reduces academic performance gap among disadvantaged student populations | **Buchanan, E. M., Valentine, K. D., & Frizell, M. L. (2019).** Supplemental instruction: Understanding academic assistance in underrepresented groups. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, *87*(2), 288-298.   * SI participation yielded increased course earnings and graduation rates |
| Edlin, M., & Guy, G. M. (2019). Mandatory and scheduled supplemental instruction in remedial algebra. *Journal of Developmental Education*, *43*(1), 2-10.   * Mandatory SI participation yielded increased understanding of course content, course completion, and semester-to-semester retention rates | **Lozada, N., & Johnson, A. T. (2019).** Perspective transformation in the supplemental instruction leader. *Journal of Transformative Education*, *17*(2), 112-132.   * SI participation for SI leaders yielded opportunities to connect with others, increased levels of institutional engagement and sense of belonging, increased knowledge of course content, and increased social and professional skills |
| Paabo, M. V., Brijmohan, A., Klubi, T., Evans-Tokaryk, T., & Childs, R. A. (2019). Participation in peer-led supplemental instruction groups, academic performance, and time to graduation. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, & Practice*.   * SI participation amount yielded higher course earning rates, but did not impact degree completion time | **Channing, J., & Okada, N. C. (2020).** Supplemental instruction and embedded tutoring program assessment: Problems and opportunities. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *44*(4), 241-247.   * Embedded tutoring, a form of SI, yielded increased retention rates, GPA, and academic skill development in gateway courses (e.g., English and math) |
| Table 5. Recent Studies Pertaining to SI | |

## Sense of Belonging

Sense of belonging refers to students’ perceived “social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, and the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the campus community or others on campus such as faculty, staff, and peers” (Strayhorn, 2012). Research regards peer leadership as a high-impact practice with the potential to increase student engagement (Bettinger & Baker, 2011; Shook & Keup, 2012; Esplin, Seabold, & Pinnegar, 2012; Keup, 2016). Accordingly, Peer Leaders (PLs) serve as a positive, accessible presence from whom students may seek assistance and guidance (Shook & Keup, 2012).

Research demonstrates PLs “develop a stronger sense of community, greater social and academic integration, and a rich network of resource and referral agents dedicated to their [current students’] success” (Shook & Keup, 2012, p. 7). Thus, with PLs serving as a source of social and academic connections for students, students may establish healthy relationships with their peers and professors (Goldrick-Rab, 2010) that lead to stronger feelings of belonging—an element of student life proven to positively affect retention and completion (Astin, 1984; Milem & Berger, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012; Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

## Summary

In sum, the research included in this literature review demonstrates the integration of peer leaders and supplemental instruction throughout the first-year experience is a significant factor in increasing learning, sense of belonging, persistence, and academic success of students, particularly for underrepresented students. The significance of these findings supports the primary objective of the College’s QEP, which includes building a framework in which students assist students through peer leadership and supplemental instructional teams to promote first-year student sense of belonging, learning, and persistence. The College’s QEP intends to incorporate peer leaders and supplemental instruction teams within first-semester courses (e.g., Learning Framework, developmental, and gateway courses) as united under the Peer Leadership Initiative (PLI) to improve learning, persistence, and academic success.

# Action Plan

The College’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) will enhance the first-year experience and improve student success by implementing and strengthening student support structures. This will include a focus on building a framework in which students help students through peer mentoring and supplemental instruction teams to promote students’ sense of belonging, persistence, and graduation rates.

## Actions to be Implemented

The QEP will focus on increasing academic support services and providing peer-to-peer social supports for FTIC students to accomplish the overall goal of increasing student perceptions of belonging, completion rates, and graduation rates. Two main goals have been identified: 1) Provide FTIC students with peer-led academic support; and 2) Bolster peer social support for FTIC students. For the purpose of this QEP, persistence will be defined as “the rate at which students persist in higher education, often as measured by the percentage of students who continue in higher education from one year to the succeeding year” (THECB, 2017, p. 48) and retention will be defined as “…the rate at which students are retained or graduate… in higher education, as often measured by the percentage of students who continue in higher education from one year to the succeeding year. The cohort generally consists of students who started in a fall term or in the previous summer term and who continued in the fall term.” (THECB, 2017, p. 53).

## Goal 1: Provide FTIC students with peer-led academic support

To accomplish Goal 1, it will be important to coordinate with the existing services currently in place at MCC. This can include, but is not limited to, Student Life, Student Engagement, Supplemental Instruction, and Academic Support and Tutoring. It will also be important to coordinate with the Vice President of Instruction & Student Engagement and the faculty at MCC, who have at least weekly contact with students.

Goal 1 will be broken down into two primary objectives: (1a) to standardize the training and evaluation of tutors, mentors, and supplemental instruction leaders, and (1b) to integrate and promote peer-led academic support programs campus-wide. The respective job descriptions of tutors, mentors, and supplemental instruction leaders are available in Appendix D. Figure 5 illustrates the objectives which will support goal 1 of the QEP.

Provide FTIC students with peer-led academic support

Figure 5. Illustration of Goal 1 and Supporting Objectives

### 1a. Standardize training and evaluation of tutors, mentors, and SILs

All Peer Leadership programs will follow a consistent training curriculum that provides common expectations, compliance training, and leadership development theory while allowing enough flexibility for the nuances of each program. In addition to the shared curriculum, all Peer Leaders will meet as a large group three times per semester. The first meeting will focus on compliance training related to Title IX, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Academic Integrity, Accommodations, and Campus Safety. The mid-year training will focus on leadership development and provide a scope for each program to work with its respective leaders on growing and developing their own leadership styles and skills. The final meeting will provide an opportunity for peer leaders to reflect on what they tried, learned, and developed over the course of the semester, and will also provide an opportunity for data collection and debriefing.

In conjunction with the three-part large group trainings, each program will follow the joint curriculum in its respective small group and one-on-one meetings with an eye toward developing its leaders and bolstering its own quality of service. Peer Leaders will be evaluated through a combination of student feedback surveys and supervisor observations. Each program will handle their evaluations separately but will collaborate on appropriate measures and tools to ensure quality of service is standardized though the type of service is diversified.

### 1b. Integrate and promote peer-led academic support programs campus-wide.

**Supplemental Instruction**

The primary academic support structure for the QEP will be Supplemental Instruction (SI). SI is a strategy whereby a peer or near-peer, known as an SI Leader, who has demonstrated success in a course or subject is partnered with a faculty member to facilitate structured group study sessions targeted to a particular instructor. SI Leaders attend classes, meet regularly with their faculty partner to construct a session plan, and offer multiple iterations of a session each week to accommodate student schedules. SI Leaders report to the SI Specialist. Additionally, the SI Leaders attend training each semester, undergo bi-weekly observations and meetings, and are evaluated by the SI Specialist. Figure 5 illustrates the two objectives which will support goal 1 of the QEP.

As a part of the College’s focus on first-time-in-college student success, developmental education and gateway courses have been identified to include SI as national research has shown improvement in the successful completion of these high enrollment, high failure, and high withdrawal-rate courses (Dawson et. al 2014).

To facilitate a smooth and successful integration across a variety of subjects, the College will implement a rolling introduction across all developmental education and gateway courses as laid out in Table 6:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2025-26 |
| * Integrated Reading and Writing (INRW) * English Composition I (ENGL 1301) * Elementary Algebra (MATH 0307) * Foundations of Math Reasoning (MATH 0308) * Intermediate Algebra (MATH 0311) * College Algebra (MATH 1314) * Math for Business and Social Sciences (MATH 1324) * Contemporary Mathematics (MATH 1332) * Elementary Statistical Methods (MATH 1342) |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Introduction of Sociology (SOCI 1301) * Introduction to Speech Communication (SPCH 1311) * Public Speaking (SPCH 1315) * Interpersonal Communication (SPCH 1318) * United States History (HIST 1301) |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Anatomy and Physiology I (BIOL 2401) * General Psychology (PSYC 2301) * Art Appreciation (ARTS 1301) * Music Appreciation (MUSI 1306) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Table 6. Proposed SI Implementation Schedule | | | | | |

In the year preceding SI’s introduction to a subject, faculty working groups will be assembled and led by the Supplemental Instruction Specialist in collaboration with division directors and the Dean of Arts and Sciences. The goals of these working groups are:

* Improving faculty support by including them in the conversation
* Leveraging faculty insight to customize SI based on course structure and need
* Creating professional development sessions specific to each subject’s faculty
* Forming a core team of faculty experts to assist their colleagues in integrating SI

**Tutoring**

In addition to SI, further academic support for students will be provided through tutoring. While SI leaders work with individual classes/faculty, tutors provide just-in-time help for students in all classes for a variety of disciplines across campus. With the implementation of this QEP, current tutoring services will be improved as tutors will receive additional training and be subject to a new, standardized evaluation process. Additionally, the incorporation of tutoring into the campus-wide Peer Leadership Initiative provides an additional opportunity to foster social relationships among all peer leaders, and through the standardization of training, tutors will learn strategies for connecting with the students they serve on a more personal level.

In summary, tutoring and SI will participate in the overarching Peer Leadership Initiative (PLI) by:

* Participating in training with other PLI programs.
* Training and focusing on creating social connections within a shared learning environment.
* Collaborating with peer leaders to facilitate student participation across college programming .
* SI includes targeted and peer-facilitated group study sessions within specific course sections to promote social connection within academic work.
* Tutoring will host skill-based workshops to promote student success.

|  |
| --- |
| Supporting Research |
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| Table 7. Supporting Research for Goal 1 |

## Goal 2. Bolster peer social support for FTIC students.

Bolster peer social support for FTIC students

Figure 6. Illustration of Goal 2 and Supporting Objectives

## 

### 2a. Integrate and promote peer social support programs

A key component of MCC’s core curriculum is the Learning Frameworks (LF) course, which is required of all matriculating students in either a one-semester credit hour or three-semester credit hour format. Since all FTIC students must take this course, it plays a central role in their experience at MCC and can positively impact student persistence rates and course completion rates. Since the implementation of our previous QEP in 2011 (The Learning Environment Adaptability Project, or LEAP), these courses have been particularly focused on developing the emotional intelligence of students, seeking to instill the grit and resilience students need to succeed at the college level. With the implementation of PASS, we will seek to increase the effectiveness of LF classes by embedding peer mentors into the course. Peer mentors are returning students with a track record of success who serve as a source of social support for their classmates and take an active role in building a shared sense of community and belonging among all members of the class.

In addition to providing social support via peer mentors in the LF classes, we will also seek to provide social support in gateway courses through SI study group gatherings. Johnson et. al (1984) established that students who study in groups learn two-and-a-half times more productively than those who study alone, if the group stays on task. With that in mind, SI connects a faculty member with a student who has successfully completed the instructor’s course to lead structured study groups for traditionally high-attrition, low-completion courses at the beginning of programs of study. In this way, the SI leader can help by not only reinforcing the academic content to be learned, but also by encouraging a sense of community among classmates. Furthermore, SI provides additional outlets for positive interdependence and student involvement in their education which have been shown to improve retention and persistence by Johnson (2009) and Astin (1975, 1999), respectively. This latter point is reinforced by MCC pilot data which shows an average drop in withdrawal status of 16 percentage points for semesters with SI compared to data from the same instructors in semesters without SI.

Because these programs rely heavily on both faculty and student participation, it is important that they be actively promoted across campus and become integrated into daily activities. To achieve this objective, we will depend on engagement from a wide range of faculty and staff. The SI Specialist will partner with Professional Development and various Division Chairs to promote SI in developmental and gateway courses. The Student Life Specialist will coordinate with the Learning Framework Coordinator and all faculty who teach Learning Framework classes to promote the integration of peer mentors into LF classes. Additionally, the Student Life Coordinator and Student Life Specialist will promote PASS to all incoming FTIC students attending orientation. All members of the QEP Advisory Council will serve as advocates to promote PASS among students, staff, and faculty, and the QEP Director will coordinate with Marketing and Communications and Student Life to promote PASS on campus, online, and within the community.

### 2b. Foster relationships among students and peer mentors in LF classes

The social bonding that takes place within the classroom and in SI study sessions is especially important on commuter campuses, where the interactions that can take place in residence halls are notably absent (Tinto, Leaving College, pp. 164-165). There are numerous means by which to increase social cohesion for students, and the College continues to pursue all reasonable means to do so on campus. However, the importance of gateway courses in the first-year experience and the chance to create social bonds characterized by academic commitments are uniquely valuable means by which to impact course completion rates and success rates. Therefore, peer mentors will be specially trained to engage with their classmates in ways that foster a sense of belonging and community.

The goal of peer mentors is to create and foster relationships with FTIC students during and outside of courses. In class, peer mentors do not facilitate the class but instead participate in discussions to encourage collaboration and to share their experiences pertaining to the course content. Relationships built during class discussions are also intended to help motivate students to become more involved with extracurricular activities and organizations. Outside of the class, peer mentors hold two study sessions per week, have one-on-ones with the students throughout the semester, invite the students to campus activities hosted by organizations or departments to get them exposed to what is available on campus, and host outside events to create a sense of belonging and community within the group. All outside activities vary by interest and time to accommodate MCC’s diverse student population and helps the mentees see another side of their mentor instead of just in an academic setting. Additionally, peer mentors will support students by listening to them, letting the mentee guide the conversation to fit their needs at the moment, and referring them to other campus resources when necessary.

**Summary**

The Learning Framework courses are a logical place to integrate peer leaders to provide social support for FTIC students. This will be facilitated by the Learning Framework Coordinator and the Student Life Coordinator in partnership with the Supplemental Instruction Specialist and Student Life Specialist. It will also be important to coordinate with the faculty of the Learning Framework courses and the peer leaders’ course schedules.

|  |
| --- |
| Supporting Research |
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| Shook, J. L., & Keup, J. R. (2012). The benefits of peer leader programs: An overview from the literature. New Directions for Higher Education, 2012(157), 5-16. |
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| Table 8. Supporting Research for Goal 2 |

# Timeline for Implementation of QEP

In addition to the main activities directed at achieving greater student success, retention, and sense of belonging through the integration of academic and social support systems, the timeline includes a schedule for the training of necessary personnel, internal planning stages, ongoing professional development, formative assessment, modifications to the plan, and summative assessment.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Academic Year | SACSCOC Actions | Actions for Goal 1.  Provide students with peer-led academic support | Actions for Goal 2.  Bolster peer social support for FTIC students |
| 2021 – 22 | * Submit the QEP (September 2021) * Complete the on-site review of the QEP (November 2021) * Make revisions to proposed Quality Enhancement Plan (Spring 2022) * Receive approval of the QEP (Summer 2022) | * Standardize the training of tutors, mentors & Supplemental Instruction Leaders. * Develop peer leadership curriculum | * Standardize the training of tutors, mentors & Supplemental Instruction Leaders. * Develop peer leadership curriculum * Expand Peer Leadership Initiative pilot to include ten sections of Learning Framework Courses across the College |
| 2022 - 23 |  | * Implement & evaluate the training of tutors, mentors & Supplemental Instruction Leaders * Implement & evaluate the developed peer leadership curriculum * Scale piloted Learning Frameworks cohorts across the college | * Implement the mentors placed into Learning Framework courses * Evaluate students’ perception of mentors in LF classes & Supplemental Instruction Leaders in gateway and developmental classes |
| 2023 - 24 |  | * Make necessary adjustments to training based on evaluation results & reevaluate * Make necessary adjustments to peer leadership curriculum based on evaluation results & reevaluate * Expand Peer Leadership Initiative across all sections of Learning Frameworks, begin exploration of expansion beyond this course into gateway courses | * Expand mentors & Supplemental Instruction Leaders to include other courses * Make necessary adjustments to training based on evaluation results & reevaluate |
| 2024 - 25 |  | * Expand Peer Leadership Initiative into gateway courses | * Evaluate Effectiveness of SI in all courses with SI implemented |
| 2025-26 | * Submit 5th Year Review | * Assess and institutionalize successful strategies | * Assess and institutionalize successful strategies |
| Table 9. Timeline for QEP Implementation | | | |

# Organizational Structure

Dr. Johnette McKown, President of MCC, has been involved throughout the QEP planning process and is ultimately responsible for the successful implementation of project activities. While the reporting structures described below will keep Dr. McKown well informed of the status of the project, she will delegate the oversight of the QEP Director to the Vice President of Instruction and Student Engagement. The Vice President of Instruction and Student Engagement will be responsible for the overall supervision of the QEP Project and will be involved in order to influence the quality of the project and oversee its impact on strengthening the institution. Day-to-day management of the project will be the responsibility of the QEP Director, Ms. Amber Bracken. Ms. Bracken will report directly to the Vice President of Instruction and Student Engagement, will have direct access to him, and will have guided authority to administer the project according to the outlined plan. The QEP Director will have a working relationship with lead project staff and will have the primary responsibility for accomplishing the objectives of the activity and verifying accomplishments. The preceding organizational chart indicates lines of authority of the QEP Director to key institutional decision-makers and personnel.

QEP Advisory Council

President

Vice President of Instruction and Student Engagement

Dean of Arts and Sciences

Learning Frameworks Coordinator

QEP Director

Director of Student Engagement

Student Life Coordinator

Peer Leaders

Director of Center for Teaching and Learning

Supplemental Instruction Specialist

Project Director, Title V

Figure 7. Organizational Chart

The QEP Director will receive direction from the QEP Advisory Council and work collaboratively with the Title V Project Director to ensure plan success. The QEP office will provide support to four positions already on campus (Director of Title V, Learning Frameworks Coordinator, Student Life Coordinator, and Supplemental Instruction Specialist). The job duties of the QEP Director are provided in Appendix D. Details of the role this position will play are also included in the “Actions to Be Implemented” section described earlier. In-house support and collaboration will be derived from the following campus areas: Student Life, Information Systems and Services, Center for Teaching and Learning, Academic Success and Tutoring, and the eight divisional chairs and their faculty. The Office of Institutional Research will collaborate with the QEP Director in collecting and analyzing assessment data.

|  |
| --- |
| QEP Advisory Council |
| QEP Director |
| Faculty Representatives (4), Arts & Sciences |
| Faculty Representatives (4), Workforce Education and Health Professions |
| Representative, Office of Institutional Research |
| Representative, Center for Teaching and Learning |
| Representative, Student Life |
| Representative, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion |
| Representative, Academic Support and Tutoring |
| Representative, Information Systems and Services |
| Project Director, Title V |
| Student Representatives (4) |
| Table 10. QEP Advisory Council |

The QEP Advisory Council will be composed of nineteen members and will be chaired by the QEP Director. The charge of the QEP Advisory Council will be to 1) advise the QEP Director on general issues; 2) assist in the review of annual summative data; 3) encourage faculty support and participation; and 4) provide feedback, support, and recommendations on the QEP implementation process. Additionally, the QEP Advisory Council will serve as a clearinghouse for ideas from the campus and community; be a sounding board and advisors to the QEP Director and on QEP issues; serve as QEP advocates and provide input on how to respond to formative assessment data.

Many members of the MCC community have agreed to collaborate on the QEP to increase student sense of belonging, course completion, and learning. Most of these areas have already made significant contributions to the QEP topic selection and plan development.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| QEP Collaborators | Role |
| Arts & Sciences, Health Professions, and Workforce Faculty | Identify best practices and strategies for implementation of the QEP and encouragement of campus-wide faculty participation |
| Center for Teaching and Learning | Collaborate with QEP programmatic features with existing academic support services to ensure maximum impact and provide professional development courses as needed |
| Information Systems and Services | Provide technical and logistical support for educational software and hardware |
| Institutional Research | Collecting and analyzing data |
| Student Life | Collaborate with QEP programmatic features with existing student support services to ensure maximum impact |
| Diversity, Equity & Inclusion | Collaborate with QEP programmatic features to ensure all students are represented and have access to services. |
| Title V Project Director | Provide project support to ensure the QEP and Title V work collaboratively and harmoniously on campus |
| Table 11. QEP Collaborators and Roles | |

# Budget and Institutional Capacity

McLennan Community College is committed to supporting the goals and objectives of the QEP, based upon Title V priorities. The expenses detailed in the following tables are designed to support the personnel, equipment, and supplies associated with the QEP.

## Funding Projection for Fiscal Years 2021-2025

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Personnel | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2025-26 |
| QEP Director | Course Release valued at $3,270 per three hours of release per semester | Course Release valued at $3,335 per three hours of release per semester | Course Release valued at $3,402 per three hours of release per semester | Course Release valued at $3,470 per three hours of release per semester | Course Release valued at $3,540 per three hours of release per semester |
| Gateway Supplemental Instruction Leaders | $85,800 + $2,033 benefits = $87,833 | $134,640 + $3,142 benefits = $137,782 | $175,560 + $4,097 benefits = $179,657 | $175,560 + $4,097 benefits = $179,657 | $175,560 + $4,097 benefits = $179,657 |
| Developmental Education Supplemental Instruction Leaders | $42,240 (100%) + $986 benefits = $43,226 | $42,240 (100%) + $986 benefits = $43,226 | $42,240 (100%) + $986 benefits = $43,226 | $31,680 (75%) + $986 benefits = $32,666 | $31,680 (75%) + $986 benefits = $32,666 |
| Peer Leaders | $40,500 (100%) + $945 benefits = $41,445 | $40,500 (100%) + $945 benefits = $41,445 | $20,250 (100%) + $945 benefits = $21,195 | $10,125 (75%) + $709 benefits = $10,834 | $10,125 (75%) + $709 benefits = $10,834 |
| Operating Expenses for QEP Director (travel, conferences, other supplies, postage, duplicating, etc.) | $5,000 | $5,000 | $5,000 | $5,000 | $5,000 |
| Grant Total | **$180,774** | **$230,788** | **$252,480** | **$231,627** | **$231,697** |
| Table 12. Budget Projections | | | | | |

## Sources of Revenue

MCC received the Title V grant in fall 2020, which will provide the majority of the funding to support the costs associated with the QEP. Associated personnel budget costs are based upon MCC salary schedules, and the College will assume a portion of salary costs over the term of the QEP project. Some positions will be reviewed and evaluated at the end of the project to determine their continuing need, and some will be fully integrated into the college budget at the end of the Title V funding period. The Gateway Supplemental Instruction Leader positions will be evaluated at the end of the fiscal year 2025, and subject area leaders making the most impact will be college funded. Developmental Education Supplemental Instruction Leader positions will be 25% college funded by the fiscal year 2025 and 100% college funded after that. Peer Leader positions will be 25% college funded by the fiscal year 2025, and 100% college funded after that.  Equipment and supplies related to the success of the QEP project will be purchased in compliance with MCC procurement policies and procedures, and travel costs were determined based upon MCC travel policies and procedures.

## Available Infrastructure

MCC has an extensive array of existing institutional resources that address student engagement and academic support regarding QEP initiatives. Beginning in 2021, by utilizing Title V funding, the College will renovate and restructure the Learning Commons on the third floor of the Learning Technology Center. This restructuring will combine student academic resources under one roof with new study spaces and furniture. Students will have easy access to the updated library, computer, and internet services. In addition, a variety of study and workrooms will be established, including one equipped with green screen technology and applications, alongside tutoring and printing centers. Centralizing these academic support structures in one accessible location supports the student learning and persistence QEP initiative.

Furthermore, in 2022, MCC will add a student life center to the Student Services Center by transforming a room into a hub for student engagement and activity. This newly created student life center will house student organization meeting rooms, a computer lab, a creative workspace, and a lounge including a microwave and vending machines. This location will build student connections and support QEP peer mentoring leadership initiatives while cultivating student development and inclusiveness in a relaxed yet creative environment.

## Human Resources

The success of the QEP will depend heavily on the MCC faculty and staff who work directly with the students inside and outside of the classroom. The College has a high percentage of dedicated full-time faculty and staff who are committed to providing a quality learning experience for MCC students. The number of full-time (207) and part-time (176) faculty and full-time (353) and part-time staff (93) employed by MCC as of the Fall 2020 semester has allowed the College to meet and support its mission and core values.

In addition to staff, the QEP will rely on students to serve as Supplemental Instruction Leaders, tutors, and Peer Mentors. To recruit students into these positions MCC not only provides job postings, but also encourages faculty and current students in leadership positions to make recommendations to students/peers to become a Supplemental Instruction Leader, tutor, or Peer Mentor. Additionally, an introduction to the Peer Leadership Initiative will be presented to all incoming FTIC students during both face-to-face and online orientation sessions, to be followed by e-mail, social media, and web-based advertisements later in the semester encouraging interested students to apply to be peer leaders. These forms of outreach to students will require collaboration among the Student Life Coordinator, the QEP Director, and the Marketing and Communication team. The College has implemented an application process for all students who would like to serve in these capacities. Once hired, students receive in-depth training and will be evaluated on a semester basis by the faculty they support, the students they assist, and the Supplemental Instruction Specialist. The assessment process outlined in the next section will provide additional details on Supplemental Instruction Leaders, tutors, and Peer Mentors being evaluated by the faculty they support and the students they served.

# Assessment

Within the QEP, the College has established objectives, performance indicators, a performance timeline, and assessment measures. The QEP Director and the Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness (OIRE) will track the outlined data in Table 13 to ensure MCC is meeting the yearly set objectives of the QEP. Each of the objectives outlined below will have a formative report given on a semester and/or yearly basis, depending on the objective being reported. At the end of each year, OIRE will create an annual summative evaluation report that will present the outlined objective data in both a graphical and narrative report. The report will be presented to the QEP Director for review to determine what modifications, if any, should be made to the project to ensure objectives are met or remain on target. If suggestions for improvements are found, the QEP Director will work with the staff responsible for the oversight of the areas identified to determine if the suggestions can or should be implemented.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Performance Indicator** | **Target** | **Timeline** | **Outcomes** | **Strategy** |
| First Year Course Completion Rate of FTIC Students | Increase 10% | 2019-2026 | • Baseline: 75%  • Year 1: 78%  • Year 2: 80%  • Year 3: 82%  • Year 4: 84%  • Year 5: 85% | Goal 1 & Goal 2 |
| FTIC First Year Retention Rates | Increase 15% | 2019-2026 | • Baseline: 55%  • Year 1: 57%  • Year 2: 59%  • Year 3: 62%  • Year 4: 65%  • Year 5: 70% | Goal 1 & Goal 2 |
| Evaluate training of tutors, LF mentors and SILs | Ensure effectiveness and relevancy covered in training | 2022-2026 | Identify areas of improvement to modify and incorporate into future trainings for tutors, LF mentors and SILs. | Goal 1 & Goal 2 |
| Assess students who have access to academic support from tutors, LF mentors and SILs | Students will report perceiving peer-led academic support to be “helpful” or “extremely helpful” | 2022-2026 | Identify areas of improvement to modify and incorporate into future trainings for tutors, LF mentors and SILs to ensure students are having positive experiences with peer led academic support. | Goal 1 |
| Assess faculty who allow the integration of tutors, LF mentors and SILs into their course(s) | Faculty will report perceiving peer-led academic support to be “helpful” or “extremely helpful” in the success of their students | 2022-2026 | Participating faculty will help to identify specific ways in which peer leaders provided students with social support in their class and where improvements can be made. | Goal 1 |
| Assess students who have access to peer led social support | Sense of belonging will increase from start of course to end of course by at least 25% | 2022-2026 | Students will have an increased sense of belonging on campus at the end of the semester following their interactions with peer led social support. | Goal 2 |
| Assess faculty who allow the integration of tutors, LF mentors and SILs into their course(s) | Participating faculty will perceive the effectiveness of peer-led social support in their classes as “effective” or “highly effective” | 2022-2026 | Participating faculty will help to identify specific ways in which peer leaders provided students with social support in their class and where improvements can be made. | Goal 2 |
| Table 13. QEP Assessment Plan | | | | |

For a detailed review of the assessment, how data will be collected and analyzed, or of the timeline, see table 14 below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Goal 1: Provide FTIC students with peer-led academic support   * *Objective 1.a. Standardize training and evaluation of tutors, LF mentors, and SILs.* * *Objective 1.b. Integrate and promote peer-led academic support programs campus-wide.* | | |
| **Assessment** | **Data Analysis** | **Timeline** |
| Training of tutors, LF mentors and SILs will be evaluated for effectiveness and relevancy of content covered in training. | OIRE will survey all tutors, LF mentors and SILs who attended training to determine if the trainings are effective in meeting the needs to properly engage and support students in their roles. The survey will have quantitative questions which will allow tutors, LF mentors and SILs to rate various aspects of training, and will also have a qualitative area for them to provide text feedback for continued improvements and supports to the training. | Within one week of training, all in attendance will be surveyed to gather their feedback. Within two weeks of the survey closing, OIRE will provide the QEP Director and the SI Specialist a detailed report of the feedback from survey respondents. |
| Students who have access to academic support from tutors, LF mentors and SILs will assess their perception of the effectiveness and support of peer led academic support received in relation to their course success. | OIRE will survey all students who were enrolled in sections with peer led academic support. The survey will allow students to give both qualitative and quantitative responses to determine the perception of how they believe peer led academic support affected their course outcomes. | Within two weeks of the survey closing, OIRE will provide the QEP Director and peer academic support supervisor a detailed report of the feedback from survey respondents. |
| Faculty who allow the integration of tutors, LF mentors and SILs into their course(s) will assess their perceived effectiveness of the peer led academic support in their course. | OIRE will survey all faculty who allowed the integration to receive feedback on what they perceived to have gone well with the integration and what could be improved upon to better support the students in their course. | During the last two weeks of the semester, faculty will receive the survey from OIRE.  Within two weeks of the survey closing, OIRE will provide the QEP Director and peer academic support supervisor a detailed report of the feedback from survey respondents. |
| Goal 2: Bolster peer social support for FTIC students   * *Objective 2.a. Integrate and promote peer social support programs.* * *Objective 2.b. Foster relationships among students and mentors in LF sections.* | | |
| **Assessment** | **Data Analysis** | **Timeline** |
| Students who have access to social support from LF mentors and SILs will assess their perception of belonging on campus at the start of the course. Then at the end of the course, they will assess their perception of the effectiveness and support of peer led social support received in relation to their sense of belonging on campus. | OIRE will survey students who were enrolled in sections with peer led social support. The survey will allow students to give both qualitative and quantitative responses to determine the perception of how they believe peer led social support affected their course outcomes and their sense of belonging on campus. | In the first two weeks of class, students will take an initial survey to determine their perceived level of belonging on campus. In the last two weeks of class, students will take the same survey again to determine any changes that occurred.  Within two weeks of the survey closing, OIRE will provide the QEP Director and peer academic support supervisor a detailed report of the feedback from survey respondents. |
| Faculty who allow the integration of tutors, LF mentors and SILs into their course(s) will assess their perceived effectiveness of the peer led social support in their course. | OIRE will survey faculty who integrated peer led social support into their sections. The survey will allow faculty to give both qualitative and quantitative responses to determine the perception of effectiveness of the social support in their course and its relation to student outcomes and belongingness on campus. | During the last two weeks of the semester, faculty will receive the survey from OIRE.  Within two weeks of the survey closing, OIRE will provide the QEP Director and peer academic support supervisor a detailed report of the feedback from survey respondents. |
| Table 14. QEP Detailed Assessment Plan | | |

The outlined assessment plan will utilize a combination of measurement instruments and outcome variables to determine the effectiveness of QEP objectives and the degree to which the plan moved the College toward its overall goal of improving student perceptions of belonging, course completion, and learning via improved adaptability to MCC’s academically challenging and dynamic learning environment. The assessment plan will be monitored by the QEP Director and the QEP Advisory Council. The College’s Office of Institutional Research will also play a key role in the implementation of the QEP assessment plan by gathering and analyzing the quantitative and qualitative measures associated with several of the objectives (e.g., successful course completion).

Once data from the assessment plan has been compiled, the QEP Director will develop an annual plan to share as an update to the Board of Trustees, Leadership Team, campus employees, students and community. The data, annual report, and identified areas of strength and improvement found in the assessment will be shared with the respective areas. From the information shared, departments and determine the action plan necessary to implement the changes that are found to be necessary.

# Updates to Campus

The QEP is supported by several departments on campus and directly influences the success of students. As a result, the campus community should be informed of the progress of the QEP. To ensure campus is updated on the progress of the plan, the QEP Director will:

* Speak at the annual faculty and staff convocation each fall
* Speak at the annual Professional Development Day to provide a brief update
* Provide an annual update to the Board of Trustees
* Present during at least one of the Leadership Team’s Coffee & Conversation, per year to update employees and allow them to provide feedback/comments. Coffee & Conversation is an event where the Leadership Team invites all of campus to come have coffee with them and hear updates (conversation) on state, local and/or campus news related to higher education or the community.
* Provide employees and students access to the annual QEP report
* Send campus infographics of data gathered in a format employees and students can use and easily understand

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# Appendix A. Town Hall Meeting Executive Summary

Beginning in March 2020 Dr. Phil Rhodes and Laura Wichman began holding Town Hall meetings with various departments and with the entire campus to begin in an open discussion to develop potential Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) topics. In all, Dr. Rhodes and Ms. Wichman held 13 Town Hall meetings open to employees and five sessions for students between March 2020 and May 2020. Over 150 employees attended the employee sessions, and two students participated in the student sessions.

## Common Themes

Below are the common or reoccurring themes/suggestions by topic area:

### Completion Rates

* There should to be a consistency in online classes. i.e. common navigation, structure, organization, etc.
* Students do not understand what an online class entails. i.e. time, motivation, devotion, course expectations. Can we advertise this better to students? Can advisors/orientation cover?
* Faculty should engage with students regularly and consistently; especially in online classes
* Online students need an orientation that answers different questions then the traditional orientation.
* Students do not have the technology skills to be successful. Do all students need computer classes? Do faculty have the technology skills to help students be successful?
* Students do not have access to technology or technology resources such as wifi and printing. Can we provide students with a technology bundle?

### Zero Credits Earned

* Involve parents in the discussion of college early in K-12. i.e. importance of college, impact college has on students and families, repercussions of dropping out (financial aid, academics)
* Community engagement/outreach is important. Connect with people in the communities to advocate for education, do not bring in someone you hire that looks like them but they cannot relate with.
* Students do not have access to technology or technology resources such as wifi and printing. Can we provide students with a technology bundle?
* How can we catch these students earlier in the term?
* Supplemental Instruction (SI) may be able to assist and support students so they do not feel like they are getting behind and dropping out. SI makes the resources available when needed.
* Do we need to offer after hours resources? i.e. food pantry, counseling, success coaches, etc.
* Students do not understand the demands or expectations of college.

### Retention and Graduation Rates

* Involve parents in the discussion of college early in K-12. i.e. importance of college, impact college has on students and families, repercussions of dropping out (financial aid, academics)
* The attendance policy should be revised to adapt to current learning/teaching environment; specially for online courses

Develop a community outreach program

# Appendix B. Employee Survey Executive Summary

In September 2020, McLennan Community College sent the Quality Enhancement Plan Topic Feedback survey to the McLennan Community College “everybody” email alias. The survey remained open for two weeks and one email reminder was sent to the “everybody” email alias. The purpose of the survey was to gather feedback and suggestions for the 2021 Quality Enhancement Plan.

Based on the responses gathered, the topics in order from Most Important to Least Important were:

1. Retention & Graduation Rates – 45.3%
2. Completion Rates – 41.1%
3. Zero Credits Earned – 13.7%

The survey asked respondents for suggestions on how to “tackle the topic you chose on campus.” The common themes for each topic area were:

* Retention & Graduation Rates
  + Increase student support services
  + Increase academic support services
  + Family/Community outreach
* Completion Rates
  + Increase student support services
  + Increase academic support services
  + Professional development
  + Student/faculty interaction
  + Online course consistency
* Zero Credits Earned
  + Supplemental Instruction

In the open text areas, several respondents noted the topic areas are closely related to the Title V grant McLennan Community College was recently awarded.

# Appendix C. Job Descriptions of Peer Leaders

# Appendix D. QEP Director Job Description

**QEP Director**

The QEP Director for MCC’s Peer Assisted Student Success Project will provide compelling leadership for the project, plus develop and maintain excellent rapport and communication with colleagues in Instruction (faculty) and the Center for Teaching and Learning. Key responsibilities include working with the Title V Project Director and Director of Institutional Research in relation to the execution of QEP activities, interpreting and utilizing QEP assessment reports, implementing necessary changes based on formative evaluation data, and providing guidance in the development of the QEP interim and final reports.

**ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES** include the following. Other duties may be assigned. Under the supervision of the Vice President of Instruction and Student Engagement, the QEP Director will

* Direct the coordination and management of the MCC’s QEP, with regard to the level of compliance with SACSCOC Principles.
* Coordinate all related committees of Faculty, Administration, and Staff created to address issues of MCC’s QEP.
* Make regular reports of plan progress to the Vice President of Instruction and Student Engagement
* Collaborate with MCC personnel to evaluate, investigate, and resolve any issues of concern regarding the QEP.
* Work actively with MCC personnel to identify and collect data related to QEP.
* Participate in professional development related to the QEP topic and provide related professional development as needed for MCC personnel.

**QUALIFICATIONS**

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform the essential duties and responsibilities listed above. The qualifications listed below are representative of the education, experience, knowledge, skills, and/or abilities required.

**EDUCATION**

Minimum: A Master's degree or equivalent. Preferred: A Doctoral degree or equivalent or working on a doctoral degree.

**EXPERIENCE**At least five years of proven success as a faculty member at McLennan Community College in a teaching, counseling, or library position.

**KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES**

* Strong writing, analytical, organizational and research skills.
* Experience editing and proofreading, with the ability to produce high-quality materials while adhering to multiple deadlines.
* A good understanding of accreditation purposes and processes.
* Project management skills.
* Ability to work effectively with faculty, staff, administration, and community members in soliciting and utilizing meaningful input.