NEW RIVER
Community College

Reaffirmation Of Accreditation

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools,
Commission on Colleges

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN:

First Semester Experience

On-Site Reaffirmation Committee Visit: October 31-November 2, 2017

Q E P
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Contents

Executive Summary

New River Community College's faculty, staff, and students have embraced a campus- and community-wide collaborative, data-driven process to develop and plan our Quality Enhancement Plan. The plan is a natural, deliberate, and strategic next step in our student success initiatives that have been developing for many years. Drawing on experiences and research internal to the college and from the broader literature on student success, the development and design process involved a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders. Moreover, the current plan has been approved and affirmed at many different levels of the college and wider community. Groups engaged in these processes range from our feeder high schools to new and returning students to college staff/faculty/administration and community business leaders.

NRCC's QEP is consistent with the core of the NRCC mission statement, "We give everyone the opportunity to learn and develop the right skills so lives and communities are strengthened." The QEP goal is to improve student performance, persistence, retention, and, ultimately, graduation rates through goal setting/tracking and community building in the students' first semester. These themes and related student learning outcomes will be incorporated into several aspects of the students' first semester at NRCC. QEP components include, but are not limited to, an online pre-orientation module, an in-person orientation session, an open house kick off (for students and their supporters), and a four to nine credit first semester seminar (co-enrolled combination of two to three common first semester courses) - as well as faculty/staff professional development and strategies to support first-generation college families.

The plan grows out of prior student success initiatives at NRCC that have applied incremental, independent approaches to improving student success such as revisions to the developmental math program and broader efforts to make college more affordable through courses with low- or no-cost materials. Although these efforts have led to some improvement, the NRCC community concluded as it discussed and developed its QEP focus that chipping away at the edges of student success was never going to achieve the desired results. Formal and informal feedback from staff, faculty and students showed a consensus around the notion of the need for a cohesive approach to student success that the college could apply at scale with all students. Employing locally-developed technology and removing unnecessary siloes separating departments and functions at the college, NRCC's QEP represents a comprehensive and evolutionary approach to supporting students. NRCC calls this approach the intentional engagement model and the QEP – the First Semester Experience – is how it will be introduced in a meaningful way to students before they ever step foot on campus.

Process Used to Develop the QEP

The goal of New River Community College's Quality Enhancement Plan is to improve student performance, persistence, retention, and, ultimately, graduation rates through goal setting/tracking and community building in the students' first semester. In order to identify this focus, the college community went through its own iterative, organic process of data analysis, evidence-based planning, goal setting/tracking and community building. Like all planning processes, this QEP discernment process was influenced by initiatives external to the institution as well as internal initiatives that predated it.

Complete 2021

At the Virginia Community College System's (VCCS's) August 2014 Chancellor's Annual Planning Retreat, Chancellor Glenn DuBois unveiled the newly proposed strategic plan that will help Virginia's Community Colleges focus on one goal through 2021:

> Virginia's Community Colleges will lead the Commonwealth in the education of its people by tripling the number of credentials awarded for economic vitality and individual prosperity.

This singular VCCS goal ("Complete 2021") coupled with its incremental performance-based funding model has focused all major decisions at NRCC, including the selection of the focus area for the Quality Enhancement Plan, on how to strategically improve student completion rates. The Chancellor's goal ultimately enhanced efforts already underway at NRCC. The College, with wide participation and support from faculty and administration, had begun work to support its students in their learning and to improve student completion by addressing the academic needs of developmental students and reducing the financial burden of many more.

Pre-QEP Student Success Initiatives

The 2014 announcement of the VCCS "Complete 2021" goal came on the heels of two other initiatives promoting student retention and completion at NRCC—developmental education redesign and the promotion of low-cost to no-cost course materials. The convergence of the three illustrate the early story of NRCC's movement toward its current QEP proposal.

The VCCS implemented a comprehensive redesign of developmental math and English education in Spring 2012 and Spring 2013, respectively. NRCC's revised developmental math education model uses a computer-based, self-paced, emporium-style classroom setting that places a priority on individual instruction to ensure students are able to meet learning outcomes. The revised developmental English education model blends writing and reading instruction to prepare students for success in 100-level English classes. Both models aimed to reduce students' time in developmental education courses to a single year and to increase the number of developmental education students graduating or transferring in four years from 25 percent to 33 percent (*Turning point: developmental education in Virginia's community colleges*, 2009). Although a December 2014 VCCS report suggests some success with the redesign initiative (*Initial review of the impact of the developmental education redesign at Virginia's community colleges,* 2014), the impact was not sufficient to improve student retention and completion rates significantly.

However, the developmental education redesign did bring to light across the College the need for broad, organized efforts to support developmental student success. It opened the door to increased professional development opportunities, and English and mathematics faculty extensively participated in VCCS professional development trainings and institutes as part of the redesign effort. Specifically, three mathematics faculty members and three English faculty members attended the annual Chancellor's Developmental Education Institute, a week-long professional development opportunity aligned with the VCCS goal of student success and

redesign efforts. Others have participated in one-day Southwest Virginia Center for Teaching Excellence training events related to developmental education. Campus momentum toward student success began to grow.

In fact, with its increased attention to student success during the developmental education redesign, NRCC began to offer its own professional development through summer workshops for faculty and staff in 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015. The two-day workshops provided professional development opportunities for faculty and staff to discover broader strategies to support student success at the College. Sessions included topics such as employing classroom assessment techniques to drive academic improvement, creating Advanced Learners Program (ALP) courses, professional goal setting with student success and retention in mind, using existing tutorial videos and developing original multimedia tutorials, and enhancing social engagement of students in online learning.

In addition to the work NRCC was doing in 2012 and subsequent years in the area of developmental education, faculty across several programs were also looking for ways to help students overcome the stumbling block of high textbook costs. In fall 2012, NRCC faculty, with support from the College's president, began collaborating with IT staff to develop a virtual library of linked and original documents as well as resources chosen and uploaded by faculty from a variety of disciplines. The aim of the project was to help preserve the affordability of college for NRCC students through lowered textbook costs. With some effort and planning, many NRCC faculty found they could use the virtual library to customize and deliver course materials and resources and thus no longer needed a required course textbook. A spring 2013 calculation showed that the use of the virtual library resources in place of costly textbooks in the first-year composition courses saved enrolled students a total of $45,115 during AY 2012-13. Since this early work to remove a financial barrier to student completion, faculty have continued to develop

courses that require low-cost or no cost materials. In fall 2017, 22 percent of the College's classes require low-cost or no-cost materials.

While these early efforts to address the academic needs of developmental students and the financial needs of all students were steps in the right direction, data indicated that they were not enough to shift success trends significantly. The next steps of the process – including the QEP discernment effort – needed to do more than just work to support subpopulations of students (i.e. developmental students). Furthermore, they needed to do more than simply address the financial and academic needs of students, so many of whom are low-income and first-generation college students.

Spring 2014 – Implementation of Early Alert System

With all of this in mind in Spring 2014, NRCC along with the other VCCS institutions, began implementing an early warning notification system (SAILS) for identifying and intervening with students not attending and/or not performing well in class. The system allowed faculty to raise flags and kudos about individual students, and these flags and kudos generated emails to the students as well as outreach by three part-time college success coaches. Two main lessons emerged from the first two semesters of SAILS implementation: (1) NRCC faculty (full-time and adjunct) were willing to use the early alert system (almost 90 percent completed the progress surveys during those first two semesters) and (2) the simple feedback provided to the students made a difference in their persistence. An analysis of end-of-semester grades during Spring 2014 showed that withdrawals were significantly lower (by more than one standard deviation) for the college. The decrease in "Ws" was not accompanied by an increase in "Fs". The combination of "F" and "W" grades assigned was also significantly lower (by more than one standard deviation). The analysis strongly suggested that the program as implemented at NRCC was effective in achieving its target goals.

Summer/Fall 2014 – Submitted Student Success Plan, Research on Student Success Models, Created Accountability in Student Learning Program Office

In July 2014, NRCC prepared its first Student Success Plan (see Appendix 1), describing how the college would invest its resources into innovative efforts to improve student completion rates. In preparing the Student Success Plan, the President's Staff reviewed student success data for the College as well as national statistics, both of which indicated that the greatest predictor of student success was family income, regardless of academic ability (Pell Institute & Penn AHEAD, 2015). This leadership team agreed with leaders in the field like David Laude at the University of Texas at Austin that any effort to address low student completion rates had to do more than simply address students' academic and financial needs. They also had to address students' fears of not belonging in college – fears that are especially prevalent among community college students who are disproportionately likely to be first-generation and/or low-income. (Tough, 2014)

In an effort to help students believe that they belong in college and assist them in following up successfully on that belief, the Student Success Plan described the college's plan to create the Accountability in Student Learning Program (ASLP). This new program was tasked with tracking students through their entire tenure at NRCC, developing interventions with a special focus on helping students overcome their doubts about their abilities and/or whether they belong in college, and determining which intervention strategies are most effective in helping students to overcome self-doubts. At the annual General Session in August 2014, the college president led a discussion with faculty and staff about the plans to establish the Accountability in Student Learning Program. Faculty and staff were generally supportive of the idea. After an extensive search process by a large committee of faculty and staff from across the campus community, a director of ASLP was hired in December 2014.

Spring 2015 – New Student Experience Innovation Team

In February 2015, the following cross section of faculty and staff were appointed by President Lewis to an innovation team tasked with expanding the new student summer orientation program:

- Dr. Deborah Kennedy (co-team lead, then the Director of Enrollment Management)

- Jill Williams (co-team lead, Director, Accountability in Student Learning Program)

- Peter Anderson (then Dean of Business and Technologies)

- Dr. Paige Cash (Professor of English)

- Megan Doney (Professor of English)

- Peggy Taylor (then Director of Student Services)

- Peggy Dunn (Academic Advising Manager)

- Janet Hanks (Professor of English, Academic Assistance Faculty Liaison)

- Dr. Donald Stowers (Associate Director, Accountability in Student Learning Program)

- Ellen Oliver (Instructor, Developmental Math Coordinator)

- Janice Shelton (Dean of Arts and Sciences)

Later, Amy Hall (Coordinator of Emergency Planning and Special Projects) was added to this team. The charging memo for this group (see Appendix 4) gave context for this task: "Your team's creation was an outgrowth of recent discussions and work evolving from the Student Success Initiative and the formation of the Accountability in Student Learning Program."

One of the team's greatest challenges was to "develop an incentive plan that will entice students to attend the program." Indeed, figuring out how to get students – particularly those who could benefit from it the most - to attend orientation was a significant challenge the group faced. In the end, the innovation team proposed telling students that attending new student orientation is required without actually blocking any students for failing to do so. In order to make the "requirement" meaningful, however, staff time was set aside to contact students directly and repeatedly (if necessary) to encourage them to sign up for a session.

Summer 2015 - Expanded New Student Orientation, Hiring connection specialists, Launched CLAS (Connecting Learning Assets and Students), Designed Intentional Engagement

Summer 2015 was a productive time for the College's student success initiatives. In addition to the newly required orientation program, NRCC offered developmental boot camps for students who did not place into college-level English and math courses. Four connection specialists were employed to manage caseloads of NRCC students, connecting campus and community resources in a timely fashion and generally giving students a go-to person for when they have questions and do not know where to turn. (See Appendix 2 for connection specialist job description.)

These individuals shouldered the brunt of the outreach necessary for the new orientation system and the model worked extremely well even in its first implementation. Data showed that 83 percent of the first-time-in-college, program-placed students completed an in-person orientation or online alternative during that first term in which it was "required."

The senior leadership team also created the Student Success Advisory Team (SSAT) tasked with guiding the College's student success initiatives. The initial team was made up of:

- Dr. Jack Lewis, President

- Dr. Patricia Huber, Vice President for Instruction and Student Services

- Jill Williams, Director, Accountability in Student Learning Program

- Dr. Don Stowers, Associate Director, Accountability in Student Learning Program (ASLP)

Later, Dr. Deborah Kennedy, Dean of Student Services, and Dr. Amy Hall, subsequently Associate Director of the ASLP, were added to the committee.

The initial success of the "required" approach to new student orientation was shared with all college stakeholders (faculty, staff, and members of the college and foundation boards) through meetings and internal correspondence, and later presented at the college-wide meeting

in August (prior to the start of the fall semester). An understanding of the idea that "students don't do options" grew into a commitment to become more intentional in serving students in several service areas of the college, like Academic Assistance, and ultimately led to the adoption of an intentional engagement framework for all of NRCC's student-facing services. Intentional engagement at NRCC is defined as "purposeful, directed intervention with appropriate communication and an exchange of information with the intent to improve behaviors."

To support the implementation of the intentional engagement model, a custom-designed technology platform was developed in-house during Spring and Summer 2015 and called CLAS (Connecting Learning Assets and Students). In CLAS, instructors can see a roster of students in each class (along with photos and a range of information on each student), take attendance, and create a referral for the ASLP team, tutoring center, or any other NRCC employee to follow up with a student about any identified needs. All NRCC instructors and staff have access to student information through this system and are strongly encouraged to use the system regularly to support student success. Three times each academic term (twice in the summer), instructors are required to complete early alert progress surveys in CLAS in which they have the opportunity to efficiently evaluate each student in each course.

CLAS and the intentional engagement model were introduced to the faculty and staff at a campus-wide general session and at the annual adjunct faculty dinner in August 2015. NRCC submitted its Student Success Plan #2 this month as well (see Appendix 3).

Fall 2015 – Implementation of Intentional Engagement Model, VCCS Student Success Leadership Institutes

Fall 2015 was the first semester in which the intentional engagement model, empowered by connection specialists and CLAS, was fully implemented. In this term 95 percent of instructors completed both of the required progress surveys during this term, generating 5,360 referrals to connection specialists and career coaches, 4333 concerns and 3,839 praises to students.

Although it is not possible to determine causality, the college saw a 21 percent decrease in withdrawals during this term without a corresponding increase in Ds, Fs, or Us. The decrease in withdrawals was even stronger in online courses, at 27 percent.

Data from this semester indicated that the newly required orientation sessions might be helping improve retention trends. First term students attending Orientation that semester withdrew from classes at a rate 43 percent lower than those who did not attend orientation. Furthermore, the percentage of first term students attending orientation receiving an A, B, or C increased at a rate 26 percent higher than those who did not attend orientation. Such improvement led the Innovation Team and Student Success Advisory Team to decide to continue the required orientation program and to begin looking at other ways to improve the first semester experience.

The Academic Assistance (tutoring) program also implemented an intentional engagement model of student support during this term by reaching out to students referred by instructors to schedule a tutoring session instead of waiting for the students to request a session. The numbers of tutoring sessions increased. At this time the department also began using data to develop targeted strategies for what they deemed as "high risk courses." Some of these strategies included embedded tutors, online tutorials and a combined position of tutor/connection specialist for one particular program of study.

During this term, the VCCS also initiated its series of planning meetings called the Student Success Leadership Institute (SSLI). Colleges were invited to send a cross section of administrators, staff and faculty. Representing NRCC at this series of meetings were:

- Dr. Jack Lewis, (then) President
- Dr. Patricia Huber, (then)Vice President for Instruction and Student Services
- Dr. Deborah Kennedy, Dean of Student Services
- Dr. Fredrick Streff, Director of Institutional Research
- Dr. Paige Cash, English Professor

- Jill Williams, Director of ASLP

The first SSLI gathering was a student success summit November 10-11, 2015. During this summit, teams examined their college's student success data (see Appendix 5), learned about promising student success strategies, and began to imagine applying them on their own campuses.

Spring 2016 – Appointment of QEP Team, Review of Institutional Data, and Identification of QEP Topic

In January 2016, Jill Williams, ASLP Director, was appointed the chair of NRCC's QEP team and on February 1, the full QEP Leadership Team was appointed with a charging memo that included the following guidance:

> *NRCC has been involved in this "recursive process" for determining the focus of the QEP for the last two years and has now committed to "Advancing Accountability in Student Learning: an Intentional Engagement Model" as the working title for the QEP. While NRCC's intentional engagement model is evident in nearly every aspect of the college's operations, the practical topic of the QEP will be the college's evolving New Student Orientation Program and the groundwork that program lays for advancing accountability in student learning throughout a student's college career.*

The original QEP Leadership Team included the following individuals:

1. Jill Williams, Director, Accountability in Student Learning Program
2. Dr. Amy Hall, Associate Director, Accountability in Student Learning Program
3. Dr. Deborah Kennedy, Dean of Student Services
4. Dr. Fredrick Streff, Director of Institutional Research
5. Dr. Pablo Chalmeta, Professor of Mathematics
6. Amber Clark, Professor of Business

7. Peggy Dunn, Academic Advising Manager

8. Serena Moore, Student (later became ASLP Administrative Specialist)

9. Dawn Glass, Student (later became Assistant to the Director of Institutional Research)

10. Sarah Tolbert-Hurysz, Assistant Professor and Assessment Coordinator (ex-officio member)

Megan Doney (English professor) joined the team in Fall 2016 as well.

The first few meetings of the QEP Team involved coming to a common understanding of the QEP assignment and delving into institutional data related to student success and completion rates. The team noted the following themes during a review of the data:

1. The key for student success initiatives at NRCC is to get people committed. Full time, program placed, financial aid students are the ones who finish.

2. First-generation students don't stick around for as long as non-first-generation students. This may have something to do with a support system, the committee reasoned. Students who attend new student orientation have the same availability of support systems that every other student does, but they tend to use them more and to be more successful.

3. The common wisdom is that developmental students don't do as well, but students who finish developmental courses seem to do fine.

4. Students who enroll prior to the semester start get better grades and withdraw less than those who enroll later.

5. Students seeking associate degrees are more likely to withdraw from at least one course than students seeking diplomas or certificates (which tend to be shorter programs of study). The committee hypothesized that when students find that a course has specific relevance to their lives/careers/goal they are more likely to see the value and, therefore, are more likely to persist.

Based on this information, the QEP Team identified the following opportunities for improving student success vis-a-vis the orientation program:

1. Recognition that orientation could be a process and not a one-shot/one day event.

2. Recognition of the difference between orientations that are structured around information and those that are structured around socialization. The latter is more difficult, but perhaps more useful in the long run.

3. Incorporation of more advising in orientation before starting classes. (Both students on the committee indicated that this would have helped them tremendously.)

QEP team members then identified and examined models for these sorts of interventions and shared those with each other. There was a general theme within all the models shared: orientation should be extended into the semester in some way, making it more than a one time, four-hour session. Other ideas included:

1. More interaction in the orientation sessions would be a benefit. The old model of talking heads in front of a PowerPoint screen with words on it does not lend itself to engaging students.

2. Smaller groups generate more interaction and foster engagement, which ultimately leads to commitment. (Instead of a few large orientation sessions, consider delivering many smaller sessions so that students get more one-on-one attention.)

3. Trust student leaders to deliver some content.

4. Conduct an open house session separate from orientation so that parents and other supporters can participate in that and get answers to questions while also keeping the orientation sessions specifically geared toward students.

5. Develop learning outcomes for orientation and other first semester events – for students, supporters, and the institution.

6. Develop a webpage that is a one-stop shop for orientation- pre/post orientation checklists, videos from orientation, etc.

7. Look at the flipped classroom model and try to create a flipped orientation. The online piece could come at beginning and would always be available for students to access.

8. Utilize time students come to campus – whenever that is – as a community building piece, during which students will feel comfortable asking questions.

9. Socialization needs to be a main component of process; through that process, students learn everything they need to know. Students need to know that they are not alone, they are not the only one going through it, there are people here to help them whether they want it or not, and it's not a sign of weakness to ask for help.

10. Consider orientation for faculty and staff. Consider orientation to be a two-way street. Set expectations for faculty/staff.

Based on these conversations, the QEP Team decided to expand its focus from a narrow new student orientation program to the First Semester Experience, a combination of experiences spanning the summer before the first semester and going through the fall term with a slightly different timeframe for students entering in the spring term. This First Semester Experience would also include a faculty/staff training component.

In an attempt to begin identifying learning outcomes, the QEP team began working on a logic model to represent the inputs, proposed QEP components and long-term goals, and then backed into identifying learning outcomes. (See Appendix 6 for QEP logic model from Spring 2016.)

Summer/Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 – Collecting Community Feedback and Incorporating It into the QEP

The QEP team spent the majority of the past year collecting feedback from stakeholders (students, staff, faculty and community employers) about the proposed plan and revising their plans to incorporate the themes that emerged. The QEP team developed and disseminated a survey about the first semester to the career and technical education (CTE) advisory groups, which are made up of local employers. (See Appendix 7 for survey.) The survey was designed to

obtain general feedback from regional employers about how they think the College could best support students in their first semester. Because employers are generally engaging with NRCC students after their two or more years in college, it turns out that they are less well-equipped to home in on what students need in their first semester. The feedback the College received on the survey echoed the feedback it generally receives from regional employers: they want the students to have a strong work ethic, to respect the chain of command, not be distracted by cell phone use, and to complete work in a timely fashion.

The QEP team held focus group sessions with a variety of faculty and staff. The NRCC Faculty Assembly generally supported the proposed QEP focus. Their main feedback was that even seasoned faculty would benefit from understanding what students learn during the first semester experience so that they can reinforce those points in their coursework. The most significant feedback from academic advisors, connection specialists and coaches was that the first semester experience should be as social of a process as possible in all components. College Success Skills (SDV-100) instructors, especially, noted the disparity in student experiences between those who take the course online versus in-person.

A variety of student groups and individuals provided QEP feedback, some in focus group settings and some individually. The team purposely consulted a range of groups from first semester classes, second year students, online and in-person classes, transfer and Career and Technical Education students. Some of the major themes that emerged from these consultations included:

- Students generally do not understand or take advantage of all of the advising resources available to them.
- Students tend to underestimate how much work college courses take, especially online classes.
- The current orientation program and SDV-100 courses are already doing a fairly good job of introducing and reinforcing college norms like checking email every day and accessing

online resources. These programs are less effective in terms of socializing students to get

to know each other, their faculty/staff and feeling like they are a part of a larger community

committed to helping each other succeed.

After collecting and considering this range of feedback on the proposed QEP goals and

components, the QEP team decided to alter the proposed points of focus. Most notably, the team

decided to narrow the categories of learning outcomes to focus on (1) community building and (2)

goal setting/tracking and, furthermore, the team decided to (3) expand the first semester seminar

into a more robust combination of courses and opportunities for engagement. These three areas

are at the center of the College's Quality Enhancement Plan.

Literature Review and Best Practices

Fewer than half of community college students who enter school with the goal of earning a degree or other credential have attained that goal, transferred to another institution or are still enrolled six years later (AACC, 2012; Martin, Galentino & Townsend, 2014; Scrivener & Coughlan, 2011). Meaningfully addressing this problem requires an understanding of its root causes as well as a research-based understanding about what makes some interventions successful. Given its complexity, there is little consensus among researchers about either. As an explanation for the lack of consensus, Sara Goldrick-Rab (2010) identifies three categories of variables that affect student success: (1) macro-level opportunity structure (state and local funding, financial aid, etc.), (2) institutional practices (remedial education, teaching, curriculum, programming, etc.), and (3) the social, economic and academic attributes students bring to college. She argues that none of these variables, in isolation, can adequately describe or predict student success and that a successful intervention must have an impact on all three levels.

Goldrick-Rab's framing allows us to bypass a common debate in educational research about whether the primary predictor of student success is academic preparation (Astin, 1993; Adelman, 1999) or characteristics over which students have no control, like family income (White House Task Force on Middle Class Families, 2015). Without taking a stand on root causes, Goldrick-Rab's framing explains why these student attributes are inextricably linked and, in so doing, reinforces what we all know – that low-income, first-generation students are vulnerable (Horn & Nevill, 2006; Bailey, Leinbach & Jenkins, 2006; Martin et al., 2014). Even though some of the variables Goldrick-Rab isolates (e.g., financial aid) are designed to create more opportunity for low-income students, most of the variables interact with each other to create greater obstacles for this population. For example, low-income, first-generation students are more likely to live in communities with a lower tax base and less political power, so it is no surprise that they are likely to have less well-funded K-12 schools, live in states with less funding for higher education or to

have their basic needs (food, shelter, childcare, etc.) met in a way that best supports learning (Martin et al., 2014; Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Given that this literature review relates to an institutional initiative rather than systems change, it will focus on research related to Goldrick-Rab's latter two variables – institutional practices and student characteristics, particularly as they relate to low-income, first-generation students. While all institutions of higher education need to be concerned with the challenges of these students as a subset of their populations, community colleges must prioritize their challenges given that low-income, first-generation students comprise such a significant portion of their student bodies (AACC, 2015). Although not all community college students are low-income, Thayer (2000) suggests that strategies for supporting student success should be created with this population in mind:

> Strategies that are designed for general campus populations without taking into account the special circumstances and characteristics of first-generation and low-income students will not often be successful for the latter… [However,] strategies that work for first-generation and low-income students are likely to be successful for the general student population as well. (p. 3)

Social, Economic and Academic Attributes Students Bring to College

It is not news that students who attend two-year colleges are more likely than their four-year counterparts to be from low-income families and to be the first in their families to go to college (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Bailey et al., 2006). It is also unsurprising that low-income and first-generation students are less likely than their counterparts to participate in academic and social behavior (e.g. study groups, faculty office hours, peer engagement, extracurricular activities and using support services) that correspond to success in college (Engle & Tinto, 2008). In order to move beyond this statement of the problem, however, colleges need to better understand why this relationship exists. "Doing so," Goldrick-Rab (2010) suggests, "increases the potential for

acting on those underlying inequalities" (p. 451). Kareem Abdul-Jabbar may have answered this question most succinctly when he said:

> I think the biggest barrier is poverty because poverty makes it impossible for people to have the money and time to become first-rate students…Usually, they are struggling to put food on the table and keep a roof over their head, so they miss out on the opportunities that are extended to them to get into the middle class. (Abdul-Alim, 2016)

Research supports Abdul-Jabbar's observation. Nearly all (79 percent) community college students work while attending school and many (41 percent) work full time (Horn & Nevill, 2006; Goldrick-Rab, 2010), significantly limiting the amount of time they are able to spend on campus and increasing the likelihood that they will take classes part-time instead of full-time (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Martin et al., 2014). But financial and time constraints are not the only challenges for students. A lack of financial resources creates additional challenges that impede a student's ability to learn. Multiple studies estimate that half of community college students are food and housing insecure (Goldrick-Rab, Broton, & Eisenberg, 2015). And nearly half also show symptoms related to mental health conditions like depression, anxiety and eating disorders (Eisenberg & Goldrick-Rab, 2016), with only a small percentage of those ever receiving any kind of mental health services. One in four female community college students have children and the majority of student parents who drop out of community college cite childcare and financial difficulties as their primary reasons for doing so (St. Rose & Hill, 2013).

Although access to information about college is available through high school guidance counselors, low-income, first-generation students are also at a disadvantage with regard to "college knowledge." Martin et al. (2014) speculate that this may be due to variation in access to these resources within schools – "The best students tend to get more resources, and these students are often the ones with the highest income and socioeconomic status." But Martin et al.

also suggest that parents of first-generation students are unable to assist their children in college admissions processes and in setting high educational aspirations.

While most researchers agree that it is not the primary cause of disparities in college success, academic preparation is also a factor. Goldrick-Rab (2010) found that low-income and minority high school students were more likely to take vocational rather than academic tracks as well as to "take fewer science and math courses; and attend schools with fewer resources, less-qualified teachers, and a lack of college prep coursework." She cites research that finds that these disparities are especially problematic given that low-income and first-generation students are more likely than their counterparts to benefit from strong high school preparation.

And, finally, low-income and first-generation students are more likely to struggle with self-doubts about whether or not they belong in college at all. Even if colleges were able to address students' financial and academic needs, these fears and self-doubts need to be addressed to see any meaningful changes in success rates, particularly in community colleges. (The College Transition Collaborative, 2016)

Institutional Practices

Many student success strategies are influenced by the involvement theory of Alexander Astin who, in 1984, posited that student involvement is key to student success. "Student involvement," he said, "refers to quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience" (p. 528). Astin's research was largely based in more traditional four-year institutions. Given students' challenges, community colleges are not usually in positions to do much to increase the *quantity* of involvement time for most of their students – particularly those who are low-income and first-generation – but they can try to improve the *quality* of student involvement. Indeed, Pace (1984) distinguishes between the time (how often) that a student engages in an activity and the effort (how fully or thoroughly the student engages in that activity)

and argues that the effort put forth by students is more significant in terms of academic outcomes than the quantity of time invested.

Webber et al. (2013) suggest that increasing the quality of engagement can be done most effectively during time students are already engaged -- in class and other required activities. One of their studies evaluating engagement efforts of one large unnamed university showed that useful practices that resulted in increased student success outcomes (GPA, completion and satisfaction levels) included a first year experience with shared reading and small discussion groups, a campus day of service, and faculty development. Timing, they say, is critical, as evidenced by the significance of that first year experience.

The emphasis on timing is supported by the work of Completion by Design practitioners who have developed the Loss/Momentum framework (Completion by Design, 2016). This framing provides a useful tool for identifying institutional practices and policies that may be contributing to low retention and student success rates by breaking up the student experience into four phases: (1) connection (interest to application); (2) entry (enrollment to gatekeeper courses); (3) progress (entry to area of study to 75 percent requirements completed); and (3) completion (finishing the requirements to attaining the credential). While all of the phases are significant, research shows that, for low-income, first-generation students, the second (enrollment to gatekeeper courses) is the most difficult hurdle to clear (Jenkins & Cho, 2012).

Engle and Tinto (2008) explain that low-income, first-generation students are almost four times more likely to leave higher education after the first year than students who had neither of those risk factors. Even after six years, nearly half of low-income, first-generation students had left college without earning degrees and two-thirds of them did so after their first year. Interventions designed to increase student engagement are most useful when they are implemented early in the student's college career (Dugan, 2013). This is in part because it is in the early college semesters that students can be most effectively influenced in terms of goal setting, taking remedial courses early, and community building/socialization.

First Semester Orientation/Seminar/Advising

Surveys of community college students show again and again that their institutions provide ample opportunities through numerous services and extensive course catalogs, but – according to some – "insufficient information with which to guide students through choosing among opportunities" (Goldrick-Rab, 2010, p. 450). As an example, many students are unaware that, although they may be required to take remedial courses in order to complete their chosen program of study, those courses do not count toward their degree. Needless to say, academic advising is critical to all students' success, but particularly to first-generation and low-income students (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). But because academic advising is often not *required* for students, the challenge for colleges is to figure out how to integrate that resource into already-required programs.

Engle and Tinto (2008) identify six strategies for promoting college access and success for low-income, first-generation students. One is to ease the transition to college through early intervention orientation programs, a structured first-year experience, an emphasis on academic support, an intrusive approach to advising, and a combination of incentives and requirements for students to make use of the services. They say all of these efforts should be integrated across campus seamlessly and have strong support from college leadership (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Cuseo (1997) says that participation in a freshman seminar which incorporates these elements has "dramatic effects on academically at-risk students" including improved retention rates and elevated academic performance (p.3). And Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) conclude that such a seminar is positively linked to both first year persistence and to degree completion.

Joseph Cuseo (1997) researched first-year and orientation programs at community colleges and determined that they could have a significant positive impact on student retention and completion rates. He identified the following five primary purposes of such successful programs:

1. Providing students with "education-for-life skills that contribute to lifelong learning and holistic development" (p. 3)

2. Promoting curriculum development by introducing students to the range of curricula available to them.

3. Stimulating faculty development by increasing faculty awareness of: "(a) institutional mission and support programs; (b) the needs and characteristics of today's learners; and (c) instructional strategies that promote effective teaching and learning" (p. 4)

4. "Fostering institutional development by (a) enhancing enrollment management (e.g., maintaining or increasing enrollment by reducing student attrition), and (b) promoting institutional effectiveness" (p. 4)

5. "Building campus community by (a) connecting students to each other and to key student-support agents, and (b) forging partnerships between members of different divisions of the college who are involved in the training for, and teaching of the freshman seminar (e.g., between faculty from different academic disciplines; between faculty and student affairs' professionals)" (p. 4)

Cuseo (1997) also identified the following common student-centered concepts that are generally incorporated into first-year experience/seminar programs:

- College experience – its meaning and value (e.g. difference between high school and college, "college knowledge," resources);

- Academic skill development (learning how to learn);

- Academic and career planning (e.g. connecting the college experience with future life plans, transfer information); and

- Life-management: education-for-life skills and holistic development (e.g. self-assessment of interests and abilities, goal setting, self-efficacy).

Goal Setting

Multiple studies have demonstrated the important relationship between degree and transfer goals and student success rates (Bailey et al., 2006; Martin et al., 2014; Alfonso, Bailey & Scott, 2005). Martin and colleagues (2014) offered a simple explanation:

With well-defined visions for their futures, and the understanding of how success in college can lead to the realization of those visions, successful students follow distinct academic tracks, as opposed to just experimenting with different course offerings…Successful students align their curricular choices with their goals and interests and seek out opportunities for personal growth and development along the way. They are able to use strategic decision making regarding course selections and academic integration with the institution.

Indeed, students with more ambitious academic goals (bachelor's degree and beyond) tend to earn higher degrees; students with modest goals tend to pursue less education, persist less and earn fewer degrees; and students who had no degree goals were not likely to complete any degrees (Bailey et al., 2006).

Complicating this explanation is further research that shows a link between family income and education level and student goals. Alfonso et al. (2005) found: "after controlling for academic achievement and other demographic factors, low-income high school students had lower educational aspirations than high-income students…one of the most important mechanisms through which social class influences college outcomes is the pre-college goal formation process" (p. 19). Furthermore, Alfonso and colleagues add, family income continues to be strongly related to the probability of completion for students who enter postsecondary education through community colleges, even after controlling for high school test scores, other personal characteristics, and stated degree goals.

With this in mind, Bailey (2006) warns, it is inadvisable for colleges to take student expectations as a given. Instead, community colleges should recognize that they can have an

influence on raising or lowering student goals. Positive interventions, according to Bailey, include counseling, career planning and "good teaching that inspires students to gain confidence and causes them to raise their goals" (p. 16). They go on to make the following proposal:

> If this finding represents systematic difficulties faced by lower income and minority students, then colleges should try to do something about those difficulties. Alternatively, if it represents systematic differences in expectations, even after controlling for high school academic record, then we should ask why such students have lower expectations. For these reasons, it might be argued that even when students state that they do not seek degrees, community colleges should strive to raise their aspirations, including helping them recognize the economic benefits of additional education and their potential for success in postsecondary education…Colleges have a responsibility to work with students to help them understand the implications of their long-term goals, to make the goals more concrete, and to help their students achieve them more effectively. (pp. 20-23)

Community Building/Socialization

While much attention is focused on meeting the academic needs of, in particular, first-generation and low-income community college students, research also points to the significant role of meeting non-academic, affective needs, often through relationship and community building (Sparkman, Maulding & Roberts, 2012; Bryan & Simmons, 2009; Dugan, 2013; Astin, 1996). A growing number of researchers find that while student engagement with faculty and staff is of value to students, peer engagement may be even more significant in terms of student success outcomes (Dugan, 2013; Astin, 1996; Sparkman et al., 2012).

A study of first-generation Appalachian students emphasized the importance of socialization and relationship building for these students. Bryan and Simmons (2009) found that this group is primarily influenced by parents and other extended family members and, when forced to choose, will tend to prioritize family over education. They explain that, before college, both

New River Community College

parents and their first-generation students lack information about college processes, etc., and that improving such "college knowledge" for the student without the parent only drives a wedge between the student and the parent. They conclude that institutions serving first-generation Appalachian students would do well to provide programming for first-generation students and parents in order to increase communication and ultimately improve retention and graduation rates. They recommend that colleges implement early intervention programs (before the beginning of the formal first semester) because they acclimate students to the college environment and help them to meet key staff members and classmates before college starts. They also ease anxiety for students about belonging on a college campus and allow them to focus on academic challenges when classes begin.

Another study on the non-cognitive predictors of student success found that the leading emotional intelligence predictors of success were social responsibility and empathy. Sparkman et al. (2012) say that these traits can be taught through college courses and activities, specifically suggesting that service-learning projects be incorporated into first year seminars or major specific courses.

Best Practices

The following three models represent some of the most effective research-based interventions for improving student success outcomes with low-income, first-generation community college students. Collectively, they incorporate the themes outlined above with regard to a focus on the first semester, goal setting, completing remedial courses early and socialization/community building.

ASAP at City University of New York (Accelerated Study in Associate Program)

Although many interventions across the country have made short term improvements in student success, the research institution MDRC's research (Scrivener, et al., 2015) shows that the ASAP program in the CUNY system, launched in 2007, is the only community college intervention program that has been proven to improve completion rates substantially in the long term, nearly doubling graduation rates within a three year period. The intervention is comprehensive. ASAP students participate in blocked classes and learning communities for their first year, take their developmental/remedial courses early, receive intensive advising and enhanced tutoring, and are enrolled full-time. In exchange for meeting these standards, students are provided with tuition (any gap between financial aid and college tuition and fees), free use of textbooks, and a monthly Metrocard for free use of public transportation options.

MDRC identified three key takeaways from this study for other institutions: (1) requiring students to take advantage of supports like advising and tutoring and then providing substantial benefit for having done so (e.g. Metrocard) is key to the program's success; (2) monitoring student participation in the program is key to its success and this requires a somewhat sophisticated data management system; and (3) encouraging students to take developmental courses early is also key.

College Transition Collaborative

Based at Stanford University, this group of researchers and partner institutions is piloting simple interventions designed to help students overcome doubts about whether or not they belong in college. The interventions vary from institution to institution, but generally involve new students being exposed to stories from older students about how they initially felt like they did not belong in college and then came to feel differently. Many of these interventions take place online before students even attend an in-person orientation session. And research is showing that these simple,

inexpensive interventions, in combination with other more meaningful ones, can have a significant impact on student retention and completion rates (The College Transition Collaborative, 2016).

Valencia College LifeMap and Atlas

Over the past fifteen years, student retention and completion rates at Valencia College in Orlando, Florida, have dramatically improved. College leaders attribute this improvement to the school's LifeMap and Atlas systems. LifeMap is the school's developmental advising system that incorporates social and academic integration, education and career planning, and study and life skills. Because it is a touchpoint for all students, it creates an expectation for all students to establish career and educational plans early in their enrollment, and it integrates a system of resources that engage with students to constantly update and monitor those plans. Atlas is an online learning portal through which students engage with faculty, staff and peers to explore, monitor and build on their learning goals. It includes a "My LifeMap" tool and was initially developed in-house at Valencia College to support the LifeMap programming (Romano & White, 2012).

Identification of the Topic

The goal of NRCC's QEP is to improve student persistence, retention and, ultimately, graduation rates through goal setting/tracking and community building in the students' first semester. An integrated first semester experience is the logical next step in implementing NRCC's intentional engagement model which, up until this point, has largely focused on a required new student orientation and assigned connection specialists (or go-to people) for each NRCC student, all empowered by a locally-developed technology platform (CLAS).

This QEP will develop the model further by helping students to feel an increased sense of belonging in higher education in general and at NRCC specifically. And that increased sense of belonging and community will be a more conducive environment in which students will set educational goals and be supported as they meet benchmarks along the way to meeting those goals.

This first semester experience will include student experiences that have long been a part of NRCC (SDV-100, the college success skills course) and ones that have been revamped over the past couple of years (the required new student orientation and open house kick-off celebrations). It will also be bookended by new components: an online pre-orientation module and, most prominently, a four to nine credit first semester seminar for all new program-placed students; the seminar will include three courses for transfer students and two courses for career and technical education students.

First Semester Experience Components:

Online pre-orientation module	→	New Student Orientation	→	Open House Kick-offs	→	First Semester Seminar (4-9-credits)
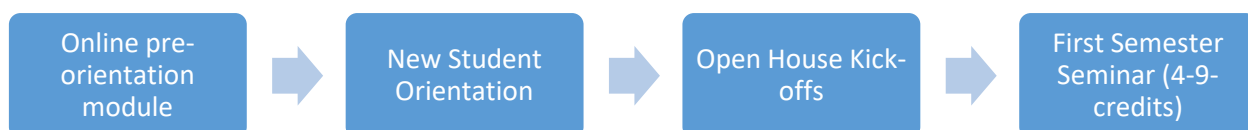
Desired Student Learning Outcomes

The QEP team, in consultation with stakeholders from all parts of the college community, has intentionally developed a set of ambitious, unconventional learning outcomes that are tailored to fit the distinct culture, strengths and needs of NRCC students, faculty and staff. Those learning outcomes are described below. And a similarly ambitious and goal-directed plan for assessing these learning outcomes is described at the end of this document.

Goal Setting/Tracking
Students will set long-term goals as well as short term benchmarks for reaching those goals.

Explicit goal setting works to clarify and specify what students want to achieve. Absent this step, achievement is more difficult than it needs to be. It begins with the identification and selection of an "ultimate" goal for their academic careers. Once this ultimate goal is chosen and made explicit, it is then possible to develop a plan or pathway toward the achievement of the identified goal. This plan serves as a means to schedule and prioritize events required to achieve the goal. The components of this plan then become more specific, actionable goals that are more easily measured and achieved than the higher-order goal first specified.

The step of developing increasingly specific and short-term goals required to achieve the ultimate goal is necessary for many reasons. The ultimate goal will be too remote to drive the day-to-day behaviors required to succeed. One does not simply get an associate's degree in instrumentation and automation control. Instead, an associate's degree is earned through a process of taking and passing courses in the desired field that together lead to the achievement of the ultimate goal. Making this path explicit provides the opportunity to plan the day-to-day activities required to succeed in the courses required to earn the degree. Indeed, this level of incremental goal setting provides more than a path to achievement to follow. Incremental goal

setting provides a number of places at which both the student and the student support team (including college faculty and staff, fellow students, family and friends) can assess the extent to which the incremental goals are being successfully achieved. This process provides an opportunity not only to reward the achievement of these required steps, but also to identify and correct problems that are encountered along the way. It is important to realize that the achievement of even seemingly small goals needs to be rewarded as the journey progresses. Rewards, even less tangible rewards like praise, are required for students to continue to engage in the behaviors that make them successful day to day. Absent these rewards, the necessary behaviors become less frequent and the likelihood of success decreases.

For NRCC students, goal setting will begin before they ever show up for orientation through a questionnaire. When students begin at NRCC they will be guided through a process that concludes with their selection of an academic plan (major). This major is associated with a specified set of courses and a timetable for the completion of the courses. Using this basic idealized template, students will then specify their goals in course selection and timing toward the achievement of the academic award in the plan. This goal setting will also include intermediate awards/certificate/certifications that can be achieved during the progress toward the ultimate academic award being sought.

The purpose of this initial goal setting exercise is for students to have a specific set of timing expectations to plan toward. When developing this plan, students should include non-academic challenges in developing a reasonable plan. These would include (but will not be restricted to) family life (child or elder care requirements, for example) and financial requirements that could affect timing such as work schedules and financial aid eligibility requirements.

The explicit nature of this more detailed plan permits the ASLP team and faculty advisors to assess each student's progress and to reward (praise) their accomplishments and act to remediate challenges that arise when adequate progress is not observed. However, when establishing goals, it will be desirable to think about setting goals at a level even more specific

than how many and what courses might be taken at a certain time. It is desirable to set course specific goals that track what is required as detailed by the course syllabus each semester to further aid in planning and assessing progress toward not only an acceptable grade in the course but also the achievement of the ultimate goal.

Associated Learning Outcomes

- Students will articulate active educational goals.
- Students will develop learning plans with specific timelines for achieving the articulated goals.
- Students will meet targets specified in the learning plan timeline. (Note: When learning plan targets are not met, new targets will be developed together with strategies to improve the likelihood of meeting the revised targets.)

Community Building

Students, faculty and staff will see themselves as vital parts of the NRCC community who should ask for and offer help to each other.

The basic concept for the QEP is that students will be more likely to persist if they perceive themselves as part of a college community that supports and values their achievements. This persistence is required for students to achieve the goals specified in the first track of this discussion. Fundamental in this approach is the concept that absent the belief among students that they form part of a larger, supportive NRCC community, these students may have difficulty amassing the psychological, academic or physical resources required to achieve their identified goals.

Associated Learning Outcomes:

- Students will know other students, faculty and staff.

- Students will ask for help when experiencing academic and personal challenges.

- Studens will hold the belief that they are not alone in the fact that they have both academic

  and life challenges to overcome in order to succeed.

- Students will feel that others care about their success, failures, and problems.

- Students will care about the success, failures, and problems of others.

Actions to be Implemented

Community building and goal setting /tracking learning outcomes will be incorporated into the following components of the first semester experience for program-placed, first-time-in-college students. The centerpiece and most significant component of the first semester experience will be the first semester seminar, described below in detail.

Pre-Orientation Online Module

In order to make space for activities that promote goal setting and community building in the new student orientation program, the QEP working group will design and implement a pre-orientation online module that students will be required to complete prior to attending orientation. The online module will give students an opportunity to explore the online resources they will need to use as students – nr.edu, the learning management system, Student Information System (SIS) and the NRCC library website. It will also walk them through an advising check-up that will raise flags to orientation staff if individual advising is required at orientation. Additionally, it will cover most of the basic information that students need to start their first day of classes – academic calendar, how to purchase books, how to apply for and access financial aid, programs of study, etc. Although community building will be difficult in a purely online format, students will be asked to complete a few assessments and to then set an initial educational goal for themselves which will be stored in the CLAS platform and accessible to students, faculty and staff for future advising conversations.

New Student Orientation (revised)

The required orientation program for new students (see Appendix 8 for current program agenda) will be revamped to emphasize community building and goal setting. Because students will learn much of the basic information currently shared during orientation in the online pre-

orientation module, time will be available for getting to know college faculty, staff and classmates. Potential community building activities during orientation include a collective mural project, community service activities, and/or a discussion about a common reading. Additional goal setting activities will be developed and integrated into the agenda. These will allow students to "reality check" the educational goals they set in the pre-orientation module to see if they align with their skills, values, financial resources, and social/work obligations. Sharing their goals publicly will also increase a sense of public accountability for students in achieving those goals later. Information from this goal setting/tracking activity will be stored in the CLAS system so that students can revisit and revise throughout the First Semester Seminar.

Open House Kick-off Celebration

The College will continue to invite new students and their supporters (parents, spouses, friends, etc.) to an open house kick-off celebration on the Friday and Saturday before classes start during the fall and spring semesters. Attendees will be able to take tours; participate in fun activities to get to know campus; listen to advice from current and former students, faculty and others; meet their instructors and find their classrooms; as well as purchase their books, all prior to the first day of classes. This event is important in the context of the First Semester Experience primarily because of the research on the significant role families play in student success, particularly for first-generation Appalachian students. Plans include developing not only informational events for the kick-off celebration, but also ongoing resources for students' families and other supporters like social media groups and websites.

First Semester Seminar

Pre-college events will lay the groundwork for students to show up for class with the knowledge and relationships they need to be successful on the first day of classes, but the real

challenge lies in sustaining those relationships; presenting the information they need when they need it; and regularly monitoring their progress toward their educational goals, rewarding them when they reach milestones and reminding them when they do not. Based on the literature review, best practices in other institutions, and institutional context, we plan to create a First Semester Seminar that will combine two to three common first semester courses into a four to nine credit combined seminar. The seminar will allow students to be a part of a cohort that transitions to college, learns subject matter, and supports each other through the first semester.

One challenge with the current student success course (SDV-100) is that it attempts to evenly spread out course material over a semester when the students need the advising information in more intense infusions during key points of the semester (namely at the beginning and then again around mid-terms and registration for next semester courses). And while the study skills, time management and health related information is timeless, learning about it in the abstract does not maximize its usefulness for all learning styles, particularly those who learn through doing. Incorporating these lessons into more academic courses provides students opportunities to practice those skills while learning important subject matter and writing skills. A final challenge is that SDV-100 is only a one-credit course so many students opt to take it online and even the in-person courses are limited in terms of the potential to create a cohort of students who support each other in that first semester. By combining SDV-100 with two other academic courses, students will have an opportunity to learn and practice their study skills as well as to write reflective papers related to student success because learning objectives for the courses are overlapping and can be merged into combined assignments.

For four to nine hours each week, these cohorts will be in class learning together. This time in itself will contribute to the sense of belonging and community the QEP fosters. But in addition to the time, the seminar instructors will revamp their individual courses in order to design assignments and activities that reinforce overlapping and complementary learning objectives while also building a sense of community and belonging within the cohort group. Similarly,

instructors will develop goal setting and tracking activities that also serve to advance the learning objectives of the courses. These complementary activities might include service learning, civic engagement or other creative ways of learning that would be impossible within the parameters of a single course.

QEP team members went through an exercise of creating a sample syllabus for a combined English composition and study skills course. (See Appendix 9 for sample syllabus.) The syllabus included the following possible assignments that could blend both courses' objectives:

- Exercises on detecting plagiarism; understanding the impact of culture on academic appropriation

- Library orientation

- Research on focus and attention and the impact of devices: students perform a self-study alongside academic research and writing on college student performance and technology

- Research and writing on free speech codes and campus conduct

- Annotation and active reading assignments and self-assessments

This planning exercise was to create a two-course, four-credit combined seminar; the QEP proposed activity will be to create and implement a three-course, seven to nine credit combined seminar for transfer students and a different combination for Career and Technical Education (CTE) students. For transfer students, this seminar, taught during the student's first semester, will combine one of each of the following groupings of courses:

1. College Success Skills - SDV-100

2. English Composition – ENG 111, ENF 2, ENG111/ENF3

3. Introductory history courses – HIS 101 (History of Western Civilization I), HIS 111 (History of World Civilization I), or HIS 121 (United States History I)

A common first semester seminar combination of courses for Career and Technical Education (CTE) students is a little more difficult to design given the wide variety in CTE program

requirements. The pilot first semester seminar for CTE programs will combine ETR 113 (D.C. and A.C. Fundamentals) with SDV-100 for a four-credit course. The results of that pilot will help to determine the seminar course combination for future CTE seminars.

Advisors will strongly encourage all students to take the in-class combination of first semester seminar courses, but this approach will not be possible for a small number of NRCC students. For these students, the College will offer an online alternate seminar, the instructors for which will devise creative strategies for implementing goal setting/tracking and community building activities into the online experience.

Faculty Training

Instructors can not be expected to implement learning objectives that they do not understand. Hence, the QEP also includes a phased-in plan for training all instructors on basic student success initiatives as well as the specifics of the proposed First Semester Experience and its associated learning outcomes. In fact, the QEP team developed a draft list of faculty and staff learning outcomes that mirror the learning outcomes established for students. (See Appendix 10 for that list.)

Although the QEP is focused on the components described above, during the community process to design the QEP, the QEP team heard that faculty were interested in learning more about how to incorporate goal setting/tracking and community building into all of their courses. So the College also plans to hold in-service trainings on best practices that emerge from the seminar pilots with a focus on how those practices might be incorporated into other courses across the curriculum.

Finally, the work will include a new faculty/staff onboarding one-on-one training that will cover student success initiatives, CLAS and the first semester experience. Part of that onboarding

process will include inviting new faculty and staff to participate in at least one new student orientation program.

Institutional Capacity

NRCC's plans for a first semester experience are ambitious, but a variety of factors also makes this project not only feasible, but also practical. In addition to the organizational structure, timeline and budget capacity outlined in subsequent sections, a few other stars have aligned to make this plan a natural next step in the College's student success initiatives. These alignments are not happenstance with respect to the development of the proposed first semester experience. They are key elements that supported the development and planning for the project.

One of the key factors for developing the capacity to succeed in such an ambitious program is the recent (2015) creation of the Accountability in Student Learning Program (ASLP). This program was staffed with a new full-time director, a full-time position repurposed as the associate director, several new part time connection specialists, and a part time administrative assistant. Each of these individuals has worked over the past two years at establishing an intentional engagement model of student support – from caseload management to orientation programming to other student success initiatives. The caseload management system, in addition to other intiatitives, is vital for ensuring a successful first-semester experience. While the ASLP team will not be planning or implementing the First Semester Experience alone, it will provide valuable, experienced support in a variety of capacities in its implementation timeline and budget.
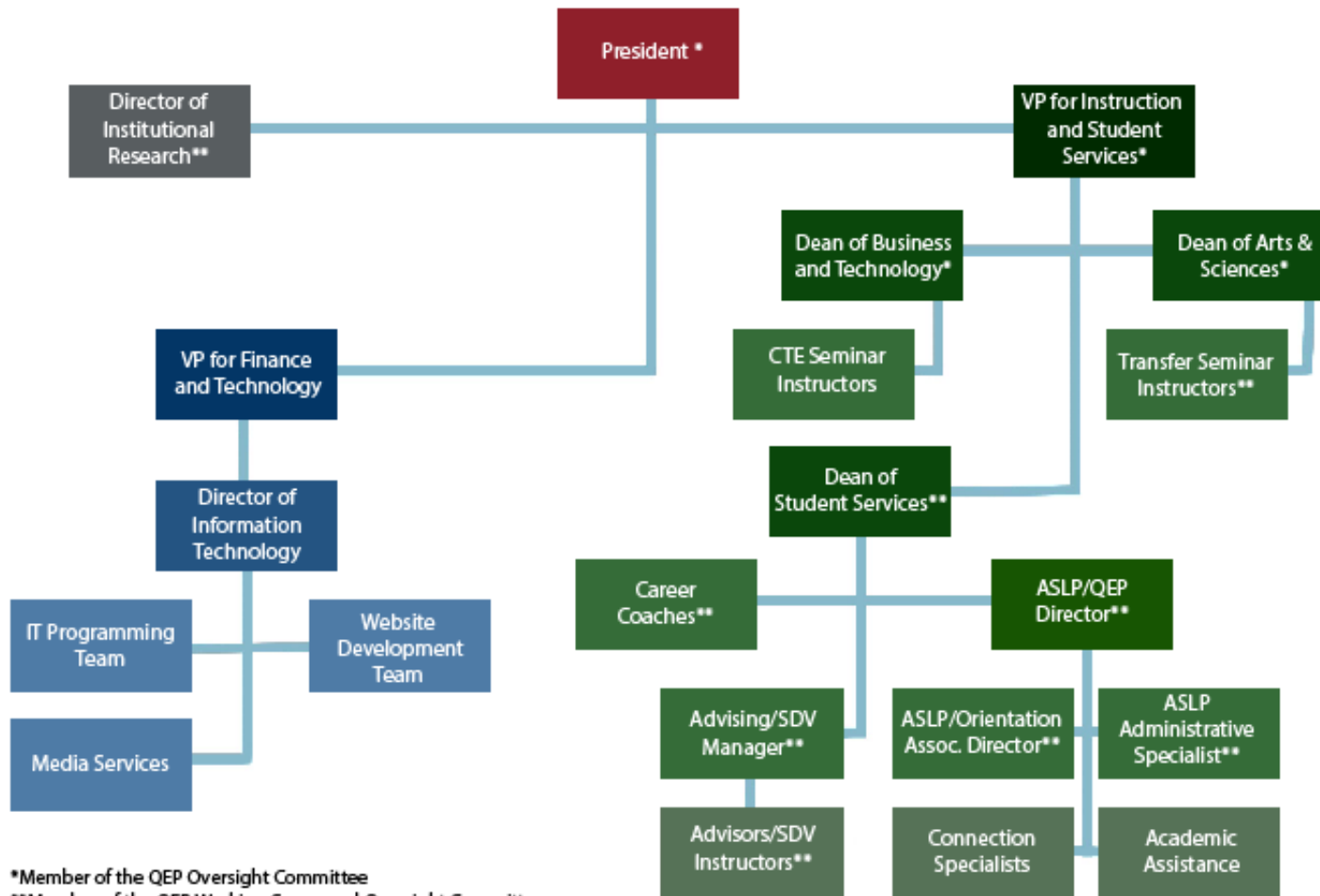
Also supporting the feasibility of this QEP is the fact that some of the components are already in place, albeit in a limited capacity. For example, the College already requires students to attend an in-person orientation session. Furthermore, all first semester students should be taking the college success skills course as well as common first semester courses for their programs of study. That being said, a variety of factors currently make it possible for students to avoid these useful pathways for success. The problem that the QEP seeks to solve is that there is no intentional connection between the orientation program and the college success skills course, much less other common first semester courses. This fractured approach means that

information is covered unevenly – some information gets delivered many times unnecessarily and other information never gets covered, perhaps because everyone thinks someone else has already taught it. Moreover, much of the information that could help students learn how to perform better in their studies is woefully abstract when covered in a stand-alone student success course. When presented in the context of a more traditional academic course, these student success skills become much more salient and better learned and applied than they would in the stand-alone course as evidenced by success and retention. Another problem is that the current model keeps everyone in an information sharing mode ('talking at' students and each other) rather than creating opportunities for community building and goal setting/tracking.

The most significant component of the QEP is to move these programs from their independent siloes and to help staff and faculty across the campus and across disciplines work together to deliver a seamless first-semester experience. As the timeline and budget below demonstrate, doing so will be a significant undertaking both in the form of creating new or revised programs/courses and in terms of tackling the logistical hurdles to managing an online pre-orientation module or a co-enrolled four to nine credit bundle of courses. Faculty and staff work on each of these components as they currently stand (as isolated components); moving beyond the first couple of years of logistical problem solving and program/course development to implementing the QEP will not require additional capacity in the form of financial or staffing resources.

QEP Organizational Structure

All NRCC staff will, in some way, touch the QEP over the next five years.
The following chart represents the key staff members responsible for core aspects of
the QEP implementation, assessment and oversight.

President *

Director of Institutional Research**

VP for Instruction and Student Services*

Dean of Business and Technology*

Dean of Arts & Sciences*

VP for Finance and Technology

CTE Seminar Instructors

Transfer Seminar Instructors**

Director of Information Technology

Dean of Student Services**

IT Programming Team

Website Development Team

Career Coaches**

ASLP/QEP Director**

Media Services

Advising/SDV Manager**

ASLP/Orientation Assoc. Director**

ASLP Administrative Specialist**

Advisors/SDV Instructors**

Connection Specialists

Academic Assistance

*Member of the QEP Oversight Committee
**Member of the QEP Working Group and Oversight Committee

Glossary of QEP-Related Staff

Many of the positions at NRCC are similar to those at other colleges, so the reader will understand intuitively what is meant by "President," "Vice President for Instruction and Student Services," and "tutor." But the College has a few departments and positions that are unique. These positions also tend to be the ones at the center of much of the proposed QEP. Following is a quick guide to these positions and their functions.

Accountability in Student Learning Program (ASLP) – This is the program tasked with evaluating, developing and implementing new student success initiatives. Currently, some of the initiatives led by the ASLP team include the new student orientation program, Graduation Acceleration Program (GAP), and support for current ACCE (Access to Community College Education) students. This program is also responsible for training and implementing the CLAS (Connecting Learning Assets and Students) system and oversees the Academic Assistance program. Given the overlap in goals, it is fitting that the ASLP Director is also the QEP Director and that ASLP team members (associate director, administrative specialist and connection specialists) are so integral to the First Semester Experience.

Connection specialists – All NRCC students are assigned to a connection specialist whose job is to intentionally engage students who may be in need of academic advising, tutoring, career services, or help in overcoming obstacles to student success such as lack of books, computers, or internet access at home. When instructors or other staff raise concerns on a student in the CLAS system, connection specialists reach out to the student to find out what is going on and to offer support. connection specialists also reach out to students when data indicate that they may benefit from a resource (like scholarships) or when they may have confusing paperwork to decipher (like financial aid related forms). Connection specialists are also among the SDV-100

(College Success Skills) instructors and orientation leaders and will therefore play key roles in the QEP. Finally, connection specialists help to staff the Advising Office during peak times of the semester.

Advisors – On most college campuses, it seems like any work with students that is not explicitly related to a course or to financial aid/business processes gets labeled "advising." At NRCC, students are assigned to faculty advisors and the College has an Advising Office with professional advisors. Like connection specialists, these professional advisors support students in a variety of proactive ways as well as through traditional drop-in academic advising. All of these professional advisors also serve as connection specialists, managing a caseload of students in particular programs of study. Some advisors also teach SDV-100 (College Success Skills), and all advisors support new student orientation programs. There is great overlap between connection specialists and professional advisors. The long-term plan is to merge these two roles into one.

Career coaches – Career coaches are NRCC employees who are located primarily in seven of the nine regional high schools. Their role is to support high school students and their families in career and college planning. Because they know a majority of the new students, they will play a key role in the QEP, helping to develop and implement programs to support first-generation families as well as staffing orientations and open houses. One career coach will serve on the QEP Working Group.

QEP working group – This group will meet monthly to manage the implementation of the QEP. Some of the components of the QEP still need to be fleshed out (e.g., plans to support first-generation families, logistics around coenrolling students in a first semester seminar, creating and implementing the pre-orientation online module, etc.). This group will take the lead on this work, with support from the ASLP/QEP Director and ASLP Administrative Specialist. The working group

will include the director of institutional research, the academic advising manager, the dean of student services, a career coach, the assessment coordinator (who is also a faculty member) and the ASLP associate director.

Oversight committee – This group will include the working group members as well as the president, vice president for instruction & student services, vice president for finance and technology, the academic deans, and the registrar. Its role will be to meet each semester to review the progress of the QEP.

Implementation Timeline

(NOTE: Assessment timeline is available in "Assessment Plan.")

Academic Year 2017-2018	
Summer 2017	
Pre-Orientation Online Module • n/a	**New Student Orientation/Open House Kick-Off** • Continue old models of orientation and open house kick-offs.
First Semester Seminar • Identify instructors for three pilot seminars (to be implemented in Fall 2019): (1) in-person transfer seminar, (2) online transfer seminar, and (3) in-person CTE seminar.	**Faculty/Staff Development** • n/a
Fall 2017	
Pre-Orientation Online Module • Research online orientation models from other schools. • Identify orientation content that can be delivered through an online portal. • Develop pre-orientation learning goals that include some QEP learning outcomes (specifically the goal setting outcomes) as well as basic information that can be communicated in an online format. • Develop online learning components for Blackboard course • Identify best platform for online portal (Blackboard would be ideal, but students don't currently have access until their courses begin) • Develop online process for storing student goals and success plans in a place where students, faculty and staff can access those throughout the students' time at NRCC. (Remains to be seen if this should happen in VIP-PASS or CLAS.) • Identify method for making sure that students complete orientation as well as interventions to encourage students to do so.	**New Student Orientation/Open House Kick-Off** • In conjunction with online orientation planning, develop learning activities in the in-person orientation session that advance the QEP's community building learning objectives. These might include a group mural project or a service project. • Develop creative and engaging plans for the open house kick-off celebrations that educate parents and other supporters about how to best support their college students. These plans could include ongoing resources like a Facebook group and/or a website for NRCC student supporters.
First Semester Seminar • Hold large group meeting of all three teams to discuss vision, answer questions and develop plan for moving forward.	**Faculty/Staff Development** • Create committee of full and part-time faculty and staff to direct QEP coordinators' efforts to train faculty and staff on QEP learning

• Hold regular small group meetings of seminar teams to develop seminar course theme, plans, activities that serve the overlapping course objectives as well as contribute to community building and goal setting/tracking, and assessment tools. • Hold large group meeting to share initial planning discussions, course plans, activities and assessment tools. Deans and ASLP Director will attend to inform decisions about phase two of the seminar implementation.	outcomes, activities, and broader student success initiatives. • With pilot seminar instructors, plan January in-service workshop to educate other faculty and staff on seminar plans as well as the first semester experience more generally.
Spring 2018	
Pre-Orientation Online Module • Finalize online orientation components, implementation process. • Prepare written materials for high school career coaches to use in preparing high school seniors who plan to attend NRCC to complete online orientation. • Set up and publish online orientation module by the time registration begins for Fall 2018.	**New Student Orientation/Open House Kick-Off** • Implement one last set of the old orientation/kick-off models, while perhaps testing out ideas for components of the new model to take place in the summer. • Continue developing community-building learning activities for orientation and parent/supporter-education activities for kick-off. • Begin registration process for orientation, including sharing information about newly required online pre-orientation online module.
First Semester Seminar • Hold in-service workshop to update faculty/staff about progress on developing seminars as well as other elements of the First Semester Experience/QEP plan. • Hold egular small group meetings to continue to plan course plans/activities/assessment tools and to develop a clear timeline of what will happen on which days of the seminar. • Hold large group meeting to share/finalize pilot plans. Deans and ASLP Director will attend to inform decisions about phase two of the seminar implementation. • Inform high school career coaches and advising staff about the pilot seminars so that they can encourage students to register.	**Faculty/Staff Development** • Hold in-service training for faculty on plans for first semester seminar (see to the left). • Plan August in-service one-on-one training lesson plan for new instructors. Training will cover student success initiatives, CLAS progress surveys and QEP. • Invite new instructors/staff to attend an orientation session during the summer.

Academic Year 2018-2019	
Summer 2018	
Pre-Orientation Online Module • Implement first wave of online pre-orientation modules.	**New Student Orientation/Open House Kick-Off** • Implement new iteration of orientation and kick-off open house celebrations.
First Semester Seminar • During orientation, ensure that a pilot group of first semester students are enrolled in pilot first semester seminars.	**Faculty/Staff Development** • Encourage nw instructors/staff to attend orientation sessions as participants.
Fall 2018	
Pre-Orientation Online Module • Evaluate implementation method and learning components and adjust accordingly. • Implement online learning tool for new students in subsequent semester.	**New Student Orientation/Open House Kick-Off** • Evaluate orientation/open house and tweak accordingly.
First Semester Seminar • Implement 3 pilot seminars. • Hold monthly small group meetings to share and assess progress. Possible tweaking to plans as the semester progresses. • Deans and ASLP Director create plan for phase 2 of seminar implementation. • Planning instructors plan best practices workshop for in-service to share lessons learned with faculty.	**Faculty/Staff Development** • Conduct one-on-one student success trainings with new instructors/staff.
Spring 2019	
Pre-Orientation Online Module • Evaluate implementation method and learning components and adjust accordingly. • Begin implementing second wave of online pre-orientation modules for new students starting in summer and fall 2019.	**New Student Orientation/Open House Kick-Off** • Implement new iteration of orientation and kick-off open house celebrations.
First Semester Seminar • In-service presentation by pilot seminar instructors, especially encouraging (requiring?) future seminar instructors to attend. • Deans identify seminar instructors for Fall 2019 and create teams to plan for bringing the seminar to scale for nearly all first semester students. • Phase 2 seminar instructor teams develop course plans for phase two seminars.	**Faculty/Staff Development** • In-service best practice workshop for pilot seminar instructors to share lessons from pilot seminars. • Conduct one-on-one student success trainings with new instructors/staff. • Invite new instructors/staff to attend an orientation session during the summer.

Academic Year 2019-2020	
Summer 2019	
Pre-Orientation Online Module • Implement for students starting in summer and fall 2019.	**New Student Orientation/Open House Kick-Off** • Implement new iteration of orientation and kick-off open house celebrations.
First Semester Seminar • During orientation, ensure that an appropriate number of first semester students are enrolled in a first semester seminar. (Depends on the scale at which the first semester seminar is being implemented in Phase 2.)	**Faculty/Staff Development** • Invite new instructors/staff to attend orientation sessions as participants.
Fall 2019	
Pre-Orientation Online Module • Evaluate implementation method and learning components and adjust accordingly. • Implement online learning tool for new students in subsequent semester.	**New Student Orientation/Open House Kick-Off** • Evaluate orientation/open house and tweak accordingly.
First Semester Seminar • Implement phase 2 of first semester seminar, potentially bringing the seminar to scale for all new students. • Phase 2 instructors prepare best practices workshop for in-service in January.	**Faculty/Staff Development** • Conduct one-on-one student success trainings with new instructors/staff.
Spring 2020	
Pre-Orientation Online Module • Evaluate implementation method and learning components and adjust accordingly. • Begin implementing second wave of online pre-orientation modules for new students starting in summer and fall 2020.	**New Student Orientation/Open House Kick-Off** • Implement new iteration of orientation and kick-off open house celebrations.
First Semester Seminar • Phase 2 seminars, continued. (Smaller number of first semester students in the spring term means fewer seminar courses this semester, even if the program is at scale.) • Deans and QEP director assess program to decide what next steps should be. If program is not at scale yet, this would be the ideal time for planning for it to be brought to scale.	**Faculty/Staff Development** • Hold faculty in-service workshop to share best practices and begin to look at how the learning outcomes can be applied to courses outside of the First Semester Seminar. • Conduct one-on-one student success trainings with new instructors/staff. • Invite new instructors/staff to attend an orientation session during the summer.
Academic Year 2020-2021	

Summer 2020	
Pre-Orientation Online Module • Implement for students starting in summer and fall 2020.	**New Student Orientation/Open House Kick-Off** • Implement new iteration of orientation and kick-off open house celebrations.
First Semester Seminar • During orientation, ensure that all first semester students are enrolled in a first semester seminar.	**Faculty/Staff Development** • Invite new instructors/staff to attend orientation sessions as participants.
Fall 2020	
Pre-Orientation Online Module • Evaluate implementation method and learning components and adjust accordingly. • Implement online learning tool for new students in subsequent semester.	**New Student Orientation/Open House Kick-Off** • Evaluate orientation/open house and tweak accordingly.
First Semester Seminar • Teach seminars, likely at scale at this point. • Continue regular meetings of seminar instructors and deans to evaluate progress and tweak seminar as necessary.	**Faculty/Staff Development** • Conduct one-on-one student success trainings with new instructors/staff.
Spring 2021	
Pre-Orientation Online Module • Evaluate implementation method and learning components and adjust accordingly. • Begin implementing second wave of online pre-orientation modules for new students starting in summer and fall 2021.	**New Student Orientation/Open House Kick-Off** • Implement new iteration of orientation and kick-off open house celebrations.
First Semester Seminar • Teach seminars, likely at scale at this point. • Continue regular meetings of seminar instructors and deans to evaluate progress and tweak seminar as necessary.	**Faculty/Staff Development** • Conduct one-on-one student success trainings with new instructors/staff. • Invite new instructors/staff to attend an orientation session during the summer.
Academic Year 2021-2022	
Summer 2021	
Pre-Orientation Online Module • Implement for students starting in summer and fall 2021.	**New Student Orientation/Open House Kick-Off** • Implement new iteration of orientation and kick-off open house celebrations.
First Semester Seminar	**Faculty/Staff Development**

• During orientation, ensure that all first semester students are enrolled in a first semester seminar.	• Invite new instructors/staff to attend orientation sessions as participants.
Fall 2021	
Pre-Orientation Online Module • Evaluate implementation method and learning components and adjust accordingly. • Implement online learning tool for new students in subsequent semester.	**New Student Orientation/Open House Kick-Off** • Evaluate orientation/open house and tweak accordingly.
First Semester Seminar • Teach seminars at scale. • Continue regular meetings of seminar instructors and deans to evaluate progress and tweak seminar as necessary.	**Faculty/Staff Development** • Conduct one-on-one student success trainings with new instructors/staff.
Spring 2022	
Pre-Orientation Online Module • Evaluate implementation method and learning components and adjust accordingly. • Begin implementing second wave of online pre-orientation modules for new students starting in summer and fall 2022.	**New Student Orientation/Open House Kick-Off** • Implement new iteration of orientation and kick-off open house celebrations.
First Semester Seminar • Teach seminars at scale. • Continue regular meetings of seminar instructors and deans to evaluate progress and tweak seminar as necessary.	**Faculty/Staff Development** • Conduct one-on-one student success trainings with new instructors/staff. • Invite new instructors/staff to attend an orientation session during the summer.

Assessment Plan

NRCC's QEP intends to make an impact on several student learning outcomes with the intent that affecting these outcomes will result in improved student success measures. Specifically, the QEP intends to help students achieve the following student learning outcomes in two areas (goal setting and community building):

Student Learning Outcomes: Goal Setting

(Students will set long term goals as well as short term benchmarks for reaching those goals)

- Students will articulate active educational goals.

- Students will develop learning plans with specific timelines for achieving the articulated goals.

- Students will meet targets specified in the learning plan timeline.

    Note: When learning plan timeline targets are not met, new targets will be developed together with strategies to improve the likelihood of meeting the revised targets.

Student Learning Outcomes: Community Building

(Students, faculty and staff will see themselves as vital parts of the NRCC community who should ask for and offer help to each other)

- Students will know other students, faculty and staff.

- Students will ask for help when experiencing academic and personal challenges.

- Students will hold the belief that they are not alone in the fact that they have both academic and life challenges to overcome in order to succeed.

- Students will feel that others care about their success, failures and problems.

- Students will care about the success, failure, and problems of others.

These student learning outcomes feed the desired goals for the QEP. The intent of the QEP is that by helping students achieve these learning outcomes, they will achieve a greater degree of success as demonstrated by the following student success measures:

Student Success Measures
- Successful course completion rates in the first semester (% students receiving A,B or C grades)
- Successful course completion rates in subsequent semesters (% students receiving A,B or C grades)
- Course withdrawal rates in the first semester
- Course withdrawal rates for subsequent semesters
- Fall to spring retention rates
- Fall to fall retention rates
- 100% and 150% time graduation rates
- Overall graduation and transfer rates

Data Sources
To assess the achievement of these student-learning outcomes and the overall student success goal, specific measures and means to collect data for the identified measures are being developed.

Assessing Goal-Setting Student Learning Outcomes: Data associated with the goal setting student learning outcomes will be gathered using an in-house piece of software described earlier in this document called CLAS (Connecting Learning Assets and Students). Using CLAS, each

student's educational goal, as well as the learning plan and associated timeline, will be written to a database for future action. As modifications to the goal and plans are made, these too will be written to the database. All database activity will be stored. The database will store not only the most recent (active) goal and associated learning plans, but all goals and learning plans entered into the system for each student. This record will permit assessment personnel to analyze both the achievement of goals and associated learning plan components in order to assess QEP activities. By storing all goal and learning plan activity instead of only the active goal and plan, CLAS users, including the student him/herself, instructors, advisors and ASLP staff can see the evolution of these plans, enhancing the College's ability to reward students for successful achievement and to modify plans when necessary to improve the likelihood of future achievement. Moreover, the CLAS system will be used to gather precise information about what interventions/QEP program elements to which each student has been exposed. This use of CLAS is important because as the QEP is conducted and the original plan is modified based on analyses of the data, it will be increasingly critical for assessment to be able to understand and disaggregate students based on exactly what intervention components students have experienced.

Assessing Community Building Student Learning Outcomes: Measurement of the student learning outcomes associated with community building will be accomplished using a survey instrument (see Appendix 11 for SOCI – Sense of Community Inventory) designed to measure these behaviors and attitudes. A pilot instrument has been developed and is currently being tested. A copy of the survey (which will be implemented as a web survey) is attached as an appendix. This survey will be conducted annually with all students. Because survey responses will include student ID numbers (called emplids at NRCC), it will be possible to disaggregate students based on student characteristics (demographic, academic, and characteristics related to the QEP elements to which they have been exposed).

Assessing Student Success Measures: Data for assessment of the student success measures as well as important data on student characteristics come from the student information system. This system provides data on enrollment, course outcomes, academic awards and industry-recognized certifications, as well as demographic data useful for disaggregation.

Assessment Strategy

The QEP will be implemented in stages. The assessment strategy focuses on gathering data and conducting analyses to guide the staged implementation of the programs outlined in this QEP. This staged implementation approach permits the QEP team to assess the impacts of each of the staged implementations as they occur and make modifications for improvement as they are dictated by the analyses.

AY 2016-17

The time period of academic year 2016-17 (AY16-17) serves as a baseline for subsequent comparisons in that students would have had no exposure to the QEP interventions or its intent. Therefore, students who began their studies in AY16-17 and were never exposed to the primary interventions of the pre-orientation online module, the new student orientation/open house kick-off and the first semester seminar can serve as a quasi-experimental control group (not randomly assigned to condition) for comparisons. Similarly, students who begin their studies at NRCC in AY17-18 can act as a separate quasi-experimental control group. This would be a separate control group because the QEP activities that are planned for AY17-18 may have some minor impact on their attitudes and behaviors as faculty and staff begin to adapt their personal behaviors to correspond with the philosophies and trainings espoused in the QEP as it is formally implemented.

AY 2017-18

Based on the implementation timetable, AY17-18 will serve primarily as a baseline year. All of the data elements described earlier will be collected and saved for future analysis. Students in the AY 17-18 cohort represent the baseline experiences of first year students against which subsequent cohorts can be compared. Furthermore, data from students in the AY 16-17 cohort collected in AY 17-18 will form a set of baseline data against which subsequent second year student results can be compared.

AY 2018-19

AY18-19 will serve as the first intervention year. In this year, the first cohort of incoming students will be exposed to the new pre-orientation online module and the new student orientation/open house kick-off. In addition, a relatively small pilot group of students will be exposed to one of three first semester seminar sections in AY18-19. These will serve as the first two experimental groups for the assessment. Their activities, student success outcomes, and survey results will be compared with those of the two quasi-experimental control groups described earlier. Comparisons with the quasi-experimental control groups will form the basis of determining the effectiveness of the interventions.

Additional analyses will be conducted on subgroups of these populations to assess the extent to which observed changes (or lack thereof) are related to characteristics of the subpopulations explored. Sub-populations of interest will include (but will not necessarily be limited to):

- full- versus part-time students

- students who receive financial aid versus those who do not,

- first-generation versus non-first-generation students,

- CTE program versus transfer program students,

- students who come from a background of poverty (based on US Census poverty levels) versus those who do not,

- gender,

- age (traditional college age 24 or younger vs nontraditional age students),

- ethnic background.

Due to the size of our college, it is unlikely that analyses of multiple cross-tabs of these sub-populations will be feasible. When sufficient numbers exist for meaningful analyses, cross-tabs that include multiple subpopulations (e.g., full- vs part-time first generation students vs full- vs part-time non-first-generation students) will be explored.

While it would be desirable to conduct analyses using traditional parametric statistics, sample size issues may affect the ability to conduct analyses with sufficient statistical power to find effects at the generally accepted $p<.05$ level of significance for all comparisons. That being said, parametric analysis of the larger groups will be possible. The nature of the interventions, measures (almost all interval data), and quasi-experimental control nature of the groups will permit the use of standard general linear modeling approaches to explore the data to determine where activities are working to achieve the desired results and where there are no meaningful differences between experimental and control groups. The most likely statistical models will involve ANOVA and t-test procedures. However, some of the scales of the survey instrument (SOCI) will likely need to be explored more thoroughly using cluster/factor analysis and regression models to determine relationships between items and where issues regarding interdependence of measures may create problems for parametric analysis. This is in large part why the College is already beginning testing and assessing the planned instrument to prepare it for use in this project. When parametric statistical analysis is not possible because of sample size issues, data will be examined by exploring possible relationships between frequencies, rates, means and their associated standard deviations in a more subjective manner with an emphasis on understanding the variation apparent in the data and the extent to which observed differences are greater than that apparent variation.

AY 2019-20, AY 2020-21 and AY 2021-22

Continuing with the discussion of the implementation of the project and its relationship to experimental conditions, AY19-20 through AY21-22 are the years during which the College expects to fully implement each of the components of the project, bringing the first semester seminar to scale for all students. This adds a third experimental group to the design (full implementation across all incoming students) and three new cohorts to examine for similarities and differences (AY19-20, AY20-21, and AY21-22).

Process Evaluation

A variety of non-experimental assessment activities will take place as part of the QEP project that fit into the general area of process evaluations. These assessments will inform project managers about observed challenges and potential remedies for the implementation of the project. Activities associated with the tasks detailed in the implementation timeline will be logged. In addition, as described in the implementation timeline, a variety of assessment activities (such as informal interviews, group discussions, possibly short, informal written or web surveys of participants) will be used. These assessment tools explore possible strategies to improve faculty and staff training regarding the QEP activities. In addition, these process evaluation activities will assess how components of the pre-orientation online module and the new orientation and open house kickoff are perceived and might be improved. The first semester seminar being developed and implemented in this QEP will be evaluated using the same faculty and course evaluation methods applied to all courses at NRCC.

The following chart summarizes the assessment plan in a more graphic form.

Assessment Plan Chart

	QEP Programming	Data Collected	Assessment Activities
AY 2016-17	None; continue with existing orientation programs while new programming is in development	Collection of data on AY 2016-17 incoming student cohort: • Success measures: first and second semester course completion and withdrawal rates; fall to spring retention • SOCI survey results • Goal statements in CLAS	Collection of baseline data on AY 2016-17 incoming student cohort to use for comparisons of first year students
AY 2017-18	None; continue with existing programs while preparing for AY 2018-19 implementation	Collection of data on AY 2017-18 incoming student cohort: • Success measures: first and second semester course completion and withdrawal rates; fall to spring retention • SOCI survey results • Goal statements in CLAS Collection of data on AY 2016-17 incoming student cohort: • Success measures: third and fourth semester course completion and withdrawal rates; fall to fall retention; fall to spring retention	Collection of baseline data on AY 2017-18 incoming student cohort to for comparisons of first year students Collection of baseline data on AY 2016-17 incoming student cohort in their second year to use for comparisons of second year students
AY 2018-19	All incoming students: pre-orientation online module All incoming students: orientation/open house kick-off Small pilot group of students: first semester seminar	Collection of data on AY 2018-19 incoming student cohort: • Success measures: first and second semester course completion and withdrawal rates; fall to spring retention • SOCI survey results • Goal statements and learning plan targets in CLAS Collection of data on AY 2017-18 incoming student cohort: • Success measures: third and fourth semester course completion and withdrawal rates; fall to fall retention; fall to spring retention Collection of data on AY 2016-17 incoming student cohort: • Success measures: graduation and transfer rates; course completion and withdrawal rates for students still enrolled; retention rates for students still enrolled	Analysis and comparison of data collected on AY 2018-19 incoming students to baseline data on two previous incoming cohorts to determine possible impact of QEP interventions Analysis of success measures, SOCI survey results, and completion of goals and learning plan targets will include dis-aggregation of results based on student characteristics (demographic, academic, and characteristics related to the QEP elements to which they have been exposed)
AY 2019-20	All incoming students: pre-orientation online module	Collection of data on AY 2019-20 incoming student cohort: • Success measures: first and second semester course completion and withdrawal rates; fall to spring retention • SOCI survey results	Analysis and comparison of data collected on AY 2019-20 incoming students to data on previous three years' incoming cohorts

	All incoming students: orientation/open house kick-off All incoming students, if possible: first semester seminar **Assessment findings from AY 2018-19 will inform improvements to implementation of first year experiences	• Goal statements and learning plan targets in CLAS Collection of data on AY 2018-19 incoming student cohort: • Success measures: third and fourth semester course completion and withdrawal rates; fall to fall retention; fall to spring retention • Goal statements and learning plan targets in CLAS Collection of data on AY 2016-17 and 2017-18 incoming student cohorts: • Success measures: graduation and transfer rates; course completion and withdrawal rates for students still enrolled; retention rates for students still enrolled	to determine possible impact of QEP interventions Analysis and comparison of "2nd year" data collected on the AY 2018-19 cohort to "2nd year" baseline data collected on the previous "2nd year" cohorts to determine possible impact of QEP interventions Analysis of success measures, SOCI survey results, and completion of goals and learning plan targets will include dis-aggregation of results based on student characteristics (demographic, academic, and characteristics related to the QEP elements to which they have been exposed)
AY 2020-21	All incoming students: pre-orientation online module All incoming students: orientation/open house kick-off All incoming students, if possible: first semester seminar **Assessment findings from AY 2019-20 will inform improvements to implementation of first semester experiences	Collection of data on AY 2020-21 incoming student cohort: • Success measures: first and second semester course completion and withdrawal rates; fall to spring retention • SOCI survey results • Goal statements and learning plan targets in CLAS Collection of data on AY 2019-20 incoming student cohort: • Success measures: third and fourth semester course completion and withdrawal rates; fall to fall retention; fall to spring retention • Goal statements and learning plan targets in CLAS Collection of data on AY 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 incoming student cohorts: • Success measures: graduation and transfer rates; course completion and withdrawal rates for students still enrolled; retention rates for students still enrolled	Analysis and comparison of data collected on AY 2020-21 incoming students to data on previous four years' incoming cohorts to determine possible impact of QEP interventions Analysis and comparison of "2nd year" data collected on the AY 2019-20 cohort to "2nd year" baseline data collected on the previous "2nd year" cohorts to determine possible impact of QEP interventions Analysis of success measures, SOCI survey results, and completion of goals and learning plan targets will include dis-aggregation of results based on student characteristics (demographic, academic, and characteristics related to the QEP elements to which they have been exposed)

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Appendices

1. Student Success Plan #1

2. Connection Specialist Job Description

3. Student Success Plan #2

4. New Student Experience Innovation Team Charging Memo

5. NRCC's Student Success Data

6. Proposed QEP Logic Model (Spring 2016)

7. CTE Advisory Groups Survey

8. Current New Student Orientation Agenda

9. Sample syllabus for combined SDV-100/ENG 111 seminar

10. Faculty Learning Outcomes

11. Sense of Community Inventory (SOCI)