

Brightpoint Community College - Quality Enhancement Plan Executive Summary

Excellence in academic advising practices are key components to community college student success (Hayes et al., 2020). Establishing strong relationships between advisors and students can drive improved student satisfaction, fall-to-fall retention, and graduation/credentialing rates by increasing student cultural capital and academic self-confidence. Through a systematic review of Brightpoint Community College's (Brightpoint) historic enrollment data, worrisome trends in fall-to-fall retention rates were noted by the college leadership team.

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Topics Committee, an ad hoc committee with broad institutional representation, was formed to explore potential causes and solutions for declining retention. The QEP Topics Committee conducted focus groups among college community employees and students to solicit feedback as to their current concerns on campus. These focus groups were followed by community-wide surveys to solicit stakeholder feedback among the potential topics uncovered in the focus groups. The QEP Topics Committee noted that deficits in academic advising stood out as a top issue, and the committee recommended that the QEP should focus on improvements in academic advising.

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Development Committee, a second ad hoc committee formed with broad institutional representation, reviewed the Topics Committee's recommendations and supported the broad topic of academic advising. Though first noted in the 2015 Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) and Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) data, a closer examination of results from the 2017-18 and 2019-20 Student Satisfaction with College Services (SSCS) surveys corroborated gaps in student satisfaction with advising, especially regarding adviser availability.

The college reached out to Virginia Commonwealth University's Doctor of Education program to conduct an audit of Brightpoint's advising culture and provide recommendations for improvement. As a result of feedback and assessment, the college has made quality advising a top priority. This focus is also reflected in the comprehensive advising landing page on the college's website, as a sub-unit of Goal #1 in Brightpoint's 2021-2027 Strategic Plan, and as the foundation for our newest Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP).

The new QEP seeks to promote a proactive advising environment, with all advisors receiving additional professional development in enhanced advising practices such as the use of EAB Navigate for reporting and scheduling appointments, proactive advising, and early intervention. Changing the institutional culture of advising will occur slowly through following a deliberate action plan with measurable goals.

Outcomes and Metrics

The expected outcomes of the QEP are to –

- Improve student satisfaction rates with academic advising services.
- Improve fall-to-fall retention rates.

Student satisfaction rates will be measured by the annual Student Satisfaction with College Services (SSCS) survey, and results will be collected and compared across years. The CCSSE and SENSE survey tools may also be used to corroborate findings. Fall-to-fall retention rates and graduation/credentialing rates are tracked as student achievement metrics internally and within the Virginia Community College System (VCCS). Rates will be compared and reported, and disaggregation of student populations will be explored to determine if the QEP is increasing rates overall, and/or if the QEP is also increasing rates, specifically, in historically marginalized student groups. This aligns directly to Goal 1 (Advance equity in access, inclusion, and completion by strengthening our student and academic supports, particularly for our underserved populations of students) of the strategic plan by implementing Strategy 1.1 (Use disaggregated data to assist in identifying and supporting student needs) and Strategy 1.2 (Engage faculty and staff in professional development and meaningful dialogue to broaden their understanding of being a diverse community and to address equity gaps in student success). In terms of student achievement metrics, the QEP will help the college reach its fall-to-fall retention target of a 65% retention rate, over the next six years, with a threshold of acceptability of 56%. The target was set based on a percent increase of 9% over six years, or a 1.5% increase annually. The threshold of acceptability was set as the 2018-2019 pre-COVID academic year, which was the college's highest year of retention. When examining the success rates at community colleges, workforce credentialing programs must be considered. "Community colleges are recognized by business and industry as the prime provider of career and technology education" (Davis, et al, 2008). As these students make up a significant percentage of community college enrollment (D'Amico, et al, 2017), community college success cannot be measured without including the credentialing rate achieved in these programs. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) acknowledged in 2021 that student financial analysis cannot be accurately assessed without the inclusion of this population (Romano, et al, 2021). Similarly, this previously overlooked group must be included in our metrics to gauge the success of this QEP initiative. As these programs often do not include a degree as their educational goal, graduation rates alone cannot measure the achievements of these students. The needs of the credentialed workforce are only increasing, and these students are becoming a larger part of the community college student population. We must include analysis of their success to properly serve this student group. The measure of their success requires the inclusion of credential attainment in our metric assessment, as this will allow us to compare success across years in which there are different numbers of starting population students. Completion rates for students earning a degree or credential within 150% of the expected time will be tracked as awards. The expectation is that the QEP will help the college reach its target 2,500 awards annually over the next six years with a threshold of acceptability of 1,854. The target was set based on a 35% (actual 34.84%) increase over six years, or a gain of at least 100 students annually (e.g., 110 students in year 1, 120 students in year 2, 130 students in year 3, 140 students in year 4, 150 students in year 5). The threshold of acceptability was set as the 2018-2019 pre-COVID academic year, which was the college's highest year of student award attainment. Metrics of Associate-level Transfer Programs Graduates; Career, Technology and Education (CTE) Graduates; and Short-term Credentials Graduates may be used to supplement, along with disaggregation of student groups, to determine which student populations are being impacted by the QEP. This aligns directly to Goal 3 (Provide educational and career pathways through expanded partnerships and experiential learning options for students) of the strategic

plan by implementing Strategy 3.1 (Align curricular content with the expressed needs of employers, including periodic review and updates by advisory committees that ensures consistent alignment with industry changes) and Strategy 3.2 (Initiate more comprehensive and aligned policies and processes to expand credit for prior learning, integrate workforce and academic instruction, accelerate time to completion for certain academic programs, and provide greater access to internship and apprenticeship opportunities).

Coordination and Oversight

The college will hire a Quality Enhancement Plan Coordinator, a faculty member given one class of release time per semester including the summer session, to lead the QEP. The coordinator will chair the Academic Planning and Proactive Advising Steering Committee with the support of the designated responsible personnel representing the EAB Navigate Training Task Force, the QEP Marketing Taskforce, and the Advising Skills Training Task Force. The Academic Planning and Proactive Advising Steering Committee will establish and publish the expectations of both students and advisors, identify the training needs for all advisors, establish a reward or recognition system for excellence in advising, and oversee the other QEP committees. The EAB Navigate Training Task Force will identify training needs and produce training modules in using EAB Navigate for appointment scheduling, course scheduling, academic planning, early alerts, reporting, and communicating with students. The Advising Skills Training Task Force will be responsible for the maintenance of a central repository for advising resources, the creation of new advising training elements as needed, and the oversight of new advisor training programs. Finally, the Marketing and Communications Task Force will be responsible for informing the stakeholders about the QEP, updating the stakeholders on intended benefits, and demonstrating how stakeholders can further support the QEP effort.

These committees will be tasked with transitioning the college from a passive, transactional, prescriptive advising culture to a proactive, holistic advising culture. The supportive tool to assist the college with implementing and monitoring the change is EAB Navigate, an on-line platform for scheduling and reporting student engagement with advisors, tracking student progress and attendance, and allowing early intervention. All advisors will be available in different modalities, as requested by students, including in-person, synchronous virtual, e-mail, and phone. There will also be consistency in easy scheduling practices, allowing students to meet with a faculty advisor at a time both find mutually convenient when students have been previously unable to meet regularly with faculty advisors. During advising meetings, students will work with advisors to create and document a comprehensive, long-term academic plan. A record of these meetings will be maintained in the EAB Navigate system so any future institutional agent working with the student can easily reference past meetings. To recognize the importance of advising to student success and celebrate exceptional advisors, a new award will be presented annually for excellence in advising practices to new student and programmatic advisors. Further, faculty and staff will proactively engage at-risk students through an early alert system housed in EAB Navigate. Through the semester, instructional faculty will raise alerts on students who are in danger of not succeeding in the course. These alerts will be directed to retention specialists who, in turn, will connect the student with appropriate resources or guidance. It is expected that students who engage with institutional resources through either early alerts or academic advising will have greater fall-to-fall retention and express greater satisfaction

with advising services than those students who do not. This aligns directly to Goal 1 (Advance equity in access, inclusion, and completion by strengthening our student and academic supports, particularly for our underserved populations of students) of the strategic plan by implementing Strategy 1.4 (Develop a holistic and inclusive approach to student engagement and success through proactive academic advising, financial coaching, and experiential mapping).

Continuous Quality Improvement

Continual assessment and re-evaluation of methodology, and acting on this data to improve this plan, is the cornerstone of the Quality Enhancement Plan. As the advising culture of the college shifts over the next five years from a prescriptive advising model to a proactive advising model, the Academic Planning and Proactive Advising Steering Committee, led by the Quality Enhancement Plan Coordinator, will monitor the state of academic advising at the college through review of data of each reported activity. Binary regression analyses will show if creating an academic plan or responding to an early alert predicts student success as measured by fall-to-fall retention and graduation/credentialing rates. Further, it is expected that changes in program advisor availability, appointment scheduling, and pro-actively reaching out to students during the semester will improve student satisfaction with advising services measured through the annual Student Satisfaction Survey, and CCSSE. This aligns directly to Goal 1 (Advance equity in access, inclusion, and completion by strengthening our student and academic supports, particularly for our underserved populations of students) of the strategic plan by implementing Strategy 1.2 (Engage faculty and staff in professional development and meaningful dialogue to broaden their understanding of being a diverse community and to address equity gaps in student success). If performance goals are not being met, the Academic Planning and Proactive Advising Steering Committee will suggest changes to the Quality Enhancement Plan, based on internal research and current literature, to improve student success.