

Quality Enhancement Plan: First-Year Experience Initiative

The purpose of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for Athens Technical College (ATC) is to improve the first-year experience of students by providing a foundation for academic and career success. Comprehensive research on how to improve student engagement, persistence, and program completion at ATC led to the **QEP topic selection of the first-year experience**. A **First Semester Seminar (FIRST) course** and **Student Success Professional Development program** will serve as the focal points of the College's QEP.

FIRST is designed to introduce new students enrolling in the College to the academic skills and resources they will need to attain their educational and career goals. Through the use of academic strategies and self-discovery, students will acquire knowledge and skills to help them succeed at ATC and in life. Students new to college will take FIRST during their first semester of enrollment. The course will be a three-credit-hour hybrid course (a blend of on-grounds and online instruction). Student learning outcomes for FIRST include:

- **Students will demonstrate** appropriate communication skills.
- Students will be able to **apply time management** strategies.
- Students will be able to **identify effective student strategies**.
- Students will be able to **describe various student resources** at Athens Technical College that contribute to the educational experience.
- **Students will create** an education and career plan with defined short-term and long-term goals.
- Students will **develop a College Success Portfolio**.

The **Student Success Professional Development program** will consist of two components. The first component, which will be mandatory for faculty and staff selected to teach FIRST, will focus on pedagogical approaches and instructional technology integrated in FIRST. The second component will consist of a Student Success Certificate program, which will be mandatory for all faculty and staff. The focus of this certificate program will be on understanding barriers to success, getting to know the ATC students, and engaging students for success.

The QEP will be evaluated utilizing quantitative and qualitative methods. Annual reports will provide summaries of what is working well, what has been accomplished, and what areas need to be adjusted to improve results. The QEP Implementation Team will conduct a summative evaluation of the QEP's overall impact on students' first-year experience as part of the fifth-year report to the Commission on Colleges.

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