



Executive Summary

Mission - The mission of Augusta Technical College is to promote and provide the education, economic, and community development needs of its service area. The college awards Associates of Science Degrees, Associate of Applied Science Degrees, diplomas, and technical certificates of credit through traditional and distance delivery methods. The College achieves its mission by providing academic and technical education, student support services, customized business and industry training, economic development services, continuing education, and adult education services.

QEP Focus Statement - To improve student learning in distance education through course design enhancements focusing on required orientations and the use of innovative resources and advanced multimedia.

QEP Justification - Augusta Technical College strives to support its mission statement and provide forward-thinking post-secondary education to the spectrum of learners in its service area. As a member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) regional accrediting agency, Augusta Technical College participates in a SACSCOC mandated ten-year review and reaffirmation process. A portion of the review includes improving student learning through the development of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). While complying with this scheduled review and maintaining the College's ongoing goal to improve student learning, the Augusta Technical College community has identified an area of student learning where significant improvement can be made in the context of an existing and growing pedagogical apparatus. Specifically, Augusta Technical College proposes a QEP project that addresses the introductory technological and process challenges that confront students taking online classes with the over-reaching goal to improve student learning of online course content and skills necessary to succeed in a distance education environment.

Research and statistical analyses performed at the College show that the success rate (success defined as a "C" or better) for students taking fully online classes is lower and the withdraw rate higher than students taking classes in traditional face-to-face, hybrid, and web-enhanced formats. In the 2012 Academic Year, which will be used for baseline data, the success rate was 16 percent lower and the withdraw rate 11 percent higher for fully online courses. This data combined with the fact that over 60% of the courses offered at Augusta Technical College, representing 3,000 students, utilize some form of distance education online course management interface indicates that improvement in this area of student learning will positively impact a significant portion of the College's student population.

QEP Solution - To address this student learning gap, the College has developed a solution that will produce measurable results and benefit students taking online courses; and as the processes are institutionalized over the five-year implementation, can benefit all students enrolled in any course at the College utilizing fully online, hybrid, or web-enhanced course content. During the implementation phase of the Quality Enhancement Plan, students will be required to complete an online orientation prior to enrolling in an online course. The online orientation will break down the barriers to accessing course material. Once students have enrolled in one of the specified pilot online courses, they will then be exposed to course content delivered utilizing current innovative resources and advanced multimedia focusing on identified student learning outcomes within each of the chosen pilot courses. These course design enhancements will provide for a more interactive and engaging learning experience which will positively impact student learning and the rate of success and attrition for online students. By breaking down these technological and processing barriers, the College will see, at the end of the five-year implementation period, improved student learning in the areas identified within each pilot course as well as withdrawal and failure rates reduced by five percent for students enrolled in the pilot online courses that utilize both the required online orientation and enhanced course design methodologies.