

Cape Fear Community College
Take to the Waves: Enhancing the First-Year Experience

Dr. Jennifer McBride, Director of First Year Student Success Initiatives, jmcbride@cfcc.edu

CFCC considers its next quality enhancement plan (QEP) an opportunity to identify areas for growth and enact innovative practices to improve student success. To that end, CFCC began the process of identifying potential QEP topics in the spring of 2014. This process involved gathering input from internal and external constituents and analyzing institutional data on student success.

Using the input provided by internal and external constituents and an analysis of institutional data, 15 possible QEP topics were determined. An additional survey seeking input on these 15 topics as well as a number of follow-up meetings with faculty, staff, and administrators helped the college identify improving students' first-year experience as a topic that could address many of the areas of concern that had arisen during the topic selection process. These areas include improving student orientation, academic advising, support for new students, and first year students' academic success.

With the selection of improving students' first-year success as CFCC's QEP topic, the college identified first time in college (FTIC) students as the primary target group for potential interventions and established clear and assessable goals and objectives for the plan. The QEP was presented to the On-site Committee in October 2016. Based on the feedback from that visit, the goals and objectives were modified to focus on FTIC students' academic success during their first year of enrollment rather than long-term program completion and retention rates. An additional modification based on the on-site committee's feedback involves focusing on the academic credits successfully earned by FTIC students in all classes attempted during their first year, including high enrollment classes. Finally, additional direct assessments were added to the plan.

The revised goals and objectives follow:

1. Goal 1: Increase FTIC students' engagement during their first year of enrollment.
 - Objective 1.1: FTIC students will utilize campus resources at a higher rate.
 - Objective 1.2: FTIC students will report higher levels of engagement as a result of increased utilization of campus resources during their first year of enrollment.
2. Goal 2: Improve FTIC students' first year academic success.
 - Objective 2.1: FTIC students will improve the study and personal management skills necessary for academic success during their first year of enrollment.
 - Objective 2.2: Faculty will enhance instructional strategies to support FTIC students' first year success.
3. Goal 3: Improve FTIC students' academic and degree completion planning.
 - Objective 3.1: FTIC students will develop a degree completion plan within the first 30 hours of attendance.
 - Objective 3.2: FTIC students will report higher levels of satisfaction with advising and their academic planning.

CFCC will implement a number of interventions to achieve these goals and objectives. These interventions will include improving new student orientation, expanding the capacity of the college's academic advising center, providing enhanced support for first-year students through academic success courses, and facilitating faculty professional development focused on improving student engagement. These interventions will not only support the goals of CFCC's first-year experience, but will help all incoming students engage and succeed as they work to meet their academic and career goals.