



Central Carolina Technical College (CCTC) initiated its exploration of a relevant Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) topic in 2012 with a focus on improving student success. This process initially employed a college-wide, cross-functional QEP Topic Research Team of faculty and staff who identified barriers to student success and a student focus group that provided insight into the challenges facing students in their pursuit of higher education. The result of these work groups identified needs in two areas: 1) Students lacked essential skills to support academic success to remain in college and 2) Students lacked a connection to many of the people, programs, and services offered by the College. Institutional data showed that students who were retained from the first semester to the second semester were four times more likely to graduate than those who were not retained. This data provided the evidence of a need to identify essential skills for achieving academic success, and these skills need to be acquired in the first semester. The data also indicated a need for increased connectivity between students and faculty advisors leading to a plan for how the College could connect with its students in a more comprehensive and effective manner.

Both institutional and external data support that a positive first-semester experience is key to student success and retention. CCTC's QEP, **SMART Choices for Success**, addresses the problem of students lacking the skills needed for academic success through a college-wide effort focused on first-time students in an entry-level, required course and on making connections with students through a comprehensive advising process.

The mission of the CCTC QEP **SMART Choices for Success** is to increase student success by providing essential skills for achieving academic success and employing a comprehensive advising process. The mission will be accomplished through two goals:

Goal 1: Students will develop essential skills for achieving academic success.

Goal 2: Students will participate in a comprehensive advising process.

To achieve these goals, all first-time students will be enrolled in COL 105: Freshman Seminar in their first-semester. These first-time students will also participate in a comprehensive advising process to help them establish a relationship with their faculty advisor that will sustain them throughout their time at the College. Together, COL 105: Freshman Seminar and the comprehensive advising process will help students make SMART Choices, which are essential skills needed in higher education:

- S** = Strategies to achieve academic and career goals
- M** = Methods of basic information literacy skills
- A** = Attendance policy knowledge and impact
- R** = Responsible and ethical academic behavior
- T** = Time management skills



CCTC has committed institutional resources to **SMART Choices for Success**, including personnel, release time for current faculty, and technology support. Implementation plans include a pre-pilot in Summer 2015, a pilot in the 2015-2016 academic year, and full implementation in the 2016-2017 academic year. **SMART Choices for Success** will be assessed through student learning outcomes in both COL 105: Freshman Seminar and the comprehensive advising process. Institutional data will be used in the reporting process. The results will be used to facilitate continuous improvement.

SMART Choices for Success is a QEP focused on student success. For the purpose of the CCTC QEP, student success is defined as students having a minimum current and cumulative GPA of 2.0, returning from the first semester to the second semester, and having a collaborative partnership with their faculty advisors. From a holistic perspective, academically successful students are more likely to be employed, to have higher paying jobs, and to contribute more to their families and their communities. By implementing a QEP focused on increasing student success, CCTC will continue to realize its three core values: *Excellence, Integrity, and Innovation*.

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