

## **El Paso Community College's QEP: Learning about the Community as a Community**

El Paso Community College's (EPCC's) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), "Learning about the Community as a Community," envisions students becoming better-informed and more engaged citizens through a deeper awareness of the greater El Paso metropolitan area. By completing faculty-designed assignments which connect interactions with the community to the content of courses within key disciplines, EPCC anticipates that students will gain a richer understanding of this region and their place within the El Paso community.

This project will be particularly beneficial to students who are limited to certain areas of the city, such as their neighborhoods, and to our military population who, with dependents, number about 71,000 people. Oftentimes, these particular groups have very limited exposure to their larger community - El Paso and the surrounding area - and develop an inaccurate or incomplete conception of this area. Getting to know one's community leads to a deeper understanding of the area, which consequently will result in a stronger commitment to the region and ultimately culminate in a sense of responsibility to the community and its members. It is through this developed commitment that our QEP connects directly to our mission to prepare our students to contribute to their community. To articulate the goal and assessment measures informed by the site visit recommendations, EPCC's QEP team worked with a consultant.

The goal of EPCC's QEP is the following:

- Students will enhance their cognitive development through connection and interaction with the community to be better-educated citizens.

To achieve our goal and measure our learning outcomes, assessment is done in several ways. Our direct learning outcomes are assessed only in the English discipline, as many students are required to take the composition courses. First, each instructor uses a rubric to assess one learning outcome from an essay assignment that is directly related to the instructor-designed QEP community-based interactive activity. The second learning outcome is assessed by an Interdisciplinary Panel, made up of faculty from other disciplines, with a rubric applied to a paragraph written by students at the end of the semester. To assess students' perceptions and attitudes about the community, a survey is used. This indirect assessment is also used in all other disciplines implementing QEP activities. The Interdisciplinary Panel and the survey are two aspects in which the assessment of the goal of the QEP is implemented in the institution as a whole. Furthermore, questions from the survey were put on the CCSSE and employee surveys to measure a change throughout the implementation process at an institutional level. A QEP Standing Committee was commissioned for a faculty-led review of the QEP implementation. This committee will review data and make recommendations for changes if needed during the implementation process.

With the student learning outcomes, assessments, and plans in place, El Paso Community College is ready for the challenge of implementing our Quality Enhancement Plan.

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