

Improving Success Rates of Academically Disadvantaged Students With Special Attention to the Limited English Population

Gwinnett Technical College

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Quality Enhancement Plan - Executive Summary

The mission of the college is to anticipate and exceed the educational and workforce training needs of our community. To accomplish this mission, the college must adapt to recent demographic changes in the greater Atlanta community. The influx of limited English proficient residents is now prevalent in the metropolitan Atlanta area. In the U.S. Census for the year 2000, Gwinnett County was recognized as having the largest percentage change in net minority population growth (320.8%) of any county in the nation for the period 1990-2000. According to the census data, 26% of county residents age 5 or older spoke a language other than English at home. By 2030, students who speak a language other than English at home will constitute 40% of the school age population in Gwinnett County. This study will document a plan of action for long-term improvement in student learning among the academically disadvantaged/learning support (LS) student population and the subset of limited English proficient (LEP) students within that population.

Less than 10% of LS students at GTC complete a degree, diploma, or certificate. Prior to summer quarter 2005, LS students and LEP students were not consistently identified and labeled in the Banner student database system used by the college. Of the 2003 cohort of LS students, only 8.7% achieved an academic award (certificate, diploma, or degree) by the date February 20, 2006. For FY 03, 04, and 05, the college had not met the Perkins benchmarks for academic attainment by the LS and LEP populations thus endangering future Perkins funding.

The QEP is an on-going activity designed to complement the college's existing planning and evaluation processes. The proposed changes in procedures and the implementation of new processes are intended to enhance student learning among LS and LEP students. Specifically, these are students who begin their college coursework in the LS program. The QEP as planned for full implementation is more than a series of interventions in admissions, assessment, placement, advisement, instruction, and related support services; it represents a major shift in the way that students will be served at this college in part due to the change in demographics of the college.

In 2003, as a part of its Adult Education program and in response to community demand for ESL classes, GTC opened its English Language Institute. In 2005, over 5,000 ESL students were served in the Adult Education program, and many of these individuals have a goal of entry into Gwinnett Technical College programs. With the changes in demographics, the QEP represents a shift from dealing with groups to dealing with individuals, a shift from understanding only one culture to increased understanding of the differences among the many cultures represented in the student body. In addition, the QEP proposes a shift from learning support classes taught in the traditional lecture/lab instructional methodology to a process where learning support classes are individually prescribed, more self-paced, and delivered via computer-assisted instruction. Faculty and other staff members, including advisement staff will serve as "coaches" to provide multiple support services and intervention strategies.

The ultimate goals are to increase percentage of LS students obtaining a degree, diploma, or certificate; increase success of LS students in LS courses; increase percentage of LS students progressing into credit programs after exiting LS; increase student success in first college-level English course; and increase college success scores in relation to Perkins benchmarks for AD and LEP students.