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QEP Title: STRIDE: Strengthening Teaching, Readiness and Innovation in Distance Education
Institution: Gwinnett Technical College
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Executive Summary

Gwinnett Technical College (GTC) offers a significant number of online courses to support the learning and time needs of its student body. While GTC expects student learning and performance in courses to be comparable regardless of the delivery method, GTC's course data mirrors that of the national trend, with large discrepancies in course completion and attrition between online courses and those with face-to-face instruction. Data reviewed consisted of online course pass rates, attrition rates, comparison of pass rates in courses with online and campus-based formats, online course evaluations comments, the Noel-Levitz Priorities Survey of Online Learners (PSOL), and grade distribution comparisons of online courses with their campus counterparts.

GTC's QEP is operational in nature and focuses on enhancing the online learning experience to increase student success in persisting in, completing, and passing online courses. Student Preparedness and Faculty Preparedness are the two strategy directions planned to achieve the goals and desired outcomes of the QEP. To support the learning environment online, the approach used will consist of primarily direct interventions with online faculty, while providing support and early warning to students before they enter the online course environment. Additionally, scaffolding, or instilling students with self-directed learning behaviors because of the online course environment achieved through faculty professional development and support, will create the best conditions for learning to occur.

The desired student outcomes include (1) successfully utilize provided resources for online course success, (2) successfully navigate course-related materials and tasks, and (3) successfully complete assignments and pass the course. To that end, the College implemented SmarterMeasure (SM), a software designed to assess and then increase students' awareness of their level of preparedness for an online course. Upon completion of SM assessment, as well as a pre-test and post-test, students will know which skills are important and which resources should be used to succeed in online courses.

The desired faculty outcomes include (1) being able to create and deliver an online course that has a clear lesson structure that enhances student ability to navigate and understand, (2) clear communication standards and policies, (3) enhanced engagement between instructor-to-student, content-to-student, and student-to-student, and (4) course instructions that articulate or link to additional resources for course success. As part of STRIDE, the Quality Matters standards and course rubric will be utilized to update and design all online courses at the college. Both a self and a peer-review process of all online courses will be completed and the QM rubric will replace the current course evaluation and observation form for online courses. Data to be collected each term will include online course pass rates, attrition rates, and a comparison of pass rates in courses with online and face-to-face formats.

The ultimate goals of the QEP include (1) increase average online course pass rate by 3%, (2) decrease the average success/pass rate gap between courses offered in both online and face-to-face formats by 3%, (3) decrease the average online course attrition rate by 4%, and (4) ensure that online course grade distributions will match the grade distributions of their counterpart face-to-face based courses within 1.5% for each letter grade in the course to reflect more students attaining passing grades in online courses.