

Students Taking Education Personally (STEP) Project

Executive Summary

Lamar Institute of Technology is committed to increasing the quality of education and improving student learning. To advance that commitment, LIT chose a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that will improve the student learning environment and persistence in select programs on campus. Effective learning occurs when various strategies are integrated with precision into a seamless whole where each strategy reinforces the others. For the purposes of the QEP, LIT defines the student learning environment as the establishment of an integrated support system bringing together an intrusive advising model, specific tutoring and/or supplemental instruction in gatekeeper courses and an implementation of an early alert monitoring system, all to strengthen academic performance. The QEP, christened 'Students Taking Education Personally' (STEP Project), was designed to enhance the student learning environment and persistence among a select group of at-risk students.

Selecting the focus of the QEP was a campus-wide effort that included full-time and part-time faculty, staff, students, and community advisory committee members. Initial discussions began with a review of institutional and survey data collected via a campus-wide survey conducted in April 2013. Institutional data indicated that only 18.1% (Higher Education Coordinating Board Accountability System) of the FY2011 cohort of first-time, full-time, credential-seeking students graduated within three years. In FY2013, the percentage declined to 16.3% of first time, full-time, credential-seeking students graduated, however, when ethnic subgroups are examined the data indicates that first time, full-time Caucasian students graduate at a rate of twice that of first time, full-time African-American students for the same time period.

The STEP Project will include intrusive holistic academic advising, supplemental instruction, tutoring, study groups, financial literacy information, financial aid guidance, soft skill development, discipline specific guest speakers, transfer information and other topics to assist and support participants. The elements within the STEP Project will be managed by a coordinator who will provide oversight and organization of the project. The STEP Project will have a dedicated space on campus that includes office space for the coordinator, study space, computers for student use, printers, projection equipment, and general office equipment.

The STEP Project participants will be selected following an application process that includes the following: completion of an application, a letter of commitment, enrollment in an instructional program leading to a certificate, degree, or transfer, and have one or more at-risk criteria. LIT has chosen to offer the STEP Project in the Fall 2014 Semester as a pilot project. Candidates in the pilot program will be limited to LIT's two largest programs, the Process Operating Program and the Instrumentation Program. Limiting the participants to the largest programs assure adequate numbers of qualified applicants and ultimately, the success of the project. A cohort of thirty (30) students will be selected for the Fall 2014 Semester and a second cohort will begin in the Fall 2015 Semester.

The STEP Project was designed to enhance the student learning environment and persistence. LIT is committed to providing resources to support the STEP Project and there is an expectation participants must also commit to fully participate in the STEP Project. With the strong commitment of LIT and participating students, an improved student learning environment and persistence is expected.

For more information contact:

Melissa Armentor, MSRS, R.T.(R), Dean of Instruction

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