

**Martin Methodist College**  
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**QEP Title: Reinventing the First-Year Experience to Increase Student Success**

### **Executive Summary**

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) of Martin Methodist College offers a broad-based and intentional focus on student engagement during the first year of college with goals to enhance student learning and success. Martin Methodist College considers itself a college of opportunity and enrolls a significant percentage of first-generation college students. However, not all students who are enrolled by the College are fully prepared for the collegiate experience. Approximately one-third of students at the College are in a category at risk for academic failure, based on American College Testing (ACT) composite scores. This is consistent with national trends. As colleges have become more accessible, “Colleges and Universities must educate more people than ever before from a much wider, deeper, and more diverse pool of undergraduates” (Kuh, 2005, p. 87).

By revising the first-year program, the College expects to increase the success of all students, but believes the intentional efforts will most benefit those students less prepared for college. Both long-term and short-term measures of success will be the focus of the QEP. Long-term success will be measured by assessing persistence, satisfaction, learning, and graduation. More specific indicators of success will be considered over the short-term, focusing on the first-year experience: developing intellectual and academic competence, establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, considering faith and the spiritual dimensions of life, developing multicultural awareness, and developing civic responsibility (Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot 2005a.)

The QEP involves initiatives in five areas: hiring a Coordinator of the First Year Experience, expanding Orientation, restructuring the first-year academic course, introducing Service-Learning into the curriculum, and engaging faculty in developing skills related to the first-year experience. Benchmarks of student engagement – academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching experiences and campus support (Kuh, 2003) – will serve as overriding themes in integrating the various components of the QEP.

The QEP represents an effort to intentionally address the issues not only of a growing diversity in college preparedness among students seeking college admittance but also of changing attitudes and expectations of the current student population. The College intends to offer our students the support, the skills, and the opportunities that will allow them to join an academic learning community so that they will be better prepared to discover their places in the world as discerning individuals who are self-aware, compassionate toward others, and perceptive about moral and social issues in a global community.