

Northern Virginia Community College
Quality Enhancement Plan Executive Summary
GPS for Success: Teaching and Learning through Academic Advising

Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) is the largest institution of higher education in Virginia and one of the largest community colleges in the nation, serving over 75,000 students on six campuses and at three educational centers. With commitment to the values of access, opportunity, success, and excellence, we offer numerous degree and certificate programs in a wide variety of transfer and career fields. NOVA faculty and staff take great pride in providing our students with in person and online post-secondary instruction to ensure our region has an educated population and globally competitive workforce. We are fortunate to have students coming from more than 180 countries, making NOVA one of the most diverse colleges in the country.

NOVA recognized the reaffirmation process as the vehicle not only as an occasion to demonstrate compliance with the requirements and standards of *The Principles of Accreditation* but also as an opportunity to enhance quality. NOVA's QEP, GPS for Success: Teaching and Learning through Academic Advising, is an action plan whose purpose is enhancing students' academic planning skills, reinforcing student relationships with faculty and professional advisors through regularly scheduled meetings, and identifying student learning outcomes for the process of advising. Through our research, we have found that students need deliberate instruction to help them develop the academic planning skills that allow them to succeed in college. These skills are especially important for those students who have declared a major, have not previously attended college and have recently graduated from high school. Specifically, the QEP focuses on the **G**oals, **P**lans, and **S**trategies that students must learn to attain their academic goals.

The GPS for Success creates the opportunity for students to learn these skills through a consistent and deliberately structured academic advising process. Through this program NOVA students who have never before attended college, have declared a major and are recent high school graduates develop academic goals, verify their program of study, identify and meet regularly with first with an advising specialist (these are new positions on each campus) and then with their faculty advisors who assist in the development of detailed academic program completion plans organized by semester. Continuing curricular students learn to evaluate their academic performance and revise their academic goals and academic program completion plan when necessary.

Detailed academic plans developed through intensive advising opportunities teach students the crucial planning skills that are invaluable beyond academics. The GPS for Success: Teaching and Learning through Academic Advising, is a metaphor expressing the idea that advising is a tool to teach students how to navigate their academic careers. Just as a GPS requires thoughtful input, the advising process demands that students address critical issues in a timely manner, such as setting attainable academic goals and choosing an appropriate program of study. The result of the learning that takes place is a well-thought-out plan that can be followed, evaluated, and adapted to guide the students toward their goals. These are critical skills that students develop and learn through the process of academic advising. To this end, the QEP focuses on improving students' academic planning skills through the process of advising as teaching.

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