

Executive Summary of Southwest Texas Junior College's Quality Enhancement Plan: RISE to the Top.

Southwest Texas Junior College's (SWTJC) Quality Enhancement Plan is entitled RISE to the Top. RISE is an acronym derived from **Resources** plus **Interactions** equal **Student Engagement**, or **R + I = SE**. The intended outcomes of RISE to the Top are to improve students' critical thinking skills and to increase student success outcomes of persistence, retention, graduation, and transfer.

### **Resources (R)**

This component of SWTJC's QEP is broadly defined to include personnel and services. Resources include faculty, counselors/advisors, students, and community members. Activities and services will include those offered by the college's student success centers, libraries, writing centers, and student support centers.

### **Interactions (I)**

This aspect of the QEP includes activities designed to increase meaningful collaborations, both inside and outside of the classroom, between students, between students and faculty, between students and community members, and between students and staff. A survey of the research literature on improving student learning and critical thinking through such collaborations revealed the following High Impact Practices (HIPs), which will be implemented and assessed in our QEP:

- First-year seminars and experiences (e.g., Learning Frameworks and College Success Skills Courses)
- Collaborative assignments and projects
- Undergraduate research
- Service- or community-based learning
- Capstone courses and projects.

(Kuh, George [2008] "High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter")

### **Student Engagement (SE)**

These intended results of **R+I** will be assessed by both measures of student learning outcomes and of student success. SWTJC will assess impacts on Graduation Rate; Transfer Rate; Persistence, Retention, and Completion; and qualitative indicators from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement. In addition, the college will use the ETS Proficiency Profile and the Critical Thinking Rubric developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities to assess whether student gains in critical thinking have been impacted by the HIPs. Student critical thinking will also be assessed via measures in individual General Education Core courses.

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