



IMPACT your education
IMPACT your success
QEP IMPACT your future

Pioneer Advising Center

Spartanburg Methodist College Quality Enhancement Plan Executive Summary

Contact: Kathleen Brown
Executive Director of Quality Enhancement Programs
brownk@smcsc.edu

Spartanburg Methodist College (SMC) is a two-year, independent, residential liberal arts college located in Spartanburg, South Carolina. SMC serves a highly diverse student body from several states of the United States as well as from several different nations of the world. The philosophy of the institution is to admit students who demonstrate reasonable promise of benefiting from its educational programs. It has always been the goal of the college to provide educational opportunities to those who may not otherwise have access to them.

In the fall of 2015, SMC inaugurated the eighth president. Under the new administration, strategic planning efforts at the college were redefined to identify specific areas of enhancement for the college. As part of the revitalized strategic planning efforts, campus-wide meetings were held to collect information from campus constituents regarding a possible QEP Topic. The area that rose to the top as the most likely to improve student learning for the largest percent of the student population was academic advising.

The main focus of the QEP became to give ownership and responsibility to our students in the degree planning and registration processes, by adopting a model that treats advising as teaching and learning. Traditionally, faculty advisors have discussed degrees and courses with students, then have registered the students online. Not all students see or learn to use the degree planner to build and register a schedule. When students leave SMC to further their education at another institution, they do not have the understanding, knowledge, or skills to create and register for a schedule that matched their degree plan. There have been no SLOs for academic advising to this point.

Particular attention was given to best practices in advising that would incorporate these new facets that would empower our students while maintaining a relationship of care, guidance, and support between faculty and students. It was decided that the college would adopt a proactive, split advising model that would allow students to be trained by professional advisors before moving on to meet with a faculty mentor. Academic advisors maintain a connection with the students throughout their time at SMC and would make sure students are on track to successfully complete a degree plan the student designed. The college chose to create the Pioneer Advising Center at SMC. The Pioneer Advising Center (PAC) will allow students to ImPACt their education, ImPACt their success, and ImPACt their future.

The Pioneer Advising Center will open with four full-time academic advisors who will each have an advisee cohort of approximately 125 incoming first-time freshmen, transfer students and assist continuing students. After the initial advising visit, students will be encouraged to register themselves online at the advising center. By the second semester of freshman year, students should be able to make degree plans and register for classes independently. SMC has created student learning outcomes and assessment methods for academic advising to ensure students are obtaining needed understanding, knowledge and skills.