

SUCCEED TOGETHER

QEP Executive Summary



Eastern Mennonite University's first year advising Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) will increase students' sense of belonging and increase student success by providing holistic, student-centered support and equipping new EMU students to own their college and career plans.

This QEP is firmly grounded in EMU's mission and vision and was selected and developed through university-wide conversations by QEP task forces representing diverse stakeholders. The first year advising QEP supports objectives in our strategic plan under the goals *Diversify, Grow, and Engage*.

Institutional research around student achievement (retention & graduation) and the themes of belonging and student navigation of academic advising and other university functions revealed a disparity in experiences of students from various demographic groups. This presented an opportunity to meaningfully intervene to support a sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and success for our undergraduate students, particularly for students of color, commuters, first-generation students, and students who do not come from Mennonite cultural contexts.

We have identified three hoped-for outcomes for the first year advising initiative:

1. *Students will demonstrate an increased sense of belonging.*
2. *New students will exhibit increased self-efficacy towards managing academic, personal, and vocational responsibilities as they develop a 4-year college and career plan.*
3. *Students will demonstrate increased college success, as measured by retention, D/F/W rates, and persistence.*

A literature review examining the relationship between sense of belonging and student success informs our revised first year advising model in support of these outcomes. This model is holistic and student-centered, and successful implementation requires culturally competent advisors to follow best practices in supporting student learning and development through advising processes during students' first years on campus.



The First Year Advising QEP Implementation Team and the Assistant Provost for Student Success will lay significant groundwork for the initiative during the 2020-21 school year, developing an advising handbook and training modules in collaboration with academic programs and student services offices. For 2021-22 the team will hire and train a qualified individual who is able to connect with the diverse lived experiences of our student body and serve as first-year advisor to a pilot group of students beginning in summer 2021. After the pilot year, the team will hire and train two additional advisors and begin academic advising via the new model for all students entering EMU in the summer of 2022.

First year advisors will serve as instructors in the CORE 101 Transitions course, which orients first-year students to EMU and will meet with students multiple times during their first year at EMU to facilitate their initial stages of academic and career planning. They will provide additional interventions as needed for at-risk students. Further, advisors will be available to students for assistance with navigating the functional aspects of university life, with an advising hub serving as a "one stop shop" for students to connect with appropriate university resources. When students are ready, they will transition to academic advisors within their academic programs, taking with them personalized career and academic plans.

In support of these advising processes, the First Year Advising QEP Implementation Team will collect, analyze, and evaluate assessment data annually, devising and implementing improvements when necessary. At the end of our five-year QEP period, we expect to see an increased sense of belonging and self-efficacy in our students, along with corresponding improvements in student success.