



## The Big LEAP; Learning, Excellence, and Persistence Executive Summary

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for Odessa College (OC) focuses on increasing persistence rates for students through a Learning Framework course. The Big LEAP: Learning, Excellence, and Persistence is the title of our project and has been implemented to enable Odessa College students to succeed in their academic pathways and future careers. The Big LEAP: Learning, Excellence, and Persistence project was designed to monitor, measure, and ultimately improve the persistence rates of students attending Odessa College. The college has implemented a contextualized practical learning course, EDUC/PSYC 1300, for first time in college (FTIC) students with built-in leading and lagging indicators to provide data which inform and identify student persistence barriers. In addition, the QEP committee has conducted an extensive literature review, established detailed outcomes and goals, and allocated the proper resources, including financial, marketing, and professional development through broad-based involvement that supports the mission of the college.

True to its mission, the college strives to lead the way in preparing its community for the future. OC became an "Achieving the Dream" community college in 2009, achieved Leader College status with ATD in 2013, and became a Leader College with Distinction in 2021. The college has implemented many data-driven programs over the years aimed at improving student retention rates. The most effective program, the Drop Rate Improvement Program, was implemented in 2011 and has improved student course success rates and increased student course completion rates. However, student data shows that the needle for persistence has remained virtually unchanged. Contributing to low persistence rates is the economy in the Permian Basin. OC's service area, which includes most of the Permian Basin in West Texas, does not typically foster a robust college-going culture. The students live in a community that tends to drive students into the oil field immediately after graduating high school for the quickest path to financial independence. Instead, for many students in Odessa and OC's larger service area, college is either a second option when the oil economy is down or an achievement, which they perceive to be unattainable due to feeling underprepared by their K-12 educational experiences.

The goal of the Big LEAP, which supports the Odessa College mission statement, is to provide a purposely designed and contextualized learning framework course for FTIC students that will:

1. provide a strong curricular and co-curricular foundation,
2. improve student learning equity,
3. promote career exploration early,
4. increase student retention and persistence, and
5. create lifelong learners.

The goals of the Big LEAP align seamlessly with the EDUC/PSYC 1300 learning outcomes. The focus of the Big LEAP is to monitor the persistence rates and completed semester credit hours of the FTIC student cohorts who take the EDUC/PSYC 1300 Learning Framework course. To gauge course effectiveness and student learning, the college has developed leading assessment indicators. The leading indicator data will be used to identify data points where students meet established benchmarks and other areas that might need to be adjusted. These leading indicators will provide a data window for the lagging indicators should the persistence needle remain unchanged. The assessment plan has clearly defined outcomes and involves criteria for success to monitor progress towards achieving the Big LEAP goals.

Odessa College is leading the way in higher education in the United States. Three times recognized as a top ten community college by the Aspen Institute, Odessa College is poised to positively impact student access to higher education and student achievement of career and educational goals. The Big LEAP will support students in their critical first term in college by providing them with a unique college and career preparation course. In addition, students will receive ongoing student support as they experience seamless advising from an integrated instructional and student success team, supported by College Life Coaches. The latter can help students access critical resources outside of the classroom setting and require tutoring and supplemental instructional support for struggling students' content areas.

The Odessa College QEP, the Big LEAP, has broad-based support from Odessa College's stakeholders, representing a collaborative effort in continuing to improve student success, learning, and persistence on our campus. Faculty who will teach the EDUC/PSYC 1300 will go through training for instructional best practices for a course designed for college and career preparation. The Instructional team will provide administrative oversight of the Big LEAP with assessment data analysis of leading and lagging indicators delegated to the QEP Implementation Committee. Institutional Effectiveness will provide support for the collection of student artifacts and scoring data results. With that, Odessa College has committed more than \$325,000 over five years, including the implementation year, to help reach the goals of this project.

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