

QEP Title: Smart Start to Finish

Institution: Amarillo College

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Executive Summary

The focus of the Amarillo College Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), *Smart Start to Finish*, is increasing fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention for first-time-in-college (FTIC) student cohorts. In the last strategic plan, No Excuses 2020, Amarillo College improved student performance outcomes in completion and closed achievement gaps across numerous student metrics. However, during that time, retention rates did not substantially improve. Therefore, the creation, development, refinement, and implementation of the QEP is focused on retention using the Guided Pathways framework to engage students before they start at the College and until they complete their academic journey at the College with an earned credential, entry into the workforce, and/or transfer to a four-year institution.

Fall-to-fall retention is a primary metric at Amarillo College to determine the effectiveness of the College's commitment to increasing the number of students who complete a certificate, degree, and/or transfer to a four-year institution in a timely manner. Simply put, students who are not retained do not complete. In spite of our efforts to improve student outcomes through numerous programs and interventions, retention rates have only marginally improved.

Through broad-based support and involvement with internal and external stakeholders around the College's student performance outcomes, the QEP committee developed a suite of engagement activities that focuses on clarifying the path, entering the path, and staying on the path. In the pre-enrollment phase, the QEP features recruitment and outreach efforts through Success 360, springboard activities with the College's career communities, and community-based New Student Orientations for first-time-in-college students, with heavy involvement by faculty, advisors, and other staff. In the enrollment phase and until they finish, the QEP consists of a mandatory career-based first-year seminar course (EDUC 1100, Learning Frameworks) that emphasizes career planning, career community engagement, intrusive advising, and ongoing mentoring through a success network, even after the completion of the course. Undergirding these components in the enrollment phase through matriculation is the use of a retention case-management software platform (AVISO) that provides real-time data on student performance and engagement to support early-alert interventions.

The College is committed to supporting the QEP and will assess its effectiveness by tracking fall-to-fall retention of first-time-in-college students, beginning in fall 2022, as these students matriculate through the pre-enrollment phase, enroll at the College, and are engaged and supported along the way through a Guided Pathways framework.