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First-year Mustangs Adventure QEP: Executive Summary

Midwestern State University's (MSU Texas) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), First-year Mustangs Adventure (FMA), is designed to prepare new students for academic success and engagement. The First-year Mustangs Adventure program will meet these goals through a 0-credit hour First-year Seminar that helps students take responsibility for their educational journey through a curriculum focusing on academic engagement and community-building. Each section will be led by a trained Peer Educator and supported by a faculty or staff mentor. Students will receive a customized Mustangs Adventure Guidebook that will provide activities and prompts reflecting the course goals and Student Learning Outcomes, and students will meet weekly with their Peer Educator to reflect on and discuss their adventures. First-year Mustangs Adventure builds on existing new student orientation programming and meets MSU Texas students where they are. The QEP is designed for first-time full-time students.

The curriculum seeks to improve first-year retention by 1) helping new students find and create an academic community and 2) providing them with resources and strategies to set goals and prioritize their wellness. The success of the program itself will be assessed on three measures: student completion of the seminar, faculty participation, and first-year retention. Additionally, the First-year Mustangs Adventure QEP seeks five key student learning outcomes: 1) setting SMART goals; 2) creating strategies to achieve goals; 3) developing awareness of wellness needs; 4) using campus resources and effective strategies for academic success; and 5) feeling connected to campus. A mix of direct and indirect measures will be used to assess these outcomes, including four reflection assignments, a final survey, and a completed adventure log. Participation in activities is reflected in the curriculum's focus on "Adventures," an approved list of actions and campus events associated with the student learning outcomes; for example, a student might "attend a tutoring session" as an Adventure associated with "using campus resources." Students are required to complete eight (8) adventures and attend seminar meetings regularly to receive credit for the course. Given the challenge of incentivizing participation in a 0-credit seminar, several strategies have been incorporated into the program, such as hiring Peer Educators to run seminar meetings and maintain consistent outreach with their students, as well as assigning new students to a seminar of fellow majors and mentored by a faculty mentor in their college. To oversee the program and ensure its effectiveness in all measures, MSU Texas has appointed a faculty Director and dedicated coordinator, who will work with the FMA Advisory Committee to assess the program's success and needs each spring.

MSU Texas takes seriously its commitment to its students and recognizes the importance of the first year in helping students assimilate and lay the groundwork for academic success. The First-year Mustangs Adventure reflects this commitment and has the broad-based support from the campus community to ensure a strong, sustainable program.

Additional questions may be directed to Dr. Melissa Nivens, Faculty Director First-year Mustangs Adventure, at melissa.nivens@msutexas.edu or (940) 397-4145. Or you can contact the MSU Texas Accreditation Liaison, Dr. Jeremy Duff, at jeremy.duff@msutexas.edu or (940) 397-4747.