Athens Technical College's CODE for Student Success

Athens Technical College (ATC) has elected to focus on distance education for its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), titled *Commitment to Outstanding Distance Education for Student Success (CODE)*. The process to arrive at this decision involved a consideration of the College's mission, vision, and strategic plan goals and objectives; surveys and focus groups involving students, faculty, staff, administrators, and local advisory board members; a review of the literature, data analysis, and findings from assessment of student learning outcomes. Topic exploration revealed that the technological aspects of distance education are of importance to the College's stakeholders and that there were gaps in course completion, course grades, and in some cases, achievement of student learning outcomes between online courses and face-to-face courses. The CODE for Student Success plan was developed to address these gaps and improve student success in online courses. The student success objectives for CODE were defined as follows:

- Students completing the improved Blackboard/Online Learning Orientation will have an adequate grasp of the online learning environment.
- Students enrolled in redesigned courses will have higher rates of course completion.
- Students enrolled in redesigned courses will have higher rates of A-C grades.
- Students enrolled in redesigned online courses will have improved course experiences.

In addition, student learning outcomes were defined for select courses and will be expanded upon as the plan progresses. Faculty objectives related to training and teaching strategies were also developed, but with the ultimate goal of improving student learning and student success.

Implementation of the proposed QEP is designed to include four parts: redesigning the online learning orientation for students, training faculty in course design, redesigning course master shells, and teaching courses after redesign. The implementation of ATC's CODE can positively affect student success through increased student satisfaction, reduced course attrition, and improved student grades in redesigned courses. Through professional development opportunities focusing on the tools available through Blackboard and course design best practices, faculty can support student success and have an impact on improved course and college completion.

The effectiveness of CODE activities will be assessed both formatively and summatively with oversight by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the QEP Director. Institutional data will be used to track student success in redesigned courses. Attainment of student learning will be compared in select courses between online and traditional delivery methods, and between pre and post faculty training. Students will be surveyed regarding their experiences in redesigned courses. Assessment data will be collected continuously throughout implementation and evaluated to determine if implementation adjustments are needed.

The implementation budget for the CODE plan includes $621,200 in new funds over five years to cover the cost of training, an instructional designer position, outreach activities, and supplies. Broad - based involvement is achieved through the cross-functional organizational structure for implementation activities, and promotion of the CODE for Student Success by faculty, staff, student organizations, and student support services.

The CODE is a plan that addresses key issues of importance to student success in online learning. The plan is well-organized, well-conceived, founded with stakeholder interests in mind, and staffed with skilled professionals who have anticipated what is needed to bring it to fruition. ATC has the resources, the will, and the commitment to student success to make the CODE an enduring part of the College landscape.

Point of Contact: Missy Lockhart, Director, Online Learning, eCampus, and QEP
mlockhart@athenstech.edu