Gordon State College
Quality Enhancement Plan
Dates of On-Site Visit: October 24-27, 2016
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Executive Summary

Gordon State College (GSC) is a member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC); as such, the institution has an opportunity every ten years to create a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a carefully crafted plan to enhance student learning and to further the mission of the institution. First Things First: Increasing Mastery in Quantitative and Communication Skills has been developed to respond to institutional needs highlighted during the QEP topic search, to fulfill the college’s mission, vision, and strategic planning priorities, to voice the opinions and hopes of the entire campus community, and to enhance student learning in significant ways.

Gordon State College is an access institution, committed not simply to getting students in the door but to guiding them successfully to degree completion. One of the college’s priorities is “Access with Excellence”; the mission is to “provide an exceptional education through innovative teaching and engaged learning.” The fulfillment of these two ideals creates a learner-centered environment in which students are retained and progress; in short, as the GSC vision declares, they “flourish.” The First Things First topic was determined by a broad-based process that led to a focus on essential quantitative and written communication skills that are taught and built upon in “Area A Essential Skills,” the University System of Georgia (USG) designation for the nine-hour credit block of college math and English courses within the core curriculum. As a USG institution, GSC requires all students to receive credit for three courses within Area A (two English and one math). Institutional data reviewed during the topic selection phase highlighted the low success rate for courses in this area; additionally, faculty campus-wide reported that even successful Area A students were not utilizing the learned skills outside Area A.

The QEP’s Action Plan includes a course-redesign initiative to enhance student engagement in Area A courses, since engagement has been shown to increase student success. A faculty survey administered during the QEP development stage narrowed the plan’s focus to College Algebra (MATH 1111) and Composition I (ENGL 1101) and to eight particular Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). A review of literature and best practices led to the selection of John N. Gardner Institute’s Gateways to Completion® process (G2C®) as the mechanism by which to achieve QEP goals, including annual improvements over SLO baseline percentages, pass rates in the two courses, and faculty pedagogies/academic policies and student behaviors that strengthen student learning and success. As a continuous improvement redesign plan, G2C is especially beneficial to First Things First because it provides a unified approach which works equally well with both subject areas; the purpose of the G2C initiative is to focus on courses such as MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101 in their capacity as foundational, “gateway” courses.

Other elements of the Action Plan include the establishment of a First Things First Steering Committee to oversee the plan, the creation of a First Things First unit within the College’s First Year Experience course, and the implementation of an ambitious professional development plan. Additionally, the QEP includes a thorough assessment plan (which includes both direct and indirect measures), a carefully designed organizational structure and timeline, and a solid budget demonstrating the institution’s full support of the initiation, implementation, and completion of the plan.

Both Gateways to Completion® and its acronym G2C® are copyrighted. Permission has been granted for use of these names in this document.
Chapter One: Broad-based Institutional Process Identifying Key Student Learning Issues

The topic for the Gordon State College (GSC) QEP was identified, narrowed, and selected through a broad-based institutional process that involved all appropriate campus constituencies and that stemmed from an examination of institutional assessment data and from a deep commitment to GSC’s mission, vision, and strategic planning priorities. Part One opens with an overview of GSC—its history, mission, vision, and strategic planning priorities; Part Two provides a detailed summary of the process of identifying GSC’s QEP topic First Things First: Increasing Mastery in Quantitative and Communication Skills, as well as the selection of the QEP Research and Development Committee.

Chapter One

- Part One: Overview of the history, mission, vision, and strategic planning priorities of Gordon State College
- Part Two: Detailed summary of the process of identifying the GSC QEP topic and the selection of the QEP Research and Development Committee

PART ONE: Overview of the History, Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning Priorities of Gordon State College

History of Gordon State College

Today, Gordon State College sits on slightly more than 235 acres in Barnesville, Georgia, a small town of about 5,200 people halfway between Atlanta and Macon. Because all academic buildings are situated on fewer than 30 acres, faculty, staff, and students can easily walk to any building in ten minutes, creating a close-knit campus. Even though the campus is small, the College has five residence halls housing approximately 1,000 students, a house devoted to alumni affairs, a newly renovated student center and dining hall, a state-of-the-art Nursing and Allied Health Science Building, and a new 56,000 square foot Student Activity and Recreation Center. With 139 full-time faculty members, 159 staff members, 58 part-time faculty members, and an unduplicated student enrollment of around 4,000, Gordon State College is small, yet it has come a long way from its humble origins: a log cabin built in 1828 on one site, and on another site, a frame school house built in 1832 by Josiah Holmes so that he could teach the classics to local children. In 1852, the Georgia General Assembly incorporated the school as the Barnesville Male and Female High School, and then in 1872, the high school was transformed into the Gordon Institute, named in honor of General John B. Gordon, who served the state and nation as a two-term Governor and a three-term U.S. Senator.
Less than twenty years later, the Gordon Institute created the Military Department, and for the next eighty years, the school distinguished itself as a premier military institution that also served as the public school for the city of Barnesville.

By 1933, the institution had transformed again, and the Gordon Military College, as it was then unofficially called, moved to the current site of Gordon State College. Then in the 1960s, Governor Carl Sanders’ Commission to Improve Education declared the need for a junior college in middle Georgia, and so, on July 1, 1972, thanks to the efforts of many community leaders, Gordon Junior College opened its doors to 571 students.

True to its history of growth and change in response to the needs of the state of Georgia, GSC has continued to transform itself, initiating its widely acclaimed Associate Degree in Nursing Program in 1973, which has graduated almost 1,600 students between 1996 and 2015. In 1987, the institution formally became Gordon College; in the fall of 2007, the first four-year degree was added; and then in 2012, Gordon College became Gordon State College. GSC now offers ten baccalaureate degrees. Despite such amazing growth, the institution still maintains its small-college atmosphere, with intimate class sizes and an emphasis on teaching—qualities that speak to the QEP topic.

### Gordon State College Bachelor’s Degree Programs

- Bachelor of Arts: English and History
- Bachelor of Science: Biology, Early Childhood Education/Special Education, Health Information Management, Human Services, Management and Administration, Mathematics, Nursing (RN-BSN), and Middle Grades Education

### The Gordon State College Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning Priorities

GSC’s focus on quality instruction is underscored in the institution’s mission, vision, and strategic planning priorities, standards created by the broad-based 2012-2013 Strategic Planning Committee. (Appendix A contains a complete list of the members of this committee.)

Both GSC’s mission “To provide an exceptional education through innovative teaching and engaged learning for the benefit of the world in which we live” and the vision statement “Gordon State College . . . where students flourish” speak to the institution’s history and dedication to quality education. In order to achieve the institution’s mission and vision, the 2012-2013 Strategic Planning Committee crafted five strategic planning priorities, including “Access with Excellence,” which is especially linked to the QEP. This priority states, “Gordon State College will serve the educational needs of the region and the state by maintaining its mission as an access institution, while expanding to offer wider access to baccalaureate programs and assuring excellence in its offerings and service to its constituents. By maintaining access while expanding programs, Gordon State College will open the doors to a college education to a wider audience, resulting in a more educated Georgia.”
Gordon State College is an access institution, committed not simply to getting students in the door but to guiding them to academic success. Guided by its mission, vision, and strategic planning priorities, GSC strives to be an institution devoted to “Access with Excellence,” a priority that is achievable through “innovative teaching and engaged learning.” The current QEP topic evolved from a thorough examination of strategies through which the College can achieve the vision, “where students flourish.”

Gordon State College Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning Priorities

*Access with Excellence + innovative teaching & engaged learning = students who flourish*

PART TWO: Detailed Summary of the Process of Identifying the GSC QEP Topic and the Selection of the QEP Research and Development Committee

**Phase One: Call for QEP Topics**

*Summer 2014 – December 2015*

During the summer of 2014, GSC’s Reaffirmation Leadership Team began meeting to discuss the steps necessary to initiate the QEP portion of the institution’s decennial reaffirmation process. The Leadership Team was carefully selected to ensure broad-based involvement of all appropriate campus constituencies—even in this most early phase. (Table 1-A provides a complete list of members of the GSC Reaffirmation Leadership Team.)
### Table 1-A  GSC Reaffirmation Leadership Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max Burns</td>
<td>President, Gordon State College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Jeffery Knighton</td>
<td>Provost and Vice President, Academic Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa Betkowski</td>
<td>Chair &amp; SACSCOC Liaison, Assistant Vice President, Institutional Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed Whitelock</td>
<td>Faculty Representative, Head, Department of Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dennis Chamberlain</td>
<td>President’s Cabinet, Vice President, Student Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhonda Toon</td>
<td>President’s Cabinet, GSC Alumna, Vice President, Institutional Advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristen Albritton</td>
<td>President’s Cabinet, July 2015, Vice President, Finance &amp; Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Hayes</td>
<td>President’s Cabinet until 6/30/15, Director, Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justin White</td>
<td>Staff Representative, GSC Alumnus, Financial Analyst, Finance &amp; Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Green</td>
<td>President’s Cabinet until 6/30/15, Assistant Vice President/Controller, Finance and Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Higgins</td>
<td>Consultant to the Team, Faculty &amp; Staff Representative, Director, Student Success Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Leadership Team initiated a series of meetings and presentations to educate the entire campus about SACSCOC regulations and to announce the call for topics for GSC’s upcoming QEP. Additionally, the Team posted numerous documents on the Institutional Effectiveness website to educate the campus regarding the particular steps in creating such a plan, the timeline for developing the plan, and the SACSCOC’s guidelines regarding topic selection. Charged with the task of disseminating information, members of the Leadership Team visited various departments and offices to ensure that “word spread” to every corner of the campus community.

### Phase Two: QEP Topic Brainstorming Sessions

**January 2015**

Midway through the fall term, the Leadership Team selected Dr. Alan Burstein (Professor of Business) to facilitate brainstorming and topic selection workshops in the upcoming spring term. Dr. Burstein, a former GSC SACSCOC Liaison (2002 – 2012), authored the institution’s 2012 Fifth-Year Interim Report, functioned as coordinator of the campus’s Excellence in Teaching programs, and was trained in brainstorming techniques as...
part of his Six Sigma Certification process; he was, therefore, uniquely suited for this role. Accordingly, on January 5, 2015, Dr. Burstein facilitated brainstorming sessions open to the campus community, which were broken into two meetings to accommodate diverse schedules. Both sessions followed a standard model of brainstorming, consisting of the following activities:

1. **Introduction to the Workshop: “Selecting a ‘strong’ QEP topic.”** As a way of introducing the importance of the QEP to members of the campus community, Dr. Burstein gave a brief presentation on the purpose and requirements of the Quality Enhancement Plan, emphasizing the need for widespread, collaborative participation during the entire QEP process. Dr. Burstein stressed the need for a topic that meets two overarching criteria:
   
   a. The topic should emerge naturally from GSC’s mission, vision, and strategic planning priorities
   
   b. The topic should emerge from institutional data that points to what SACSCOC defines as a “critical need” at the institution

   Dr. Burstein also reviewed QEP expectations according to CR 2.12 and CS 3.3.2 so that attendees at the brainstorming events would understand that the topic—especially once it was fully articulated as a plan—would need to meet certain additional criteria:

   c. The topic would need to be developed into a plan that the College would be fully capable of initiating, implementing, and completing
   
   d. The topic would need to evolve into a plan that would allow for broad-based involvement of all pertinent campus constituencies at all phases of development and implementation
   
   e. The topic would need to be developed into a plan embodying overall goals that would inform the identification of specific student learning outcomes (SLOS) as well as a plan to assess those very particular learning outcomes
   
   f. Ideally, the topic should also include some form of professional development plan to empower the faculty and/or staff involved with the QEP Action Plan

2. **Activity: Roundtable Brainstorming.** Workshop attendees were divided into teams of three or four participants posting their ideas onto an easel pad. The emphasis was on generating a large number of ideas without commentary, regardless of whether the idea originated from faculty, staff, or the student body. The purpose of the roundtable team format, therefore, was to help articulate rather than to judge or evaluate ideas.

3. **Activity: Synthesis of Key Ideas.** Following the Roundtable Brainstorming, easel pads were passed from one team to another. Each team reviewed the neighboring team’s posted ideas and attempted to select three to five key suggestions from the bigger lists. During the two sessions, this step produced a total of eighteen suggestions, which are provided in the Table 1-B below.
4. **Activity: Identification of Preferred Topics.** Participants then reviewed the synthesized ideas and voted on two topics that would most strongly address a “critical need” at GSC concerning student learning. This vote resulted in an overall ordering of the synthesized ideas from each session.

5. **Conclusion: “Next steps.”** The sessions were concluded with a brief discussion of the brainstorming experience and with suggestions regarding ways to go forward with the topic selection process. Additionally, attendees were encouraged to return to their respective units on campus and continue the conversations begun at the brainstorming sessions.

### Table 1-B Brainstorming Sessions: Key Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Advising Services: Guided pathways, First Year Experience (FYE), etc.</th>
<th>Active Pursuers of Understanding versus Passive Acquirers of Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Reading</td>
<td>Inculcating the Dispositions for Academic Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude, Professionalism, Proficiency</td>
<td>FYE for All students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Support Programs</td>
<td>Area A, Communication and Critical Reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Advising and Support Services</td>
<td>Career Oriented Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Behaviors Promoting Learning: punctuality, reading syllabus, asking questions, actively seeking information, etc.</td>
<td>Breaking Barriers: overcoming hurdles and obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etiquette of Technology</td>
<td>Faculty Development for Better Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote Academic Integrity</td>
<td>Scholarly Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The World Beyond Gordon</td>
<td>Experiential Learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phase Three: Synthesis of Brainstorming and Faculty Survey**

**Late January 2015 – March 2015**

Following the brainstorming sessions, Dr. Burstein worked with the Leadership Team to design a campus-wide survey that would solicit feedback to the topic ideas. Design of the survey required further discussion and distillation of the eighteen ideas generated by the brainstorming sessions down to a more manageable number.
Six key topics were identified that captured both the range and the essence of the brainstorming sessions, and more complete titles were added to articulate their importance:

1. Rethinking Advising – Finding What Works Best
2. Beyond “Grit”: Instilling the Dispositions for Academic Success
3. Optimizing Academic Support Services
4. Critical Reading across the Curriculum
5. First Things First: Mathematical and Communication Skills (Area A English and math core requirements)
6. Walking the Walk: Fostering Studentship

In February, the campus community was invited to participate in a web-administered survey listing the six topics and asking two focused questions:

1. Please review the six topic areas and indicate the extent to which you think implementation of a QEP focusing on each of them would promote our students' success, however you personally define it, at Gordon State College.
2. Our reaffirmation of accreditation is contingent on participation in our QEP by a large proportion of our faculty. For each of the topic areas, how likely are you to be willing to participate in any or all of the research, planning, implementation, and evaluation of a QEP focusing on the topic?

In March, a review of the survey results revealed that three topics, Rethinking Advising, Optimizing Academic Support Services, and Walking the Walk, were of little interest to the campus community; respondents saw considerable promise, however, in the three remaining topics, as indicated in the figure to the right.

Nearly 90 percent of the respondents concluded that each of the topics would be of value in fostering student success; nearly a third felt that each project would make a major contribution to student success. Additionally, most faculty members who responded were willing to participate in implementation of any of the three topics, although there was somewhat less enthusiasm for “Grit” than for Critical Reading and First Things First. While nearly 90 percent of the respondents would participate in any of the projects, over a third said they would participate in
**First Things First** only because it was important for accreditation. (See the figure above.) Since the subtitle of **First Things First** was “Mathematical and Communication Skills (Area A English and math core requirements),” the Leadership Team and Dr. Burstein inferred that faculty who do not teach those courses, while willing to participate, may not have had a clear view of what the nature of their specific participation might be. Campus discussions ensued to demonstrate that **First Things First** would indeed involve the entire campus. Quantitative and written communication skills introduced and built upon in Area A courses would be developed as students move through other areas of their academic programs.

Given general discussion of the survey results, Dr. Burstein and the Leadership Team further narrowed campus interest down to **Critical Reading across the Curriculum** and **First Things First: Mathematical and Communication Skills**, and moved forward with these two finalists.

**Phase Four: Campus Discussions and Submission of Proposals**

**Late March 2015 – June 2015**

At the end of March, the Vice President of Academic Affairs extended an invitation for a “Wine and Munchies Conversation about the QEP.” “Our next step,” the invitation stated, “is to get together and discuss how to interpret and refine the survey results, and work toward choosing one topic as the focus of our next Quality Enhancement Plan.” Approximately 30 faculty and staff, representing all academic units of the College, the Library, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, and the Office of Academic Affairs, gathered for further discussion aimed at refining the topic. Conversation centered on the proposed topics **Critical Reading across the Curriculum** and **First Things First: Mathematical and Communication Skills**; GSC’s mission, vision, and strategic planning priorities; current complementary programs and initiatives; GSC’s particular student body; and the group’s varied definitions of GSC’s “critical need.”

Some attendees felt that a critical reading initiative could enhance student learning across campus, even pointing to the strong connection between critical thinking/reading and the ability to use the rules of logic to know which conclusions do and do not follow from a set of assumptions. A large number of attendees pointed to the problematic D, F, and withdraw (DFW) rates for the math and English courses in Area A Essential Skills, and for the critical need for a plan to address this problem because these courses are foundational, gateway courses that often block a student’s path to other courses as shown in the table. Still other attendees pointed out that basic quantitative and written communication skills were very weak not only in Area A Essential Skills courses but in courses outside of Area A as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GSC Area A-Essential Skills DFW Rates</th>
<th>Spring 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Spring 2013</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Spring 2014</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 1101</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 1102</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH 1001</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH 1111</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH 1113</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH 1501</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In relation to that topic, faculty from several departments initiated a conversation about the Gordon State College Composition Handbook Project (http://www.gordonstate.edu/successcenter/writing-handbook). Formed in 2011, the GSC Composition Consortium, a cross-disciplinary body, had garnered attention of the entire GSC campus. By the time of the “Wine and Munchies” gathering, the leaders of the Consortium had already held dozens of meetings, interviewed faculty campus wide, and drafted much of the *Gordon State College Composition Handbook* in order to address several critical areas of campus-wide concern:

- Students’ tendency to compartmentalize academic skills, especially composition skills, and to fail to transfer those skills to other areas of their academic work
- The DFW rates, approximately 40% per semester among an average of 1,600 English 1101 students per year
- Students’ continued sub-standard writing projects campus wide, from history term papers, to performance observations in the humanities, to lab reports in the physical sciences

Several faculty members from various departments discussed the Complete College Georgia initiative, the University System of Georgia (USG) version of Complete College America, headed at that time by Dr. Stephen Raynie, and the ways in which it spoke to the *First Things First* Proposal. With regard to this work, Dr. Raynie stressed the fact that an access mission does not imply less academic rigor; instead, Dr. Raynie argued, such a mission means that the institution is responsible for providing the scaffolding necessary to help students make a successful transition to academic life. During the discussion, Dr. Raynie also pointed out that first things should be dealt with first: student weaknesses in the skills taught and built upon in Area A Essential Skills courses represent the College’s critical need. These courses are foundational in nature, fundamental to every other discipline, and every GSC student must receive credit for Area A courses. Ultimately, the consensus of the meeting was that while both *First Things First* and *Critical Reading across the Curriculum* were valuable topics, an access institution like GSC—still in the early development of its baccalaureate programs—would need to ensure that all students were well grounded in the essential competencies embodied by an Area A initiative. For many of GSC students, the attendees agreed, success depends on whether first things are in fact addressed first.

Towards the end of the spring semester, the GSC community was invited to submit specific implementation plans for QEP projects. By June, three implementation plans had been submitted to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness for consideration by the Leadership Team and the President’s Cabinet:

- *First Things First: Building Retention through Core Skills*, proposed by a faculty member and supported by the Director of Student Success, Advising, and Testing and two program heads, all of whom are also faculty members
- *Fostering a Culture of Reading*, submitted by three faculty members in three different disciplines
- *Instilling the Dispositions for Academic Success*, submitted by the Director of Library Services and the Library staff
Phase Five: The SACSCOC 2015 QEP Summer Workshop and Selection of both the QEP Proposal and the QEP Research and Development Committee


In early summer, the Reaffirmation Leadership Team selected Professor Peter Higgins to attend the SACSCOC 2015 QEP Summer Workshop in Orlando, Florida. Since Professor Higgins had been a faculty member at GSC for almost twenty years, Director of the Student Success Center for almost a decade, and Faculty Fellow in Residence living in the residence halls with the students for half a decade, the Leadership Team felt that he was uniquely qualified to represent faculty, staff, and student interests at this most important meeting.

By July, members of the Leadership Team were prepared to make their recommendation to the President’s Cabinet for adoption of First Things First: Building Retention through Core Skills; however, they asked the designers of the proposal to rethink the title in order to align it with the proposal’s stated rationale, goals, assessment plan, and resources. The proposal points to the discrepancy between GSC’s vision statement “where students flourish” and the reality that many of GSC’s students struggle with essential quantitative and written communication skills, leaving them under-prepared for the intellectual rigor of an advanced education. The document goes on to suggest that Area A courses are key places in the core curriculum where interventions can have a dramatic effect because all GSC students must receive credit for courses in this unit and because the Area A courses are foundational to all other courses with a quantitative and/or written communication requirement. The First Things First proposal insists that if GSC is serious about being an institution “where students flourish,” then the College needs to re-examine and refine the way essential skills are taught and reinforced. In essence, the Reaffirmation Leadership Team wanted the faculty and staff who submitted the proposal to understand that their initiative is not just about retention—though that is indeed a desired outcome. The First Things First proposal is about student learning, more significantly, about student learning that is fundamental to every course in a student’s academic career. The new title and our QEP topic, First Things First: Increasing Mastery in Quantitative and Communication Skills speaks to the breadth of the initiative and highlights GSC’s critical need.

Late July – August 2015

Once the topic selection was complete, the Reaffirmation Leadership Team followed the suggested methodology of the SACSCOC Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement and handed over the day-to-day operation of the development of the QEP to a broad-based QEP Research and Development Committee, representing all pertinent campus constituencies. Table 1-C lists the composition of this body. Appendix B provides a breakdown of the smaller working subcommittees whose purpose, in the words of the SACSCOC manual, is to “focus on particular aspects of the development process”. The first QEP Committee meeting convened on August 31, 2015, with members meeting monthly or bi-monthly
through summer 2016 when the QEP document was completed. (Appendix C contains select pertinent documents from QEP Committee meetings.)

Table 1-C  QEP Research & Development Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position and Department/Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna Dunlap Higgins-Harrell</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Humanities; QEP Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristen Albritton</td>
<td>Vice President of Finance &amp; Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernard Anderson</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics &amp; Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Boltz</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipper Burns</td>
<td>Development Officer, Institutional Advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Burstein</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Business &amp; Public Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Butts</td>
<td>Professor, Department of History &amp; Political Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Capers</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, School of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoff Clement</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Department of Mathematics &amp; Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonya Coleman</td>
<td>Director, Residence Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kathy Davis</td>
<td>Associate Professor, School of Nursing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allen Fuller</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Mathematics &amp; Computer Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hannah Haden</td>
<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Higgins</td>
<td>Director, Student Success Center; Instructor, Department of Humanities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anissa Howard</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of Business &amp; Public Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joyce Klaus</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of Biology &amp; Physical Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Britt Lifsey</td>
<td>Director, Institutional Research</td>
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<td>Douglas Lindsay</td>
<td>Student</td>
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<td>Creché Navarro</td>
<td>Academic Services Assistant, Department of Humanities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth O'Brien</td>
<td>Administrative Assistant, Academic Affairs; GSC Alumna</td>
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<td>Tony Pearson</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Department of Humanities, Programs in Fine &amp; Performing Arts</td>
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<td>Damien Peele</td>
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<td>Stephen Raynie</td>
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<td>Jim Rickerson</td>
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<td>Laura Shadrick</td>
<td>Senior Coordinator, Academic Affairs; GSC Alumna</td>
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<td>Theresa Stanley</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Biology &amp; Physical Science</td>
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<td>Wanda Stuckey</td>
<td>Academic Advisor &amp; Part-time Instructor of Learning Support, Student Success Center</td>
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<td>Brian Webb</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of History &amp; Political Science</td>
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Summary

**First Things First: Increasing Mastery in Quantitative and Communication Skills** has a focus that is uniquely GSC. The topic evolved naturally from the institution’s mission, vision, and strategic planning priorities; the topic addresses data (the DWF rates in Area A courses) of campus-wide concern; and the topic promises to enhance
student learning at GSC in a significant manner. Every GSC student must receive credit for Area A courses: core curriculum courses which are foundational, gateway courses that are fundamental to every other discipline. **First Things First** is a plan that the College is capable of initiating, implementing, and completing. The subject matter for the forthcoming chapters discusses the broad-based involvement of the QEP at all phases and will identify and assess specific student learning outcomes.
Chapter Two: Review of Literature and Best Practices

With the topic selection process complete, the newly designated QEP Committee turned to the Review of Literature and Best Practices to better understand the critical need identified during that process and to identify an array of possibilities in the scholarship for approaching such student learning issues. The review was a crucial first step in ensuring that Gordon State College (GSC) is capable of initiating, implementing, and completing the QEP: the College could not create a plan without gaining insight into what is actually a national phenomenon, as institutions of higher education across the country are concerned about pass rates and student learning issues connected to foundational, gateway courses such as those in GSC’s Area A Essential Skills. The goal of the current chapter is to provide an overview of the committee’s research, especially as it concerns foundational, gateway courses and improving student learning through engaging, learner-centered strategies.

PART ONE: Issues Surrounding Student Success in Foundational, Gateway Courses

Introduction

As stated in Chapter One, the QEP’s proposal points to a discrepancy between GSC’s priorities, mission, and vision of students “flourishing” and the reality that many GSC students struggle with essential quantitative and communication skills, a situation that leaves students under-prepared for subsequent course work and that leads to alarming rates of Ds, Fs, and withdrawals in Area A courses. The First Things First proposal argues that courses taught in Area A are key places in the curriculum where interventions can have dramatic effect on this critical issue because all GSC students must receive credit for courses in Area A and because these courses are foundational in nature and fundamental to every other discipline—several functioning as prerequisites to subsequent courses. Putting “First Things First” by enhancing student learning in regard to the essential skills taught and built upon in these foundational, gateway courses is the goal of the QEP.

A benefit of the literature review was the assurance that the situation at GSC is not unique. Nationwide, many institutions face similar issues: throughout America, there are underprepared and unsuccessful students struggling and often failing out of vital foundational, gateway courses such as those in Area A. The overall goal of the QEP Committee’s research phase was to examine this issue and the scholarship
surrounding it so a plan could be developed that would make it possible for many more GSC students to truly “flourish.”

The American Complete College Dream and the Foundational, Gateway Course

Over the last decade or so, the battle cry in America to “complete college” has been heard loud and strong, with Complete College America initiatives springing up all over the nation. President Obama proclaimed his goal that by 2020 this country would once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world; the Lumina Foundation voiced their goal of 60% of Americans attaining some type of “high-quality” postsecondary credential by 2025; the 21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges called for a 50% increase in completion; and other institutions such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have shared their goals (CCCSE 3). Closer to home, Georgia governor Nathan Deal’s Complete College Georgia initiative lists a goal of adding 250,000 post-secondary graduates to the state’s rolls by 2020.

Currently, only 40% of Americans hold a college degree, certificate, or other postsecondary credential, a figure that increased by only 2% between 2008 and 2013 (CCCSE 3). The literature shows that the dream of high national rates of postsecondary credentials is not yet a reality. Research shows that more than one million students begin their college career needing remediation; sadly, those courses are often the first and the last classes that many of them will ever take, especially if they are low-income students or students of color (Complete College America; CCCSE ).

In his seminal work Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter, George Kuh and his associates describe the “complete college” agenda and its effects on the American student:

The college-going stakes are higher today than at any point in history, both in terms of costs and potential benefits to students and society. Indeed, virtually all forecasters agree that to be economically self-sufficient in the information-driven world economy, some form of postsecondary education is essential . . . . This realization has hit all demographic groups, bringing waves of historically underserved students to campus. . . . [The outcome is that institutions of higher learning have increasing numbers of students who are] not as well prepared academically as faculty members would like. (xiii)

In their Joint Statement, Achieving the Dream, American Association of Community Colleges, Charles A. Dana Center at The University of Texas at Austin, Complete College America, Education Commission, and Jobs for the Future point to the outcome of the imbalance between the impetus for completion and the reality of unpreparedness: “In response to the need expressed at both state and national levels to increase the proportion of our population with postsecondary credentials, institutions everywhere are rethinking the efficacy of their orientation, advising, placement, and remediation policies and practices.” Such “rethinking” is most certainly affecting foundational, gateway courses such as those in GSC’s Area A. In fact, according to the 2016 national report by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE), there is now in America a “revolution” at the collegiate level “to significantly alter the way colleges deliver whatever

“[F]uture success in higher education pursuits is directly correlated with success in gateway courses—students have to succeed in gateway courses to be able to move on to further study.” (Koch, 29)
remediation” a student needs, both to reduce the levels of remediation and to accelerate a student’s progress to and then through foundational courses like those in GSC’s Area A (CCCSE 1). One of Complete College America’s “Pillars” of building a strong educational program is a philosophy that is very impactful for initiatives such as **First Things First**: according to Complete College America, “All students should complete Gateway Courses in one Academic Year,” a goal that includes students enrolling in foundational, gateway courses like the ones in GSC’s Area A while receiving support, if needed, in a co-requisite format. Currently, the national percentage of students required to take a math co-requisite is 31%, while for English co-requisites the number is even higher at 40% (CCCSE 16). Other states have even passed legislation to remove remedial programs altogether (CCCSE 1). Such a situation ensures that some students will enter foundational, gateway courses under-prepared.

However, many students find themselves in foundational, gateway courses such as those in GSC’s Area A—with or without remediation—and the research shows that those courses are the ones that often stop forward progress for many students. This fact certainly affects a QEP such as **First Things First**, which focuses on foundational, gateway math and English courses. The QEP Committee saw over and over again in the research that institutions cannot afford to ignore students’ struggles in such courses. Take for example, a 2006 study based on 164,331 students from 110 colleges and universities conducted by Emily Shaw and Brian Patterson. Their study highlights English and Mathematics as two of the top three courses most affected by “readiness” and “standards for success” in allowing students to flourish in the remainder of their college course work. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), it is not uncommon to find D, F, and withdrawal rates that exceed seventy percent in foundational, gateway courses such as those in GSC’s Area A (Koch); the situation is especially alarming with regard to gateway STEM courses (McKeachie, 2006; Pappano, 2012; Summerlin, 2003; Toubassi, 1999; Weinstein, 2004; Hembree, 1990; House, 1995; NRC, 2001). Concern about the struggle students have with foundational, gateway courses is not new, of course. In the mid-1980s and early 1990s, Deanna Martin and others from the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) implemented Supplemental Instruction (SI), an intervention created to address alarming fail rates in UMKC’s foundational, gateway courses (Martin & Arendale, 1993). Back in 1999, in his famous *Answers in the Tool Box* (1999) and then in 2006 in his follow-up *The Toolbox Revisited*, Clifford Adelman bemoaned the high fail rates in these types of courses, linking those rates to the likelihood that students would not complete a degree at all if they failed these instrumental courses. In fact, he strongly suggested that institutions “identify their gateway courses and regularly monitor participation” and success in them (xix). The literature review showed that such concern has continued. Take, for instance, Andrew Koch’s 2012 “A Call to Action: Why High-Enrollment, High Risk, Gateway Courses Require an Intentional Institutional Effort,” which argues passionately, “future success in higher education pursuits is directly correlated with success in gateway courses—students have to succeed in gateway courses to be able to move on to further study” (29). The research is clear: students are struggling in the foundational, gateway courses such as those in GSC’s Area A; yet those courses are the very ones that are so instrumental to success in higher education.
The Foundational, Gateway Course Student

“We need be realistic about who we’re teaching. Most of them aren’t the kind of good students we once were . . . . Many students come to us with multiple learning needs and attitudes that make them challenging to teach. It’s easy to lose faith in them, to become frustrated, and to always be critical, especially in conversations with colleagues who are all too ready to agree and offer examples of their own.”

Maryellen Weimer of *Faculty Focus* (23 Sept. 2015)

According to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education’s (WICHE) 2008 report *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity*, the numbers of students from low-income families, first-generation students, and minority students are increasing every year. Of these incoming students, many “are from the very same populations that have historically fared the worst in postsecondary education” (Koch). Add to those numbers, the difficulties faced by non-traditional students, whether they are single parents coming back to school to complete their education or “non-traditional” age students who have suddenly found themselves out of work from downsized companies (WICHE, 2012). And of course, there are the “traditional” fresh-out-of-high school students entering college. Research concerning this last group was of special interest to the QEP Committee because “traditional” students compose 60% of the student body at GSC.

They’ve been dubbed “Generation Z”: they are the traditional, 18-23 year old students who have also been labeled the “coddled,” the “entitled,” the “everyone gets a trophy,” and the “special snowflake” generation. At a recent First-Year Experience Conference, Mathew Little, Director of First Year Experience (FYE) at the University of North Alabama, dubbed this new generation of student the “iGen.” In his presentation “How Do We Serve the Next Generation of Students,” Little claimed that these incoming students, the products of the “No Child Left Behind” programs, are a class of “digital natives unlike any previous group.” According to Little, many of the characteristics of these incoming students are unlike the traits that institutions of higher learning have historically defined as ones that will lead to success in the foundational, gateway courses they will soon find themselves taking:

- Their average attention span is eight seconds
- They tend to be intensely distrustful of authority
- They tend to have a poor sense of organizational hierarchy
- They become extremely frustrated when the answer isn’t somewhere on the page
- They spend ten to eleven hours per day on average connected to some sort of technology and simultaneously monitor up to five screens at a time
- They are “school hackers” and want only the courses that interest them or seem useful to them
- They find the concept of a well-rounded, liberal arts education to be completely foreign
- They tend to want their hobbies to be their livelihood and often cannot understand how that might not work out
Add to these traits data from the 2013 National College Health Assessment that shows that almost half of the 123,078 traditional and non-traditional student respondents from 53 colleges and universities across America claimed to have experienced overwhelming anxiety during their previous school year; one third had such intense anxiety that they had problems functioning at all (Savini). Interestingly, the review of literature unearthed a host of scholars who point to such alarming data and facts and accept the role they have played in both creating and solving the current situation. John Warner, for instance, declared recently in *Just Visiting*, “Students are not coddled or entitled; they are defeated.” Warner then apologizes, saying that his generation’s teachers and administrators turned students into mere cogs and numbers, thereby separating school from student learning.

Some faculty look at traits such as those enumerated by Little, the data provided by the National College Health Assessment, and the claims of scholars such as Warner and feel frustrated, overwhelmed, attacked, or perhaps hopeless. What is a faculty member supposed to do about such a situation? How can a faculty member reach the students sitting in today’s foundational, gateway courses? Some faculty members plead for changes in admissions policies in attempts to attract “better” students, yet research reveals that better grades in high school do not guarantee college preparedness: of the nearly seven in ten students who end up taking some type of remediation courses in America, that includes 40% who graduated high school with an A-level grade point average (CCCSE 8). And what of the students themselves, what do they tend to think of the hullabaloo surrounding their preparedness, or the lack thereof? According to the CCCSE’s 2016 report, 86% of students arrive on campus claiming that they are academically prepared to succeed in those first foundational, gateway courses they are soon to enter, yet 68% of the students in America will find out in those first few days of arriving on campus that they need some type of remedial coursework (8-9). Only 39% of the entering first-time-in-college students will earn a degree or certificate within six years (CCCSE 8-9).

**PART TWO: Engaging Students and Improving Student Learning in Foundational, Gateway Courses**

**Introduction**

Fortunately for frustrated faculty members trying to reach their students, there is much being said about enhancing student learning and success in foundational, gateway courses. Take for example, the 2015 Joint Statement issued by the Achieving the Dream, American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), Charles A. Dana Center at The University of Texas at Austin, Complete College America, Education Commission, and Jobs for the Future, which claims enthusiastically, “The creative energy currently being devoted to transforming higher education is palpable,” and that energy is resulting in research and data that makes it clear “that many more students can succeed in college-level gateway courses than have historically been placed into them.” Indeed, as the QEP Committee discovered, scholarship offers hope through a vast array of approaches and focuses that enhance student success in
general, including in the foundational, gateway courses that are the ones that stop forward progress for so many college students even before the first year is complete. Significantly, most of these varied approaches call for institutions and faculty members to focus on the student, the “learner.”

Creating Learner-Centered Courses to Achieve Student Success in Foundational, Gateway Courses

According to the review of literature, the answer to the issues surrounding student success in the foundational, gateway courses involves accepting who it is faculty are teaching and then designing “learner-centered” courses that meet those students where they are and then encourage them to reach the class goals. Some scholars go a bit further. For example, Jennifer Waldeck argues passionately that institutions “must motivate [students], make them feel good about themselves and their abilities, promote their enjoyment of the learning process and create positive attitudes about the class and the subject matter”; for her, the view that students’ “positive feelings and emotions about learning are nice, but an unnecessary aspect of the educational process, has been dispelled by a significant amount of research” (Faculty Focus, 9 May, 2016). No scholar that the QEP committee investigated promotes the “sink or swim” philosophy popular in past decades concerning high fail rates in foundational, gateway courses. Certainly, no scholar that the QEP Committee investigated advocates simply handing out passing grades so that the alarming fail rates in America rebound. All of the literature stresses student responsibility and accountability. The scholarship simply argues that there are ways to create learner-centered courses that will engage students and therefore encourage student learning and success.

In Rebecca Cox’s survey-driven article “It Was Just that I Was Afraid,” she argues that when instructors understand student anxiety and offer an environment that is validating, a student’s defensive strategies can be quelled and the student excel. For Pegeen Reichert Powell, institutions are guilty of wasting the time and energy of their faculty and staff by continually pursuing the newest retention policy. Instead, Powell advocates a pedagogy of Kairos, one that focuses on where students are at the current moment; for her, there will always be students who leave the institution for reasons having nothing to do with academics, so faculty should focus on engagement (something they can control) and not on retention (something they cannot control). Patrick Sullivan’s deeply theoretical work turns to the

“We work with the students we have, not those we wish we had. . . . We may be open admission, but we are not open graduation.” (qtd in Kuh 117)
scholarship of neuroscience and developmental psychology in offering strategies for reaching the students in today’s foundational, gateway courses. Sullivan claims, “Our focus should be less on certainty and closure, and more on exploration and reflection” (28). Scholars such as Douglas Wilson argue for more time on task, support services, and “brain-friendly” learning strategies for all foundational, gateway courses. For Carol S. Dweck, the focus should be on assisting students in taking ownership of their education; for Vincent Tinto, the focus should be on increasing students’ academic and social involvement with the campus community by encouraging study groups and other learning strategies students did not need in high school in order to be successful. Other scholars point to the need to enhance students’ interest level, their willingness to take risks, their perseverance, their motivation, and their patience (Lester & Kroll, 1993; Muir, et al, 2008). Some researchers claim that faculty members should cultivate “habits of mind” in their math and composition students; in fact, many argue that such “habits” must begin in K-12, with teachers encouraging the development in their students of qualities such as curiosity, openness, creativity, and persistence (Sullivan; Hansen). Table 2-A lists some of the other strategies and initiatives that appear over and over again in the literature, approaches that, as the scholars argue, will help institutions focus not on retention per se but on the students—on the learners—and what they need in order to succeed.

Of special note to the QEP Committee were the learner-centered studies that focused solely on improving student learning and success in foundational, gateway mathematics and composition courses. Mathematicians such as Pólya, Schoenfeld, J. Wilson, Yeap & Menon and Composition theorists such as Sullivan, Keller, and Carillo stress the importance of metacognition. Thinking metacognitively about mathematics and composition, these scholars argue, fosters students’ ability to use familiar skills in new contexts. Other scholars offer different perspectives. Mathematics scholar Elizabeth Green sums up academic failure in math courses as a vision issue: for students to succeed in mathematics, they need to “see math not as a list of rules to be memorized but as a way of looking at the world that really makes sense.” Robin Bontrager’s study on academic success and persistence, especially in math courses, shows that institutions and their faculty members need to see the bigger picture of student success. For Bontrager, students’ perception of their ability to succeed, their self-motivation, their family support, and their relationship with faculty all contribute to success in higher education in ways that institutions do not understand. Bontrager also joins a large community of educators who argue for the efficacy of enhancing students’ time management skills, dedication to study, responsibility, and willingness to use unfamiliar learning strategies and of building programs such as mentoring, learning communities, tutoring, and support labs (Crisp, 2010; Engstrom & Tinto, 2008; Halcrow & liams, 2011; La Manque, 2009). Composition scholar Gary Hafer points out how essential “habit, effort, and perseverance are to learning,” which is why he created his provocative “Contract for B,” an updated model first proposed by Peter Elbow used for success in foundational, gateway composition courses that rewards certain learning behaviors and dedication to rewriting with a B.
Also of particular interest to the QEP Committee was the scholarship that focused on the importance of professional development for faculty members who are attempting to create learner-centered courses in an effort to enhance student learning and student success in foundational, gateway courses. Fortunately, the scholarship is rich with ideas for such professional development. Mathematics scholar Elizabeth Green encourages faculty to look beyond the American higher education system, pointing in particular to the Japanese program called jugyokenkyu (“lesson study”) wherein a teacher practices in a mock classroom of students, staff, and other educators and then engages in a discussion with participants. Composition theorist Susan Eliason shares her institution’s experience with a faculty course redesign camp intended to educate faculty about learner-centered teaching skills, defining the learner-centered models as those that focus on the learning process, how students learn and apply learning. The framework for Eliason’s course redesign was built upon Fink’s Self-Directed Guide to Designing Courses of Significant Learning and Blumberg’s self-assessment, which was employed to help participants reflect on their instructional practices related to the five dimensions of learner-centered teaching (content purpose, instructor role, responsibility for learning, assessment uses and processes, and power balancing). Whatever avenue they advocate, from faculty camps to traditional research, the scholars agree that the creation of engaging, learner-centered foundational, gateway courses can be more easily achieved at institutions that focus on professional development opportunities for faculty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2-A: Sample Best Practices for Student Success</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-Year Seminars</td>
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<td>Supplemental Instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Bridge programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-term orientations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning/Study skills centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging joining behaviors, full-time enrollment, and assistance seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforcing pre-requisites</td>
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Engaged Pedagogies and Active Learning as Strategies for Improving Student Learning and Student Success in Foundational, Gateway Courses

Although there are many diverse approaches to learner-centered courses in the scholarship, one predominant theme is an approach to pedagogy that is actually already embedded in GSC’s mission of “innovative teaching and engaged learning”—and that is engaging pedagogy, a broad topic that covers a host of strategies that are learner centered.

The classic scholarship on engaging pedagogy, which they called “active learning,” was prepared by Bonwell and Eison, who defined active learning as “involving students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing” (2). More current work by scholars such as Carr, Palmer, Hagel, and Millis builds on this early scholarship. These works encourage faculty members who implement engaging pedagogies to focus not on one single strategy but on a wide range of approaches, as long as the two key components of “doing” and “reflecting” are present. Interestingly, much of this recent scholarship points to the fact that Bonwell and Eison’s work actually anticipated some of the research on neuroscience that Leamnson and others are currently exploring. For R. Leamnson, learning is an act that “[stabilizes], through repeated use, certain appropriate and desirable synapses in the brain” (qtd in Millis 1). Barbi Honeycutt, owner of FLIP It Consulting, points out that several active learning strategies, such as her famous “Focus on your Learners by Involving them in the Process” (FLIP), may seem like merely the newest “thing” but are actually pedagogical models that are grounded in the classic Bloom Taxonomy: out-of-class work involves the lower levels of Bloom’s famous triangle, while in-class work focuses on the higher levels. In the FLIP model, students work out of class on essential materials (for example, by either reading or watching a video) and then are engaged in active learning strategies in the classroom to encourage deeper thinking.

While the scholarship concerning student engagement is extensive and offers many techniques and strategies, Table 2–B below provides a sample list of popular engaging pedagogies and active learning strategies.
Table 2-B: Sample Listing of Engaging Pedagogies & Active Learning Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flipping</th>
<th>Visible Quiz</th>
<th>Think-Pair-Share</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer Teaching/Supplement Instruction</td>
<td>Thinking-Aloud Pair Problem Solving</td>
<td>Learning by doing (hands-on learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send/Pass-a-problem</td>
<td>Applied learning</td>
<td>Service learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Teaching</td>
<td>Lab work</td>
<td>Role plays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Learning</td>
<td>Case-based learning</td>
<td>Classroom interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology-based strategies (for example, simulations, games, clickers, and miscellaneous smart phone applications)</td>
<td>Group work of various kinds</td>
<td>Participation &amp; discussion (most widely used)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Effective instruction can raise achievement levels even among students with uneven preparation.” (Qtd. in Kuh, 99)

According to George Kuh, “[I]nstitutions and students can succeed despite the odds. Powerful learning environments and significant learning outcomes can be achieved no matter what the institution’s resources or students’ preparation” (89). Kuh’s ground-breaking work evolved from his Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) project, a two-year study involving 2,700 students at twenty institutions, which solidified Kuh’s belief that a “systematic use of active and collaborative pedagogies” is needed in America. This is so, Kuh argues, because such strategies create “opportunities for students to practice what they are learning in the classroom, [to] develop leadership skills, and [to] work with people from different backgrounds” (69). Of particular interest to the QEP Committee is the fact that Kuh’s insights are founded on the Talen Development Theory, which argues that “every student can learn under the right conditions” (77). By implementing the Talen Development Theory, faculty members can let go of “the all-too-common fixation on trying to recruit the best and the brightest” and focus on engaging the students they do have in their classrooms (89).

“[I]nstitutions and students can succeed despite the odds. Powerful learning environments and significant learning outcomes can be achieved no matter what the institution’s resources or students’ preparation.” (Kuh 89)
Summary

While none of the scholars suggest that there is one single strategy that works for all courses—or for all institutions—the literature does argue that higher levels of engagement leads to higher levels of completion. Overall, the QEP Committee’s review of scholarship demonstrated clearly the need to implement engaging, learner-centered interventions of various types in order to improve student learning in foundational, gateway courses such as those in GSC’s Area A. According to the Columbia University School of Arts and Sciences Teaching Center, there are factors beyond student behaviors that lead to poor learning outcomes, including the “failure to develop instructional strategies that will actively engage our students and address their confusions and misconceptions” (qtd. in Kuh 99). The good news for First Things First can be summed up in other words from the Columbia University School of Arts and Sciences Teaching Center: “Effective instruction can raise achievement levels even among students with uneven preparation.” GSC already boasts a mission focused on “innovative teaching and engaged learning” and a vision “where students flourish.” The next step for the QEP Committee was to create a plan that would be faculty-oriented and learner–centered and that would empower the faculty to create engaging courses that lead to greater student learning.
Chapter Three:  Focus & the QEP Action Plan

Along with conducting a literature review, the overarching goal during the development phase for the QEP Committee was to be very deliberate and intentional in tying the institutional needs made visible through the topic selection processes to a carefully crafted quality enhancement plan, one which would support Gordon State College’s (GSC) mission and vision, represent the input of all pertinent campus constituents, and focus on student learning. Members saw in the literature review that such a plan should be faculty-oriented and learner-centered. In order to create such a QEP, the committee needed first to identify particular Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and then to create a plan that would map out the path to achieving those outcomes. Accordingly, QEP Committee members initiated a two-step process to narrow the scope of First Things First so that they could then craft a sustainable and powerful action plan.

Chapter Three

- Part One: Focus on Student Learning Outcomes
- Part Two: The QEP Action Plan

PART ONE:  Focus on Student Learning Outcomes

Introduction

The original proposal for First Things First: Increasing Mastery in Quantitative and Communication Skills calls for the creation of interventions within Area A foundational, gateway math and English courses. This part of GSC’s core curriculum is a perfect place for such interventions because all GSC students must receive credit for courses in that area, because those courses are foundational in nature and fundamental to every other discipline, and because it is here that essential quantitative and communication skills are taught and built upon. In order to begin working on such an impacting plan, the QEP Committee needed a campus-wide definition: the QEP would seek to increase mastery of exactly which quantitative and communication skills? In order to answer that question, the QEP Committee created a campus-wide faculty survey. (See Appendix D for the complete text of the QEP Faculty Survey.)

Step One: Identifying Particular Quantitative and Communication Skills via the

Rationale for the QEP Faculty Survey:

- To identify specific quantitative and communication skills in order to craft very focused Student Learning Outcomes
- To make clear that all GSC faculty members would be a part of the QEP development process and would be affected by the implementation of First Things First because the skills involved affect student performance in all disciplines
QEP Faculty Survey

The first four survey questions were constructed to solicit input from every faculty member at GSC, full and part time, regardless of whether or not they had ever taught courses in Area A. The QEP Committee wanted all faculty members involved in the identification of the particular quantitative and communication skills because it was their belief that such skills affect student success in courses campus wide. Questions five through nine of the survey were crafted to solicit faculty perception of students’ communication skills, with three questions offering Likert-scale options; questions ten through fourteen were crafted to solicit faculty perception of students’ quantitative skills, with three questions offering Likert-scale options.

Once the survey closed, committee members began a careful review of the responses. Ninety-two faculty members representing all three schools and every department within the School of Arts and Sciences responded to the survey. Over seventy percent of those ninety-two respondents answered that they “occasionally” or “frequently” give assignments requiring basic quantitative skills, and over ninety percent answered that they “occasionally” or “frequently” give assignments requiring written communication skills. According to the faculty responses, only half of the students enter classes at GSC with quantitative and written communication skills strong enough to succeed. Of particular interest to the QEP committee were the responses to the questions that asked for narrative answers: of the ninety-two responses, eighty included comments—sometimes lengthy comments—that gave the committee greater insight into faculty-wide opinions concerning the skills that were the focus of the QEP. (See sample comments in the discussion below.) Significantly, those eighty comment responses also gave voice to all three schools and all departments within the School of Arts and Sciences.

The questions that called for respondents to list particular quantitative and communication weaknesses allowed the QEP Committee to narrow the QEP’s focus. With regard to quantitative skills, the largest number of responses dealt with algebra skills. Respondents also noted weaknesses in basic knowledge, using fractions, understanding data, and applying mathematical knowledge. With regard to communication skills, the largest number of responses addressed student deficiencies in the area of writing clarity (making one’s thinking visible), especially such issues as grammar mistakes, poor syntax, and wording errors. Respondents also noted weaknesses having to do with essay writing, from planning and organizing to developing and preparing a paper.

Table 3-A was created by members of the QEP Committee to summarize the areas of concern mentioned by survey respondents. Concerns are listed by frequency of mention and grouped together in ways that allow for easier analysis. Note that there is also a list of concerns mentioned by respondents who linked quantitative and communication skills together in their answers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3-A  QEP Faculty Survey Response Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Quantitative Skills:

**Algebra skills**
- Linear equations
- Factoring
- Exponents / Logarithms
- Distinguishing between functions and products
- Simplifying
- Distributing

**Basic Knowledge**
- Arithmetic / Basic skills
- How to use calculators
- Basic Principles
- Terminology / Vocabulary

**Using Fractions**
- Fractions
- Dosage calculations
- Ratios / Percentages

**Graphing**
- Reading graphs
- Drawing graphs
- Reading Tables

**Applying mathematical knowledge**
- Mathematical reading comprehension
- Applying math to new situations
- Word Problems
- Basic formulas
- Confidence
- Quantitative skills

**Mathematical intuition**
- Relying on authority and memorization
- Overuse of calculators
- Originality
- Numerical intuition
- Units

**Logic**
- Abstract thinking
- Writing symbolically

### Written Communication Skills:

**Clarity/making thinking visible**
- Grammar/Nonstandard English
- Subject / verb issues
- Unclear pronouns
- Misplaced modifiers
- Passive voice
- Semicolons
- Second language issues
- Precision/ Communicating ideas
- Slang/Texting language
- Verb forms / tense
- Homonyms
- Sentence fragments
- Spelling / Vocabulary
- Proofreading
- Clarity/Syntax
- Predication
- Double negatives
- Sentence structure
- Commas
- Colons

**Essay Writing**
- Planning
- Ideas not supported with
- Weak development
- One big paragraph / no
- Paragraph structure
- Relying too much on personal
As mentioned previously, other than simply listing “particular weaknesses,” eighty of the ninety-two respondents crafted comments that were informative, especially because they provided the committee with insights about particular weaknesses as seen by the different schools at GSC. With regard to quantitative skills, one Biology faculty member noted simply that GSC students “lack basic math skills.” Another in that department said that students were “[u]nable to distinguish [a] graph from a table in the assignment, these are often reversed. Unable to make a table[,] Unable to make a graph[,] Unable to make conclusion based on data shown in graph [;] Unable to put all data within one graph - [Students] think [they] have to make two or several graphs depending on the data.” A respondent from Business and Public Service pointed to students’ “Generalized fear of numbers,” and another in that department pointed out that “many students lack the required quantitative skills and reasoning ability necessary to excel in higher education.” Several faculty members in Humanities noted that while students can take standardized tests and memorize, they cannot, in the words of one Humanities respondent, “think logically or question what they have been told or seek evidence for what they are told.” Still another Humanities faculty member claimed that students have “trouble linking evidence to their reasoning, or even being able to discover evidence to reason a specific way.” A Math and Computer Science faculty member wrote passionately, and simply, “fractions, fractions and more fractions (many have no idea!).” Another member of that same department pointed to a weakness in algebra skills, underscoring that students lack “those basic algebra skills that are taught/learned in high school.” A Nursing faculty member said, “Nursing students must develop critical thinking skills, and many do not.”

With regard to communication, one respondent who teaches in Biology wrote, “Poor grammar sometimes makes even brief answers difficult to understand.” Another Biology faculty member noted that the “inability to communicate ideas clearly” was the most pronounced problem. A respondent teaching in Business and Public Service bemoaned students’ “Terrible sentence structure”; another instructor in the same department claimed, “sometimes students struggle with processing a complete
thought.” An Education faculty member noted that students “do not seem to make rough drafts . . . . they do one draft and consider it ‘done.’” While most faculty members from Humanities simply listed weaknesses, one respondent summed up the issue up this way: “I ... see students who are unable to clearly express themselves.” A respondent from Math and Computer Science claimed, “At times I . . . have trouble understanding what a student is trying to say,” and a faculty member from Nursing noted simply, “many nursing students have a weakness in grammar, research, reference, and just [in] general pulling thoughts together.”

As the survey made clear, the desire to strengthen very particular quantitative and written communication skills was campus-wide. Since the survey also produced a very precise list of skills, the QEP Committee was able to proceed more confidently towards a plan of action.

**Step Two: Creation of the QEP Student Learning Outcomes**

The QEP Committee now had a set of very particular quantitative and communication skills that would be addressed by the QEP, but there still remained the issue of selecting the specific courses that would be the focus of the QEP’s efforts. As mentioned previously, Area A is a part of the GSC core curriculum that includes six courses, four mathematics and two composition courses. (See the figure above.) Based on the results of the faculty survey and after much discussion that extended beyond the QEP Committee to involve the heads of both the math and English programs, the Committee narrowed the focus to two particular courses: MATH 1111 College Algebra and ENGL 1101 Composition I.

With the courses chosen, the QEP Committee turned to the creation of very specific, measurable QEP SLOs. In crafting those outcomes, members of the QEP Committee carefully reviewed the responses to the faculty survey, spoke with the two program heads, and took into consideration existing learning goals for each course. Additionally, the committee attempted to balance significance and sustainability. GSC must be able to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP, so learning outcomes assessment needed to be manageable. Below are the five quantitative and three communication SLOs crafted by the QEP Committee. These SLOs are discussed at length in Chapter Five Assessment; additionally, Appendix E includes pertinent rubrics and assessment materials.

**Quantitative Student Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students will be able to solve problems involving fractions, ratios, and percentages.
2. Students will be able to simplify algebraic expressions and solve linear equations.
3. Students will be able to read a passage of simple but unfamiliar mathematics and answer conceptual and computational questions about the material.
4. Students will be able to read information from a graph and to draw graphs that clearly and accurately represent a set of data.
5. Students will be able to understand the relative size of numbers, to round numbers, and to predict how basic manipulations will affect numbers.

Communication Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to write simple, compound, complex, and compound complex sentences using Academic Language Conventions and with appropriate punctuation.
2. Students will be able to make their thinking visible by organizing a series of sentences into unified, coherent, well-developed paragraphs.
3. Students will be able to use the stylistic conventions expected by an academic and professional audience.

PART TWO: The QEP Action Plan

Introduction

A thorough review of GSC’s mission, vision, and strategic planning priorities, the institution’s critical needs, and the findings from both the review of literature and the faculty survey led the QEP Committee members to create a four-part action plan that promises to enhance student learning at GSC in a significant way. The figure below briefly lists the four components of the plan, while the following narrative sections thoroughly describe each component. (Chapter Four will offer additional information concerning the QEP Action Plan, including budgetary matters and resources.)
Component One: Establishment of a broad-based First Things First Steering Committee to oversee initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP

Component Two: Implementation of a course-redesign initiative for Area A courses MATH 1111 College Algebra and ENGL 1101 Composition I

Component Three: Implementation of a First Things First Unit in GSC’s First Year Experience course

Component Four: Implementation of a three-part QEP Professional Development Plan

Component One: Establishment of a broad-based First Things First Steering Committee to oversee initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP

Component One is the establishment of a steering committee that will oversee all activities and processes of the QEP for the life of the plan. Such a component is a critical course of action, intended to ensure that First Things First can accomplish its goals. As will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Four Capability, this body will assist the QEP Coordinator in keeping the project moving forward, on time and on budget. Additionally, the steering committee component brings a strong broad-based element to the implementation and completion phases of the QEP—one that emphasizes the ways in which First Things First is a plan to enhance student learning in the foundational, gateway Area A courses but also in all courses, as strong essential quantitative and written communication skills are the basic building blocks of all disciplines at GSC, as was made clear by the responses to the QEP Faculty Survey. To ensure that First Things First continues to address critical needs campus wide, the steering committee membership includes faculty representatives from all three schools at GSC, an alumna, and a student tutor from the Student Success Center.

While several positions and their particular responsibilities are discussed in detail in Chapter Four, the list below provides a glimpse of the makeup of the First Things First Steering Committee:

- Chairs of the MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101 Course-Specific Committees (faculty representatives)
- QEP Coordinator (faculty representative)
- Director of Student Success, Advising, and Testing (faculty and staff representative)
- Coordinator for the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning; Coordinator for the Teaching Matters Conference (faculty representative)
- Chair of the General Education Committee (faculty representative)
• Access Coordinator (faculty representative)
• Faculty members representing the three schools at GSC (faculty representatives)
• Director of the African-American Male Initiative
• Adult Learner Coordinator
• SSC Tutor (student representative)
• Director of Institutional Research (staff representative)
• GSC’s Instructional Technology Specialist (staff and alumna representative)
• Dean of Arts and Sciences (administration representative)
• Department heads of both the Mathematics and English Programs (faculty and administrative representatives)
• GSC’s Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs (administrative representative)

Rationale for the steering committee format

The selection of the steering committee format was based upon the QEP Committee’s literature review, in particular the arguments from three sources. In their famous “It Takes a Village” article, Swing and Alexander applaud initiatives that implement a broad-based body; they do so because such a group relies “on the collective knowledge and skills of a campus’s faculty and staff . . . [and therefore builds] on the natural talent of academics to debate, deconstruct complex situations, and develop evidence-based solutions.” The scholarship of Kezer and Lester (2009) also focuses on the benefit of an initiative that includes a broad-based work force that contains both administrators and the faculty directly impacted by the work. For Kezer and Lester, “In order to improve teaching and learning, higher education institutions need to foster effective linkages between institution-wide change initiatives and local, grassroots innovations” (36-37). For Andrew Koch, improving student success in foundational, gateway courses especially calls for a “coordinated” effort that brings “together people and programs to create an intentionally connected gateway course success plan for each of the high-risk courses” that an institution is redesigning (40). This impacting body has already been formed, has already had its initial preparatory meeting (February 26, 2016), and has already completed its first task. As mentioned above, Chapter Four provides many more details of the members, responsibilities, and tasks of the First Things First Steering Committee.

Component Two: Implementation of a Course-Redesign Initiative for Area A Courses MATH 1111 College Algebra and ENGL 1101 Composition I

Component Two is the implementation of a course-redesign initiative for the two Area A courses selected after the QEP Faculty Survey was completed. MATH 1111 College Algebra and ENGL 1101 Composition I will be transformed in ways that will help students better engage with the content since engagement has been shown to increase student success. These redesigned classes will be more “learner-centered,” adapted to take advantage of the latest advances in research in the scholarship of teaching and learning and to help students master essential quantitative and communication skills—even those skills students perhaps should have learned in high school.
Initiating the Course-Redesign process

The QEP Committee selected John N. Gardner Institute’s (JNGI) Gateways to Completion (G2C) process as the mechanism by which to “kick start” Component Two of the QEP’s Action Plan. As a continuous improvement redesign initiative, G2C is especially beneficial to First Things First because it provides a unified approach that works equally well with both subjects—the purpose of G2C is to focus on courses such as MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101 in their capacity as foundational, gateway courses. Three criteria define a course as “gateway” within the G2C process, making G2C a perfect fit for GSC’s QEP:

- Gateway courses are foundational in nature, either non-credit bearing support courses or college credit-bearing courses;
- Gateway courses are high-risk courses that have historically resulted in high rates of Ds, Fs, Withdrawals, and Incompletes;
- Gateway courses are high-enrollment with regard to the number of students enrolled across sections of a course.

All three criteria also define MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101: they are foundational, high-risk, and high-enrollment Area A courses.

Briefly, the G2C process is a self-study initiative that offers tools, research, and professional development opportunities that assist institutions as they and their faculty members create and implement an evidence-based plan for improving student learning and success in foundational, gateway courses such as those in the GSC’s Area A. Currently, institutions participating in the G2C process involve a collective enrollment of over 750,000 undergraduates, many of whom have already begun to experience successful change, as demonstrated by an external evaluation (Drake, 2010). (See Appendix F for a list of participating G2C Institutions.)

In offering a process to guide institutions in understanding students’ struggles with foundational, gateway courses, JNGI does not advocate lowering standards in order to raise pass rates, an important point for an institution considering adopting the G2C process as a mechanism for reaching QEP goals. For the Gardner Institute, the definition of improved success in gateway courses can be phrased simply: “Institutions and their students will have successfully addressed the gateway course failure issue when all students who have the capacity and will to succeed in a gateway course are met with a coordinated institutional system that allows them to do so” (Koch 40). The Gardner Institute does not mandate strategies, nor does it implement any programs, another important aspect with regard to adopting G2C as a mechanism within a QEP. Simply put, G2C assists institutions with tools and evidence-based processes as the institution and, especially, its faculty members do the work.
**Initiating the G2C Process**

Selecting G2C required additional steps and involved faculty and staff beyond the QEP Committee, which will be summarized in the following section. Liaisons for the project (the QEP Coordinator, the Director of Institutional Research, and the Provost of GSC) completed the G2C application in January and then attended a Launch Meeting in Macon, Georgia in February of 2016. In selecting G2C as a mechanism for the QEP’s redesign initiative, GSC joins the 2015 Gateways to Completion USG Cohort, which includes ten University System of Georgia institutions. (See the figure in this paragraph.) Members of the campus community representing key constituents were invited to attend the April 1-5 JNGI 2016 Gateway Course Experience Conference in order to learn more about the effect of the G2C process on student learning. Ultimately, the Dean of Arts and Sciences, Department heads overseeing MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101, and faculty members who will chair and compose the Course-Specific Committees joined the three liaisons in attending events at the conference. All nine attendees were encouraged to participate in the workshops germane to their area of interest. Having the input of multiple attendees at each session provided a depth of understanding gained from multiple viewpoints. Additionally, the shared experience helped solidify the working groups approach, instilled a sense of comradery, and encouraged the development of common goals.

The conference was broken into two and a half days of Pre-Conference Sessions and two and a half days of Conference Sessions.

- First was the day-long Teaching and Learning Academy (TLA), a face-to-face and virtual course redesign community created specifically for faculty. GSC attendees spent the day meeting colleagues from across the nation and the world, including schools already experiencing successful results from the G2C process. The day’s schedule included full group events as well as small group sessions intended to encourage more intimate conversations about participants’ experiences with foundational, gateway courses like GSC’s Area A courses. By the end of the first day, GSC attendees were enthused, encouraged both by the explanations of the G2C process and by the experiences of other participating schools further along in the process.
- The second day of the conference was the day-long Community of Practice Meeting, including facilitated group discussions involving schools participating in the G2C process. Most productive of the day’s events were the sessions devoted to the particular courses that schools have selected for the initiative. Attendees heard first-hand accounts of transformations in foundational, gateway courses that have led to great improvements in student learning on their campuses.
• The morning of third day was an introduction to the Analytics Process Collaborative (APC), a face-to-face and virtual community for those involved in the G2C process. This workshop included sharing evidence-based methods for applying analytics to improve teaching and learning in foundational, gateway courses. Participants were given access to prediction models and tools and to research that will guide faculty in their efforts to use analytics in improving their student learning outcomes.

• During the afternoon of the third day, the Gateway Course Experience Conference began, two days of concurrent sessions and keynote speaker events covering topics such as excellence in teaching, faculty development, curriculum redesign, the latest promising practices, early warning systems, academic help labs, predictive analytics, pre-enrollment placement, preparation strategies, and the role of foundational, gateway courses in student success and completion. Many of the concurrent sessions were led by faculty involved with the G2C process at their institutions, so GSC attendees were able to hear additional first-hand accounts of the success of the program.

Component Three: Implementation of a First Things First Unit in GSC’s First Year Experience Course

Component Three is the implementation of a First Things First Unit in GSC’s First Year Experience course (GFYE), which was launched as a result of GSC’s previous QEP and will also be transformed via the G2C initiative. Although the QEP will monitor neither the self-study nor the assessment processes required for the first-year course, the QEP will benefit from the redesign work completed on this important course. A more engaged, learner-centered First Year Experience course will lead to a better prepared student body entering GSC’s Area A coursework. Additionally, because GFYE is a course taught by faculty members across all academic disciplines, this component brings an added broad-based element to the QEP.

Goals of the GFYE First Things First Unit

Although they will continue to evolve as the GFYE Course-Specific Committee begins its work, the particular goals of the First Things First Unit are as follows:

• The unit will familiarize GSC students with the First Things First initiative in general and the ways in which stronger quantitative and written communication skills will be of value beyond Area A coursework
• The unit will encourage student participation in redesign courses
• The unit will encourage student participation in Student Success Center Tutoring
• The unit will lead to students developing the proper attitudes for success in MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101, as well as in other foundational, gateway courses. Although the unit will continue to evolve as the GFYE Course-Specific Committee reviews data and research, possible avenues for this goal include the following:
A borrowing from the strategies of the Students Taking Academic Responsibility course (STAR 0098) that focus on personal attitudes and habits and require introspection

A preview that spells out the particular demands of MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101

A section on the habits and attitudes of those who succeed in foundational, gateway (and other) courses, including some helpful hints for developing those habits and attitudes

Component Four: Implementation of a Three-Part QEP Professional Development Plan

Component Four is the implementation of an ambitious three-part professional development plan, which was created to benefit faculty participating in the MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101 redesign initiative, faculty and staff campus wide, and Student Success Center (SSC) tutors. As such, the plan enriches the First Things First by empowering faculty and student tutors directly involved with the redesign process but also faculty, student tutors, and staff who are less intimately involved. Although they will be discussed more thoroughly in the sections below, the following bullet list provides an overview of the three parts of the QEP Professional Development Plan:

- Component Four A: Participating Faculty Professional Development Plan
  - Monthly, often weekly, G2C webinars
  - Participation in the G2C Community of Practice
  - Participation in the G2C Analytics Process Collaborative
  - Participation in the G2C Teaching and Learning Academy
  - Annual Gateways to Completion Conference

- Component Four B: Campus Wide Faculty and Staff Professional Development Plan
  - CETL
  - Teaching Matters Conference
  - Student Success Summit

- Component Four C: Student Success Center Tutor Professional Development Plan
  - College Reading and Learning Association-certified Online learning modules
  - College Reading and Learning Association-certified Face-to-face sessions
  - Georgia Tutoring Association Annual Conference

Rationale for the QEP’s Professional Development Plan

As the literature review demonstrated, no plan to enhance student learning can be successful without a professional

“One constant finding in the research literature is that notable improvements in education almost never take place in the absence of professional development. At the core of each and every successful educational improvement effort is a thoughtfully conceived, well-organized, and well-supported professional development component.” (Thomas R. Guskey, qtd in FF 29 April 2016)
development plan in place for the faculty involved. One of the benefits that the QEP Committee noted about the G2C process is that it strongly emphasizes “enhanced faculty fulfillment,” and one of the ways that it does so is by placing faculty development at the epicenter (G2C Guidebook). The Course-Specific Committees analyze historic and current institutional data; examine scholarship concerning student success, student learning, and engaging pedagogy; and then make recommendations for enhancements to policy, procedure, and/or pedagogy in the participating courses. As Maryellen Weimer pointed out in a 20 April post to Faculty Focus, faculty working together on a project such as the First Things First course redesign will have time to delve into the deep issues of their profession, times when the “spirit of sharing” deepens pedagogy to a significant degree. Such sharing is actually an important part of growing as a teacher. As Weimer points out, faculty often bemoan the fact that students join classroom discussions “without enough background knowledge, related experience, or having done the reading.” That “lack of preparation affects the quality of the discussion.” “The same critique could be leveled against us,” Weimer claims: “If all our pedagogical exchanges happen on the fly as we pass each other in the hall or pause in the mailroom, we’re not having conversations that match the caliber of what we’re trying to do.”

Component Four A: Participating Faculty Professional Development Plan

Within the G2C process, there is a very ambitious professional development facet that will involve participating faculty with others around the nation—and the world. Below is a breakdown of the professional development elements of G2C:

- Monthly, often weekly, G2C webinars
- Participation in the G2C Community of Practice
- Participation in the G2C Analytics Process Collaborative
- Participation in the G2C Teaching and Learning Academy
- Annual Gateways to Completion Conference

Briefly, participating faculty members will have access to monthly, sometimes weekly, webinars facilitated by the experts at the Gardner Institute. Some of the these webinars, such as those focusing on predictive analytics, will offer insightful training; others go even further, as participating in the G2C process allows faculty to be part of the virtual and face-to-face professional G2C Community of Practice, the Teaching and Learning Academy, and the Analytics Process Collaborative. These three professional communities meet both virtually all year and annually at the Gateway Experience Conference. Lastly, the Gardner Institute encourages professional development via networking, an advantageous element that has already led to the acceptance of a joint presentation at the upcoming 2016 SACSCOC Annual Conference for one GSC faculty member.
Component Four B: Campus-Wide Faculty and Staff Professional Development Plan

All faculty and staff at GSC will benefit from three professional development opportunities connected to the QEP:

- Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL): Created in 2012, CETL is comprised of ten yearly campus professional development opportunities for faculty, including visits from nationally and world-recognized experts in various disciplines and in the fields of pedagogy and student learning. The Coordinator for CETL also regularly updates faculty and staff relative to off-campus professional development opportunities and maintains a Teaching and Learning Library/Repository. Plans are being developed to include speakers and topics connected to the First Things First focus into the broad array of forthcoming events.

- Teaching Matters Conference: Begun in 2002, the Teaching Matters Conference is an interdisciplinary professional conference dedicated to discussions and critical examinations of practical pedagogy. The conference meets in March of every year, averaging 80-90 attendees and 50-60 presenters from Georgia, the nation, and other countries.

- Student Success Summit: Launched August 3, 2016, the Student Success Summit is an in-house professional development event composed of seminars and discussion groups intended to provide insights and information to assist GSC faculty and staff in their support of student success. The keynote speaker for the August 2016 summit was Dr. Charlie Nutt, Director of NACADA, who also facilitated a session at the JNGI 2016 Gateways to Completion Conference mentioned previously. Although the Summit was created initially to support the goals of the QEP, it will extend beyond the reporting life of the QEP.

While offering an array of additional development opportunities unrelated to the QEP, these three programs have essential elements that will extend and complement the First Things First focus, thereby opening up the research aspect of the QEP to all GSC faculty and staff. For example, the theme of the 2017 Teaching Matters Conference, “Engaging Students and Empowering Educators,” and the selection of the Key Note Speaker for the Student Success Summit both evolved directly from the research conducted in support of the QEP.

Component Four C: Student Success Center Tutor Professional Development Plan

In addition to an in-house development plan, Student Success Center (SSC) tutors will gain invaluable experience from the QEP’s professional development plan that extends beyond the campus. In particular, the SSC tutor plan includes three components:

- College Reading and Learning Association-certified Online learning modules
- College Reading and Learning Association-certified Face-to-face sessions
- Georgia Tutoring Association Annual Conference

All peer tutors, including the 20-25 students who tutor math and writing skills, will participate in the SSC’s College Reading and Learning Association-certified tutor training program. The training consists of both online learning modules and face-to-face sessions. All peer tutors will complete the first two
semesters of training; those who continue working at the SSC can complete up to six semesters’ of training. Additionally, 15-20 peer tutors will attend the Georgia Tutoring Association (GaTa) annual conference, funded through the First Things First budget for all five years of the QEP. At the conference, tutors will attend sessions and presentations on best practices, which will empower them to handle the kinds of issues that the QEP committee reviewed during the research phase. The tutors will also network with peer tutors from other University System of Georgia (USG) and Technical College System of Georgia (TCGS) institutions.

Summary

The QEP’s literature review demonstrated that engaging, learner-centered pedagogies are making the content of foundational, gateway courses like those in GSC’s Area A, more approachable, relevant, and enjoyable. Thus, these courses can lead to greater student involvement and relevance to essential quantitative and communication skills, which encourages practice and repetition, leading to skill development. Taken together, the insights gleaned from the literature review and the QEP Faculty Survey give credence to a course redesign initiative aimed at Area A. Accordingly, the QEP Committee crafted and redesigned an action plan that will be supported by a First Things First Steering Committee. As a whole, GSC’s QEP Action Plan builds on the institution’s mission and priorities: innovative teaching and engaged learning, enriched by the action plan of First Things First, leading to the GSC vision of students flourishing.
Chapter Four: Capability to Initiate, Implement, and Complete the QEP

Because the essential skills of Area A courses affect the academic success of all Gordon State College (GSC) students, it was imperative to move from preparing the QEP Action Plan to accomplishing additional goals: to craft a carefully thought out budget and timeline; to leverage the knowledge and skills of faculty, student tutors, and staff involved with student learning by building a strong operational and administrative structure; to identify initiatives on campus that will enhance and complement the QEP; and to ensure a continuous flow of information regarding First Things First. The goal of the current chapter is to show that GSC has allotted the appropriate financial and human resources and is fully capable to initiate, implement, and complete the action plan of First Things First.

PART ONE: The Implementation of a Sustainable Budget and Timeline

The QEP Budget: Financial Commitment and Capability

A QEP, as far-reaching as First Things First, requires a very deliberate and carefully considered budget that covers the costs of all resources and all actions involved in the implementation and completion of the QEP. Prior to the creation of the First Things First Action Plan, the President of GSC met regularly with the Vice President of Finance and Administration and the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs to ensure dedication of the funding needed to initiate and sustain a new quality enhancement plan. The College administration showed its commitment by allocating over $54,000 for fiscal year 2016, for actions begun in preparation for the implementation of the QEP.

Once the particular components of the QEP Action Plan were designed, the Vice President of Finance and Administration, the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, and the QEP Coordinator applied the monies to the plan, allocating over $40,000 for FY 2016, over $73,000 for FY 2017, and over $80,000 for each fiscal year 2018-2021 to the course-redesign (Components Two and Three of the Action Plan, the redesign initiatives of MATH 1111, ENGL 1101, and GFYE) and to associated professional development opportunities (Component Four A and Four C of the Action Plan, the participating faculty plan and the Student Success Center tutor plan). Additionally, over $13,000 for FY 2016, over $28,000 for FY 2017, and over $20,000 per year for FY 2018-2021 was allocated for QEP Administration costs.
Two elements of the QEP Action Plan are not represented in the QEP Budget. The establishment of a **First Things First** Steering Committee (Component One) requires human resources (which are discussed below) but not financial. Likewise, the campus-wide faculty and staff professional development plan (Component Four B) does not need funding from the QEP, as costs for those elements are covered under other GSC budgets.

Funding is dedicated to the QEP in a separate budget string with the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs as primary expenditure authority. The complete annual commitment beginning fiscal year 2017 for the QEP exceeds $100,000 per year and totals almost $560,000 by the time of the submission of the QEP Impact Report to SACSCOC in 2022. The overall QEP Budget is provided in Table 4-A below. A letter from Dr. Kristen Albritton, Vice President of Finance and Administration, confirming the financial commitment of GSC is provided at Appendix G.

### Table 4-A  **FIRST THINGS FIRST BUDGET**
(Impact report to be submitted Fall 2022)

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<th>QEP Action Components</th>
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<th>FY 18 Year Two</th>
<th>FY 19 Year Three</th>
<th>FY 20 Year Four</th>
<th>FY 21 Year Five</th>
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<td>Professional Development--Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>6325</td>
<td>6325</td>
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<td>10,500</td>
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<td>English Course-Specific Committee Chair (release time)</td>
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<td>Travel (G2C Conferences)</td>
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<td>Professional Development (Campus-wide: CETL, Teaching Matters, Student Success Summit)</td>
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<td><strong>QEP ACTION COMPONENTS TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>40500</td>
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<tr>
<td>ETS assessment licensing fee</td>
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<td><strong>ASSESSMENT TOTAL</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>QEP Coordinator (stipend and release time)</td>
<td>6950</td>
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<td>Travel-SACSCOC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
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<td><strong>QEP ADMINISTRATION TOTAL</strong></td>
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</table>

| **FIRST THINGS FIRST GRAND TOTAL** | 54318 | 101850 | 101850 | 101850 | 103850 | 559200 |
The QEP Timeline: Capability and Sustainability

An initiative as impactful as First Things First requires a carefully crafted Timeline that outlines the implementation of all the major initiatives, actions, assessment processes, and SACSCOC compliance deadlines of the QEP. The QEP Coordinator will submit an annual report of the activities of the QEP, any necessary changes (including the rationale for any changes), as well as assessment data and findings to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness in the same form required for the summative QEP Impact Report to be submitted in 2022.

The QEP Timeline is represented in Table 4-B below. Because several important actions have already begun, the timeline extends from spring 2016 to fall 2021.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Spring 2016</th>
<th>Fall 2016</th>
<th>Spring 2017</th>
<th>Fall 2017</th>
<th>Spring 2018</th>
<th>Fall 2018</th>
<th>Spring 2019</th>
<th>Fall 2019</th>
<th>Spring 2020</th>
<th>Fall 2020</th>
<th>Spring 2021</th>
<th>Fall 2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish First Things First Steering Committee</td>
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<td>Complete QEP Inventory</td>
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<td>Update inventory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invite Faculty to Join Course Committees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Select Course-Specific Committee Chairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welcome Course-Specific Committee Meeting</td>
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<td>Welcome Steering Committee Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bi-Weekly QEP Coordinator &amp; Indiv. Chairs Mtg</td>
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<td>Monthly QEP Coordinator &amp; Indiv Chairs Mtg</td>
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<td>Monthly Course-Specific Committee Meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review G2C Inventory and other data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete Course Reports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implement Course Initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implement OFYE Course Initiatives (ITF Unit)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review data and refine implementation plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participate in weekly/bimonthly Webinars</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participate in Teaching &amp; Learning Academy</td>
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<td>Participate in Analytics Process Collaborative</td>
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<td>Participate in Community of Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend Gateways to Completion Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participate in GSC Student Success Summit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participate in GSC Teaching Matters Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participate in GSC Center for Excellence in Teaching &amp; Learning</td>
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<td>Tutors Participate Annual GaTa Conference</td>
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<td>Review of Principles and KPIs</td>
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<td>Direct Assessment of QEP SLO's</td>
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<td>Indirect Assessment of QEP SLO's</td>
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<td>Administer Early-Term Satisfaction Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Run Student Learning Gains Survey</td>
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<td>Collect SSG Tutoring Log Data</td>
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<td>Run DFW Reports</td>
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<td>Conduct ETS Proficiency Profile</td>
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</table>

**Status**
- Complete
- Future
- In-Progress

**SACSCOC-Related Activities**
- Submit QEP to SACSCOC & Host On-Site Visit
- Participate in SACSCOC Annual Meeting
- Submit Report to Institutional Effectiveness
- Prepare QEP Impact Report

Introduction

Along with designing a strong Action Plan, budget, and timeline, the QEP committee set in place an organizational and administrative structure whose purpose is to ensure that the College can sustain First Things First. To begin, the QEP Coordinator and other faculty and staff from the QEP Committee will continue to have oversight of the overall plan, as they are already invested in the plan; however, oversight will also reach beyond such members to ensure that implementation of the plan is broad-based. The First Things First Steering Committee is manned by faculty, staff, administrators, and students with expertise in the two disciplines of the initiative, in the fields of excellence in teaching and student success, in institutional research and technological capability, and in assessment; various members also have first-hand knowledge of the work involved in the foundational, gateway courses of Area A. Additionally, the QEP Committee was very intentional in fashioning an operational structure that would carry the proper status and administrative support that such an important initiative deserves. Briefly, the day to day responsibilities of governing First Things First will be divided between one steering committee and three course-specific committees, as shown in the figure below. The makeup and particular responsibilities of each are discussed in the narrative sections below.

First Things First Steering Committee

Math 1111 Course-Specific Committee   ENGL 1101 Course-Specific Committee   GFYE Course-Specific Committee

First Things First Steering Committee

As discussed in Chapter Three, Component One of the QEP Action Plan is the establishment of a broad-based First Things First Steering Committee to oversee initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP. As also mentioned previously, this body is vital to the success of the QEP also because it extends the broad-based element of the QEP to the implementation and completion phases. The Steering Committee includes representatives of all three schools at GSC and a student tutor from the Student Success Center, members who are indispensable to the goal of continuing the QEP’s broad-based composition and focus. As the faculty survey made clear, First Things First addresses campus-wide concerns about essential quantitative and communication skills; its success will be a victory for the entire campus.
For consistency and ease of reading, the overview of the steering committee membership that is provided in Chapter Three is reproduced here. Key positions and their responsibilities as they relate to capability are discussed in detail below this list.

- Chairs of the MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101 Course-Specific Committees (faculty representatives)
- QEP Coordinator (faculty representative)
- Coordinator of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning; Coordinator of the Teaching Matters Conference (faculty representative)
- Director of Student Success, Advising, and Testing (faculty and staff representative)
- Chair of the General Education Committee (faculty representative)
- Access Coordinator (faculty representative)
- Faculty members representing the three schools at GSC (faculty representatives)
- Director of the African-American Male Initiative
- Adult Learner Coordinator
- SSC Tutor (student representative)
- Director of Institutional Research (staff representative)
- GSC’s Instructional Technology Specialist (staff and alumna representative)
- Dean of Arts and Sciences (administration representative)
- Department heads of Mathematics and English Programs (faculty and administrative representatives)
- GSC’s Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs (administrative representative)

The first objective of the Steering Committee, completed during spring 2016, was to assist the Director of Institutional Research in gathering the information needed for the Gateway Course Success Inventory (the body of historic institutional data that the course-specific committees review mentioned in Chapter Three under professional development for participating faculty). During the coming years, the First Things First Steering Committee will meet on a regular basis, as outlined in both the bullet list below and on the QEP Timeline found at Table 4-B. The student tutor and the representatives of the three schools (the Advisory Members) will not be responsible for the administrative work of this body, and a few members of the Steering Committee have additional responsibilities that will be discussed in the narrative passages below; otherwise, this body is charged with the following:

- Support QEP Coordinator in overseeing the complete action plan of First Things First
- Offer feedback, discipline insights, and support to MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101 Course-Specific Committee Chairs (in support of QEP Action Plan Component Two: Implementation of a course-redesign initiative for Area A courses MATH 1111 College Algebra and ENGL 1101 Composition I)
- Offer feedback, discipline insights, and support to the GFYE Course-Specific Committee Chair, in particular, guidance in the initiation and implementation of a First Things First Unit in GFYE (in support of QEP Action Plan Component Three: Implementation of a First Things First Unit in GSC’s First Year Experience course)
- Identify broad and common themes that emerge from Course-Specific Committee Reports
- Attend the three Synthesis and one Final Report Meetings as part of the G2C process each year
- Attend any other meetings as called by QEP Coordinator
- Attend Webinars (either live or recorded)
- Attend the annual G2C Community of Practice Annual Meeting, Analytics Process Collaborative, and the Teaching and Learning Academy
- Attend the annual Gateways to Completion Conference, as needed
- Attend all campus-wide faculty and staff professional development opportunities (CETL, Teaching Matters Conference, and Student Success Summit) connected to the QEP (in support of QEP Action Plan Component Four: Implementation of a three-part QEP Professional Development Plan)
- Assist QEP Coordinator in preparation of overall comprehensive G2C reports & action plans
- Assist QEP Coordinator in preparation of annual QEP reports and the Fifth-Year Impact Report

Table 4-C provides a list of the members of the **First Things First** Steering Committee as they have been identified so far.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 4-C First Things First Steering Committee</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna Dunlap Higgins-Harrell (Chair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Jeffery Knighton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernard Anderson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alan Burstein</td>
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<tr>
<td>Susan Finazzo</td>
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<td>Peter Higgins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erica Johnson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Britt Lifsey</td>
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<tr>
<td>John George</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephen Raynie</td>
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<tr>
<td>LaRonda Sanders-Senu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autumn Schaffer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theresa Stanley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ed Whitelock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advisory Members:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonya Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Perry-Stewart</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Williams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pamela Bell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erica Johnson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ashley Smith</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Things First Steering Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna Dunlap Higgins-Harrell (Chair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor, Department of Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Jeffery Knighton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernard Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor, Department of Math &amp; Computer Science; Chair of MATH 1111 Course-Specific Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Burstein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor, Department of Business &amp; Public Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Finazzo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interim Dean, School of Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Higgins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director, Student Success Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erica Johnson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director, Center for Excellence in Teaching &amp; Learning; Coordinator, Teaching Matters Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Britt Lifsey</td>
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<td>Director, Institutional Research</td>
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<td>John George</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interim Head, Department of Math &amp; Computer Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephen Raynie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinator, Access Institute; Professor, Department of Humanities</td>
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<tr>
<td>LaRonda Sanders-Senu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor, Department of Humanities; Chair of ENGL 1101 Course-Specific Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autumn Schaffer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructional Designer, Information Technology; GSC alumna</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theresa Stanley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor, Department of Biology &amp; Physical Science; Chair, General Education Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ed Whitelock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Head, Department of Humanities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tonya Moore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adult Learner Coordinator; Career Services Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Perry-Stewart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director, African-American Male Initiative; Associate Professor, Department of Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Representative from School of Nursing; Coordinator, the Academic Intervention and Mentoring for Success in Nursing (AIM) Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamela Bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Representative from School of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erica Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Representative from School of Arts &amp; Sciences; Coordinator, the Center for Excellence in Teaching &amp; Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ashley Smith</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Representative from the Student Success Center</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
QEP Coordinator, Chair of the First Things First Steering Committee, and Primary G2C Liaison

The QEP Coordinator will supervise all day-to-day activities and provide leadership for the QEP for the life of the plan, teaching at a reduced course-load to compensate for the performance of QEP-related duties. (Please see the QEP Budget at Table 4-A.) This position reports directly to the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs and to GSC’s SACSCOC Liaison. As chair of the First Things First Steering Committee, the QEP Coordinator will be supported by the Provost (who also functions as a G2C Liaison), the Director of Institutional Research (who functions as the secondary G2C Liaison), a Steering Committee, a senior JNGI advisor, and other support staff from the Gardner Institute. The QEP Coordinator oversees the QEP Committee, chairs the QEP’s operational First Things First Steering Committee, and functions as the primary G2C Liaison. In these roles, the QEP Coordinator will fulfill the following responsibilities:

- Facilitate all steering committee meetings
- Meet on an individual basis with the three Course-Specific Committee Chairs, either face-to-face or virtually, at least every two weeks for the first semester of the QEP and then once a month after that point
- Monitor all assessment processes for all aspects of the QEP, which includes
  - Organizing and reporting data in accordance to the QEP Action Plan
  - Writing and submitting SACSCOC reports required for the QEP
- Maintain and monitor the QEP Timeline
- Monitor all budget concerns and progress
- Function as the primary Liaison and point of contact for the G2C process, which includes
  - Attending all G2C webinars, meetings, and conferences
- Attend all SACSCOC Annual Conferences
- Attend all GSC professional development opportunities related to the QEP

Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs and G2C Liaison

GSC’s Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs is responsible for directing the College’s Academic Affairs functions, including matters related to faculty and institutional accreditation. This position is also one of the three G2C Liaisons for the life of the QEP. The Provost will serve as a member of the First Things First Steering Committee for five years, giving the QEP the administrative authority that such an important initiative deserves. Additionally, the Provost is in charge of the QEP Budget and will work with the QEP Coordinator in making sure that all actions stay within the budget.

Director of Student Success

The Director of Student Success is committed to helping students achieve academic and personal success and oversees the Gordon First Year Experience program. The Student Success Center offers advising, tutoring, academic workshops, and testing functions and initiatives. This position is a member of the QEP Committee and will serve on the First Things First Steering Committee for the life of the QEP. Other duties of this position related to the QEP are as follows:
• Function as chair of the Course-Specific Committee for Gordon State’s First Year Experience (GFYE) course, fulfilling all the G2C responsibilities of that position as discussed below
• Initiation and completion of Component Three of the QEP Action Plan: Implementation of a First Things First Unit in GSC’s First Year Experience course
• Oversight of the tutor professional development plan, in support of the third part of Component Four: Implementation of a three-part QEP Professional Development Plan, the Student Success Center Tutor Professional Development Plan
• Forward tutoring logs/reports as indicated on the QEP Assessment Plan to the QEP Coordinator, the Director of Institutional Research, and the math and English Course-Specific Chairs

**Director of Institutional Research and Secondary G2C Liaison**

The Director of Institutional Research (IR) is responsible for collection, analysis, distribution, and presentation of data for audiences both within and outside the college. The Director of IR is a member of the QEP Committee and was responsible for the creation of the Gateway Course Success Inventory mentioned earlier. During the life of the QEP, the Director of Institutional Research will have the following responsibilities:

• Oversee all technological aspects of the QEP
• Assist the QEP Coordinator in the creation of First Things First Steering Committee and SACSCOC Reports
• Assist the Course-Specific Committees in the administration of the Student Learning Gains Survey (discussed in Chapter Five Assessment) and all other surveys
• Collect assessment data on a planned and scheduled basis

The Director of Institutional Research will function as a First Things First Steering Committee Member for the five-year initiative, as well as serve as secondary G2C Liaison and point of contact for the Gardner Institute.

**Coordinator of the Consortium for Excellence in Teaching and Learning; Coordinator of the Teaching Matters Conference**

The Coordinator of the Consortium for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) is a Level II special faculty assignment, a position created to cultivate a culture of teaching and learning excellence at GSC. The position reports to the Provost or designee, participating in University System of Georgia (USG) conversations and national conversations on excellence in teaching and learning, including actively participating in listservs, USG committees, and conferences. Additionally, the Coordinator of CETL is the Coordinator for the Teaching Matters Conference. This position will serve on the Steering Committee as an “Advisory Member” of the First Things First for five years, working with the members especially in support of Component Four B of the QEP Action Plan, the implementation of a campus-wide professional development plan.
Course-Specific Committees

As discussed in Chapter Three, Component Two of the QEP Action Plan is a course-redesign initiative for Area A courses MATH 1111 College Algebra and ENGL 1101 Composition I; Component Three of the plan is the implementation of a First Things First Unit in GSC’s First Year Experience course. Both of these action plans will be initiated, implemented, and completed by the work of individual committees. Briefly, for each course that is part of the G2C process there is a Course-Specific Committee composed of faculty members who teach the course. These committees report directly to the Course-Specific Committee chairs. (See a discussion of the Course-Specific Committee chairs below.)

The literature review demonstrated the benefits of this kind of faculty-driven initiative. Contrasting them to larger institutional programs, Dee and Associates argue that beginning at the individual course level is often “a more productive route to pedagogical improvement. Faculty teams can guide the course redesign process, identify practices to foster student engagement, and build active learning environments that promote higher levels of achievement” (Dee et al 57). As discussed in Chapter Three relative to the professional development component of the QEP Action Plan, these committees actually function as both research groups and action committees: they analyze historic and current institutional data and review scholarship concerning student success, student learning, and engaging pedagogy; they then make recommendations for enhancements to policy, procedure, and/or pedagogy in the participating courses.

Course-Specific Committee Members

These committees are supported by the First Things First Steering Committee, their unit Heads, and the QEP Coordinator. Additionally, they have access to the G2C Platform, the G2C tools, and the G2C Guidebook (an invaluable resource that walks participants through the entire G2C process). These committees will also have the support of Advisory Members to whom they can reach out for additional input as needed. Ideally, these committees will work through the life of the QEP retaining the same membership, though faculty may be added or rotated as needed. The particular duties and responsibilities of the members of the Course-Specific Committees are as follows:

- Analyze historic and current course related data
- Continue to review literature and best practices begun by the QEP Committee
- Assist in the creation of new indirect assessment measures, as described in Chapter Five
- Attend webinars
- Assist course-specific chairs in completing course reports
- Participate in discussions of redesign plans in an effort to create learner-centered courses that will encourage student engagement/learning
- Attend monthly course-specific meetings and any additional meetings as called by course-specific chair
- Attend campus-wide professional development opportunities relating to the QEP
Responsibilities for the Course-Specific Chairs, narrated immediately below this section, as well as the QEP Timeline in Table 4-B, provide further details of the Course-Specific Committee’s duties and schedule details. Table 4-D lists the members of the three Course-Specific Committees as they were identified by summer 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4-D</th>
<th>First Things First Course-Specific Committees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MATH 1111 Course-Specific Committee &amp; Advisory Members</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernard Anderson, Chair</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of Math &amp; Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoff Clement</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Department of Math &amp; Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen Fuller</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Math &amp; Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John George</td>
<td>Interim Department Head, Associate Professor, Department of Math &amp; Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Gore</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Department of Math &amp; Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satjajit Karmakar</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Math &amp; Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikita Patterson</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of Math &amp; Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marwan Zabdawi</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Math &amp; Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy Davis, Advisory Member</td>
<td>Associate Professor, School of Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce Klaus, Advisory Member</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of Biology &amp; Physical Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Webb, Advisory Member</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of History &amp; Political Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **ENGL 1101 Course-Specific Committee & Advisory Members** | |
| LaRonda Sanders-Senu, Chair | Associate Professor, Department of Humanities |
| Doug Davis | Professor, Department of Humanities |
| Becky Godlasky | Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities |
| Robert Ivey | Lecturer, Department of Humanities |
| Mark King | Professor, Department of Humanities |
| Erik McCarthy | Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities |
| Stephen Powers | Associate Professor, Department of Humanities |
| Wesley Venus | Associate Professor, Department of Humanities |
| Kathy Davis, Advisory Member | Associate Professor, School of Nursing and Health Sciences |

| **GFYE Course-Specific Committee & Advisory Members** | |
| Peter Higgins, Chair | Director, Student Success Center |
| David Casebeer | Part-time Instructor, School of Education |
| Gay Grubbs | Academic Advisor & Part-time Instructor, Student Success Center |
| Anissa Howard | Assistant Professor, Department of Business & Public Service |
| Wanda Stuckey | Academic Advisor & Part-time Instructor, Student Success Center |
| Trisha Walker | Lecturer, Department of Biology & Physical Sciences |
| James Woodruff | Academic Advisor, Student Success Center |
| Cathy Lee, Advisory Member | Associate Professor, Department of Biology & Physical Sciences |
Course-Specific Committee Chairs

The MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101 Course-Specific Committees are chaired by faculty experienced in teaching Area A courses; the GFYE Course-Specific Committee is chaired by the Director of Student Success, who is also a faculty member with extensive experience in teaching GFYE, functioning also as the director of the First Year Experience program. All three Course-Specific Committees will report directly to the QEP Coordinator and are supported by the First Things First Steering Committee, their unit Heads, and a course-specific committee. They have access to the G2C Platform, G2C tools, and the G2C Guidebook, which walks them through the entire G2C process. Additionally, the math and English Course-Specific Chairs will teach at a reduced course-load to compensate for the performance of QEP-related duties. (See the QEP Budget at table 4-A.) The particular responsibilities for all three Course-Specific Committee Chairs are as follows:

- Participate in all Steering Committee Meetings
- Attend individual meetings with QEP Coordinator (live and virtual), as indicated above in the list of QEP Coordinator responsibilities
- Attend G2C Community of Practice Annual Meeting
- Attend annual Teaching and Learning Academy
- Attend Analytics Process Collaborative Annual Meeting
- Attend Gateways to Completion Annual conferences
- Attend webinars (live if possible, recorded as needed)
- Attend all campus-wide professional development opportunities related to the QEP (CETL, Teaching Matters Conference, and Student Success Summit)
- Arrange and facilitate all Course-Specific Committee meetings
- Supervise the following yearly tasks
  - Course-Specific Committee’s review of data, including Gateway Course Success Inventory plus Student Learning Gains Survey (SLGS) outcomes from previous semester and other relevant institutional data, in relation to JNGI Principle 1 & 2; enter Key Performance Indicators (KPI) ratings on Platform; prepare report using the report writing tools and templates provided in the G2C platform. (See Chapter Five for a discussion of both the G2C SLGS and Principles/KPIs.)
  - Course-Specific Committee’s review of data, including Gateway Course Success Inventory plus SLGS outcomes from previous semester and other relevant institutional data in relation to JNGI Principle 3 & 4; enter KPI ratings on Platform; prepare report using the report writing tools and templates provided in the G2C platform
  - Course-Specific Committee’s review of data, including Gateway Course Success Inventory plus SLGS outcomes from previous semester and other relevant institutional data in relation to JNGI Principle 5 & 6; enter KPI ratings on Platform; prepare report using the report writing tools and templates provided in the G2C platform
  - Preparation of narrative report and recommendations, using the report writing tools and templates provided in the G2C platform
- Continue yearly to review GSC data and relevant scholarship and to implement course redesign plans for the life of the QEP
- Supervise the creation of new indirect assessment measures, as discussed in Chapter Five
- Work with Steering Committee to prepare G2C Final Report and Action Plan each semester that they are due
• Work with QEP Coordinator on selection of participating faculty
• Work with QEP Coordinator and Director of Institutional Research on the details of assessment, including administration of the SLGS and all other assessments
• Work with QEP Coordinator and Steering Committee on all QEP reports and the Fifth-Year Interim Report

Note that the GFYE Course-Specific Committee Chair will not be responsible for preparing all of the QEP reports as required by SACSCOC, as only the unit dedicated to the QEP will be part of QEP reports; that position will, however, fulfill all G2C Course-Specific Committee Chair duties.

PART THREE: Identification of Campus Initiatives that Enhance, Complement, and Offer Infrastructure to the QEP and the Orchestration of a Broad-Based Marketing Campaign

Identification of Campus Programs & Initiatives that Complement, Enhance, and Offer Infrastructure to the QEP

First Things First will also be supported and enhanced by several existing programs and initiatives that will be discussed below. Of utmost importance is GSC’s Student Success Center because its goals, programs, and functions align perfectly with the QEP and because the Director of the SSC is involved in all four components of the QEP Action Plan. Both the GSC Composition Handbook (the in-house handbook devoted to writing across the disciplines mentioned in Chapter One) and the Access Redesign initiatives offer infrastructure, as do several other campus programs dedicated to enhancing student learning and student success at GSC.

Programs & Initiatives that Complement, Enhance, and Offer Infrastructure to the QEP

- The Student Success Center
- The Gordon State College Handbook
- Access to Redesign Initiatives
- Miscellaneous
The Student Success Center (SSC)

Opened in 2009, the GSC Student Success Center (SSC) is committed to helping students achieve academic and personal success; as such, the SSC will play an important role in the success of the QEP. Though not a component of the action plan per se, the SSC was an outcome of GSC’s previous QEP, which created the First Year Experience program. Especially relevant to First Things First are the following Student Success Center initiatives, most of which are also reflected in Chapter Two’s literature review as being some of the “best practices” for student success:

- Quantitative Skills Tutoring
- Written Communication Skills Tutoring
- Supplemental Instruction in a variety of courses
- Always Alert System
- Miscellaneous officering of academic and personal workshops

**SSC Quantitative Skills Tutoring:**

Over the past three fall semesters, the SSC has averaged 2,244 total one-on-one math sessions, 970 dedicated to MATH 1111. In that time, frequently tutored students (those with three or more tutoring visits) enjoyed ABC rates of almost 5% higher than students who received no tutoring at all. Briefly, the Student Success Center at GSC provides help to students in all the math courses offered at the college. Experienced professional and peer tutors work with students one-on-one and in small groups, with the ultimate goal of empowering students to find their own solutions to problems. In particular, SSC tutors assist students with the following aspects of their math courses:

- Work through practice and sample problems with students
- Help students identify mistakes and learn from them
- Explain and reinforce theorems and postulates covered in class
- Explain and reinforce mathematical ideas and concepts covered in class
- Encourage and support students to work through problems on their own to develop reasoning and logic skills

**SSC Written Communication Skills Tutoring:**

Over the past three fall semesters, the SSC has averaged 904 one-on-one writing sessions, with 420 dedicated to English 1101. In that time, frequently tutored students (those with three or more tutoring visits) enjoyed ABC rates of almost 20% higher than students who received no tutoring at all. The SSC supports students in all aspects of the writing process, with a primary goal of providing students with one-on-one tutorial assistance from trained, qualified peer tutors. The SSC fosters a positive environment that promotes excellence in composition in all disciplines and at all levels of development, and the staff members are committed to helping students discover effective writing practices and skills in order to enhance their opportunities for success. In addition to one-on-one tutoring, the SSC has a
number of handouts and online tutorials available to help students with specific writing needs, and staff members even provide technological support for student writers in the form of computer access and assistance. In particular, the tutors help students with the following aspects of writing:

- Understanding expectations of the writing assignment
- Generating ideas
- Focusing and organizing those ideas
- Learning how to support main ideas with details and examples
- Crafting introductions and conclusions
- Understanding the issue of audience inherent in all writing assignments
- Identifying and prioritizing weaknesses in their own writing
- Recognizing grammatical errors and punctuation errors and learning to correct them
- Formatting
- Developing writing potential in general

**SSC Supplemental Instruction:**

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is an academic support service that targets historically difficult courses to provide assistance with regularly scheduled, out-of-class, study sessions. These study sessions are facilitated by trained student leaders who in a previous semester showed mastery of that course material. Assistance begins during the second week of class and is open to all students in the course. Data kept at both GSC and the International center for SI in Kansas City shows that students who regularly attend and participate in SI sessions enjoy pass rates up to 60% higher than their classmates who do not attend SI.

**SSC Always Alert System:**

Always Alert at GSC is an academic service seeking to provide support to students with characteristics that hinder academic performance and scholastic success, for example, behaviors such as excessive tardiness or absences, lack of participation and engagement in the course, failure to submit assignments or submission of incomplete assignments, and/or grades that indicate potential failure in the course. Throughout each semester, faculty members may complete reports for students in their courses that notify the SSC of students who may benefit from additional resources and support. The notification is not a grade and is not reported in the student’s academic record; rather, the Always Alert notification affords the students an opportunity to make academic modifications and improvements in a timely manner to achieve scholastic success by the end of the semester. In particular, the Always Alert program helps students achieve the following traits of a successful student:

- Recognize academic challenges
- Identify resources and strategies to address academic challenges
• Take ownership and become empowered to accomplish goals for academic success
• Take advantage of campus resources

SSC Miscellaneous officering of academic and personal workshops:

The Student Success Center offers dozens of workshops throughout the academic year. Topics range from study skills, to time management, to help with skills of a particular discipline.

The Gordon State College Composition Handbook

In 2011, the Composition Consortium convened and began work on producing a low-/no-cost Composition handbook to replace costly publisher versions and to improve on publisher models by generating a handbook specific to writing across the whole of the USG core curriculum. The Affordable Learning Georgia Textbook Transformation Grant proposal prepared by the chairs of the Consortium points to the alarming DFW rates in ENGL 1101, to students’ tendency in general to compartmentalize academic skills, and to faculty complaints regarding students’ inability to transfer skills learned in composition courses to the written assignments in other classes. Because of the cross-disciplinary nature of the consortium, because of their focus on strong writing across the whole of the USG core curriculum, and because of their extensive interviews with faculty campus wide, the feedback from the consortium about the development of the QEP has been invaluable. Both co-chairs of the Composition Consortium will sit on the ENGL 1101 Course-Specific Committee.

Access Redesign Initiatives

In a 2016 report by the CCCSE “Expectations meet Reality: The Underprepared Student and Community Colleges,” the compilers offer eight “innovative” approaches that can be combined with a strong remediation program to “bridge” the gap between support programs and graduation. Of those eight innovations, GSC has implemented, is currently working on implementing, or plans to implement a version of five: co-requisite programs, redesigned math, accelerated learning support courses, partnering with high schools, and assessing readiness through more than just one placement exam. Beginning in fall 2015, the Access Coordinator has worked to implement new initiatives. By spring 2016, transformations in the English remediation courses had already begun. In fall 2016, the Access Coordinator himself will be enrolled as a student in a math Access course in order to better understand the issues with student success in those courses. Since 60% of the students who entered Gordon State during the last five-year period in the regular semesters needed one or more support classes, enhancements in this program will positively affect many of the students who take MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101. The Access Coordinator will sit on the First Things First Steering Committee.
Other Relative Campus Resources, Programs, and Initiatives that complement the QEP

Gordon State College has other initiatives that will offer infrastructure to the QEP. Three such programs are listed below. Significantly, faculty and staff associated with these initiatives are also involved in the QEP Action Plan and will be able to direct interested students to the redesigned courses.

- **The Academic Intervention and Mentoring for Success in Nursing Program**: The Academic Intervention and Mentoring for Success in Nursing (AIM) is designed to provide nursing students with academic support and mentoring to improve their success, especially as it relates to the skills that are the focus of the QEP. The program provides students with academic assessment and planning, tutoring and mentoring, and referrals for additional assistance or support from other on-campus resources. Along with answering the QEP Faculty Survey, the Coordinator of AIM provided several especially insightful comments that pertain to weaknesses in quantitative and communication skills and to the goals of AIM with regard to those skills. (See Appendix H for an extensive comment by the Coordinator of AIM.) Additionally, the Coordinator of AIM will sit on the **First Things First** Steering Committee and will be able to refer interested Nursing students to the redesigned QEP courses.

- **The Go Back Move Ahead Program**: The Go Back Move Ahead USG initiative aids adult students with the common roadblocks to success in Area A foundational, gateway courses and in subsequent coursework as well by extending attention and care to the adult student. Because these returning students tried college previously but did not complete their degree, the learner-centered approaches of the redesigned courses may appeal to them. Along with career development and outreach elements, the Go Back Move Ahead program assists adult learners with various components of their college life, represented by the following areas:
  - Onboarding process: assistance with admissions, adult-friendly orientations, coordinator dedicated to assisting adult learners
  - Academic: weekend college programs, expanded course options, adult tutors, peer advisors, adult learning ambassadors, and trained Prior Learning Assessors
  - Activities: Adult Learner coffee breaks, Midterm Stress Release Events, Adult Learner Resource Fairs, and Veterans Resource Fairs

The Coordinator for the Go Back Move Ahead Program will sit on the **First Things First** Steering Committee and, thus, be able to refer interested students to the redesigned courses.

- **The African-American Male Initiative**: The African-American Male Initiative (AAMI) is a student support service program designed for men of color. The program provides opportunities for their academic, professional, and personal growth through weekly enrichment workshops, peer mentoring, and tutorial sessions. These activities are primarily facilitated through the AAMI Living Learning Community, a residential cohort of 25 first-year male students who are enrolled in similar courses and engaged in learning academic success skills. Additionally, the Coordinator for AAMI will sit on the **First Things First** Steering Committee.
Orchestration of a Broad-based QEP Marketing Campaign

First Things First has been crafted to enhance student learning in significant ways; such an important initiative calls for a strong marketing campaign. Briefly, the campus has been kept abreast of the developments with the QEP topic through efforts of the QEP Committee at large and the QEP Marketing Sub-committee in particular. In the future, the QEP Coordinator and members of the Marketing Sub-committee will work together to keep the information flowing. (Appendix I provides the marketing plan as it has been developed thus far.) In general, the plan includes distribution of First Things First gifts and business cards at events ranging from the summer New Student Orientation (NSO) programs to athletic events. Additionally, the plan will take advantage of video display monitors and screens across campus, the GSC website, the student newspaper, and various social media. The QEP Coordinator and the Marketing Sub-committee have been assisted in their efforts by offices all over campus, from Admissions, to the Bookstore, to Student Activities, to Dining Services. Such generosity marks the spirit with which the entire campus community has participated in putting “First Things First” in order to enhance student learning at GSC. Below is a summary of activity so far.

Spring 2016

During the spring term of 2016, the QEP Committee worked with staff, faculty, and students across the campus in sharing the news of the impending implementation of the QEP. Working with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Office of Institutional Advancement, members of the QEP Committee prepared a Spring First Things First Newsletter, seen in the figure to the right. The newsletter opened with a message from Dr. Max Burns, President of GSC, and then continued to discuss SACSCOC requirements and the status of the QEP. The newsletter was distributed to every office and mailbox on campus.

The QEP Marketing Sub-committee—a body that includes faculty, staff, an alumna, and four current students—began its work to heighten campus awareness of the QEP, a campaign launched with the creation of the First Things First logo, seen in the figure above. After much discussion concerning the elements to include in the logo and appropriate color schemes, the Marketing Sub-committee acquired three possible logos from graphic designer Niki Walker and then asked the entire campus community to vote for their
favorite logo. Within a couple of hours, the logo survey had garnered almost 150 votes and reached 500 within days, with even support for all three designs. Accordingly, the Marketing Sub-committee let factors having to do with readability and ease of use as a logo design on both large and small items determine the final selection.

Additionally, during the spring term, a student writer from the GSC student paper Claymore was invited to interview both GSC’S SACSCOC Liaison and the QEP Coordinator. The Claymore article also had the privilege of introducing the QEP logo to the GSC community. In early summer, the members of the QEP Special Projects Sub-committee, a body composed solely of staff and alumni, was charged with working alongside the QEP Coordinator to create a plan to involve faculty and staff with a special relationship to the College in the QEP Marketing campaign.

Summer 2016

 Summers represent a unique opportunity for advertising First Things First because a large portion of the students who will enter the Area A courses in fall come on campus to attend new student activities. As such, the marketing campaign included plans that involved GSC’s New Student Orientation (NSO) programs. During summer 2016, every new student received a QEP informational sheet directing them to the First Things First guest table. Once there, students received small gifts and more information, and they were offered the opportunity to show off quantitative skills by entering a guessing game. Additionally, Student Success Center tutors wore First Things First t-shirts for the entire summer, and video display monitors in buildings across campus began running “teaser” messages and pictures to build interest about the QEP.

Fall 2016

In addition to their charge regarding spring and summer activities, the QEP Marketing Sub-committee was also charged with planning an advertising campaign for upcoming semesters, one that will include distribution of free gifts imprinted with the First Things First logo.

 In fall, a second First Things First newsletter was produced, thanks to the assistance of the Office of Institutional Advancement. This newsletter was distributed in hard copy format at opening meetings and electronically to all GSC faculty, staff, and students. Additionally, the QEP Special Projects Sub-committee continued to work alongside the QEP Coordinator to keep faculty and staff up to date with regard to the development of the QEP. Taken together, these fall activities reminded the entire campus community that GSC is putting “first things first.”
Summary

First Things First is a plan that has been carefully thought out and balances significance and sustainability. The QEP budget is solid, covering all details concerning initiatives, fees, and compensation. The QEP Committee carefully considered personnel costs (those stemming from time commitment to the project, course-reductions, and investment in professional development activities), all costs for assessment and instructional materials, and all other related expenses. The plan identifies the source for funding and demonstrates that finances are in place for future activities of the QEP. As mentioned above, GSC is committed to the QEP budget, as is clear in the letter from GSC’s Vice President of Finance and Administration. In creating a five-year timeline, the QEP committee considered all significant parts of the QEP’s action plan, including professional development opportunities, budget matters, assessment issues, and relevant SACSCOC activities. Additionally, First Things First has a solid infrastructure built with a broad-based steering committee and working faculty committees, a framework supported by the findings of the literature review. The QEP Committee selected steering committee members very carefully, weighing issues such as expertise, representation, commitment to the plan, and authority. The QEP itself identifies all faculty and staff members (or provides job descriptions for those who may join later) who are responsible for the implementation and execution of the plan. Overall, the QEP Committee has considered the financial and human resources necessary for initiating, implementing, and sustaining the QEP; members have identified resources, created a workable timetable and strong budget, and established working connections with other programs on campus that complement or offer infrastructure to the QEP. In other words, First Things First is built for success.
Chapter Five: Assessment

The QEP assessment plan has one overarching goal: to assess the impact of the First Things First Action Plan on student learning outcomes. To reach that goal, the QEP Committee crafted a plan that includes both direct and indirect measures so that results can be triangulated, that closes the loop by establishing a pattern of planning, measuring, acting, and planning again, and that includes a longitudinal measure so that the far-reaching effect of the QEP can be measured. This chapter will summarize the College’s assessment plan, including pointing out persons responsible for data collection, analysis, decision making, and reporting.

PART ONE: Assessing GSC’s QEP

Introduction

In crafting an assessment plan, the QEP Committee wanted what Catherine Wehlburg calls the “just-right paradigm” for institutional assessment, where assessment leads to improved and enhanced student learning; if done properly, Wehlburg points out, then “improvement based on documented data can also be used to share with others for accountability and accreditation” (15). As the literature review indicated, there are scholars calling for a change in campus culture concerning assessment, moving toward a culture that strives to embed assessment into the processes of teaching and learning. One reason the QEP Committee selected G2C as a mechanism by which to initiate the QEP’s redesign goals had to do with its emphasis on “evidenced-based” pedagogy that includes collection of data that is meaningful, that is analyzed by faculty members themselves, and that is embedded into the course design—all in order to strengthen learning outcomes. Assessment without faculty analysis is meaningless, especially with regard to the goals of this QEP. With regard to participating faculty, the QEP Committee had two overarching goals to: (1) design a plan that would marry well with other assessment measures and (2) that would produce data that faculty members could incorporate into their pedagogical strategies.

“Assessment is not a service; it is how we improve and enhance teaching and learning.”

Catherine Wehlburg (16)
The First Things First Assessment Plan

The QEP Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that the First Things First Assessment Plan outlined below is followed, that data is collected according to the QEP Timeline, that all pertinent reports are prepared, and that data is shared with all relevant campus constituents. Additionally, the QEP Coordinator is responsible for meeting with the chairs of the Course-Specific Committees on a regular basis to discuss any complications so that matters may be brought to the Steering Committee to adjust the plan in ways that ensure the success of the QEP. The QEP Coordinator will also work closely with the two program heads to carefully monitor changes relevant to the QEP so that First Things First works with and not against participating faculty members’ “home” units; the goal is to neither confuse nor excessively tax any of the faculty involved in the QEP. Lastly, the QEP Coordinator will work closely with the Provost, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, and the Office of Institutional Research in order to complete all appropriate SACSCOC reports concerning QEP assessment.

Whenever possible, the QEP Committee worked with existing assessment plans, including University System of Georgia (USG) goals, and they did so for two specific reasons: to avoid undue stress and work for faculty and staff members, and to make the assessment of the QEP fit as seamlessly into existing institutional plans as possible. As the literature review revealed, assessment plans are most effective when institutional, program/department, and classroom assessment “talk to each other”; with such an assessment plan, an institution can achieve a “culture of evidence” (Hutchings 3). The sections below describe in detail relevant existing assessments that will be incorporated, as well as explaining new measures that will be introduced to the campus through the QEP. Existing plans relevant to the QEP are the collection of USG goals, department student learning outcomes, and DFW rates. As will be seen in the narrative passages in Part Two, the USG and program outcomes are analogous with the new QEP student learning outcomes, which evolved from the QEP Faculty Survey: the former focus upon skills moving forward within the discipline while the latter is interdisciplinary in nature. Two new assessment measures of the QEP Assessment Plan include the Student Learning Gains Survey (SLGS) and the Principles and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which are both a part of the G2C process and were mentioned in Chapter Four in the list of responsibilities of the Course-Specific Committee Chairs. A third new measure that the QEP will implement is the Educational Testing Service’s (ETS) Proficiency Profile.

Table 5-A and 5-B, the First Things First Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes and the First Things First SLOs charts, provide an overall breakdown of the QEP assessment plan. Detailed discussions of the individual assessment instruments will follow after the table.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QEP Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Measurement Tools</th>
<th>Annual Improvement Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 1 Direct and Indirect Measures: Students will meet/exceed Student Learning Outcomes crafted especially for the QEP and reflective of faculty responses to the QEP Faculty Survey. (See Table 5-B for individual SLOs.)</td>
<td>QEP SLOs will be assessed directly in participating QEP courses as shown in Table 5-B. An indirect Course-Specific Assessment instrument will also measure gains in SLOs, as described in the narrative sections below Table 5-B.</td>
<td>Annual improvement over baseline percentages: 2.5% beginning after year one of the QEP; baseline data will be collected in spring 2017.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 2 Direct Measure: Students will successfully complete participating QEP courses with C or higher.</td>
<td>Percentages and raw numbers of students earning a C or higher.</td>
<td>Annual improvements over baseline percentages shown in DFW chart in this chapter: 2.5% gain per academic year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 3 Direct Measure: Students enrolled in participating QEP courses will exhibit gains over time in essential quantitative and communication skills.</td>
<td>Improvement over time of cohorts of students will be assessed via analysis of results from the Educational Testing Service Proficiency Profile (ETS).</td>
<td>Annual improvements over baseline percentages. Baseline data will be collected in spring of 2017.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 4 Indirect Measure: Result in faculty pedagogies and academic policies and/or practices relative to participating QEP courses that strengthen student learning and success in participating QEP courses.</td>
<td>Early-Semester Satisfaction Surveys; Student Learning Gains Survey (SLGS) Sections 1-5; G2C Principles and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)</td>
<td>Annual improvements over baseline percentages. Baseline data was collected in spring of 2016 for the SLGS and will be again in fall 0f 2016; baseline data will be gathered September-November 2016 for the G2C Principles and KPIs and for the Satisfaction Surveys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 5 Indirect Measure: Result in student behaviors that strengthen student learning and success in participating QEP courses.</td>
<td>Student Learning Gains Survey (SLGS) Sections 6-7; Logs of student participation in tutoring center</td>
<td>Annual improvements over baseline percentages; Baseline data was collected for the SLGS in spring 2016 and will be again in fall 2016; baseline of tutoring logs are already on file at the SSC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QEP Participating Course</td>
<td>QEP SLO</td>
<td>Measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH 1111: College Algebra</td>
<td>SLO # 1 Students will be able to solve problems involving fractions, ratios, and percentages.</td>
<td>Average score on the corresponding section of the assessment (See Appendix E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH 1111: College Algebra</td>
<td>SLO #2 Students will be able to simplify algebraic expressions and solve linear equations.</td>
<td>Average score on the corresponding section of the assessment (See Appendix E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH 1111: College Algebra</td>
<td>SLO #3 Students will be able to read a passage of simple but unfamiliar mathematics and answer conceptual and computational questions about the material.</td>
<td>Average score on the corresponding section of the assessment (See Appendix E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH 1111: College Algebra</td>
<td>SLO #4 Students will be able to read information from a graph and to draw graphs that clearly and accurately represent a set of data.</td>
<td>Average score on the corresponding section of the assessment (See Appendix E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH 1111: College Algebra</td>
<td>SLO #5 Students will be able to understand the relative size of numbers, to round numbers, and to predict how basic manipulations will affect numbers.</td>
<td>Average score on the corresponding section of the assessment (See Appendix E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 1101: English Composition I</td>
<td>SLO # 1 Students will be able to write simple, compound, complex, and compound complex sentences using Academic Language Conventions and with appropriate punctuation.</td>
<td>Final Exam Essay. See Rubric at Appendix E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 1101: English Composition I</td>
<td>SLO # 2 Students will be able to make their thinking visible by organizing a series of sentences into unified, coherent, well-developed paragraphs.</td>
<td>Final Exam Essay. See Rubric at Appendix E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 1101: English Composition I</td>
<td>SLO #3 Students will be able to use the stylistic conventions expected by an academic and professional audience</td>
<td>Final Exam Essay. See Rubric at Appendix E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART TWO: Direct Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Introduction

The QEP Committee felt strongly that direct assessment in the two courses that are the focus of First Things First would be critical for assessing the overall strength of the QEP. Based on student artifacts gathered in class (exams, quizzes, portfolios, projects, papers, etc.), direct measurement allows faculty members to evaluate a sample of what students can do, which is very strong evidence of student learning. The effectiveness of QEP strategies and implementation based on the results of direct assessment will be an essential component in directing “next steps” in refining pedagogical approaches and addressing metacognitive concerns indicated by any possible disconnect between direct and indirect assessment measures.

The First Things First Assessment Plan includes the following three direct measures, defined and discussed in detail below:

- Course-Specific QEP Student Learning Outcomes Instruments
- Drop, Fail, Withdrawal (DFW) Rates
- Educational Testing Service Proficiency Profile (ETS)

DIRECT ASSESSMENT ONE: Course-Specific QEP Student Learning Outcomes Instruments

Since the QEP is an Area A initiative and since Gordon State College (GSC) is a member of the USG, it is quite logical to begin discussion of the direct measures component of the QEP Assessment Plan by demonstrating alignment between the USG Learning Outcomes, the program/department learning goals, and the QEP Student Learning Goals. Such alignment shows that the QEP enhances GSC’s “culture of evidence.” As can be seen in the narrative sections below, the QEP Student Learning Outcomes (SLOS), which were crafted to address faculty concerns as identified by the QEP Faculty Survey, reveal a connectedness and linearity with both the USG and the program/department goals. In order to meet Outcome 1 of the First Things First Assessment Plan, the QEP will measure QEP SLOs in the ways discussed below.

Math 1111 College Algebra

University System of Georgia Learning Goal A2 is “Students have the ability to represent and manipulate mathematical information in verbal, graphical, and symbolic forms and use these representations and manipulations to solve a variety of problems.” The USG’s learning goals for the core curriculum include suggestions for Quantitative Outcomes as described under Learning Goal A2: Quantitative Outcomes. The description from section 2.4.1 of the USG Academic & Student Affairs Handbook reads:
**Learning Goal A2: Quantitative Outcomes**

Examples of learning outcomes that would forward this goal:

- Students have a strong foundation in mathematical concepts, processes, and structure.
- Students effectively apply symbolic representations to model and solve problems.
- Students have the ability to model situations from a variety of settings in generalized mathematical forms.
- Students have the ability to express and manipulate mathematical information, concepts, and thoughts in verbal, numeric, graphical, and symbolic forms while solving a variety of problems.
- Students have the ability to solve multiple-step problems through different (inductive, deductive, and symbolic) modes of reasoning.

The General Education student learning outcomes for mathematics were developed by the mathematics faculty in the fall of 2014 to clarify USG Student Learning Goal A2. These outcomes for mathematics include skills that students need for future coursework in mathematics, while the QEP quantitative student learning outcomes were developed to address specific skills that students need to succeed in courses in other areas. To ensure that College Algebra students are prepared for future courses in all fields, both sets of student learning outcomes will be assessed in participating courses; however, only the QEP SLOs will be reported to the QEP Coordinator.

**Mathematics 1111 Course Goals and Student Learning Outcomes:**

- Graphical: The ability to interpret, draw, and recognize the important features of graphs.
- Symbolic: The ability to translate ideas into and out of symbolic language, and to simplify and manipulate symbolic expressions.
- Quantitative Analysis: The ability to organize and perform complex computations, and to understand the significance of numerical data.
- Problem solving: The ability to synthesize new or unfamiliar applications of mathematical ideas in order to obtain a goal.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the QEP Committee compiled comments from the faculty survey administered early in the development of the QEP. From this list of comments, the committee created a list of ten student learning outcomes for College Algebra. Based on input from the faculty, this list was then condensed and simplified to a list of five QEP quantitative student learning outcomes that emphasized the most important skills that students need to master. As can be seen by comparing all the goals discussed in this section, the QEP Student Learning Outcomes for MATH 1111 maintain linearity with USG Learning Goal A2: Quantitative Outcomes goals and with GSC Mathematics Department learning goals.

**QEP Student Learning Outcomes for MATH 1111:**

- Students will be able to solve problems involving fractions, ratios, and percentages.
- Students will be able to simplify algebraic expressions and solve linear equations.
• Students will be able to read a passage of simple but unfamiliar mathematics and answer conceptual and computational questions about the material.
• Students will be able to read information from a graph and to draw graphs that clearly and accurately represent a set of data.
• Students will be able to understand the relative size of numbers, to round numbers, and to predict how basic manipulations will affect numbers.

English 1101 Composition 1

University System of Georgia Learning Goal A1 is “Students communicate effectively using appropriate writing conventions.” The Student Learning Objectives for English 1101 are based upon USG communication outcomes for Area A of the core curriculum and upon GSC Composition program goals. The USG’s learning goals for the core curriculum include suggestions for Communication Outcomes as described under Learning Goal A1: Communication Outcomes. The description from section 2.4.1 of the USG Academic & Student Affairs Handbook reads:

USG Learning Goal A1: Communication Outcomes:

Examples of learning outcomes that would forward this goal:

• Students produce well-organized communication that meets conventional standards of correctness, exhibits an appropriate style, and presents substantial material.
• Students communicate effectively using appropriate writing conventions.
• Students have the ability to assimilate, analyze, and present in oral and written forms, a body of information.
• Students have the ability to adapt communication to circumstances and audience.
• Students have the ability to interpret content of written materials on related topics from various disciplines.
• Students demonstrate an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and acknowledge the use of information sources.

Based upon these suggestions and in an effort to create a progression within the Program, the English Department assigned the following course goals to English 1101 Composition 1:

English 1101 Course Goals and Student Learning Outcomes:

• Students will demonstrate the ability to produce written communication that conforms to Academic Standard English and is organized into a series of coherent, unified paragraphs.
• Students will demonstrate the ability to assimilate, analyze, and organize information by composing in various formal modes and writing with a clearly developed thesis and effective support.
• Students will demonstrate the ability to adapt written communication stylistically to suit a variety of circumstances and audiences.
In responding to the QEP Faculty Survey, members of the QEP Committee needed to make some minor revision to the general learning goals for the QEP Assessment Plan: there is more focus on particular basic skills, and the reference to multiple modes was removed. As can be seen by comparing all the goals discussed in this section, the QEP Student Learning Outcomes for ENGL 1101 maintain linearity with USG Learning Goal A1: Communication Outcomes goals and with GSC English Composition Program learning goals.

**QEP Student Learning Outcomes for ENGL 1101:**

- Students will be able to write simple, compound, complex, and compound complex sentences using Academic Language Conventions and with appropriate punctuation.
- Students will be able to make their thinking visible by organizing a series of sentences into unified, coherent, and well-developed paragraphs.
- Students will be able to use the stylistic conventions expected by an academic and professional audience.

**MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101 Data Collection Processes and Use of Results**

**Math 1111 Data Collection:**

QEP SLOs are measured by average score on the corresponding section of the assessment (See Appendix E). The assessment will be conducted during the last week of the course by individual instructors. Gen Ed Math SLOs are measured by questions embedded in the Final Exam. There are three different embedded questions for each of the four Gen Ed SLOs. A student answering 0 or 1 of these questions correct does not meet expectations. A student answering two questions correctly meets expectations. A student answering three questions correctly exceeds expectations. The measure used for the QEP Student Learning Outcomes is the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations for that category. The Chair of the MATH 1111 Course-Specific Committee will collect data from the head of the Mathematics program.

**English 1101 Data Collection:**

The QEP Committee, working with members of the Humanities Department and English faculty members, will assess student learning outcomes in GSC’s ENGL 1101 courses through a blind, three-person review of essays composed for the ENGL 1101 final exam beginning in fall 2016 in order to gather baseline data. The process will include a representative sampling of essays collected from all sections of ENGL 1101 during fall 2016 (traditional delivery, online, and hybrid delivery). Faculty members will review essays utilizing the English 1101 Composition I QEP Student Learning Outcomes Rubric (See Appendix E). Each essay will receive three independent reviews and will be scored (does not meet, meets, or exceeds expectations) according to the level that at least two reviewers agree upon for each SLO. The Chair of the English 1101 Course-Specific Committee will collect data from the head of the English program.
Use of Results for MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101 Data:

For the purposes of the QEP, all assessment data will be shared with the members of the Course-Specific Committees and the First Things First Steering Committee as a way to monitor student learning and to help faculty recognize where students are struggling. The collected data will guide discussions concerning pedagogical strategy, or “next steps” for members of the Course-Specific Committees.

DIRECT ASSESSMENT TWO: DFW Rates

One of the goals of the QEP is to implement learner-centered teaching strategies by which faculty members can reach more students, including students who may be demoralized by lack of preparedness for Area A courses. Over the life of the QEP, GSC would like to see a noticeable increase in the passing rates for students enrolled in the QEP designated courses. Because grades are a direct measure of student success but not necessarily of student learning, other assessments are in place as well. In order to meet Outcome 2 of the First Things First assessment plan, the QEP will track pass/fail rates for MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101. As the literature review demonstrated, institutions can do something about the high failure rate in foundational, gateway courses across America.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gordon State College DFW Rates</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Spring 2014</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Spring 2015</th>
<th>Fall 2015</th>
<th>Spring 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 1101</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH 1111</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection Processes and Use of Results

The Director of Institutional Research is responsible for reporting DFW rates each year to the QEP Coordinator and to the Course-Specific Committee Chairs for use in committee discussions about teaching strategies and student learning. As is true at many institutions in America, GSC has an academically unprepared student population, and GSC faculty work hard honing their teaching strategies to reach both the college-ready and the unprepared students—and their strategies are effective for many students. The goal of the QEP is to extend the faculty’s reach so that the institution can see a 2.5% annual improvement over current baseline rates, as shown in the figure above.

DIRECT ASSESSMENT THREE: Educational Testing Service Proficiency Profile

In order to meet Outcome 3 of the First Things First assessment plan, the QEP will longitudinally track cohorts of students from participating QEP courses to demonstrate that those involved in QEP initiatives exhibit and retain greater learning gains. In researching assessment tools, members of the QEP Committee examined the scholarship and data concerning the Educational Testing Service Proficiency
Profile (ETS), formerly known as the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP). Briefly, ETS is a nationally vetted longitudinal instrument geared specifically to assess fundamental academic skills as students progress through their academic careers. The four foundational skills assessed by the ETS are writing, mathematics, critical thinking, and reading, which essentially parallel the outcomes of the QEP, as well as with GSC’s General Education (Gen Ed) outcomes. The test measures students at three proficiency levels and ranks them as proficient, marginal, or not proficient at each level. (Proficiencies required at each level can be found in Appendix J.)

QEP interventions and enhancements will be implemented in the QEP designated courses, and there are assessment measures in place at that juncture; however, the QEP Committee felt that ideally results can best be observed in the products of education, as students mature in their academic fields and have the opportunity to practice the skills of MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101. Grades alone (individual assessment instruments or course grades) cannot paint the full picture of the effectiveness of the QEP. Using ETS data is one way for institutions to track student learning gains across the student’s academic career, while also allowing tracking of specific cohorts, such as those who enrolled in participating QEP courses. Additionally, because it is a nationally vetted assessment, there are established benchmarks which have merit and allow comparisons to a national database of similar sector schools. The QEP Committee felt that using a standard vetted instrument would also remove what is often seen as the capricious nature of self-produced internal instruments: members of the committee recognized that the “grading” of self-produced instruments is sometimes viewed as problematic, even with rubrics.

Data Collection Processes and Use of Results

For QEP purposes, the ETS will be used to measure a student’s essential math and writing skills as the student has the opportunity to grow in those skill areas. Because students will take the ETS at least twice during their academic career, the QEP will be able to longitudinally track students to demonstrate that those involved in the QEP initiatives did in fact exhibit and retain greater learning gains. GSC will administer the ETS Proficiency Profile Standard form at three points in a student’s academic career:

- As the student is completing other new student procedures prior to entering GSC as a first year student (with no transfer hours)
- When students complete the GSC Colloquium (COLQ) requirement
- During the senior capstone course specific to the major

The ETS will be administered during GSC’s programs for incoming students; it will be administered for the first time at GSC in spring 2017 and then every semester following. The Director of Institutional Research is responsible for collecting the data from the ETS and getting results to the QEP Coordinator and the chairs of the Course-Specific Committees to review in order to enhance pedagogical strategies.
PART THREE: Indirect Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Introduction

In crafting the QEP Assessment Plan, members of the QEP Committee were careful to include both direct and indirect measures. As a tool by which to assess student learning, indirect measures are not as strong as direct measures because faculty members have to make assumptions about what exactly the self-reported artifacts mean. Yet, as the research shows, measuring student learning outcomes via direct assessment only is not advisable. As a single sample, the direct measurement artifact may not be emblematic of all the student can do; additionally, direct measurement does not provide a picture of such important aspects as a student’s learning perceptions, feelings, and attitudes. Indirect assessment does address student perceptions of learning and engagement and therefore allows the faculty member to gauge student attitudes regarding subject matter expertise.

INDIRECT ASSESSMENT ONE: Early-Semester Satisfaction Surveys

One of the most popular examples of indirect assessment is the survey, though quizzes and exams can be crafted to assess indirectly as well. In order to meet Outcome 4 of the First Things First Assessment Plan, the QEP will track data garnered from early-semester satisfaction surveys. The effectiveness of the various QEP strategies and implementation plans—now measured from the student point of view—will be essential in directing the Course-Specific Committees’ “next steps” in refining plans for pedagogical approaches and for addressing metacognitive concerns indicated by any possible disconnect between direct and indirect assessment measures.

Data collection processes and use of results

The Course-Specific Committees (or individual instructors, as the committees select) will craft these instruments in such a way that they can be administered and assessed quickly. Because learners are often not the best judges of pedagogical approaches, the survey results will be used with regard to the QEP exclusively to garner feedback for individual instructors and to stimulate discussion in the Course-Specific and Steering Committee meetings.
INDIRECT ASSESSMENT TWO: Student Learning Gains Survey

In order to meet Outcome 4 and 5 of the First Things First Assessment Plan, the QEP will also track data stemming from the administration of the G2C Student Learning Gains Survey (SLGS). The literature review demonstrated that pedagogical approaches can enhance student learning; therefore, First Things First will assess not only student competencies as they are seen in achievement of benchmarks but also the effectiveness of the pedagogical approaches. The SLGS is a Likert-type survey consisting of eighteen questions which is an adaptation of the Student Assessment of Learning Gains (SALG) created in 1997 by Elaine Seymour. The survey solicits information concerning a student’s perceptions of the way in which the course’s instructional approaches, pace, class activities, and graded materials lead to learning gains. The survey also gathers information about the students’ understanding of the content and the manner in which the course impacted the student’s attitudes. (The paper version of the SLGS can be found at Appendix K. The correspondence of SLGS questions to outcomes is presented on Table 5-A.)

Data Collection Processes and Use of Results

The SLGS was administered in spring of 2016 to all MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101 classes in order to gather baseline data and will be administered again in fall 2016 to all three courses involved in the G2C process, including GFYE for the same purpose. After that point, it will be administered every semester as an assessment tool of the QEP. The Director of Institutional Research is responsible for gathering the data and getting it to the QEP Director and the chairs of the Course-Specific Committees for use in discussions. Like all the other pieces of QEP assessment, the SLGS will offer the Course-Specific Committees and the Steering Committee insights into student learning.

INDIRECT ASSESSMENT THREE: G2C Principles and Key Performance Indicators

In order to meet Outcome 4 of the First Things First Assessment Plan, the QEP will track data collected from the G2C Principles and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) evaluation. Developed by a team composed of G2C experts drawing on research associated with best practices in undergraduate education, the six G2C Principles and their corresponding KPIs provide a set of aspirational standards designed to facilitate an institution’s self-study and improvement of foundational, gateway courses such as GSC’s MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101. (See Appendix L for a list of the G2C National Advisory Board.) The Course-Specific Committees will perform this evaluation using the Principles and KPIs, other relevant evidence (for example, from the GSC Inventory, the SLGS, and other surveys and assessments that seem pertinent), and their own knowledge and experience as instructors of the courses. Each of the six G2C Principles is associated with five to eleven KPIs, with a total of 52 KPIs in all. (A complete list of all six Principles can be found at Appendix M) Below are examples of two Principles and their associated KPIs:

Principle: “Faculty/Instructors”

Associated KPIs:
• Criteria for instructor selection
• Levels of student performance by instructor classifications
• Faculty development and support
• Rewards for faculty/instructors
• The role of faculty/instructors in providing academic support and/or assistance.

Principle: “Improvement”

Associated KPIs:

• Definition of foundational/gateway courses
• Monitoring of foundational/gateway courses
• Course evaluations
• Provision and use of faculty/instructor development
• Encouragement of faculty/instructors to share and learn from each other

Data collection processes and use of results

The Course-Specific Committees will evaluate GSC policies and practices and student performance in MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101 using a system of Principles and their KPIs. The Course-Specific Committees work as a unit to run the G2C Principles and KPI evaluation, careful that the ranking reflects a consensus view of the whole committee. That data is then uploaded to the G2C platform, which also has note-taking and evidence-linking tools that will assist the chairs to develop the three reports and the one final report that include these particular findings. At the Synthesis Meetings, data is then shared with the Steering Committee. The sole purpose of the Principles and their associated KPIs is to promote discussion that leads to innovative ideas to improve student engagement and learning.

INDIRECT ASSESSMENT FOUR: Course-Specific Indirect Assessment Instruments

In order to meet Outcome 1 of the First Things First Assessment Plan, the QEP will track data provided by course-specific indirect assessment instruments. To guide participating faculty members in gauging student learning with regard to the QEP SLOs, the MATH 1111 and ENGL 1101 Course-Specific Committees will craft course-specific indirect assessment instruments. The literature is rich with examples for the committees to review, from clicker exercises, to minute papers, to post-it-note answers. More elaborate examples involve showing models of correct and incorrect problems or strong and weak sentences and having students assess the models relative to their strengths and weaknesses. This process allows teachers to assess student understanding indirectly.

Data collection processes and use of results
The Course-Specific Committees will design course-specific indirect assessment instruments and plan when to make use of them in the classrooms. As is the case concerning all the other assessment tools, results of these indirect instruments will be used to stimulate discussion within the course-specific and steering committees.

INDIRECT ASSESSMENT FIVE: Logs of Student Participation in SSC Tutoring

In order to meet Outcome 5 of the First Things First Assessment Plan, the QEP will track a limited number of tutoring logs maintained in the Student Success Center (SSC). For every tutoring session in the Student Success Center, tutors fill out a Tutoring Notes form that contains the following information: student name; GSC ID number; course identification, which is designated by a four-letter abbreviation and four-digit number (such as MATH 1111); professor’s name; and time that the session started and ended. There is also a space for the tutor to write notes and show sample work or problems. At the end of their shifts, tutors are responsible for entering the information on the sheet into an Excel database. The sheets themselves are then scanned and emailed to the appropriate professor; the hard copy of the sheet is kept on file for one year.

Data Collection Processes and Use of Results

At the end of every semester, the tutoring data is analyzed and used by the SSC in several different ways:

- Usage: the Director of Student Success reviews the totals for each of the different tutoring areas (Math, Science, and written communication skills) looking for trends in usage, such as increases or decreases in sessions for the different areas and courses
- Productivity: the Director of Student Success reviews individual tutor totals to ensure that all tutors are being productive; low totals for individual tutors can be a signal that more training might be needed
- Effectiveness: semester data is sent to the Director of Institutional Research for analysis. “Frequently Tutored Students” (those who have logged at least three sessions for a course) are identified, and the ABC rates for those students are compared to the overall ABC rates in those courses.

For the purposes of the QEP, the Director of Student Success will be responsible for designing an extra cell that will allow tutors to record if a tutee is enrolled in a participating QEP class. The Director of Student Success will send such data to the Director of Institutional Research for analysis, who will then share the outcomes with the QEP Coordinator and the First Things First Steering Committee. The data will be used by the Course-Specific Committees and the Steering Committee in discussions about student engagement.
PART FOUR: Additional Assessment Opportunities

As mentioned previously, one of the reasons that the QEP Committee chose the G2C initiative has to do with the makeup of the organizational structure: the first line of action is the faculty, the Course-Specific Committees. They are the ones who teach the courses, they are the ones who try year after year to reach the changing student body, and they are the ones who know best what assessments fit most conveniently into the courses. Such truths are the rationale behind the charge that the Course-Specific Committees themselves will create the Early-Semester Satisfaction Surveys and Course-Specific Indirect Assessment Instruments. As the literature review demonstrated, there is a wealth of innovative ways to assess: there are the relatively simple ways to assess within the classroom, for example, the “one minute paper” and “muddiest” point techniques (which allows a teacher to learn each student’s “muddiest” or most unclear point from the lecture or reading); there are also the more elaborate ones, for instance, pre- and post-tests, “co-assessments” (which would function ideally with the Course-Specific Committee set up of GSC’s QEP), and interviews (Hutchings; Werder & Otis, 2010; Kuh & Ikenberry; Angelo & Cross; Huba; Driscoll & Wood). Sources for the Course-Specific Committees to investigate the new assessment culture include SACSCOC-related conferences and the resources provided by entities such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

Summary

Assessment is not a statement about a particular teacher, nor is it always a statement about a student’s ability; it is a tool for enhancing student learning. What is often called in the scholarship “The Assessment Movement” came to maturity in the 1980s, championed by policymakers who saw assessment as a means of demonstrating the effectiveness of higher education—but also by educators who saw assessment as a tool for improving student learning. First Things First seeks to affect student learning in a significant way at GSC, and its assessment plan was crafted in order to demonstrate such an effect. As the literature review revealed, assessment in America has too often been removed, at least “conceptually, . . . from the area of teaching and learning and moved into the administrative, accreditation area” (Wehlburg 2). The QEP Committee crafted an assessment plan that demonstrates that the number one goal of assessment is to guide teaching.

The organizational structure of the First Things First Steering Committee and Course-Specific Committees create a perfect backdrop for a fresh approach to assessment so that the goals of the QEP can be measured in ways that perhaps the QEP Committee has not even considered. One scholar said it best when he described the kind of group discussions of assessment that will take place in the Course-Specific Committee meetings as they hash out ideas about pedagogy, student learning, and assessment: “At its best, assessment reflects the ethic of inquiry that informs academic life more broadly, bringing faculty’s habits and values as researchers and scholars to their work as educators and to their students’
learning” (Hutchings 1). GSC’s QEP will make a significant impact on student learning by involving faculty more intimately and deeply in ways they assess their students. As such, the First Things First Assessment Plan will play its part in fulfilling the institution’s “Access with Excellence” priority and dedication to “innovative teaching and engaged learning,” all of which moves GSC further towards its vision of a place where as many students as possible do indeed “flourish.”
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---. “What We Learn From Each Other.” *Faculty Focus*. Magna Publications. 20 April 2016.


Appendix A: Members of the 2013-2014 Strategic Planning Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1-A</th>
<th>Members of the 2013-2014 Strategic Planning Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Boltz</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Humanities, School of Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ric Calhoun</td>
<td>Director, GSC at McDonough; Professor, Department of Business &amp; Public Service, School of Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad Davies</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Biology &amp; Physical Science, School of Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Pearson</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Fine &amp; Performing Arts, School of Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Raynie</td>
<td>Coordinator, Access Institute; Professor, Department of Humanities, School of Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff White</td>
<td>Associate Professor, School of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margie Wright</td>
<td>Professor, School of Nursing &amp; Health Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara Boatwright</td>
<td>Public Information Officer, Institutional Advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimbrely Clark</td>
<td>Director, Institutional Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todd Davis</td>
<td>Director, Athletics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Goodloe</td>
<td>Academic Services Assistant II, School of Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reggie Hamm</td>
<td>Building Maintenance Supervisor, Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Higgins</td>
<td>Director, Student Success Center; Instructor, Department of Humanities, School of Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonya Johnson</td>
<td>Director, Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Williams</td>
<td>Counselor, Student Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa Stanley, Chair</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Biology &amp; Physical Science, School of Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clint Chastain, Co-Chair</td>
<td>Controller, Finance &amp; Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Dempsey</td>
<td>Director, Fanning Institute-Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community/Alumni</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Bazemore</td>
<td>President/CEO, Monroe County Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Blosser</td>
<td>Paragon Development, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia Gunn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: QEP Research & Development Committee

(This list is broken down to show working subcommittees, as well as the Internal Consultants.)

Table 3-A: QEP Committee, divided into working subcommittees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QEP Coordinator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role: Coordinate all subcommittee work; prepare draft of QEP, including timeline and budget; function as liaison to all campus constituents; coordinate all JNGI G2C activities; prepare all SACSCOC reports and 5th-Year Interim Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Dunlap Higgins-Harrell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steering Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role: Support Coordinator in supervision of subcommittee work; create and recommend to full committee QEP Action Steps and Student Learning Outcomes; assist with the preparation of the draft of the QEP; serve on the various working subcommittees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Dunlap Higgins-Harrell, Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernard Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Burstein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Capers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Higgins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Raynie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa Stanley</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QEP Development Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tasks: Participate in all phases of the development of the QEP; participate and help encourage campus-wide participation in on-line surveys; vote on all issues up for consideration; serve on the various working subcommittees; review and comment on the QEP document as it develops; function as a liaison between other students and their departments/schools and the QEP Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristen Albritton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Boltz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipper Burns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Butts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoff Clement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonya Coleman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy Davis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen Fuller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anissa Howard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce Klaus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britt Lifsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creché Navarro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Pearson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Rickerson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumn Schaffer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanda Stuckey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Webb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Haden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas Lindsay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damien Peele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Smith</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### QEP Communication Skills Research Subcommittee

**Objective:** To survey the literature concerning strengthening students’ communication skills and Best Practices for reaching students in foundational courses focused on these skills; provide coordinator with an annotated bibliography of findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Raynie</td>
<td>Chair, Coordinator, Access Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy Davis</td>
<td>Associate Professor, School of Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Higgins</td>
<td>Director, Student Success Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anissa Howard</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of Business &amp; Public Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### QEP Quantitative Skills Research Subcommittee

**Objective:** To survey the literature concerning strengthening students’ quantitative skills and Best Practices for reaching students in foundational courses focused on these skills; provide coordinator with an annotated bibliography of findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bernard Anderson</td>
<td>Chair, Professor, Department of Math &amp; Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoff Clement</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Department of Math &amp; Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen Fuller</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Math &amp; Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Webb</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of History &amp; Political Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### QEP Special Topics Research Subcommittee

**Objective:** To research miscellaneous topics as requested by the coordinator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter Higgins</td>
<td>Chair, Director, Student Success Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Burstein</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Business &amp; Public Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creché Navarro</td>
<td>Academic Services Assistant, Department of Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanda Stuckey</td>
<td>Academic Advisor, Student Success Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### QEP Marketing Subcommittee

**Objective:** Create the First Things First logo; plan and purchase First Things First paraphernalia to be distributed to students in fall 2016; plan and implement mass marketing and education strategy for fall 2016, aimed particularly at new students and those not aware of First Things First

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter Boltz</td>
<td>Chair, Professor, Department of Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipper Burns</td>
<td>Development Officer, Institutional Advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumn Schaffer</td>
<td>Instructional Designer, Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonya Coleman</td>
<td>Director, Residence Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Haden</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas Lindsay</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damien Peele</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Smith</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### QEP Special Projects Subcommittee

**Objective:** Assist Coordinator in reminding faculty and staff about the key ideas and goals of the QEP; coordinate faculty/staff “GSC Special Connection” photograph session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creché Navarro</td>
<td>Chair, Academic Services Assistant, Department of Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth O’Brien</td>
<td>Administrative Assistant, Academic Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura Shadrick</td>
<td>Senior Coordinator, Academic Affairs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Internal Consultants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teresa Betkowski</td>
<td>Assistant Vice President, Institutional Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica Eanes</td>
<td>Administrative Assistant, Community Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Finazzo</td>
<td>Interim Dean, School of Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhonda Toon</td>
<td>Vice President, Institutional Advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesley Venus</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Department of Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherlana Walker</td>
<td>Coordinator, Institutional Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed Whitelock</td>
<td>Head, Department of Humanities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Miscellaneous QEP Committee Documents

August 31, 2015 Meeting of the QEP Committee
(Excerpt of QEP Coordinator’s unofficial meeting notes)

Part One Meeting Notes

Discussion Topic One: The current proposal submitted by Stephen Raynie, Peter Higgins, Nolan McMurray, and Ed Whitelock

- Gen Ed numbers from Fall 2014 support the proposed QEP as significant
- Math 1001 and 1111: less than 50% met expectations (Gen Ed assessment, 2014-2015)
- Problems with quantitative and communication skills in upper-level classes
- Question: how define precisely “quantitative” and “communication” skills?
- Action: members to begin consideration of the wording of a campus-wide survey to assess specific ways in which faculty have found students’ lacking in these areas. Survey goal: give campus-wide faculty opportunity to articulate their frustration with students’ English and math skills and provide committee with data

Discussion Topic Two: Assessment

- Testing in the Area A courses to assess and improve skills
- Testing in upper-level courses to assess retention of skills gained in Area A courses
  - Area D courses could be source of assessment for quantitative skills
  - Area C courses could be source of assessment for communication skills
  - Colloquia could be source of assessment for communication skills
  - Benefit: later assessment to assess outcome of QEP
  - Benefit: Commencement of testing now will provide base line
  - Benefit: campus-wide effort, not just Area A faculty

Discussion Topic Three: Percentage of assessment tool

- Significant enough to matter to students not high enough to significantly alter faculty approach

Discussion Topic Four: Assessment Tool

- Imbedded questions versus course-wide standard test

Discussion Topic Five: “learning” versus “retaining”

- Issue: material “learned” in Area A courses often not retained beyond Area A
- Knowledge versus the confidence and “know-how” to solve new mathematical problems
- Math 1001: the math that students are more likely to use and retain
- Discussion of courses needed to various programs

Discussion Topic Six: Specific Learning Goals

- The objectives now listed on the syllabi of English faculty developed by Steve when he was chair
- Bernie to work with idea of modifying questions on department test
Agenda for 9/14/15 QEP Committee Meeting

One: Topic of QEP

“First Things First” is our topic, even though some of our conversation over the weekend drifted into areas that sounded like critical thinking.

- We are locked into our topic, “First Things First,” unless we were to go back to square one w/ the Leadership Team; ours is an Area A initiative, not LS or upper level (although assessment will definitely involve upper, and our survey will invite all faculty to respond); we cannot focus on LS also b/c we have to focus. As you know, Dr. Cuevas suggested we focus on only math, but most of you have responded to me that this is not what you want. Let’s begin our work w/ Learning Goals and literature review; if the QEP seems to get “out of control,” we can think reconsider this point.
- Interventions can be aimed at the outcomes of Area A, in a holistic type of approach; my understanding is that we have to go with our outcomes as they are worded on our webpage.
- Learning Goal A1: Students communicate effectively using appropriate writing conventions.
- Learning Goal A2: Students have the ability to represent and manipulate mathematical information in verbal, numeric, graphical, and symbolic forms and use these representations and manipulations to solve a variety of problems.

Two: Faculty Survey

I will read the draft and we will vote b/c I want this survey out this week: the faculty needs to hear “QEP” soon. With a couple of small tweaks, the draft is the same I sent this weekend.

- What do you think is a reasonable amount of time for a response? (I want to give a certain amount of days, not “when you’re able,” though of course we will sound friendly; I just don’t want the survey lost for weeks—and we’re already 6 months behind b/c of factors out of our control.)

Three: Full Committee

Unless you see some reason not to, I want to invite the full committee to the next committee meeting. Via email, I plan to formally invite them to join us and to help us get the word out to fill out the survey.

Four: Learning Goals

I will send ideas and drafts for your review/response, to get the ball rolling.
Agenda for 10/21/15 QEP Committee Meeting

Item: Guest presentation

Item: Bernie’s Survey count

Item: Question for vote & Response to draft Learning Goals

- Can we go ahead and decide that by “communication” (in our QEP’s subtitle quantitative and communication skills) that we mean written communication? Vote.
- Learning Goals drafts discussion

Item: Rough Draft of Action Plan (Warning: these are just some thoughts, in no real order—to get us thinking and talking 😃)

- Initiative One: Charge a Task Force on First Things First (name to be decided) to oversee initiation and/or development of other initiatives on the action plan (Note that this will not happen until we get our work complete)
- Initiative Two: Course Redesign of ENGL 1101, ENGL 1102, MATH 1001, and MATH 1101 as part of Pathways to Completion program (connect with guest presentation -- course redesign, interventions, conference for professional development, etc.)
- Initiative Three: Policy Redesign
  - Prepare a Gordon State College-specific, GSC-wide definition of Area A “essential skills” and baseline performance measures
  - Communication: C or better in ENGL 1101 and 1102 before exit
  - Communication: Students must pass modules on ___________ in order to pass English composition sequence (we fill in the blank w/ items such as grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation—perhaps after we poll faculty to get their response to our general areas of concern. Faculty could rank one through five or six weaknesses with regard to importance)
  - Communication: Adjustment of the Gen Ed ICLA for composition sequence (Rugg version did not address the course objectives that Steve Raynie initiated
  - Quantitative: C or better in MATH 1001 or MATH 1101 before exit
  - Quantitative: Students must pass modules on ___________ in order to pass MATH 1001 or MATH 1101 (ditto note above)
  - Quantitative: Bernie and math department to advise us w/ regard to the Gen Ed ICLA and/or department test
- Initiative Four: Assessment
  - TBD later! Our basic idea is to add assessment measures for quantitative and communication essential skills in the upper-level courses so we can track the improvement in student learning. True?
Appendix D: QEP Faculty Survey

QEP Faculty Survey

1. What is your department or school?
2. Have you taught ENGL 1101 or 1102, or MATH 1001, 1111, 1113, or 1501?
3. Have you taught general education classes other than ENGL 1101 or 1102, MATH 1001, 1111, 1113, or 1501?
4. Have you taught upper level (3000 and above) classes?
5. To what extent do you give assignments requiring written communication?
6. If applicable, briefly describe such an assignment in the space below.
7. To what extent does fluent, articulate written communication directly affect students’ grades in your classes?
8. In the space below, please list all the particular weaknesses that you see the most often:
9. What proportion of students come into your classes with written communication skills adequate for success?
10. To what extent do you give assignments requiring basic quantitative skills and reasoning ability?
11. If applicable, briefly describe such an assignment in the space below.
12. To what extent do quantitative skills and reasoning ability directly affect students’ grades in your classes?
13. In the space below, please list all the particular weaknesses that you see the most often:
14. What proportion of students come into your classes with quantitative skills and reasoning ability adequate for success?
Appendix E: MATH 111 Assessment Materials and ENGL 1101 Rubric

Quantitative Learning Assessment

Numerical intuition
1. (3 points) Round to the nearest tenth: 734.18
2. (3 points) Round to the nearest integer: 131.13
3. (3 points) Round to the nearest hundred: 13962
4. (5 points) Which of the errors below is more significant? Justify your answer.
   (A) An error of 1 meter in measuring the length of a classroom.
   (B) An error of 5 meters in measuring the distance from the Earth to the Moon.
5. (8 points) Circle the number below that is closest to the number of letters on this page: $1.5 \times 10^1$
   $1.5 \times 10^2$ $1.5 \times 10^3$ $1.5 \times 10^4$ $1.5 \times 10^5$
6. (8 points) Let $x$ be a number with $2 < x < 20$. Rank the following from least to greatest:
   (A) $x + 0.01$.  (B) $x - 0.01$.  (C) $0.01x$.  (D) $\frac{x}{0.01}$.

Basic algebra
1. (4 points) Simplify: $(x + 2)^2 - 4$
2. (6 points) Simplify: $(x^2 + 3x + 5) - (x^2 - x + 6)$
3. (4 points) Simplify: $3(x + 2) - 5$
4. (6 points) Let $b = 4$ and $c = -3$. Find $2bc + b^2$.
5. (4 points) Solve: $3x - 8 = 55$
6. (6 points) Solve: $4x + 1 = 2x + 2$

Fractions
1. (4 points) A student answers 39 questions correctly on a 50 question exam. What percent of the questions did the student answer correctly?
2. (6 points) The recommended dosage of some drug is 20 grams of the drug for every 100 kg a person weighs. How much of the drug should be administered to a 70 kg woman?
3. (4 points) A municipality has 7% sales tax. If an item cost $3 before tax, how much does it cost with tax included?
4. (5 points) A store sells a pack of 50 widgets for $2, a pack of 120 widgets for $6, and a pack of 200 widgets for $9. Which is the best buy? Justify your answer.
5. (6 points) Evaluate: $\frac{2}{3} - \frac{1}{7}$
6. (5 points) Rank from least to greatest: $\frac{1}{4}, \frac{1}{3}, \frac{2}{9}$

Graphing
1. (15 points) A professor has recorded the exam scores and homework scores of five students. There were one hundred points possible for both the homework and the exam. The data is given in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homework</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>70</th>
<th>90</th>
<th>100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the graph paper, graph the data above. Place homework scores on the x-axis and exam scores on the y-axis. Make the graph large enough for the data to be easily readable. Use the same uniform scale for both axes. Plot the data points and draw a smooth curve connecting them.

The remaining problems in this section refer to the graph** on the auxiliary sheet. This graph shows the number of bacteria in a large petri dish over time.

2. (5 points) How many bacteria are present after 3 hours?
3. (5 points) At what time are 5000 bacteria present?
4. (5 points) Which of the scenarios below best describes the behavior described by the graph?
   (A) The number of bacteria grows slowly at first, then grows more quickly as time goes on.
   (B) The number of bacteria grows quickly at first, then grows more slowly as time goes on.
   (C) The number of bacteria stays fairly constant.
   (D) The number of bacteria declines slowly at first, then declines more quickly.

Mathematical reading comprehension
The following passage contains material that is unfamiliar but can be learned without previous knowledge. Read the passage and answer the questions below.

Cryptology is the study of systems, called cryptosystems, for secure communications. In a cryptosystem, the sender transforms the message before transmitting it, hoping that only authorized recipients can reconstruct the original message (i.e., the message before it was transformed). The sender is said to encrypt the message, and the recipient is said to decrypt the message. If the cryptosystem is secure, unauthorized persons will be unable to discover the decryption technique, so even if they read the encrypted message, they will be unable to decrypt it. . . . For example, if a credit card number is sent over the internet, it is important for the number to be read only by the intended recipient. . . .

. . . . In the RSA [Rivest Shamir Adleman] system, each participant makes public an encryption key and hides a decryption key. To send a message, all one needs to do is look up the recipient's encryption key in a publicly distributed table. The recipient then decrypts the message using the hidden decryption key.

In the RSA system, messages are represented as numbers. For example, each character might be represented as a number. If a blank space is represented as 1, A as 2, B as 3, and so on, the message SEND MONEY would be represented as 20, 6, 15, 5, 1, 14, 16, 15, 6, 26. If desired, the integers could be combined into a single integer 20061505011416150626 (note that leading zeros have been added to all single-digit numbers.)

We next describe how the RSA system works . . . Each prospective recipient chooses two primes p and q and computes z = pq. Since the security of the RSA system rests primarily on the inability of anyone knowing the value of z to discover the numbers p and q, p and q are typically chosen so that each has 100 or more digits. Next, the prospective recipient computes \( \phi = (p-1)(q-1) \) and chooses an integer n . . . to be a prime. The pair z, n is then made public. . . .

1. (6 points) A person sends a credit card number encrypted by RSA over the internet. A hacker who obtains the encrypted number is unable to decrypt it because they do not know which two numbers?

2. (6 points) Give one reason why the number $p = 7583728979535002875292$ could not be used in an RSA system?

3. (6 points) Using the method given in the passage, what word is represented by the single integer 130203?

Suppose in a highly simplified example we have $p = 7$, $q = 13$, and $n = 5$.

4. (5 points) Find the value of $\phi$ in this example.

5. (7 points) What pair of numbers are made public in this example?

**Graph from the Auxiliary Sheet:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QEP Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)</th>
<th>Does not meet expectations</th>
<th>Meets expectations</th>
<th>Exceeds expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENGL 1101 SLO #1:</strong> Students will be able to write simple, compound, complex, and compound complex sentences using Academic Language Conventions and with appropriate punctuation.</td>
<td>Writing displays numerous significant grammar, punctuation, and/or sentence structure flaws that undermine clarity to a significant degree.</td>
<td>While the writing has a limited mixture of sentence structures and/or some mechanical errors, it generally conforms to Academic Language Conventions and rules of punctuation.</td>
<td>Writing conforms to Academic Language Conventions and displays a variety of sentence structures to a high degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENGL 1101 SLO #2:</strong> Students will be able to make their thinking visible by organizing a series of sentences into unified, coherent, well-developed paragraphs.</td>
<td>Essay paragraphs lack unity, coherence, and/or development, to such a degree that the writer’s point is unclear.</td>
<td>Essay has clearly developed thesis and topic sentences with unified, coherent, developed paragraphs, though with an occasional weakness.</td>
<td>Essay has clearly articulated thesis and topic sentences supported by perfectly unified, richly coherent, and deeply developed paragraphs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENGL 1101 SLO #3:</strong> Students will be able to use the stylistic conventions expected by an academic and professional audience.</td>
<td>Essay’s tone is inconsistent and/or lacks demonstrative awareness of audience to a high degree.</td>
<td>Overall, essay’s tone displays audience awareness, with an occasional lapse.</td>
<td>Essay clearly addresses a specific audience through tone, consistent engagement, and direct reference.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F: Participating G2C

- Arkansas Tech University
- American Public University System
- Ashford University
- Bergen Community College
- Bemidji State University
- College of Micronesia – FSM
- East Georgia State College
- Florida International University
- Georgia Highlands College
- Georgia Southern University
- Georgia Southwestern State University
- Gordon State College
- Kennesaw State University
- Lansing Community College
- Lone Star College – North Harris
- Metropolitan State University Denver
- Middle Georgia State University
- Montana State University – Billings
- Nevada State College
- New Jersey Institute of Technology
- North Dakota State University
- Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology
- Qatar University
- South Georgia State College
- University of Houston Downtown
- University of Rhode Island
- University of Southern Mississippi
- University of West Georgia
- Valdosta State University
- Western Michigan University
Appendix G: Letter of Financial Commitment for the QEP from GSC’s Vice President of Finance and Administration

Gordon State College
University System of Georgia
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION
419 College Drive
Barnesville, GA 30204
678. 359. 5041 f. 678. 359. 5014
www.gordonstate.edu

To: QEP Leadership Team

From: Ms. Kristen Albritton, Vice President for Finance and Administration

Date: August 1, 2016

Re: Institutional Commitment for QEP Implementation

I am writing to confirm institutional support for the implementation of the Gordon State College Quality Enhancement Plan: First Things First. The QEP addresses campus-wide concerns about essential quantitative and communication skills, and its success will be a victory for the entire campus and our students.

Funding for the QEP has been incorporated into the College budget, beginning with the 2017 fiscal year to continue throughout the 2021 fiscal year. In preparation for the execution of the QEP, we have allocated over $54,000 for plans begun during fiscal year 2016. All aspects of the implementation of the overall QEP have been afforded appropriate funding.

Finally, let me express my sincere appreciation to the QEP Steering Committee for the excellent work that has been and will continue to be done.

Cc: Dr. C. Jeffery Knighton, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
    Mr. Walter Green, Assistant Vice President & Controller
    Mr. Justin White, Director of Budgets & Aux. Operations
Appendix H: Letter From Mary Williams, MS, RN, Coordinator of the Academic Intervention and Mentoring for Success in Nursing Program (AIM)

The School of Nursing Faculty has recognized that students admitted to the ASN program have demonstrated an overall weakness in their writing skills. Problems with grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, connecting thoughts, and building paragraphs are the most frequently recognized deficiencies. These deficits influence a student’s ability to use clear written expression when completing writing assignments. To address this dilemma and to assist in strengthening students’ writing skills the faculty incorporated a series of informal writing activities throughout the curriculum. The assignments include reflective journaling, electronic and written documentation; practice based evaluative summaries, and other professional writing activities.

Students admitted to the ASN program are required to take a Dosage Calculations Exam in the first semester Pharmacology course. The exam consists of metric, household and apothecary conversions, basic math skills, and the use of algebraic or scientific equations to calculate safe medication dosages. Students have three attempts to pass this test, which is a requirement for progression in the nursing program. Approximately 60% of the students admitted to the first semester’s cohort pass the exam on their first attempt. A majority of the remaining students subsequently pass the test on their second or third attempt. Over the past three years, a negligible number of students were unsuccessful with passing this exam. As a result, they were not able to progress in the nursing program. To improve student proficiency with dosage calculations, the faculty test this skill on all exams in every nursing course. The expectation is that students remain competent with calculating safe medication dosages.

Although nursing students are continually tested on dosage calculations, an increasing number of fourth semester students are experiencing difficulty with the skill. The fourth semester faculty now requires any student who answers two or more medical math problems incorrectly to remediate and pass a dosage calculations test. These students are given a remediation packet and are referred to the Academic Intervention and Mentoring for Success in Nursing (AIM) Coordinator for tutoring assistance.

Organization, time management, and good study skills are integral to succeed in nursing. AIM is designed to provide nursing students with academic support and mentoring to improve their success. The program provides students with academic assessment and planning, tutoring and mentoring, and referrals for additional assistance or support from other on campus resources.
Appendix I: First Things First Marketing Plan

First Things First Marketing Plan

The purpose of Gordon State College’s marketing plan for its SACSOCS quality enhancement plan is to have every student, staff member and faculty member to be able to recite the name of the QEP and articulate in broad strokes the plan’s goals. The name of the QEP is First Things First with the subtitle Mastery in Quantitative and Communication Skills. The primary tool for making the name commonly and accurately known by the GSC community is repetition. This will be achieved by the distribution of T-shirts and other giveaways with the QEP’s logo and wording on them at key events prior to and during the Fall 2016 semester. The broader strokes of First Things First are: that the QEP will focus on the redesign of GSC’s English 1101 (composition) and Math 1111 (college algebra); professors of these courses will receive training in making the courses more learner-centered and engaging. Clearly, the full plan of First Things First has greater detail than this, but the marketing subcommittee’s charge is to increase awareness of the QEP’s name and its broad purpose, which is to positively affect the academic success of GSC students. The length of this marketing plan is from July 14 to Oct. 27, but since the QEP has a five-year lifespan, faculty, staff and students will be reminded of First Things First for years to come with the announcement of trainings, requests for data, and intervention programs.

The following is a schedule of events for advertising the name and intent of GSC’s QEP, First Things First.

Schedule

July 14, 28, August 5
These are dates of GSC’s new student orientations. (QEP booths)

August 1 and all semester
Campus screens will begin showing slides asking the question, “What is First Things First?” with the logo on the big screen and the little screens Aug. 1-4. By the 5th the screens should give the following answer:
First Things First means
• Better engagement
• Better learning
• Better math and writing skills

Social media will follow suit according to the same schedule. Social media and the screens can be used to advertise student events where things like T-shirts are won. The Claymore’s first issue can run a story about FTF. Subsequent issues can report on FTF events. Put an animated FTF logo on the campus computers to run all semester.

August 3, 8, 9 & 10: F/S presentations by QEP Coordinator; Alumni Association water bottles; bookmarks distributed

September 5 & October 10-11 Holidays
Messages piggybacked on the screens

Periodically throughout the semester
Post student “person on the street” videos that ask people what they know about QEP and FTF. Still photographs could also be used in a similar way except the stills would be posted on the screens around campus.

At basketball games
The big screens can flash the FTF logo along with the message of “First Things First means better engagement better learning and better math and writing skills.” Hold halftime promotions, Students could receive prizes if they can answer questions about QEP and FTF.

Jeans Day
If staff wear a handmade FTF logo on a certain day, they get to wear jeans for a particular Friday without having to pay for it. Only a few will be awarded per week if noticed by an “FTF spy” appointed for the week.
Appendix J: ETS Proficiency Profiles

ETS® Proficiency Profile Proficiency Levels

Reading and Critical Thinking

Level 1
To be considered proficient at Level 1, students should be able to:
- recognize factual material explicitly presented in a reading passage
- understand the meaning of particular words or phrases in the context of a reading passage

Level 2
To be considered proficient at Level 2, students should be able to:
- synthesize material from different sections of a passage
- recognize valid inferences derived from material in the passage
- identify accurate summaries of a passage or of significant sections of the passage
- understand and interpret figurative language
- discern the main idea, purpose or focus of a passage or a significant portion of the passage

Level 3/Critical Thinking
To be considered proficient at Level 3, students should be able to:
- evaluate competing causal explanations
- evaluate hypotheses for consistency with known facts
- determine the relevance of information for evaluating an argument or conclusion
- determine whether an artistic interpretation is supported by evidence contained in a work
- evaluate the appropriateness of procedures for investigating a question of causation
- evaluate data for consistency with known facts, hypotheses or methods
- recognize flaws and inconsistencies in an argument

Writing

Level 1
To be considered proficient at Level 1, students should be able to:
- recognize agreement among basic grammatical elements (e.g., nouns, verbs, pronouns and conjunctions)
- recognize appropriate transition words
- recognize incorrect word choice
- order sentences in a paragraph
- order elements in an outline

Level 2
To be considered proficient at Level 2, students should be able to:
- incorporate new material into a passage
- recognize agreement among basic grammatical elements (e.g., nouns, verbs, pronouns and conjunctions) when these elements are complicated by intervening words or phrases
- combine simple clauses into single, more complex combinations
- recast existing sentences into new syntactic combinations

Level 3
To be considered proficient at Level 3, students should be able to:
- discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate use of parallelism
- discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate use of idiomatic language
- recognize redundancy
- discriminate between correct and incorrect constructions
- recognize the most effective revision of a sentence
Mathematics
Level 1
To be considered proficient at Level 1, students should be able to:

- solve word problems that would most likely be solved by arithmetic and do not involve conversion of units or proportionality. These problems can be multistep if the steps are repeated rather than embedded.
- solve problems involving the informal properties of numbers and operations, often involving the Number Line, including positive and negative numbers, whole numbers and fractions (including conversions of common fractions to percent, such as converting "1/4" to 25 percent).
- solve problems requiring a general understanding of square roots and the squares of numbers.
- solve a simple equation or substitute numbers into an algebraic expression.
- find information from a graph. This task may involve finding a specified piece of information in a graph that also contains other information.

Level 2
To be considered proficient at Level 2, students should be able to:

- solve arithmetic problems with some complications, such as complex wording, maximizing or minimizing and embedded ratios. These problems include algebra problems that can be solved by arithmetic (the answer choices are numeric).
- simplify algebraic expressions, perform basic translations, and draw conclusions from algebraic equations and inequalities. These tasks are more complicated than solving a simple equation, though they may be approached arithmetically by substituting numbers.
- interpret a trend represented in a graph, or choose a graph that reflects a trend.
- solve problems involving sets; problems have numeric answer choices.

Level 3
To be considered proficient at Level 3, students should be able to:

- solve word problems that would be unlikely to be solved by arithmetic; the answer choices are either algebraic expressions or numbers that do not lend themselves to back-solving
- solve problems involving difficult arithmetic concepts, such as exponents and roots other than squares and square roots, and percent of increase or decrease
- generalize about numbers (e.g., identify the values of (x) for which an expression increases as (x) increases)
- solve problems requiring an understanding of the properties of integers, rational numbers, etc.
- interpret a graph in which the trends are to be expressed algebraically or one of the following is involved: exponents and roots other than squares and square roots, percent of increase or decrease
- solve problems requiring insight or logical reasoning
Appendix K: Paper Version of the G2C Student Learning Gains Survey (SLGS)

All questions are answered with one of the following:
0 = not applicable 1 = no help 2 = a little help 3 = much help 4 = great help

The Class Overall:
HOW MUCH did each of the following aspects of the class HELP YOUR LEARNING?
1. How the class topics, activities, reading and assignments fit together
2. The pace of the class

Class Activities:
HOW MUCH did each of the following aspects of the class HELP YOUR LEARNING?
3. Participating in discussions during class
4. Participating in group work during class
5. Doing hands-on class activities
6. Please comment on how the class activities (discussions, group work, an/or hand-on class activities) helped your learning.

Assignments, graded activities and tests:
HOW MUCH did each of the following aspects of the class HELP YOUR LEARNING?
7. Graded assignments (overall) in this class
8. The number and spacing of tests
9. The way the grading system helped me understand what I needed to work on
10. The feedback on my work received after tests or assignments

The information you were given:
HOW MUCH did each of the following aspects of the class HELP YOUR LEARNING?
11. Explanation of how the class activities, reading and assignments related to each other
12. Explanation given by instructor of how to learn or study the materials
13. Explanation of why the class focused on the topics presented.

Support for you as an individual learner:
HOW MUCH did each of the following aspects of the class HELP YOUR LEARNING?
14. Working with peers during class
15. Working with peers outside of class

Your understanding of class content:
As a result of your work in this class, what GAINS DID YOU MAKE in your UNDERSTANDING of each of the following?
16. The main concepts explored in this class
17. The relationships between the main concepts

Class impact on your attitudes:
As a result of your work in this class, what GAINS DID YOU MAKE in the following?
18. Willingness to seek help from others (teacher, peers, TA) when working on academic problems
## Appendix L: G2C Advisory Board

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G2C National Advisory Committee</th>
<th>University/Institute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lou Albert – Arizona State University</td>
<td>Christine Keller – APLU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Baer – Civetas</td>
<td>Jillian Kinzie – Indiana Univ. Center for Postsecondary Research &amp; NSSE Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trudy Bers – Oakton Community College</td>
<td>Robert Kubat – Pennsylvania State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter Boylan – National Center for Developmental Education</td>
<td>Tricia Leggett – Zane State College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Braddy – Mathematical Association of America</td>
<td>Julie Little – EDUCAUSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Campbell – West Virginia University</td>
<td>Jean MacGregor – Washington Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Cox Brand – Oregon Community College Association</td>
<td>Jodi Koslow Martin – North Park University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Cornett – Ivy Tech Community College</td>
<td>George Mehaffy – AASCU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent Drake – Purdue University</td>
<td>Jerry Odom – University of South Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johanna Dvorak – University of Wisconsin Milwaukee &amp; NCLCA</td>
<td>Karan Powell – American Public University System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maribeth Ehasz – University of Central Florida</td>
<td>Lynn Priddy – National American University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Evenbeck – CUNY Stella and Charles Guttman Community College</td>
<td>Elaine Seymour – University of Colorado at Boulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad Gonzales – American Historical Association &amp; South Texas College</td>
<td>Marion Stone – International Center for Supplemental Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Guell – Indiana State University</td>
<td>Uri Treisman – University of Texas at Austin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casey Green – The Campus Computing Project</td>
<td>Ross Peterson-Veatch – Goshen College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeanne Higbee – University of Minnesota</td>
<td>Kaye Walter – Bergen Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amber Holloway – Higher Learning Commission</td>
<td>Cynthia Wilson – League for Innovation in the Community College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gordon State College | First Things First
Appendix M: G2C Principles

Academic Practice and Policy
Gateways to Completion institutions have formal policies that promote student success in gateway courses. Policies are effectively communicated and inform academic practice at all levels. The link between policy and practice is clear, and the institutions’ actions are consistent with their policies.

Faculty / Instructors
Gateways to Completion institutions are dedicated to instructional excellence in gateway courses. Institutions and departments, intentionally select gateway course faculty based on academically sound criteria, support ongoing professional development, and reward exemplary teaching in gateway courses.

Learning
Gateways to Completion institutions are committed to authentic student learning in gateway courses. Institutions, departments and faculty articulate clear learning goals and expectations, assure timely and frequent feedback, and provide opportunities to demonstrate content mastery.

Improvement
Gateways to Completion institutions maintain a culture of ongoing quality improvement to advance student success in gateway courses. Institutions and departments use multiple data sources to better understand student and faculty performance. Institution and department leaders encourage knowledge about and sharing of best practices in undergraduate teaching and learning.

Students
Gateways to Completion institutions monitor the performance of students in gateway courses. Institutions and departments analyze and use student data to provide appropriate support based on both student characteristics and specific learning environments.

Support
Gateways to Completion institutions are committed to providing students coordinated and effective support to strengthen academic skills needed for success in gateway courses. Institutions and departments deliver timely support in collaboration with other relevant units.