Gordon State College

Quality Enhancement Plan Implementation Form

Title:

# First Things First: Building Retention Through Core Skills

Submitted By:

| Name | Position | Email Address |
|---|---|---|
| Dr. Steve Raynie | Access Coordinator | sraynie@gordonstate.edu |
| Mr. Peter Higgins | Director of Student Success | phiggins@gordonstate.edu |
| Dr. Nolan McMurray | Department Head, MPS | nmcmurray@gordondstate.edu |
| Dr. Ed Whitelock | Department Head, Humanities | e_whitelock@gordonstate.edu |

Please complete the following information. Attachments may also be included.  All submissions must be received by June 30, 2015.  You may submit your topics electronically to t_betkowski@gordonstate.edu.

**Rationale:**       Describe why your topic is important to Gordon State College.

Gordon State College's vision statement is "where students flourish." Nonetheless, many of the students we admit struggle with basic quantitative and communication skills, leaving them under-prepared for the intellectual rigor of an advanced education. They have lofty goals--they want to be nurses, attorneys, business professionals, and engineers. Yet many are simply overwhelmed by the huge leap to college-level work.

We are an access institution, and clearly the most important work we as faculty can do is reduce the attrition of hundreds of students each year. At the same time, those students must be prepared for academic work throughout the core curriculum and in upper-level courses. Students who have not mastered quantitative and communication skills are less likely to be successful; they are more likely to repeat courses or drop out.

While we have seen recent gains in retention, we can do better. We can re-imagine our work and deploy resources for greater effect. Area A courses (ENGL 1101, ENGL 1102, and MATH 1101 or MATH 1111) are the key places in the core curriculum where interventions can have a dramatic effect on retention. All students must receive credit for courses in these subjects, and they are fundamental to every other area of study in the college. If we as an institution are serious about Gordon State being a place where "students flourish," then we need to re-examine and refine the way we teach and tutor basic skills.

**Goals:**            State the goals and identify the student learning outcomes that will be addressed.

Reconceptualizing how the college deploys resources to support student development of quantitative and communication skills in Area A is the focus of the QEP. It addresses the access mission of the institution, and its overall objective is in line with with the vision statement of building a postsecondary academic environment where students flourish. The overall plan will include three major components: 1) development of a shared vision for quantitative and verbal literacy, 2) development and implementation of targeted interventions, and 3) development  and implementation a set of recommendations regarding how college resources are deployed in teaching and tutoring for Area A courses. These components will manifest in the following objectives:

1) Develop a college-wide vision of competency in Area A courses;
2) Align and integrate student success services with faculty teaching;
3) Increase professional development opportunities for Student Success Center tutors;
4) Develop a clearer framework and focus for co-requisite support labs for learning support students.

Reaching these objectives will lead to an increase in the percentage of students who demonstrate competency in quantitative and communication skills. Students will be better prepared academically for the core curriculum and upper-level classes, and they will be more likely to finish academic programs.

**Assessment:** Describe how the student learning outcomes will be assessed and how assessments will be utilized for continuous improvement.

This QEP project will assess its impact in the following ways:

1) English and Math co-requisite learning support labs will use common final exams based on course learning outcomes; information about learning outcome deficiencies will be used to refine pedagogical and tutoring practices.
2) Information from the new general assessment protocol will provide information to refine pedagogical and tutoring practices.
3) Faculty members teaching courses outside of Area A will be surveyed about student preparedness in quantitative and communication skills. The survey results will guide refinement of pedagogical and tutoring practices.
4) Correlation coefficients between tutor visits and student grades will be used to suggest the effectiveness of tutor professional development efforts.

Ultimately, the best measure of success will be improved retention and progression at Gordon State College.

**Resources:** Identify the kinds of resources needed to implement your proposal. A full budget will not be necessary at this time. However, the resources must be viable and sustainable.

The most important resources needed for this project are faculty time and teamwork. Key faculty members developing and implementing such a broad-based plan might require release time in the initial phases. Since the project is designed as an on-going set of practices, however, it will not require long-term financial support. Instead, it may generate revenue through enhanced retention and progression. In addition, the college will need to allocate funds for the professional development of tutors. Efforts will also be made to identify and solicit possible sources of outside funding such as grants.