

ROUTING FORM FOR PROPOSED CHANGES TO ACADEMIC POLICY, CURRICULUM CHANGES, STATUTES

EAST GEORGIA STATE COLLEGE

NAME OF POLICY/ PROPOSAL: Quality Enhancement Plan Topic Proposal

Attach a complete copy of the proposed change as acted upon by the APCC or Faculty Senate. If changes made to proposal prior to adopting, please note the person and governance body making the change on the proposal, initial and date the change. Copies of appropriate documentation should be attached to the form with each submission and should be retained at each level. Please indicate the type of proposal being submitted:

- New Course
- Deactivate Course
- Discontinue Course
- Reactivate Course
- Policy Proposal.
- New Degree Program
- Discontinue Course
- Deactivate Degree Program
- Policy Revision
- Changes to Degree Program Requirements
- Reactivate Course
- Discontinue Degree Program
- Statutes Revision
- Other: _____

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE (APCC)

Initiated and Submitted to APCC

Ken Denton / ss
Signature

01-13-2020
Date

Dean Approval:

Signature

Date

APCC Action: Approved Denied Returned Tabled

Signature of Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, Chair

01/05/2020
Date

Comments: approved via email vote.

Sandra Shannon
APCC Chair submits to Faculty Senate

01-15-2020

FACULTY SENATE

Faculty Senate Action: What

Approved Denied Returned Tabled

Signature of Faculty Senate President

01/15/2020
Date

Comments: _____

Faculty Senate President sends to EGSC President and to the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs
Note: Revisions to EGSC Statutes require approval of President's Cabinet and must be submitted to Chief of Staff/Legal Counsel for routing to President's Cabinet and routing to President. Please indicate "EGSC Statutes revision" on this form.

President's (or designee's) Action: [Signature]
Signature

PRESIDENT
Approved Denied Returned Tabled

Comments:

Date

Distribution By:

[Signature]
Signature

01/17/2020
Date

President retains original ACADEMIC POLICY/PROPOSAL ROUTING FORM

President's Office Distributes Copies To:

Faculty Senate—President

Date 01/17/20

Academic Policies & Curriculum Committee—Chair/VPASA

Date 01/17/20

Chief of Staff/Legal Counsel

Date 01/17/20

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, FBI
FROM: SAC, [illegible]
SUBJECT: [illegible]

[illegible text]

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

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Quality Enhancement Plan Topic Proposal
Student Learning Communities: Learning to Associate
East Georgia State College 2019

QEP Director: Ren Denton

QEP Implementation and Assessment Committee: David Altamirano, James Brady, Terri Brown, Dean Carlos Cunha, Antré Drummer, Dr. John Giebfried, Natasha Goss, Courtney Joiner, Dr. Tori Kearns, Dr. Deborah Kittrell-Mikell, Christian Kraus, Mike Moran, Karen Murphey, Dr. Brett Larson, David Strickland, Dr. Mary Waalkes, Dean Jimmy Wedincamp, Dr. Lena White.

QEP Topic Proposed: The First-Year Experience (Student Learning Communities)

QEP Proposed Name: Student Learning Communities: Learning to Associate

Introduction

East Georgia State College's QEP Topic Selection Committee acknowledged a strong need to focus on a topic that will increase student retention and graduation rates. Several relevant topics were identified and narrowed through discussions of proposals and forum outcomes as well as through informative meetings and surveys that sought participation and input from students, faculty, staff, and EGSC's Foundation Trustees (see QEP Process Report). Through ongoing, comprehensive conversations and brain-storming discussions with students, faculty, and staff, EGSC's QEP Topic Selection committee identified challenges that first-year students have that interfere with their course success and retention. The QEP Committee believes a First-Year Experience redesign will provide EGSC's students with the foundation that they need for success.

According to David Strickland, EGSC does not have a "true" FYE program to bring together initiatives and foster a sense of belonging, cultivate a growth mindset, or promote active learning. The CATS course in and of itself does not constitute an FYE program. The FYE is not a single class or initiative, but is "an intentional combination of academic and co-curricular efforts within and across postsecondary institutions" focused on a "purposeful set of initiatives designed and implemented to strengthen the quality of student learning" to increase the student's confidence, satisfaction, and sense of belonging in their first year, according to Koch and Gardner (Greenfield xxviii).

Institutions have a need for a cohesive FYE because the largest portions of dropout occur within the student's first year. Therefore, FYE programs have been created across the nation to address the critical needs of all first-year students, including first-generation and minority students who need the most support. As a result of effective FYE programs, institutions have demonstrated innovation in advising, orientation, residential learning, teaching, and learning communities. Because of the FYE potential to positively impact retention and graduation, EGSC has already identified the need to redesign its FYE program to include a seminar and other high impact practices. Therefore, the QEP committee wants to facilitate the redesign by proposing Student Learning Communities (SLC) as an element of the FYE for the QEP to design, implement, track, and assess.

Rationale

East Georgia State College has three institutional goals: Complete College, Economic Development, and Innovative Performance. The QEP's focus on Student Learning Communities connects to the first goal. Complete College focuses on providing "access to innovative academic programs" while engaging "in college completion initiatives, transforming students and equipping them with tools for success."

Serving a large, rural and diverse population, EGSC is acutely aware of the ongoing diversification of higher education and the shifting needs that diversification creates. Although studies show that higher education institutions have not "yet achieved parity with respect to the students it serves," (xxviii Greenfield), East Georgia State College strives to position itself as an institution engaging in innovative work to provide access to higher education that promotes equitable learning environments where diverse populations can thrive. Thus, as an open-access institution, EGSC strives to create an inclusive learning environment so that all students have equal access to success. The many initiatives from the University System of Georgia that EGSC is implementing aim to provide equity in the classroom for first-generation and minority college students. Student Learning Communities are commonly used to promote inclusivity and equity, even as they provide students with opportunities for deeper learning relevant to their world and careers. Therefore, Student Learning Communities will help EGSC engage in the innovative work that opens access to all who desire to pursue a college degree.

Student Learning Communities, generally defined as a cluster of linked courses that share the same cohorts, emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a strategy for intervention and retention for first-year students (Greenfield 113). According to studies, over 90 percent of institutions have some form of learning communities for their first-year students (Greenfield 114). Studies have shown that the primary benefits of having SLCs are the impact on learning, academic success, and retention. There is evidence that "students' experiences in learning communities have a positive impact on corollaries of persistence," in that students will experience a smoother transition to college, form peer connections, and increase engagement with college-level materials, even as they enhance their purposeful interaction with faculty and increase cognitive development (Greenfield 130). Other benefits include the promotion of diverse viewpoints and experiences while purposefully creating an inclusive learning environment that fosters a sense of belonging.

Thus, the QEP's topic, Student Learning Communities, connects to EGSC's vision and mission statements in that it makes the learning environment more equitable, promotes active-learning techniques, and supports students in their transition into college. Student Learning Communities is also a high impact practice that focuses on helping students integrate knowledge so that they can make multiple, interdisciplinary connections that lead to application skills like problem-solving and analysis. Furthermore, faculty who participate tend to be more engaged in the students' learning experience, even as they learn and apply active learning pedagogies associated with SLCs (Greenfield 131). Having Student Learning Communities also maximizes the various initiatives from Georgia's University System designed to support traditional and nontraditional students for academic success while ensuring a high-quality academic experience that prepares graduates for a lifelong love of learning. If designed to include the Service Learning such as the Correll Scholars Program, the learning communities can also foster a commitment to improving communities through service. In other words, if EGSC can purposefully design learning communities that align with the institutional goals, these learning communities will indeed teach students how to belong to an academic culture, even as it fortifies their learning abilities. Thus, if students come to EGSC to "get associated," then

EGSC's FYE should teach them how "to associate." Hence, the QEP Topic Selection Committee proposes the QEP name "Student Learning Communities: Learning to Associate."

Purpose

The Association of American Colleges and Universities identify student learning communities as a high impact practice that effectively encourages "integration of learning across courses," as students become involved with "the 'big questions' that matter beyond the classroom" (aacu.org/leap/hips). Thus, the common primary purpose of any student learning community is to help students make interdisciplinary connections by integrating their knowledge gained in different courses. However, other common purposes include introducing students to "the rigors and processes of college-level work," forging academic and social networks with faculty and peers, and orienting students to the resources and habits that increase success (Greenfield 115).

Outcomes

Though an increase in retention and graduation rates is the desired overall outcome for Student Learning Communities, there are more appropriate and specific indexes of student success to measure. If the main purpose of SLCs is to help students integrate knowledge, even as these communities teach students how to succeed in the rigors and processes of college-level work, forge academic and social networks, and orient students to the resources available to them, then it is appropriate to measure disciplinary integration, collaboration, faculty interaction, and academic and social engagement (Greenfield 128). Therefore, the QEP implementation and Assessment Committee has agreed to focus on a blend of student success outcomes and student learning outcomes to assess both what students are doing and learning as a result of their Student Learning Communities. The Student Success Outcomes and Student Learning Outcomes below represent common, assessable outcomes common to SLCs and are appropriate for our students:

Student Success Outcomes:

- Students will connect to a network of peers, faculty, and advisors for support in persisting in their degree programs.
- Students will use the ACE, library staff, and faculty mentors to develop the skills that they need for course success and building momentum toward graduation.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Students will develop qualitative, analytical, and communication skills through collaborated efforts.
- Students will integrate information from multiple disciplines to form a strong foundation of knowledge that supports long-term learning.

Envisioning Student Learning Communities

Well-designed First-Year Experience programs foster a sense of campus community and promote a healthy satisfaction with the college experience. High impact practices are crucial to advancing equity and increasing participation and performance among all students, particularly those traditionally

underserved students. Thus, high impact practices must be embedded in successful FYE programs. Studies have shown that high impact practices (HIPS) and pedagogies “develop more positive learning orientation, lead to greater intellectual curiosity, and foster an interest in graduate degree plans” (16 Greenfield). Student Learning Communities is a HIP that allows students to develop a rigorous approach to learning, even as they establish relationships with peers, faculty, and staff.

Successful learning communities are made up of first-year students and are an inclusive grouping of cohorts that navigate academic content as a community. These communities have a unique ability to increase the interaction between faculty and peers, help students create a sense of belonging while navigating the college environment, and increase students’ academic and social engagement.

SLCs are formed by considering shared learning spaces that span several interrelated disciplinary areas and may be linked to First-Year Seminars, Service-Learning Initiatives, or other initiatives. Learning communities may share common readings, assignments, and projects that can be assessed through the different disciplinary perspectives, even as they meet a combination of the following objectives typical of most college courses:

1. Increase complex cognitive skills
2. Increase knowledge acquisition
3. Facilitate Intrapersonal development
4. Facilitate Interpersonal development
5. Develop practical competence
6. Promote a sense of civic responsibility and engagement
7. Provide a base for intercultural knowledge and competence
8. Promote information literacy
9. Develop written and oral communication skills
10. Develop ethical reasoning
11. Promote Creative thinking
12. Form collaborative ability
13. Build Problem-solving Skills
14. Promote integrative learning

Student Learning Communities are usually small in class size and promote a high level of collaboration inside and outside of the classroom, provide quality interaction with faculty, and form a group identity that promotes a sense of belonging. While the communities require a degree of curricular coordination, they “provide a context for developing complex thinking skills” because students are interacting with the materials on a deeper level. Learning communities are based on interactive pedagogy that facilitates the integration of social and academic experiences and promotes interdisciplinary connections.

Resources Needed for Student Learning Communities

There are three areas of expenses associated with implementing Student Learning Communities: Start-up Costs, Administrative and Operating Expenses.

Start-up Costs: We may want to consider developing spaces that promote collaborative learning such as classrooms with tables rather than individual desks, developing a faculty training module or purchasing training and resource materials for the committee members who are planning the QEP’s

SLCs and the faculty who are leading the SLCs. Assessment tools and National Survey Participation costs may also factor into the Start-up Costs.

Administrative and Operating Expenses: We may want to consider the cost of having a Student Learning Community Program Coordinator or Director to oversee SLCs and support faculty who wish to link their courses with other courses. If communities are kept small, as recommended, we may need to hire fulltime instructors and/or adjunct instructors to compensate for the number of courses that may increase as targeted classes are down-sized. We may also need to plan to increase ACE tutors, as learning communities will be required to promote the use of the ACE through one common assignment or assignment revision.

Resources Available

G2C leadership teams redesigning targeted courses;
CETL that can promote professional development series for SLCs and High Impact Practices;
Faculty willing to link their courses to form cohort learning communities;
Chancellor's Learning Scholars promoting Georgia University Systems initiatives and techniques related to high impact pedagogies;
Trained advising professionals
Trained ACE personnel
Trained Library Staff

Recommended Experts

Jennifer R. Keup, co-author of *Developing and Sustaining Successful First-Year Programs: A Guide for Practitioners* and Director of National Resource Center for First-Year Experience and Transitional Students at the University of South Carolina Columbia. 803-777-2570. keupj@mailbox.sc.edu.

Dan Friedman, Director of University 101 Programs at the University of South Carolina Columbia. Author and Researcher of First-Year seminars and learning. 803-777-9506. friedman@sc.edu.

Next Step

With topic approval, the QEP Implementation and Assessment committee is prepared to formulate, map, implement, and assess a QEP that meets SACSCOC's standards: "The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is a document developed by the institution that (1) includes a process identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment, (2) focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution, (3) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP, (4) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP, and (5) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement" (SACSCOC: Quality Enhancement Plans).

Works Cited

Association of American Colleges and Universities: A Voice and a Force for Liberal Education.

“High-Impact Educational Practices.” <http://aacu.org/leap/hips>. 12 Nov. 2019.

“East Georgia State College Strategic Plan 2018-2019 through 2020-2021.”

http://www.ega.edu/announce/EGSC_Strategic_Plan_FY_2019_-_FY_2021.pdf

Greenfield, Gerald M, Jennifer R. Keup, and John N. Gardner. *Developing and Sustaining*

Successful First-Year Programs: A Guide for Practitioners. Jossey-Bass, 2013.

“SACSCOC Quality Enhancement Plans: Lists and Summaries.”

<http://www.sacscoc.org/QEPsummaries.asp>

Strickland, David. Informal FYE Proposal to 2019 QEP Topic Selection Committee. Jan. 2019.