

Tidewater Community College

Improving First-Year Student Success through a Comprehensive Orientation System

Tidewater Community College's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is designed to improve learning for first-year students by implementing a comprehensive orientation system. The college derived this focus from an analysis of student course success data showing that students who had earned less than 16 credit hours performed consistently lower than other students. Considering the diversity of students attending the institution and that no "one-size-fits-all" approach to orientation is feasible, the college will target specific student groups for selected orientation activities. For the initial five years of the plan, five targeted first-year student groups have been identified: 1) recent high school graduates, 2) first generation students, 3) students enrolled in online math and English, 4) other curricular-placed students, and 5) non curricular-placed students. Some of the elements likely to be included in the orientation system, depending on the targeted student populations, are: pre-enrollment orientation sessions, an initial day-long session for registered new students, an orientation event for parents/spouses, a concentrated Student Success Skills course, a series of free seminars for first semester students, an early alert system for students with academic problems, an academic advising model targeted to the specific student population, and an online version of orientation.

To measure system performance, the college will first collect and analyze baseline data for each of the targeted student groups. Then, following the implementation of orientation system activities, TCC will collect a variety of data to determine if student learning improves as a result of those activities. Types of data collected will include the following: first-year credit course success ratios; credit course withdrawal rates in first-year courses; second-year credit course success ratios; cumulative grade point averages after the first year; the percentage of students on academic warning; term-to-term persistence; year-to-year persistence; academic goal completion; gatekeeper course completion; positive responses on student surveys/focus groups; the frequency of use of support services; and course-embedded measures as defined by faculty. Through multiple assessment measures at various points in the enrollment and learning continuum, the college will be able to determine if the new intake processes and interventions have a positive influence on student success and retention.

Contact: Lisa Kleiman
TCC Director of Institutional Effectiveness
lkleiman@tcc.edu