

QEP Plan

Rowan Cabarrus Community College's (RCCC) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), "Navigate Your Path: Build Career Connections," focuses on increasing student persistence by helping students gain career knowledge and experiences through exploratory writing and research, career advising, internships, and virtual career resources. Research shows students with identified goals are more likely to persist and demonstrate academic engagement because they are connected to their institution by established educational and career goals causing a personal desire to re-enroll (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). By developing and supporting students' career aspirations and offering access to effective career-seeking tools and activities, students will tend to be more engaged in their academic coursework and more likely to persist in their degree programs until completion.

This QEP offers four "career connections" or means that students may utilize to begin learning about and preparing for their proposed career path. Students may do all or just one of the "career connections."

Connection 1: ENG 111 Career Exploration Writing Assignment

This connection offers students the opportunity to explore their prospective career choice in a written assignment given in randomly selected ENG 111 classes. This activity will use writing and research to help students identify career/employment goals. Students will also develop a plan for educational completion to reach their prospective career goal. Students will take a pre and post-test to gather pre-activity and post-activity knowledge. Those who demonstrate a need for additional help or direction will be referred to a Career Advising counselor. Students will be tracked for persistence based on enrollment in subsequent semesters.

Connection 2: Career Advising

This connection highlights our career counseling services offered through Student Services and the R3 Center. Students will have the opportunity to meet with a career coach/counselor and complete various assessments to gain insight about their career choice and direction on achieving their career goals. Students will meet with a coach voluntarily and will be measured for persistence based on enrollment in subsequent semesters. The Career Advising team will work in tandem with the ACA Advising and Career Center and ACA classes to reach the greatest number of students.

Connection 3: Internships/Co-op/Service Learning

This connection will offer AAS and AA/AS students internship and/or service learning placement to gain work-related experience and expand their job network while still in college. Students will gain experience to include on their resumes and relate their academic coursework to a professional context. Students who participate in co-op or service learning will do a pre- and post-experience assessment to measure their skill and knowledge gain during the co-op or service learning placement. Students will be measured for persistence based on enrollment in subsequent semesters.

Connection 4: Virtual Employment Resources Center (VERC)

This connection will offer students a number of online resources related to career exploration, best practices for interviewing and resume writing, career searching, advice from an HR perspective, globalization in the career market, and many other relevant and current topics related to careers that students will find helpful and interesting. Students who use this resource will take surveys that are embedded throughout the VERC sections to provide feedback that will be used to make ongoing improvements to the resource. Student will be measured for persistence based on enrollment in subsequent semesters.

Plan Assessment

Data collection began for Connections 1, 2 and 3 in Fall 2013. Each of the "connections" allows for tracking and measurement based on student participation and persistence in future semesters. Connection 4 was debuted

Spring 2014 and student tracking began then. These 4 “connections” or assessment variables will be used in a logistic regression model to determine which connections were most effective in producing retention. As we gather and analyze the data, we will examine which connections or combination of connections produced the greatest retention and refine and expand those “connections” to increase student persistence in future semesters.

Institutional Capability

Our QEP plan took shape over the course of 3 years. Considering faculty and staff feedback and suggestions and the college’s institutional and fiscal capabilities to provide the necessary resources to all interested students, the Planning Committee recommended 4 “career connections” for the QEP project.

Rather than creating all new resources, we chose to highlight often underused career resources for two of our connections, Career Counseling and Co-op, that participating students could gain significant career direction but may be hesitant to participate in or may not have enough information to spark interest. The other two connections, ENG 111 Career Exploration Assignment and VERC, were developed by faculty and staff and implemented with little to no additional expense. Detailed budget estimates are provided for each “connection,” and RCCC is dedicated to expanding and providing the resources necessary to implement and sustain this plan.

Broad-Based Involvement

Broad-based involvement was of great importance to the QEP Planning Committee. Our previous QEP focused on academic programs and instruction, so we wanted this QEP to involve and highlight the outstanding services that RCCC staff provide to students and include feedback from full and part-time faculty and staff. In November 2011, the QEP Planning Committee, comprised of faculty and staff from various departments, met for the first time to learn about the QEP and how it impacts RCCC.

Based on SACS guidelines, the committee surveyed faculty and staff to determine what the next QEP topic should be. After several meetings regarding possible topics that emerged from the first survey, the committee condensed the initial survey to 3 possible topics and administered another survey to ask faculty and staff to choose the topic they thought would be the best emphasis for our students. An overwhelming 53 percent voted for a career emphasis. The Planning Committee then reviewed survey feedback, CCSSE results and best practices from research to determine the most beneficial career-related activities for the QEP.

Over the course of the year, the committee met monthly to share research findings and develop a proposal for implementation. From the initial Planning Committee, three subcommittees comprised of faculty and staff were established to review literature and best practices, develop a marketing campaign, and plan QEP-related professional development activities for faculty and staff. In addition, development committees were assigned to create an exploratory career writing assignment and a Virtual Employment Resources Center (VERC). The committee developed the current proposal which is comprised of four “connections” or activities intended to measure and promote students’ career-focused learning and retention.

RCCC seeks to improve the lives of our students through public higher education and workforce development. This QEP supports the mission of the college by encouraging and supporting students’ career exploration through writing, advising, co-op experiences, and virtual career resources conveniently housed in one location, all geared toward our students’ needs and pursuits.