

# MORE

Maximizing Online Readiness and Excellence



**MIDLANDS**  
TECHNICAL COLLEGE

## **A QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN | 2019**

*Submitted to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools –  
Commission on Colleges*

*by Midlands Technical College | Dr. Ronald L. Rhames, College President*

*In preparation for an On-Site Review | October 7 - 10, 2019*

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# Guide to Fundamental QEP Issues

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) identifies the [fundamental criteria](#) that must be present for a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) to be of exceptional quality. The following table provides readers with a quick-guide to the location of specific QEP criteria identified by SACSCOC. Please note these page numbers provide examples of evidence where the criteria is demonstrated, but additional references to meeting the SACSCOC criteria may be found elsewhere in this document.

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## Executive Summary

Consistent with national trends, Midlands Technical College (MTC) has experienced steady growth in online enrollment in recent years. Also consistent with national trends, student success in online courses (defined as the rate of students receiving a grade of “C” or higher) has lagged behind face-to-face counterparts. Internal research revealed that MTC student success in online courses was 13 percent lower than student success in face-to-face courses during the 2017-2018 academic year. As a result, an important focus of the 2018-2021 MTC Strategic Plan is to improve online student success. In order to achieve the goals set forth in the Strategic Plan, MTC has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) aimed at improving online student success, titled **Maximizing Online Readiness and Excellence (MORE)**.

MORE is the result of extensive college-wide discussions that involved faculty, staff, students, Commissioners (Board of Trustees), Executive Council, Faculty Council, Staff Council, Academic Affairs Council, Student Development Services Council, and the Student Advisory Board. These discussions, conducted through surveys, listening sessions, web conferences, and one-on-one conversations, led to the development of the QEP topic. This inclusive engagement of MTC constituents has helped build broad-based support for MORE.

According to national research and best practices, three key components to improving student success are orienting students to the online environment, providing training to faculty in the area of online pedagogy, and supporting students through online student services. Therefore, MORE seeks to implement three primary actions:

### **Develop an Online Student Readiness Course**

MTC will design, implement, assess, and refine an online student readiness course that must be completed prior to registering for one of six online gateway courses. The course, titled “Virtual Backpack: Starting Your Online Journey,” will equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to persist and to be successful in the online environment. Topics include, but are not limited to, an introduction to the college’s learning management system (D2L Brightspace) and academic resources, as well as time management and technical skills for online success.

### **Improve Faculty Readiness for Online Teaching**

Faculty who teach targeted online gateway courses will further develop the knowledge and skills necessary for effective online instruction by participating in an Online Faculty Learning Community (OFLC). The OFLC will provide instruction on accessibility, student engagement, course design, feedback, assessment, Quality Matters® (QM®) standards, and D2L Brightspace. The OFLC also will provide faculty with opportunities to discuss online pedagogy, including ways to reinforce concepts and skills introduced in the online student readiness course and to better integrate student services.

## **Enhance and Coordinate Services to Support Online Student Success**

To further support students in these targeted gateway courses, MTC will develop coordinated touchpoints connecting students to online support services beyond completion of the online student readiness course. Drawing on feedback from students and faculty collected in the QEP development phase, MTC will focus on improving and enhancing student connection to three specific online academic resources: tutoring, advising, and library services. MTC will collect data and apply analytics to ensure necessary student services are provided in a timely manner.

To keep the scope of MORE manageable from a human and financial resources perspective, assessment of QEP interventions (Virtual Backpack, OFLC, and enhanced online support) will focus on six online gateway courses: AHS 102 - Medical Terminology, ART 101 - History and Appreciation of Art, BUS 101 - Introduction to Business, ENG 101 - English Composition I, MAT 101 - Beginning Algebra, and PSY 201 - Introduction to Psychology. These courses collectively reach approximately 35 percent of all first-time online students and impact a cross-section of students in Arts and Sciences as well as Career Programs.

These three key interventions are designed to work in unison to improve student success rates, the specific Student Learning Outcomes within the six identified online gateway courses, as well as student perceptions of readiness. Baseline data has been collected and a target of eight percent improvement in online student success has been set. The QEP includes both formative and summative assessments that will regularly measure the effectiveness of the interventions targeting student learning. Qualitative assessment components such as surveys, student focus groups, and one-on-one student and faculty interviews will seek to obtain feedback for improvement for the three QEP interventions.

MTC Executive Council has appropriated a substantial and detailed QEP budget to initiate, implement, assess, and complete MORE. Funds have been allocated for personnel to support QEP interventions, technology to implement online advising, books for faculty development, as well as enhancements to online tutoring services. Progress towards QEP objectives will be measured on an annual basis in order to adjust resources and make improvements or changes to the interventions as needed.

## About MTC

MTC is a two-year college serving Richland, Lexington, and Fairfield counties of South Carolina. The college is comprised of six physical campuses (Beltline, Airport, Harbison, Fairfield, Batesburg-Leesville, and Northeast—and also offers some entry-level courses at Fort Jackson) and offers hybrid, online, and virtual (synchronous online) classes to students throughout the area, including multiple dual enrollment sites. MTC enrolls approximately 15,000 credit students annually in courses leading to associate degrees, diplomas and/or certificates in Arts and Sciences, Business, Engineering Technology, Health Sciences, Industrial Technology, Information Systems Technology, Nursing, and Public Service. The college offers many transferable general education courses and has bridge programs, transfer programs, and articulation agreements with many in-state universities and colleges. Further, MTC's programs support a sustainable workforce for existing, new, and expanding industries

MTC's Corporate and Continuing Education division provides professional and career training, in addition to personal enrichment opportunities, to approximately 13,000 individuals from the community, as well as businesses, industries, and governmental and health agencies. At its Northeast Enterprise Campus, the college promotes regional business expansions and growth through public-private partnerships.

MTC offers online learning opportunities for multiple academic programs and training courses, including both hybrid, asynchronous, and synchronous online classes. While online learning only began at MTC in the early 2000s, hybrid and online courses currently comprise approximately one third of the college's academic enrollment.

## Key Terms and Definitions

**D2L Brightspace (D2L)** – A learning management system used to deliver course content and assessment online. It provides faculty the ability to post content, engage with students, grade assessments, provide feedback, and access learner activity via analytic tools. It provides students the ability to engage with their instructor and classmates, check grades and attendance, and access all course materials and assessments.

**Faculty Learning Community (FLC)** – A faculty professional development activity in which a group of instructors is led by a facilitator with the goal of sharing knowledge and experiences in order to improve their teaching. Typically, FLCs have an intentional focus on metacognition, and participants consciously try to transfer knowledge and skills acquired through the FLC into course design and management.

**Faculty Readiness** – The degree to which faculty members are prepared with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively teach online. For this QEP, faculty readiness will be developed through participation in an Online Faculty Learning Community (OFLC).

**Gateway Course** – A course traditionally taken during a student’s first year of college that earns credit and prepares students for more advanced coursework.

**Hybrid Course** – A course which uses a “blended delivery via Internet and face-to-face instruction (1-99 percent)” (South Carolina Technical College System Data Dictionary).

**On-Ground/On-Campus/Face-to-Face Course** – A course in which all instruction is delivered in a physical classroom. The use of online resources or online homework does not affect the course’s designation as face-to-face, so long as no portion of in-class instruction is regularly replaced by online instruction.

**Online Faculty Learning Community (OFLC)** – A faculty professional development activity in which a group of instructors is led by a facilitator with the goal of sharing knowledge and experiences in order to improve their teaching. An OFLC differs from an FLC in that the OFLC is specifically designed for faculty who teach in the online environment. There is a heavier use of the learning management system and more training content delivered online in an OFLC versus an FLC.

**Online/Internet Course** – A course in which “all (100 percent) of the instruction is delivered via Internet” (South Carolina Technical College System Data Dictionary).

**QEP Leads** – The QEP Director and Assistant QEP Director.

**Quality Matters® (QM®)** – “A nationally recognized, faculty centered, peer review process designed to certify the quality of online courses and online components” (“Quality Matters,” n.d.).

**Student Readiness** – The degree to which students are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to persist and to be successful in the online learning environment.

**Student Readiness Course** – A preparatory course for online students that covers various topics, including, but not limited to, student expectations for the online mode of instructional delivery, necessary technical skills, and available academic and non-academic help resources. The readiness course developed by MTC and discussed throughout the QEP will be titled “Virtual Backpack: Starting Your Online Journey.”

**Student Success** – A measure of the rate of students who receive a grade of “C” or higher for a course.

**Targeted Gateway Courses** – A set of 32 courses targeted as part of MTC’s 2018-2021 Strategic Plan. These courses are considered gateway courses because they are typically taken in a student’s first year and are often prerequisites to other courses.

**Targeted Online Gateway Courses** – A subset of the targeted gateway courses from MTC’s current Strategic Plan that will be the focus of MORE. This subset of six courses was selected due to their high online enrollment, low online success rates, and other factors that made them an ideal focus for improving online student success.

**Virtual Backpack** – The name of the readiness course for online students developed as part of MORE.

## Process Used to Develop the QEP

In Fall 2017, MTC's Executive Council started the process of ensuring the college's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is part of MTC's ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation process by examining the current MTC Strategic Plan and identifying online learning as the principal area of interest for the upcoming QEP (Appendix A). College constituents, including faculty, staff, and students, were then engaged in a multitude of ways to submit a variety of more narrowly focused ideas. These ideas were evaluated for their fit with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) criteria for an acceptable QEP, as well as align with Strategic Plan focus areas.

First, the QEP Topic Selection Committee (consisting of faculty and staff representatives) promoted and held a series of QEP Listening Sessions (Appendix B) in Fall 2017 which were open to all faculty and staff, as well as a listening session with the Student Advisory Board:

- Airport Campus – Tuesday, September 5, 1:00-2:00 pm
- Beltline Campus – Friday, September 8, 9:00-10:00 am
- Northeast Campus – Friday, September 8, 11:00-12:00 pm
- Beltline Campus – Wednesday, September 13, 3:00-4:00 pm
- Airport Campus – Friday, September 15, 10:00-11:00 am
- Airport Campus – Friday, September 15, 11:30-12:30 pm (Student Advisory Board)
- Web Conference – Monday, September 18, 1:00-2:00 pm, (via Adobe Connect)

The purpose of the listening sessions was to have a dialog about issues facing online students and to brainstorm ways MTC could improve online student success.

The Committee also reached out to 1,100 students via an electronic survey (Appendix C) to better gauge their computer/internet self-efficacy, online course self-efficacy, experience and perception of effort, problems in online courses, as well as their perception of their online technical and communication skills. In addition, 124 faculty members completed an electronic survey (Appendix D) to determine their self-efficacy to teach online, including their experience with online courses, the possible reasons to teach online courses, and their suggestions to improve online courses. Students were encouraged to participate by entering their names into a raffle for a \$50 Amazon gift card, and faculty survey participants were entered into a raffle for a reserved parking spot for one semester. In addition to the surveys, the Committee conducted interviews with three students and two faculty members to elaborate on their experiences with online learning and teaching in order to confirm the information received from the student and faculty surveys (Appendices E and F). The QEP Topic Selection Committee met with the MTC Student Advisory Board (Appendix G) to solicit students' suggestions on ways to improve online student success.

Alongside the listening sessions, a website and an intranet site were developed to keep college stakeholders updated on the progress of the QEP. The public-facing external website (<http://midlandstech.edu/QEP>) was focused on informing current and future students about forthcoming QEP interventions, while MTC’s intranet provided faculty and staff justifications as well as the SACSCOC timeline and logistics for interventions. Early in the topic selection process, this web presence was used to solicit specific ideas for potential QEP topics (Appendix H). These consultations with faculty, staff, and students generated numerous ideas for improving online education at MTC and helped build broad-based support for the selected QEP topic.

## Idea Submissions

Feedback from students, faculty, staff, and the QEP Topic Selection Committee fell into approximately two dozen possible areas of improvement. Some of the suggestions were not feasible due to necessary resources or they did not align with the MTC Strategic Plan (Appendix A). The QEP Topic Selection Committee reviewed all of the proposals and narrowed the list to four broad topics that specifically aligned with the MTC Strategic Plan:

1. Development of new online programs
2. Improving readiness of online students
3. Improving readiness of online faculty
4. Improving connection to online student services

When measuring these potential topics against SACSCOC 7.2.C, the Committee decided that developing new online programs did not necessarily go to the heart of “improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success” as required by SACSCOC, so that proposal was rejected. The Committee’s decision to narrow the focus to the remaining three topics was supported by the survey results from online students and faculty, as the samples below demonstrate.

Survey Respondents:	Student Readiness	Faculty Readiness	Student Support
<b>Students</b>	<p>“Online courses required more than in-class courses I’ve taken because you, the student, have to be on top of your schedule and assignments.”</p> <p>“The workload isn’t terrible, but it’s difficult juggling time to effectively complete and learn assignments when you have a full-time job.”</p>	<p>“Require professors to organize content and post good study tools for each course.”</p> <p>“Instructors need to be clearer in their assignment instructions and expectations.”</p> <p>“Teachers should provide a clearer understanding of what counts as attendance in the class and what will/will not be graded.”</p>	<p>“Maybe initiate a webcam chat for students that need help.”</p> <p>“Provide more online sources for supporting course materials.”</p> <p>“Providing online advisement would be nice, not everyone is available to do face-to-face due to full-time jobs.”</p>

<b>Faculty</b>	<p>“Have a mandatory online training course students must complete before taking online courses.”</p> <p>“Students, particularly our younger students, need to know proper study habits and how to manage their time effectively. They don’t know how to plan and organize study time.”</p>	<p>“Create a professional learning community for faculty who are not technologically –savvy so that they can have a network of peers in which to work.”</p> <p>“Provide more online support and training to adjunct faculty.”</p>	<p>“Hire an additional advisor for online students. Someone else that can send out tutoring information or helpful tips to being successful in the online environment.”</p> <p>“More online tutoring.”</p> <p>“Clear listings of resources, tutorials in use of resources, tutorials in networking and communication.”</p>
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Table 1: Survey Responses

## Findings

Survey and interview results revealed several issues that need immediate attention to improve online learning at MTC. Based on the results, the following issues were identified:

### Students

1. Lack of knowledge and skills to take online courses (i.e., technical, academic, and soft skills)
2. Lack of motivation to complete online courses
3. Lack of awareness of available resources

### Faculty

1. Lack of knowledge and skills to teach online courses (i.e., pedagogical, technical, and soft skills)
2. Lack of motivation to deliver effective and efficient online courses
3. Lack of performance management/feedback system
4. Lack of online teaching community support
5. Lack of a systematic evaluation process for online courses

### Student Resources

1. Inflexible testing center hours
2. Low availability of academic help offered to online students
3. Low quality of academic help offered to online students

After gathering input from the college community and reviewing the national literature, the Committee determined that in order to have the most impact, MTC should address student readiness, faculty readiness, and access to online student support services in the QEP. To keep the scope of the QEP narrowly focused, most interventions would be applied to a targeted cohort of faculty and students, as identified by Strategic Plan initiatives.

Once a specific topic outline was developed, the QEP Topic Selection Committee drafted a proposal for MORE and shared the proposal with a variety of college stakeholders, including:

- Academic Affairs Council
- Executive Council
- Faculty Council
- MTC Commission
- Staff Council
- Student Development Services (SDS) Council

The proposed QEP topic received positive feedback from all constituents. Once Executive Council approved the QEP topic in Spring 2018, a QEP Topic Development Committee convened to develop the details of the QEP document during the 2018-2019 academic year.

Finally, the completed QEP document was approved by the Executive Council in Summer 2019 prior to submission to the SACSCOC on-site committee for approval.

# Evidence of Need: Online Learning at MTC

## History and Local Context of Online Learning

MTC has offered online courses since the early 2000s. Online courses at MTC first developed as a grassroots initiative, driven by dedicated and forward-thinking faculty. Online learning continued to grow organically every year, to the point where today online courses provide 18 percent of the entire college academic enrollment. Online and hybrid courses together currently account for more than 27 percent of all enrollment. MTC currently fills about 13,000 seats in online courses annually, with a unique headcount of around 5,900 students annually. In 2017, MTC offered around 220 online sections per semester, taught by 137 instructors.

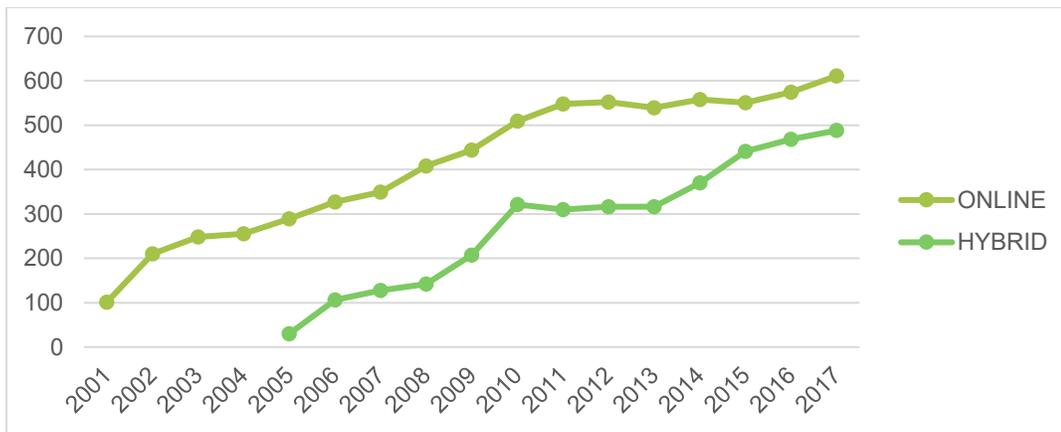


Figure 1: Online and Hybrid Section Count

Online learning is especially critical for the sustainability of the college as it experiences declining on-ground enrollment.

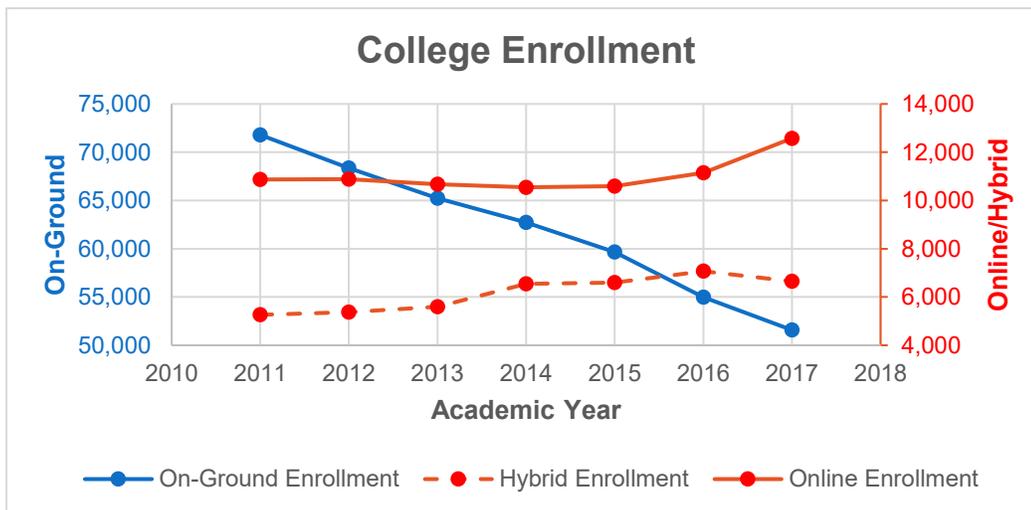


Figure 2: College Enrollment

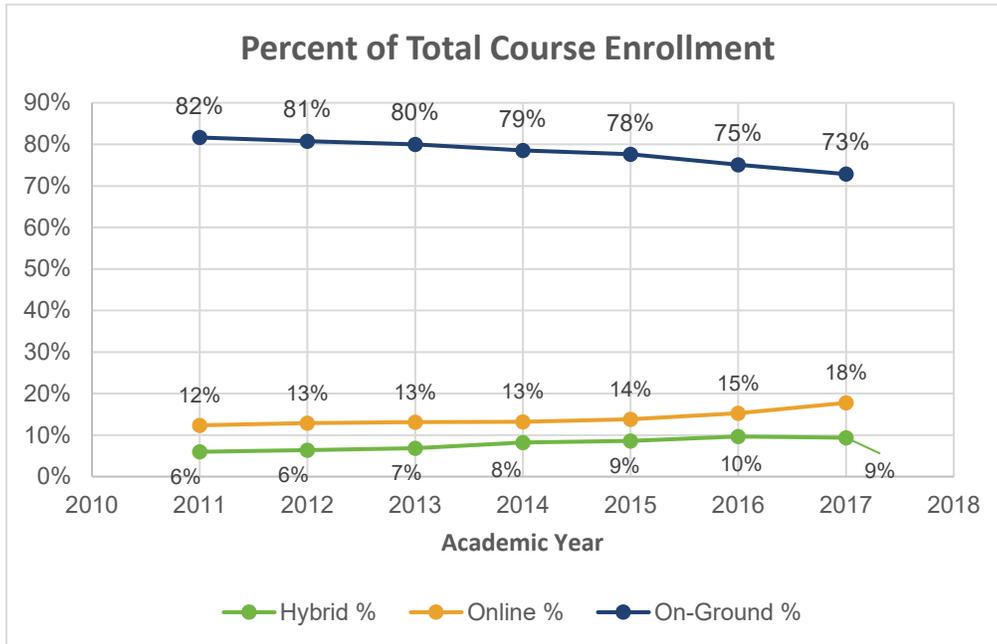


Figure 3: Percent of Total Course Enrollment

### Online Student Success, Retention, and Persistence

Following national trends, students in online courses at MTC are not as successful as students in on-ground courses. The following graphic compares the MTC student success rate between online and on-ground courses from Fall 2017 to Summer 2018.

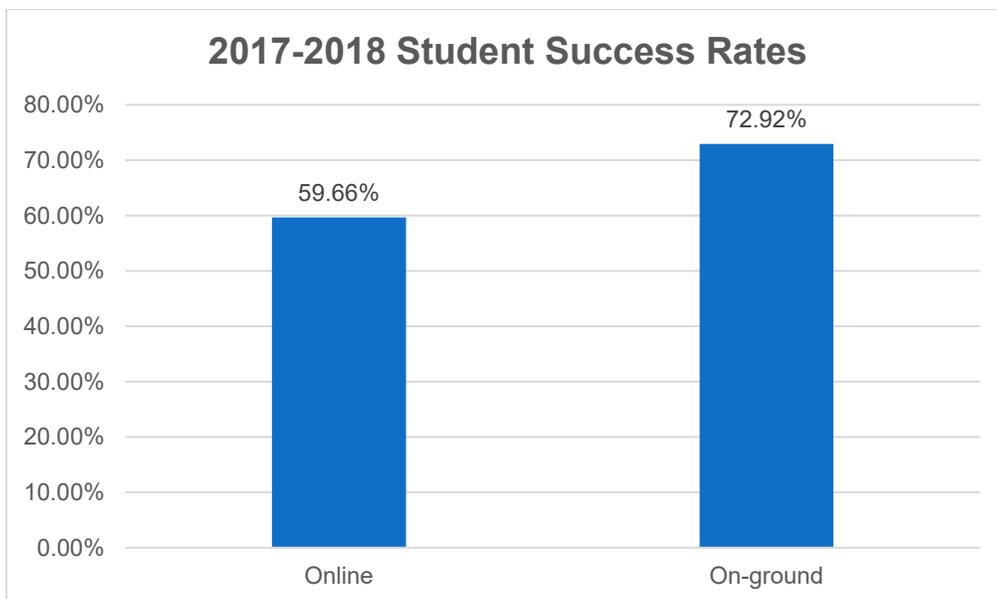


Figure 4: Student Success Rates, FA2017-SU2018

On average, the success rate of students in online courses is approximately 13 percent lower than that of students enrolled in face-to-face courses.

Despite growing online enrollment, students who take online courses also experience a low rate of persistence and retention compared to the overall student body. Persistence and retention rates for online students in the graphics below are computed by identifying the number of students enrolled in at least one online course during a given Fall semester and, excluding graduates and transfers, determining the percentage of those students still enrolled at the college the following Spring and Fall, respectively.

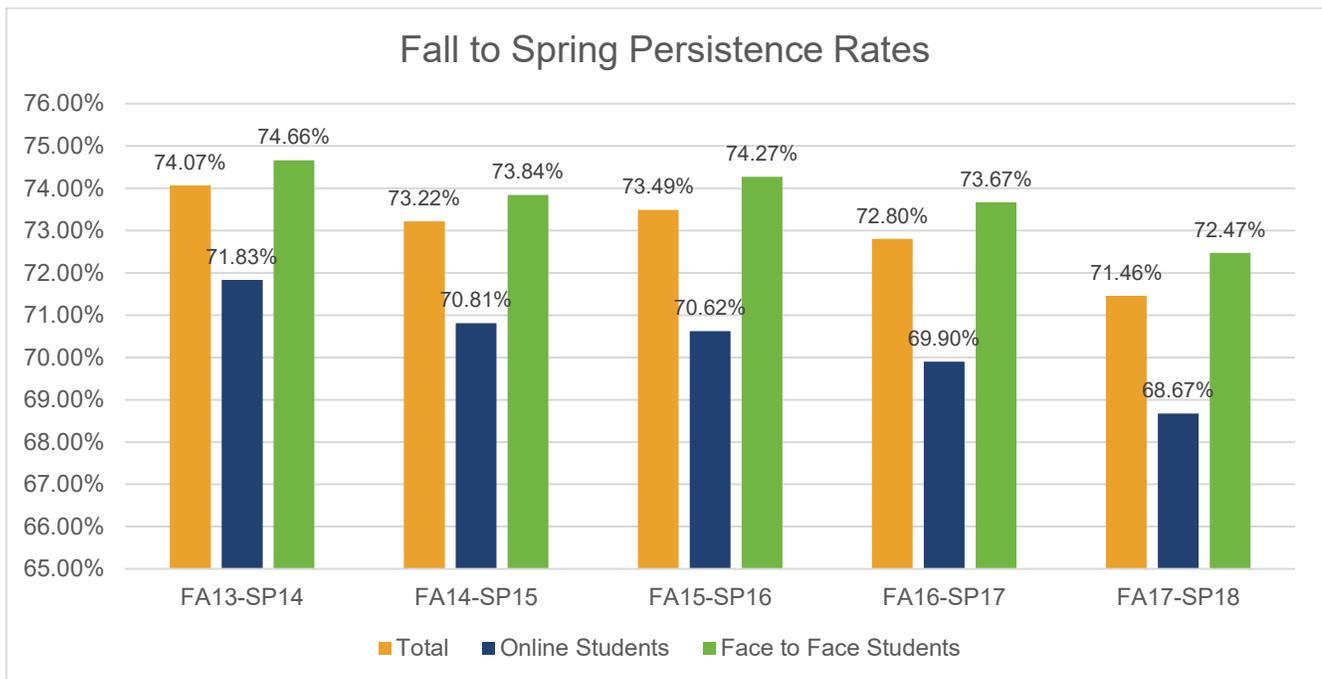


Figure 5: Fall to Spring Persistence Rates

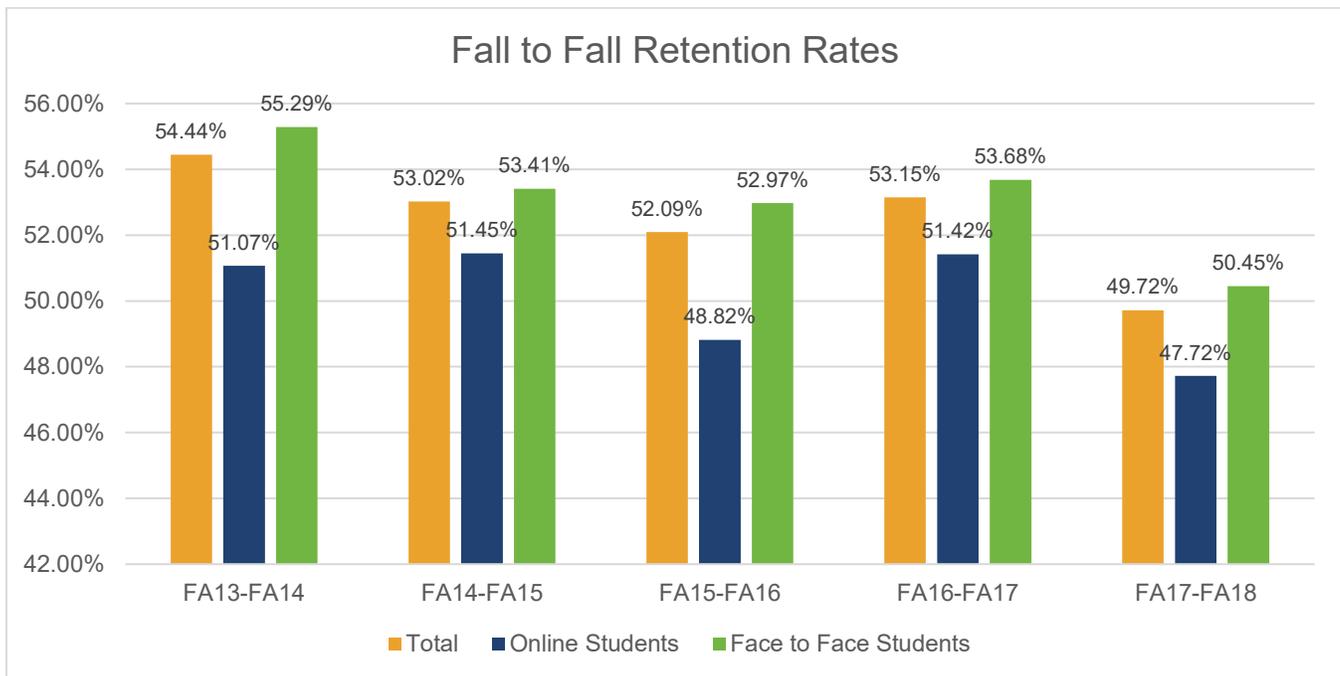


Figure 6: Fall to Fall Retention Rates

MTC anticipates the short-term impact of the QEP on online course success will have long-term results in terms of improved rates of persistence and retention of online learners.

On average, about 43 percent of online students every semester are first-time online students.

Semester	Total Unique Online Students	First-time Online Students	% of First-time Online Students
Spring 2018	2,891	1,157	40.02%
Summer 2018	2,198	1,003	45.63%
Fall 2018	2,922	1,292	44.22%

Table 2: Percentage of First-Time Online Students

## Ongoing College Initiatives Impacting Online Learning

A number of ongoing college initiatives have the potential to affect the success of online students. Note that these activities are outside of the QEP but may positively or negatively impact the data collected during the QEP process. A list of the major initiatives external to MORE currently being implemented at MTC is summarized below.

### Centralized Academic and Career Advising

In 2019, MTC transitioned from a faculty advising model to an assigned professional advising model. Centralized advising provides several opportunities for improving student success including sustained student/advisor relationships, increased advisor availability, and coordination of early alerts for students in danger of failing or withdrawing from a course.

## Multiple Measures Course Placement

In 2017, MTC moved to using multiple measures for academic course placement. MTC now uses high school GPA, SAT/ACT scores, GED scores (starting Fall 2019), and other metrics in addition to traditional placement tests to place students into curriculum level courses. This new methodology has allowed more students to place directly into curriculum level, where previously they would have been placed into developmental level courses. Placing students into higher level courses may result in lower success rates in individual courses. However, the expectation is that with increased support and a shorter pathway to graduation, more students will ultimately complete their degrees, diplomas, or certificates.

## Guided Pathways

Beginning in Fall 2020, MTC will adopt the American Association of Community Colleges Guided Pathways model in an effort to facilitate and support student success and graduation. This approach calls for creating a clear path for students to follow from enrollment to degree completion, assisting students in selecting an appropriate pathway, providing intrusive advising and other forms of assistance to keep them on track, and designing programs around particular learning outcomes (Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins, 2015). Some of MTC's earlier changes, including the adoption of multiple measures and the addition of the Academic and Career Advising Center, were important steps in transitioning to the Guided Pathways model. It is unclear at this time if the development of specific pathways and the restructuring of the academic division of the college into Schools will affect the results of the QEP. The restructuring of programs within the college will mean that student learning outcomes for particular courses will likely change during the period of the QEP, which could affect the analysis of QEP assessments. These changes are being implemented with the expectation that Guided Pathways will improve the quality of education for MTC students, and the changes will be factored into interpreting data from MORE's targeted courses.

## Literature Review: National Trends in Online Education

Most recent research publications on the subject of online student retention and success in higher education begin by highlighting national growth in online courses since the early 2000s and the ways in which online courses expand access to higher education for millions of students. According to Lokken and Slimp (2017), "When online learning arrived, it did not require deep pockets to implement, and community college students were in particular need of this alternative to F2F [face-to-face] on-campus courses due to their life circumstances and needs" (p. 74). Jaggars, Edgecombe, and Stacey (2013a) report that by 2008, "97 percent of two-year colleges were offering online courses—compared with only 66 percent of all postsecondary institutions" (p. 1).

But most researchers follow the great promise of online learning with seriously concerning realities, including persistent problems with lower rates of success and persistence compared to students taking on-campus courses—issues also experienced at Midlands Technical College that motivate this QEP. Of particular note are research findings showing that:

- Community college students are not as successful in online courses as they are in on-campus courses; percentages of Fs, Ws, and WFs are higher for two-year online students compared to four-year (Jaggars, Edgecombe, & Stacey, 2013a; Xu & Jaggars, 2011, 2013), and taking an online course has been shown to have a negative effect on graduation (Huntington-Klein, Cowan, & Goldhaber, 2017).
- Online courses present an educational equity issue by exacerbating pre-existing performance and achievement gaps (Jaggars, Edgecombe, & Stacey, 2013a; Xu & Jaggars, 2014): “Specifically, males, Black students, and students with lower levels of academic preparation had significantly stronger online performance gaps compared with their counterparts” (Xu & Jaggars, 2014, p. 651).
- General assumptions about the low cost and high return for online offerings, as well as the rapid growth and change in online platforms and technologies, have left faculty without the support and development needed to provide high-quality online courses that engage and retain students (Ray, 2009; Xu & Jaggars, 2013).

What does research tell us about the causes of these disparities and strategies for changing this trajectory? The results of the 2016 Instructional Technology Council (ITC) survey results show the number one major challenge is student readiness, followed by faculty training, and then course design (Lokken & Slimp, 2017, p. 76).

Overall, research shows that factors associated with student persistence in online courses span the personal and academic realms (Hart, 2012), requiring a *holistic* approach with *integrated* systems and cycles of activity involving students, faculty, college support services and online course design (Ray, 2009; Jaggars, Edgecombe, & Stacey, 2013c; Xu & Jaggars, 2013; Travers, 2016; Thor & Moreau, 2016).

The following review of research examines studies relevant to MORE’s focus areas—online student readiness, online student support, and online faculty development—with specific attention to research relevant to two-year college environments.

## Online Student Readiness

Researchers use slightly different terminology, but consistently examine similar factors that affect online student attrition and lack of success, including “time commitment, lack of feeling of community, the lack of student preparedness for college-level work” (Travers, 2016, p. 52), and “information communications technology engagement, motivation, self-efficacy, and learner characteristics” (Doe, Castillo, & Musyoka, 2017).

Fetzner (2013) interviewed unsuccessful online students at a community college in 2000-2001, 2005-2006, and again in 2009-2010, wondering “What do unsuccessful students want us to know?” Of the top 13 points of advice students gave, Fetzner notes that the majority were about “soft skills” (p. 17), as seen in the top four: “1. Stay up with the course activities, 2. Use good time management skills, 3. Use good organizational skills, 4. Set aside specific times during each week for your online class” (p. 16).

In light of such findings, researchers argue that institutions need to provide orientation programming better informed by student experience: better informed expectations can help online students be more resilient. Robichaud (2016) notes that up to 75 percent of the reasons that students drop out can be countered by better understanding student experiences and constructing strong supports, starting with an orientation program (p. 60). Jones (2013) found that implementing a mandatory online student orientation at a rural community college positively improved student perception of their readiness for online learning and that those perceptions translated into increased retention: “Retention in online courses improved after the implementation of the mandatory online orientation (71.8 percent retention rate pre-orientation compared to 79.5 percent retention rate post-orientation) and continues to remain between 80-84 percent three years later” (p. 44.)

Overall, researchers recommend pre-online enrollment orientations, activities, or short courses covering a range of areas, including technical/computing skills, navigating the learning management system (LMS) and course, as well as both academic and non-academic behaviors and responsibilities (including soft skills). Jaggars, Edgecombe, and Stacey (2013c) also recommend scaffolding key skills needed in specific content courses at the start, thus integrating and reinforcing what students learned in the pre-enrollment phase (p. 4).

## Online Student Support

As Baxter (2012) states, “Much research carried out within the higher education sector, based within both distance learning and campus-based institutions, indicates that student retention and progression is based upon a complex mix of institutional, personal, and biographical factors” (p. 110). Specifically, researchers note that lower online course completion rates are influenced by the kinds of issues and environmental factors faced by nontraditional community college students. They arrive at similar recommendations for integrated online student support in which institutional attention to the entirety of the online student’s journey (pre-course, in-course, and post-course) and social connection/presence and metacognitive development are common themes (Lee & Choi, 2011; Baxter, 2012; Huang, DePaolo, & Simmons, 2016; Travers, 2016).

In their comprehensive literature review, “Online Student Services: Current Practices and Recommendations for Implementation,” Bailey and Brown (2016) find that the same emphasis on

connection found in online pedagogy should also be a guiding principle in the design of online student support services. Collaboration across the institution should address “administrative, academic, and personal services” (Bailey & Brown, 2016, p. 451), including “engaging prospective learners throughout enrollment, allowing advance access to the online classroom, providing access to course resources, offering counseling or mentoring for online learning, addressing technical issues right away, providing clear and flexible office hours,” and identifying underperforming students (p. 458). Such services need to bring a “holistic approach to the learner, aimed at encouraging the person to be an active participant in their education and become self-directed” (p. 454).

Institutional flexibility and adaptation to online students’ needs is another key, and newer online technologies make it possible to provide increased academic and social support (Shea & Bidjerano, 2014), such as technical helpdesk services and early warning systems that alert both instructors and advisors when students have not logged in to the LMS or course, miss assignment due dates for dropboxes, etc. (Nichols, 2010; Jaggars, Edgecombe, & Stacey, 2013c; Xu and Jaggars, 2014; Travers, 2016; Murphy & Stewart, 2017).

In addition to technical support, advisors/mentors, virtual library (and librarians), and counseling and disability services, Bailey and Brown (2016) remind readers that “[s]tudents also need support in learning how to study and do their best; this may include tutoring, writing services, information literacy training, [and] learning communities” (p. 454). They conclude that “online tutoring and writing assistance should be considered to provide academic support to students regardless of course format, whether the academic support service is based in-house, provided through a third-party service, or a combination thereof” (p. 454). Their conclusions about the importance of online tutoring align with Rheinheimer, Grace-Odeleye, Francois, and Kusorgbor’s (2010) findings that at-risk students who receive tutoring are more likely to graduate than those who do not (p. 28).

Overall, researchers note the importance of changing student assumptions that the online learner is a “lone wolf,” and they argue that institutions should not wait for students to decide to access student support services (Brown, Hughes, Keppell, Hard, & Smith, 2015, p. 12), since students in most need of services have been shown to be less likely to seek help when they need it (Rheinheimer, et al., 2010). However, institutions must also avoid taking a patchwork approach (Brown, et al., 2015, p. 1); engaging students in institutional support services must be intentional and carefully orchestrated.

## Online Faculty Development

Thor and Moreau (2016) attribute lack of attention to online faculty development to the way in which distance education evolved. While distance education via telecourses in the 1960s and 70s required a team approach with teachers, developers, and producers, the advent of the internet in the 1990s meant

that individual faculty “assumed the role of author, producer, and distributor of distance education content in ways that were rarely possible during the telecourse era” (p. 75). This model proved unsustainable as online technology developed rapidly and “provided a greater variety of online information sources and opportunities for interactivity” (p. 75). Lokken & Slimp (2017) note that two-year colleges were quickly adopting online learning to meet the needs of their non-traditional students but that because “community colleges had little to no resources required to research this new learning environment [they] were implementing online courses in a ‘knowledge vacuum’” (p. 74).

Of course, this scenario has changed significantly in recent years. In a national survey of online faculty development provided by 39 higher education institutions across the Carnegie categories, Meyer and Murrell (2014) found that many focus on general best practices for teaching, learning styles theory (even though they note that there is little empirical research support for this approach), and instructional design models.

Jaggars, Edgecombe, & Stacey (2013c) make clear that online faculty development is essential, including having an online course design process with a course template and appropriate standards to ensure that the necessary tools, design, engagement activities, and interactions are part of the online course and curriculum. MTC currently uses Quality Matters® (QM®) design principles and process to support faculty development of quality online courses, and this support has had positive effects on online student success in redesigned courses. Several studies cite QM® training in course design as an important step in providing support for consistent online course design (Barczyk, Hixon, Buckenmeyer, & Ralston-Berg, 2017; Martin, Polly, Jakaiho, & May, 2017). QM® standards break down key elements of instructional quality (Hollowell, Brooks, & Anderson, 2017; Martin et al., 2017).

But while Meyer and Murrell (2014) note that help with the “how” and “what” basics of online course design is certainly needed, they also argue that this approach alone is limiting as it may not provide a basis in theory and research: the “why.” We no longer need to operate in a “knowledge vacuum” as research has provided viable models and frameworks to ground online teaching, and this work points to the importance—and complexity—of creating a community of online learners.

One such framework is Moore’s frequently cited model of “transactional distance”. Moore posited in the 1980s that lessening this distance is key to online student success (Reyes, 2013). Jaggars and Xu (2016) investigated the three key elements of Moore’s model: course *structure*, *dialogue* (particularly instructor-student interaction), and student *autonomy* (how much say and choice the learner has in the course) (emphasis added, p. 271). According to Moore, these three elements exist in dynamic tension with each other; Jaggars and Xu (2016) note for example that “a course with greater transactional distance—a low degree of dialogue—will be more challenging for less autonomous learners” (p. 271). The investigation found that “[a]mong the four design features examined, only the quality of interpersonal interaction [dialogue] within a course relates positively and significantly to [online] student grades” (p. 271).

Another prominent model identifies “presence” as a key factor; the Community of Inquiry framework posits that cognitive, teaching, and social presence are essential for learning (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2010; Cho & Tobias, 2016). Jaggars & Xu’s (2016) study put these two frameworks together and found that “interpersonal interaction may help reduce transactional distance, and strengthen students’ psychological connection to the course by enhancing ‘social presence’—the degree to which a person is perceived as a ‘real person’ in mediated communication” (p. 273).

Similarly, Kauffman’s (2015) review of research found that “[c]ourses that facilitated increased performance and satisfaction were interactive and allowed for collaboration.” Baranik, Wright, and Reburn (2017) affirm that learner-to-learner interaction is important as well as faculty-student. They recommend using online discussion board forums, chat forums, social media pages, and having students exchange contact information, noting that “[t]hese suggestions are bolstered by the recent finding that students participating in classroom activities that promoted social interaction exhibited more student-student dialogue and instructor-student dialogue, which lead to more self-efficacy” (p. 69). Cho & Tobias (2016) also found that social presence was most influenced by online discussion boards (p. 124).

Research makes clear that both design and implementation of an online course are important to student success. We can no longer assume that online teaching is a matter of “simply” transferring teaching materials and activities from on-ground to online formats. In a recent qualitative study Cochran and Benuto (2016) followed nine instructors through the faculty development transition from on-campus to online teaching, and the theme running throughout their results was “transformation” with major activity in two categories: knowledge acquisition (“technology, best practices, ... and mentoring”) and experiential learning (“mirroring and overcoming challenges”) (p. 44).

There will always be this “experiential” component to faculty development because teaching is an open system of knowledge, necessarily shifting with changes in student populations and in the technology itself. MTC’s Online Faculty Learning Communities (OFLC) will provide the scaffolding, support, and time for faculty to explore opportunities for integrating student support services so that their courses are part of the online student’s journey. They will support faculty as they create projects, assignments, and activities that encourage all the kinds of “presence” required for students to feel connected and to be successful. Faculty learning communities have been used successfully to support faculty to work on curricular design and implementation (Daly, 2011; Sipple & Lightner, 2013; Hollowell, Brooks, & Anderson, 2017). As Sipple & Lightner (2013) note, “Successful Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) have far-reaching effects that may influence teaching and learning and help to transform the culture of an institution” (p. 2). Faculty learning communities (FLCs) have been integral to faculty development at MTC during the last 10 years as a now-institutionalized component of our previous QEP, and this QEP proposes extending their benefits to our online faculty.

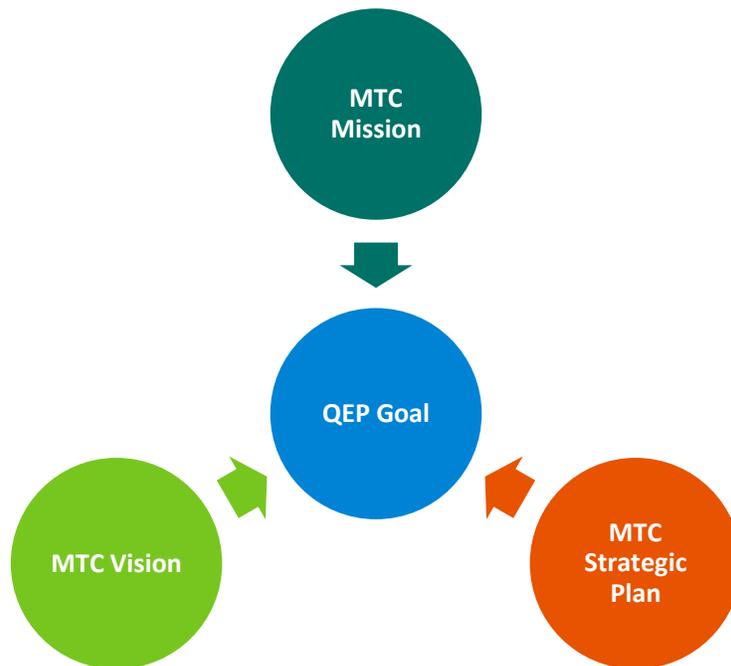
## Alignment of the QEP Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes with the College Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan

A key component of MTC’s mission is to “provide accessible, affordable, quality education” (Appendix I). Online learning fulfills an integral part of MTC’s mission by providing access to flexible learning opportunities for students with disabilities, personal or professional commitments, or other potential barriers to the traditional on-campus course model. Another critical component noted in MTC’s mission is quality. To enhance the quality of the online student experience, MTC’s QEP will ensure students have the tools and resources to be successful in the online environment.

MORE is specifically designed to increase student success in the area of online learning, which is the mode of instructional delivery that currently has the lowest student success rate of any instructional delivery mode at the college. By focusing on improving student success, the QEP is helping MTC achieve its mission.

**QEP Goal:** Increase student success in targeted online gateway courses.

The QEP goal of increasing student success in targeted online courses is framed by the college-wide Strategic Plan initiative to “increase success in targeted gateway courses” across all modes of delivery (Appendix A). Additionally, the QEP goal speaks directly to the vision of the college, which is to strive to be the “premier higher education partner [that] creates innovative learning environment” (Appendix I).



*Figure 7: MTC Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan All Support the QEP Goal*

## QEP Outcomes

MTC has identified five specific outcomes that will indicate successful achievement of the QEP Goal:

1. Increase the student success rate (defined as earning a C or better) in targeted online gateway courses by eight percent above the baseline.
2. Improve student performance as measured by Student Learning Outcomes in targeted online gateway courses by five percent.
3. Decrease the withdrawal rate by five percent in targeted gateway courses.
4. Increase students' perceived readiness to successfully complete online courses.
5. Increase faculty's perceived readiness to effectively teach students online.

## QEP Objectives

To achieve the QEP goal and outcomes, MTC has established three primary objectives:

1. Implement a mandatory student readiness course to prepare students for online learning.
2. Implement an Online Faculty Learning Community (OFLC) to prepare faculty for online teaching.
3. Facilitate coordination of student services in targeted online gateway courses.

**Objective 1:** Implement a mandatory student readiness course to prepare students for online learning.

- "provide accessible, affordable, quality education" - MTC Mission
- "increase success in targeted gateway courses by eight percent" - MTC Strategic Plan

**Objective 2:** Implement an Online Faculty Learning Community (OLFC) to prepare faculty for online teaching.

- "provide accessible, affordable, quality education" - MTC Mission
- be the "premier higher education partner, [that] creates innovative learning environments" - MTC Vision
- "increase success in targeted gateway courses by eight percent." - MTC Strategic Plan

**Objective 3:** Facilitate coordination of student services for students in targeted online gateway courses.

- "provide accessible, affordable, quality education" - MTC Mission
- be the "premier higher education partner, [that] creates innovative learning environments" - MTC Vision
- "increase success in targeted gateway courses by eight percent" - MTC Strategic Plan

*Figure 8: Alignment of QEP Goals to MTC Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan*

The MTC mission, vision, strategic plan, QEP goal, objectives, and outcomes are all interrelated. The figure below illustrates how QEP components connect to each other.

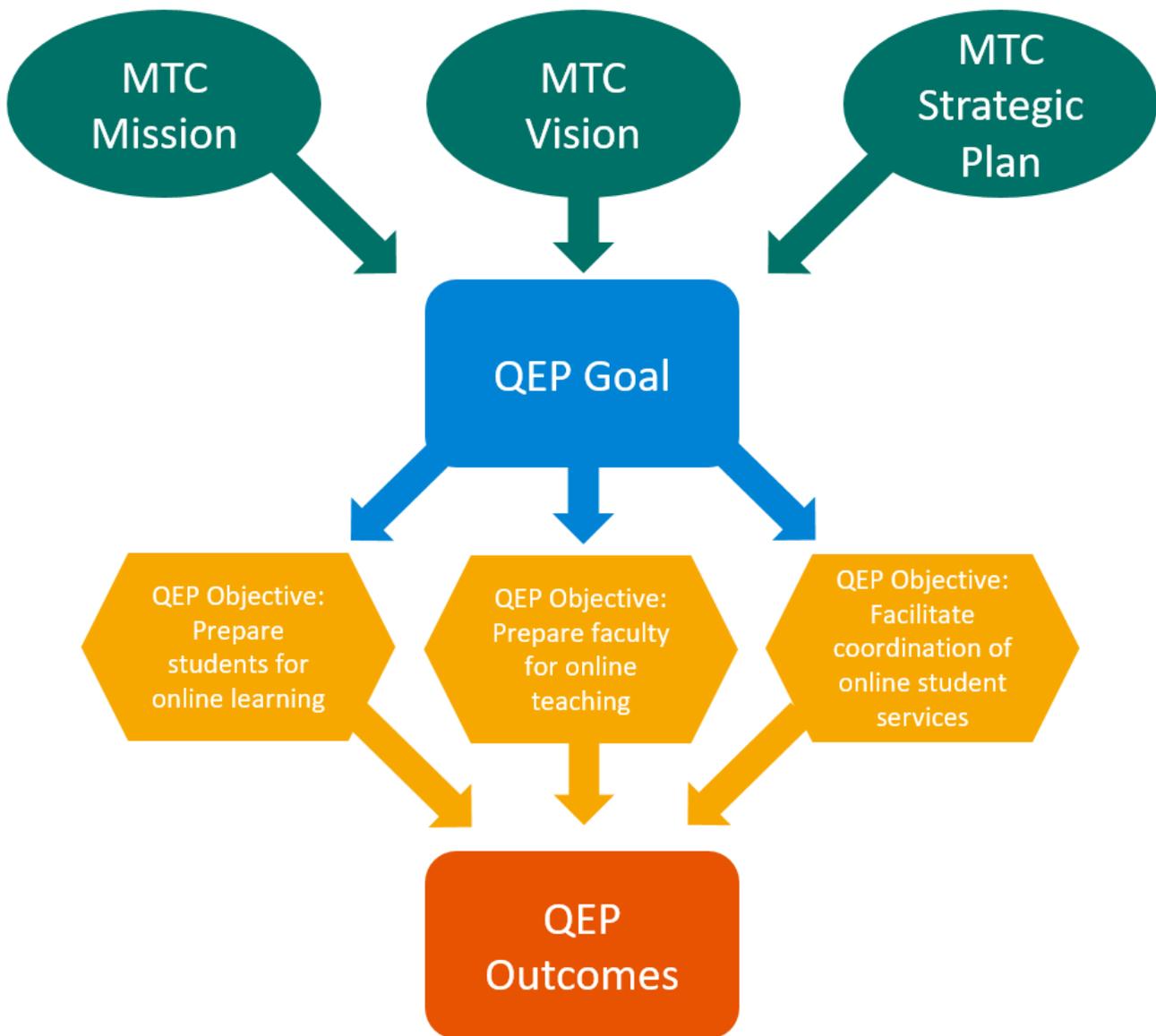


Figure 9: Connection of Various QEP Components

## QEP Actions

### Introduction

Online learning creates a different kind of partnership between the instructor and the student than in a traditional classroom. The instructor needs to know the best way to deliver instruction electronically, and students need to know how the expectations, skills, and support resources in online courses vary from those of the traditional classroom. Results from a study by Glazer and Murphy (2015) indicate that students participating in “an orientation to the university and the learning platform prior to beginning courses has increased students’ probability of success and has provided them with many of the skills necessary to persist.” However, researchers like Bawa (2016) content that a “key factor leading to ineffective online course designs is the level of confidence and comfort that the faculty have with respect to online classes and using technology in the classroom.” In addition to student and faculty components, MORE will also use strategically coordinated resources to help online students be successful in their courses, including faculty referral to online tutoring, communication from online academic advisors, and increased availability of online library resources.

These activities are designed to meet the goals set forth by the QEP. MTC anticipates that implementing the three interventions in a strategically unified approach will improve student success and retention at a rate beyond implementing only one intervention in isolation. In addition, ongoing communication with college constituents will keep stakeholders well informed, as well as providing a feedback channel to improve QEP interventions.

To keep MORE manageable in terms of scope, time, and financial resources, the identified QEP objectives will be limited to six targeted gateway courses. Over the course of the five-year span of the QEP, MTC will assess the success of MORE and collect feedback from students and faculty. Based on collected data, MTC will expand, reduce, maintain, or eliminate the three primary QEP interventions. As an example, if the faculty training program proves useful and positively impacts student readiness according to student and faculty feedback, MTC would expand the faculty training program from faculty who teach the six targeted gateway courses to be mandatory of all online faculty at MTC.

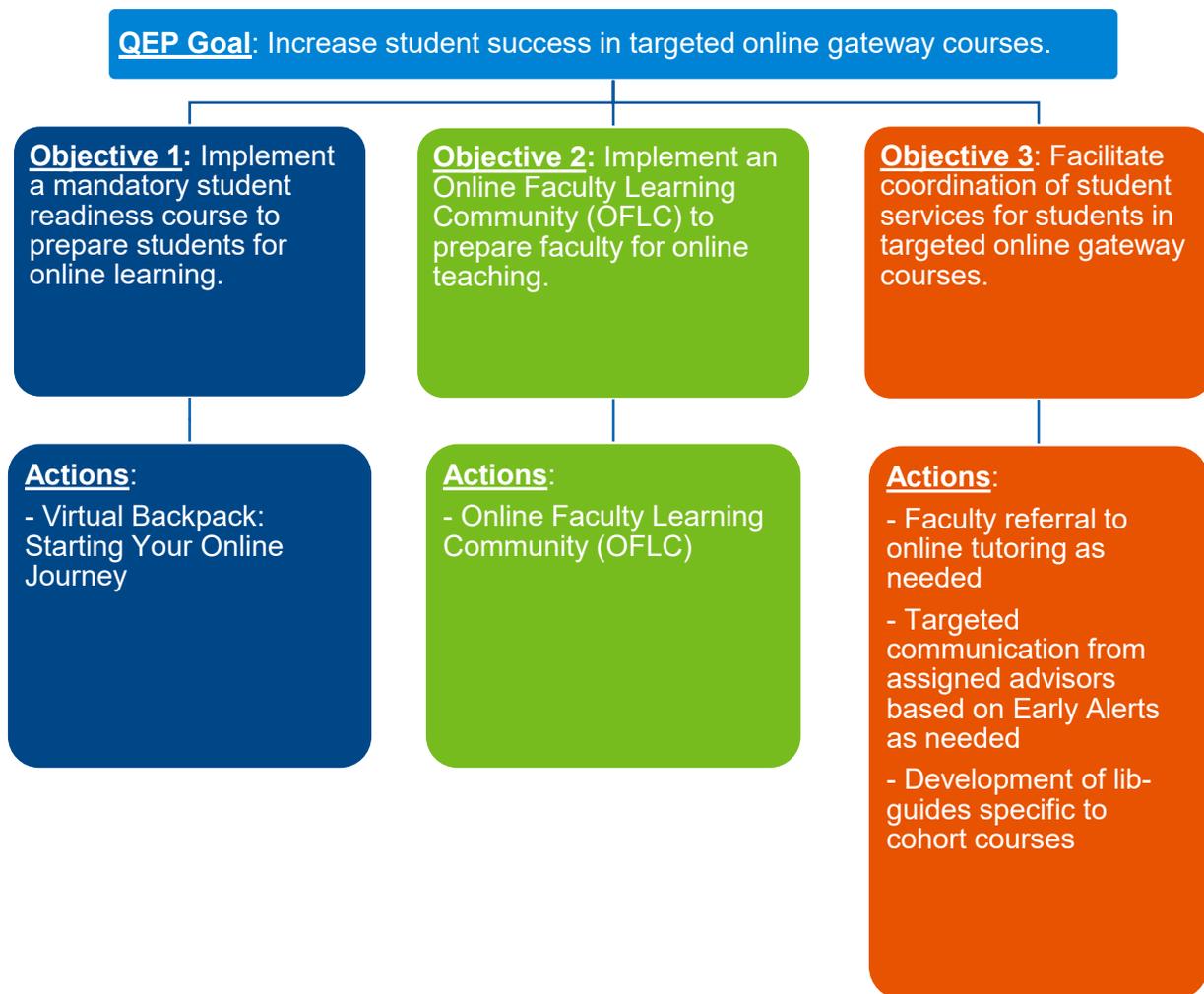


Figure 10: QEP Goal, Objectives, and Actions

## Targeted Online Gateway Courses

The current MTC Strategic Plan has as a key initiative to “increase success in targeted gateway online courses from 48 percent to 56 percent”. The QEP aligns to the MTC Strategic Plan by focusing on six courses within the list of targeted gateway courses identified in the MTC Strategic Plan.

The six identified courses were chosen strategically based on five criteria:

1. Enrollment – all identified courses have a high enrollment
2. Success rate – all courses typically have low success rates
3. Withdrawal and failure rate – most courses have high withdrawal and failure rates
4. Gateway status – all courses are taken early in a student’s educational pathway and lead to subsequent courses
5. Feasibility of faculty development – all identified courses have a manageable number of faculty to participate in the Online Faculty Learning Community (OFLC)

The chosen courses are highlighted in the following table:

- AHS 102 – Medical Terminology
- ART 101 – Art History and Appreciation
- BUS 101 – Introduction to Business
- ENG 101 – English Composition I
- MAT 101 – Beginning Algebra
- PSY 201 – General Psychology

Course	Online Enrollment	Online Enrollment Rank	Pass Rate	Fail Rate	Withdrawal Rate	# of Faculty
<b>AHS 102</b>	469	2	54%	19%	27%	8
<b>ART 101</b>	290	7	59%	10%	31%	2
<b>BUS 101</b>	184	18	55%	22%	23%	5
<b>ENG 101</b>	221	14	47%	8%	45%	3
<b>MAT 101</b>	259	12	47%	17%	36%	3
<b>PSY 101</b>	652	1	46%	19%	35%	8

*Table 3: Online Enrollment and Online Pass/Withdrawal/Failure Rates, FA2017-SU2018*

Online enrollment was a primary factor when selecting the six targeted gateway courses a part of MORE. When very low enrollment courses have high failure or withdrawal rates, ultimately it does not impact as many students as a high enrollment course. Therefore, all courses at MTC were ranked by online enrollment. Once the highest enrollment online courses were identified, the pass/fail/withdrawal rates were considered out of the high enrollment courses.

Although the six target courses were among the highest in enrollment from Fall 2017 to Summer 2018 (top 18 out of 156 total), each of the six placed near the bottom in one or more categories of success rate, withdrawal rate, and failure rate. Some courses varied in how they ranked based upon the selection criteria. For example, ENG 101 had a low failure rate of eight percent, but 45 percent of students withdrew prior to the end of the semester, one of the highest withdrawal rates in the college. Each course had success rates that were in approximately the bottom third of all online courses at MTC. None of the classes had 60 percent or more of enrolled students complete the course with a passing grade. Additionally, each course had a relatively small number of faculty teaching online, which made it more feasible to have all online faculty for the six respective gateway courses trained in the Online Faculty Learning Community (OFLC) within three years.

## Online Student Readiness



### Virtual Backpack: Starting Your Online Journey

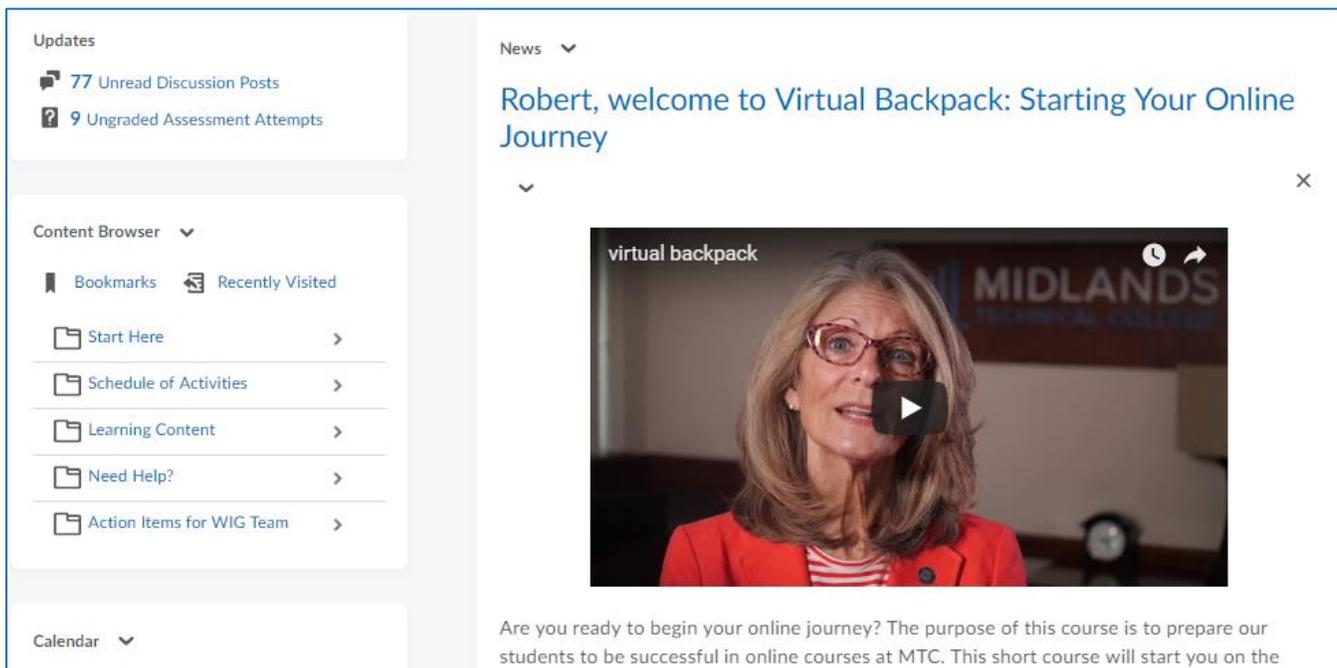
Through an online student readiness course, titled “Virtual Backpack: Starting Your Online Journey,” students will be equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to persist and be successful in the online environment. MTC will develop, implement, and assess the effectiveness of the student readiness course. The course will be continually refined based on an analysis of course results. Similar online readiness courses have been successfully implemented at schools like Portland Community College and Wake Technical Community College.

The online student readiness course is:

- Offered as free, non-credit, and self-paced
- Required as a prerequisite for enrollment in six targeted online gateway courses
- Administered via D2L Brightspace to help students become familiar with the D2L environment
- Constructed to be completed in as few as three hours in one sitting, up to a period of several days using more than one sitting

This course is designed to cover a variety of topics to better prepare students for the differences between online and face-to-face instruction. Additionally, the course is designed in the same layout as the Quality Matters® certified courses that are becoming more consistently used across MTC. In this way, the online environment students encounter in their actual classes will likely look and feel very similar to their experience with the Virtual Backpack. Students will also retain access to the Virtual Backpack for the entirety of their time at MTC in case they need to refer back to the course materials in a later semester.

The following screenshot shows the welcome page to the course along with the organization of the modules.



*Figure 11: Screenshot of Virtual Backpack - Homepage*

The course is divided into four main modules:

- Module 1 – Survival Skills
- Module 2 – Communicating in an Online Class
- Module 3 – Understanding the Course Organization and Online Functions
- Module 4 – Completing Assignments, Evaluating Feedback, and Improving Your Performance

Inside each of these modules, there are a series of slides, film clips, or other informative features that give students more in-depth information about each of the topic areas. As the contents of Module 1 illustrates, “Survival Skills” covers a variety of topics related to attendance, time management, reading syllabi, and helpful college resources.

Module 1: Survival Skills ▾

Print ⚙️ Settings

Add dates and restrictions... Published ▾

Add a description...

Upload / Create ▾ Existing Activities ▾ Bulk Edit

Survival Skills Overview <span>▾</span>	Web Page	✓
How do online classes work? <span>▾</span>	Web Page	✓
Attendance and Participation <span>▾</span>	Web Page	✓
Effective Time-Management Skills <span>▾</span>	Web Page	✓

Figure 12: Screenshot of Virtual Backpack - Module 1

One of the concerns that both MTC students and faculty referenced in their survey responses was the challenge with time management that online courses present. In many cases, students sign up for online courses because they have additional responsibilities with work or family that make traditional face-to-face courses difficult, if not impossible, to schedule. For those students, along with those directly out of high school and adjusting to the demands of college and adult life, the Virtual Backpack contains a section on how to balance personal, work, and school demands.

## Effective Time Management



Technically, time cannot be managed, but we label it time management when we talk about how people use their time. We must find effective and efficient ways to spend our time, allowing us to accomplish our most important tasks and spend time with the people most important to us.

### Transition to College

One challenge for many students is the transition from the structure of high school to the structure of college. In high school, students spend a large portion of their time in class (approximately 30 hours in class per week), while full-time college students may spend only one-third of that time in class (approximately 12 hours in class per week). Further, college students are assigned **much more homework than high school students**. Think about how many times one of your high school teachers gave you something to read during class. In college, students are given more material to read with the expectation that it is done outside of class.<sup>1</sup>

This can create problems for students who are unable to set aside proper study time for each of their courses. Keep in mind for full-time students:

Figure 13: Screenshot of Virtual Backpack - Effective Time Management

Some of the activities in the modules, like the one below titled “Attendance and Participation,” are largely text-based and explain to students how attendance is taken online and why regular attendance and participation is necessary to succeed in online classes.

### Attendance and Participation

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Many students are surprised to discover that instructors assess attendance and participation in an online class in the same way that they do in a face to face class. You will be expected to participate from the very first day of class and throughout the semester on a regular basis. Online does not mean self-paced - you will have requirements that you must meet each week. In an online class, attendance and participation are usually tied to the assignments. **It is your responsibility to know how attendance is determined for each and every online course you take.** Remember that failure to meet attendance requirements can have an impact on your ability to receive financial aid.

#### First Week of Class



If you do complete the introductory assignments for courses within the enrollment verification period **you may be dropped from the course.** Almost all of your on-line courses will have an activity that you need to complete in order to avoid being listed as a no-show. This is a federal requirement MTC must follow and indicates your intent to continue in the course.

Online courses are typically available 4 days prior to the start of the semester. Be sure to log in no later than the first day of class and check for any assignments and required activities that are due during the first week to meet participation requirements. Each online class is unique and individual instructors can have different requirements for how to demonstrate participation during the first week. Just logging into the course is not enough.

Figure 14: Screenshot of Virtual Backpack - Attendance and Participation

Other activities, like the screenshot below from Module 3, use short video clips to demonstrate how to use the college’s learning management system to do things like start a new thread in a discussion forum or reply to another student’s post. While these activities may be intuitive to some students, for others, the course technologies can provide a barrier to their success without proper instruction on how to use them.

[Table of Contents](#) > [Learning Content](#) > [Module 3: Exploring Your Online Course](#) > [Video: How to use the Discussion Board](#)

## Video: How to use the Discussion Board

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Navigate D2L Learning Environment - Discussions - Learner



⏪
⏩

Figure 15: Screenshot of Virtual Backpack - How to Use the Discussion Board Video

The fourth module in the course focuses on assessment and feedback and provides students with information on how to read feedback from faculty and how to use that feedback to improve performance on future assignments and in future courses.

## Strategies for Success

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One of the best ways to improve your performance is to reflect on each assignment and activity that you complete. Ask yourself "Did I do as well as I expected/desired?" If the answer is no, then ask:

- Did I study enough?
- What study strategies did I use? Are there other study strategies that might work better for me?
- What steps can I take to be better prepared for the next assignment?
- Did I take advantage of the available academic support services at MTC, such as the [MTC Library](#) or [Academic Success Center](#)?

There are many websites that can provide you with solid study habits. Check out a few of these and refer back to this list as you go through the courses in your future. These resources will serve you both in your online and any face-to-face classes you take.

- 1 [How to Study and How to Write](#) - It is important to recognize that you may need to use different study strategies based on what subject you are studying. This site provides a lot of useful information but it also includes a section that will help you learn how to study based on the subject you are taking.
- 2 [Study Guides and Strategies](#) - This site contains over 1500 study guides related to learning and studying.
- 3 [Strategies for dealing with difficult test questions](#)
- 4 [How to Study video series](#) - Samford University offers a set of 5 short videos that can help you improve your study skills.

*Figure 16: Screenshot of Virtual Backpack - Strategies for Success*

At the end of each of these modules, students will have to complete a short “open-book” quiz on the material in the module. Students must achieve at least an 85 percent score to move on to the next module. However, students are encouraged to retake the quiz as necessary and to refer back to the slides to find the correct answer. The goal is to help students to succeed in their courses; not to create another roadblock to their success.

## Online Course Registration Blocks

A custom-built flagging system in Ellucian Colleague prohibits students from enrolling in one of the six targeted online gateway courses until completion of the Virtual Backpack course. Students who have successfully completed an online course (earning a C or better) at MTC in the past two academic years will be grandfathered in and will be exempt from participating in the Virtual Backpack course. Students who have previously attempted online courses at MTC without completing or being successful in any course will still be required to complete the Virtual Backpack course.

## Beta-Testing and Launch

The Virtual Backpack was developed during Spring 2019 so that it could be beta-tested for one semester during Summer 2019 and be ready for implementation in Fall 2019 prior to course registration during the Spring 2020 semester. The students assessed the appropriateness of the topics covered, the length of the course, and the course’s ease of use, and provided general feedback. The beta-test drew from students

who volunteered to take the Virtual Backpack for extra credit and consists of both students who had previously taken online classes as well as students who have not.

Early results from beta-test students suggest that the course will improve student success at MTC. When asked about what information from the Virtual Backpack course they wish they had known prior to taking a previous online course, one student responded “I wish I had read the part about the time commitment involved. I did not realize how much time an online course could take up. I spent more time on my online course than I did in some of my real classes.” Another student, when asked to comment on the course as a whole, stated: “The course truly was fantastic. I felt like the course was made by students, for students. I could be very wrong...but my assumption just speaks to how the dialogue in the course touched on life inside and outside of the classroom.” Another student commented on the helpfulness of having the module walk the students through an online course environment, saying “The links, videos, and the reading content were all helpful for me to explain the material or topics that were to be learned. I would not change anything. This course I'm positive, will definitely be a welcoming tool for students who are...taking online studies.”

The MTC Office of Distance Learning will continue to receive and review feedback from students throughout the Summer 2019 semester. These results will be used to adjust the Virtual Backpack as needed prior to its full launch in Fall 2019 in preparation for Spring 2020 registration.

## Demonstration Link

To view the Virtual Backpack course:

Login link: <https://elearn.midlandstech.edu/d2l/local>

- Username: BackpackDemo
- Password: BackpackDemo

Select the Virtual Backpack by clicking on the grid of squares at the top of the page or scrolling to the bottom where the course is listed under “My Courses.”

## Online Student Readiness Actions Schedule

Action	Responsibility	Schedule
<b>Year 0 (FA2018-SU2019)</b>		
Develop registration processes for MORE and first-time online students	Information Resource Management (IRM)	Fall, Spring
Develop Virtual Backpack modules and assessments	Student Readiness Subcommittee	Fall, Spring
Market Virtual Backpack to prospective online students	QEP Leads / Marketing Communications	Summer
Alpha-test Virtual Backpack – Ensure components are working	IRM / Student Readiness Subcommittee	Spring
Beta-test Virtual Backpack – Live, but optional for online students	Student Readiness Subcommittee	Spring, Summer
Assess the functionality of Virtual Backpack	QEP Leads	Spring, Summer
Make adjustments to the Virtual Backpack	Student Readiness Subcommittee	Spring, Summer
Test and implement Colleague enrollment block/unblock triggers	IRM	Summer
<b>Year 1 (FA2019-SU2020)</b>		
Market Virtual Backpack to prospective first-time online students	QEP Leads / Marketing Communications	Fall, Spring, Summer
Virtual Backpack fully operational for targeted first-time online students	Student Readiness Subcommittee	Fall
Assess the functionality of Virtual Backpack	QEP Leads	Fall
Implement Colleague enrollment block/unblock triggers	Implementation Team	Fall
Make adjustments to the Virtual Backpack	Student Readiness Subcommittee	Fall, Spring
<b>Year 2 (FA2020-SU2021)</b>		
Market Virtual Backpack to prospective first-time online students	QEP Leads / Marketing Communications	Fall, Spring, Summer
Assess the functionality of the Virtual Backpack	QEP Leads	Fall
Make adjustments to the Virtual Backpack	Student Readiness Subcommittee	Spring
<b>Year 3 (FA2021-SU2022)</b>		
Market Virtual Backpack to prospective first-time online students	QEP Leads / Marketing Communications	Fall, Spring, Summer
Assess the functionality of the Virtual Backpack	QEP Leads	Fall
Make adjustments to the Virtual Backpack	Student Readiness Subcommittee	Spring

<b>Year 4 (FA2022-SU2023)</b>		
Market Virtual Backpack to prospective first-time online students	QEP Leads / Marketing Communications	Fall, Spring, Summer
Assess the functionality of the Virtual Backpack	QEP Leads	Fall
Make adjustments to the Virtual Backpack	Student Readiness Subcommittee	Spring
<b>Year 5 (FA2023-SU2024)</b>		
Market Virtual Backpack to prospective first-time online students	QEP Leads / Marketing Communications	Fall, Spring, Summer
Assess the functionality of the Virtual Backpack	QEP Leads	Fall
Make adjustments to the Virtual Backpack	Student Readiness Subcommittee	Spring

*Table 4: Online Student Readiness Actions Schedule*

## Online Faculty Readiness



### Online Faculty Learning Community (OFLC)

First implemented as a feature of MTC's previous QEP during reaccreditation in 2010, Faculty Learning Communities (FLC) are now an institutionalized and prominent feature of the professional development culture at the college. The research and literature review conducted in developing this project highlights the value and efficacy of faculty learning communities, and MTC has experienced this benefit first-hand. As described by the Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence, "[t]he FLC provides participants with the opportunity to get to know colleagues from across the Academic Affairs division, peers who can provide helpful and insightful feedback on project design. During their weekly meetings, faculty participants explore and discuss current research in higher education; these conversations also help inform and improve their projects."

Since 2015, MTC has institutionalized annual fall FLCs, which have now provided over 35 experienced faculty with opportunities to engage in activities such as:

- developing a new course
- redesigning an existing course
- updating a course by creating new activities, assignments, and assessments
- incorporating engagement and retention strategies into a course
- working on departmental research or planning initiatives, or
- completing similar projects that improve the quality of instruction at the college.

These projects are then implemented and assessed in the spring semester. The FLC concept has also been implemented as professional development for new faculty; since 2010, New Faculty Learning Communities (NFLCs) have provided 145 new faculty with an orientation to MTC's college culture, students, and support resources.

In MORE, *Online* Faculty Learning Communities (OFLCs) will provide consistent professional development specific to online versus on-campus teaching, starting with online faculty who teach targeted online gateway courses. By providing support and resources to help faculty better align their online courses with student readiness and support components, these OFLCs are an important mechanism for institutionalizing an integrated approach to improving online student success.

### OFLC Courses & Participants

Since Summer 2016, MTC faculty have been involved in a broad-based online course redesign initiative managed through the Office of Distance Learning. The redesigned courses (known as model courses) go

through a rigorous process to meet Quality Matters® (QM®) standards. A course that meets QM® standards has easy-to-follow navigation, uses sound pedagogy, has web accessible materials, and ensures that course learning objectives, activities, and assessments align with each other. To date, approximately 50 online courses have been redesigned.

Each targeted gateway course has been redesigned to meet QM® standards, though not all faculty teaching these courses were involved in the online redesign process.

Department	Course	# of Online Instructors
<b>Health Sciences</b>	AHS 102 – Medical Terminology	8
<b>Humanities</b>	ART 101 – Art History and Appreciation	2
<b>Business &amp; Public Service</b>	BUS 101 – Introduction to Business	5
<b>English</b>	ENG 101 – English Composition I	3
<b>Mathematics</b>	MAT 101 – Beginning Algebra	3
<b>Social &amp; Behavioral Sciences</b>	PSY 201 – General Psychology	8
<b>Total Unique Faculty</b>		29

*Table 5: Number of Online Instructors by Course*

While faculty who teach sections of QEP-targeted online courses will be familiar with QM® best practices through the use of model course shells, OFLCs will further assist faculty in developing the knowledge and skills necessary to teach online effectively by providing deeper-level understanding of both the “how” and “why” of online instruction, as recommended by Meyer and Murrell (2014).

OFLCs will provide further insight and instruction on technical matters such as QM® standards, D2L Brightspace online learning platform, and web accessibility criteria. But OFLCs will also train faculty how to integrate student support into course assignments and activities, such as those developed as part of the QEP.

OFLC faculty will learn about the new online student readiness course and enhanced student support service components of MORE, embed and reinforce readiness course topics into course design, and craft intentional and systematic approaches to helping students make use of the college resources. Faculty will also investigate approaches to facilitate social “presence” and reduce “transactional distance” via student-student and faculty-student interactions, as recommended by research on student retention and success in online courses (Paquette, 2016; Depaolo et al., 2016).

Details of the OFLC include:

- Meeting approximately 12 weeks during the Fall semester
- Meeting both online and in person
- Granting one course release in the Fall semester for all OFLC participants
- Selecting a mixed cohort of faculty teaching across different gateway courses
- Assigning half of the faculty currently teaching targeted online gateway courses to participate in OFLC1, half in OFLC2, and any new or remaining faculty in OFLC3

Topics covered in the OFLC include:

- Quality Matters® standards and model course design
- D2L learning management system platform features relevant to QEP goals
- Web accessibility criteria and ensuring accessibility
- Key differences between online and on-campus pedagogy, pacing, teaching and learning strategies, and attendance and late policies.
- Student readiness course content topics and skills and how to reinforce these via course design and activities
- Integration of college support services via online course processes and protocols
- Promotion of metacognition, motivation, and growth mindsets via formative feedback as well as other course interactions and activities
- Ways to create social presence and reduce transactional distance to engage online student-learners
- Approaches and activities that facilitate and sustain student-to-student and faculty-to-student connections
- Discipline-specific online teaching strategies and pedagogy for student-learner success and retention

The OFLC curriculum will be fully developed by Summer 2019 and implemented with OFLC1 participating faculty in Fall 2019. These faculty will then implement OFLC strategies and projects into their online courses in Spring 2020. Summer 2020 activities will include evaluating and assessing OFLCs for improvement prior to the start of the fall's next OFLC.

## Faculty Readiness Actions Schedule

Action	Responsibility	Schedule
<b>Year 0 (FA2018-SU2019)</b>		
Develop OFLC modules and assessments	Faculty Readiness Subcommittee	Spring, Summer
<b>Year 1 (FA2019-SU2020)</b>		
OFLC1 implement first round of identified instructors teaching targeted gateway courses	Office of Distance Learning	Fall
OFLC1 participants implement new teaching strategies and course components, from this point onward	Faculty in targeted gateway courses	Spring
Complete analysis of effectiveness of OFLC1, and make adjustments as needed	QEP Leads / Faculty Readiness Subcommittee	Summer
<b>Year 2 (FA2020-SU2021)</b>		
OFLC2 implement second round of identified instructors teaching targeted gateway courses	Office of Distance Learning	Fall
OFLC2 participants implement new teaching strategies and course components, from this point onward	Faculty in targeted gateway courses	Spring
Complete analysis of effectiveness of OFLC2, and make adjustments as needed	QEP Leads / Faculty Readiness Subcommittee	Summer
<b>Year 3 (FA2021-SU2022)</b>		
OFLC3 offered for new online faculty teaching targeted-gateway courses	Office of Distance Learning	Fall
OFLC3 participants implement new teaching strategies and course components, from this point onward	Faculty in targeted gateway courses	Spring
Complete analysis of effectiveness of OFLC3, and make adjustments as needed	QEP Leads / Faculty Readiness Subcommittee	Summer
<b>Year 4-5 (FA2022-SU2024)</b>		
In years 4 and 5 the OFLC may be expanded to additional courses pending results of QEP assessments and college resources.	QEP Leads	Fall

*Table 6: Faculty Readiness Actions Schedule*

## College Readiness to Support Online Learners

The third major intervention in the QEP is enhancing support to online learners. This intervention consists of three major components: intrusive online advising, expanded online tutoring, and expanded library resources for online students.

### Early Alerts and Online Advising

One opportunity for greater student support is collaboration between instructors and advisors via an early alert system. In Summer 2019, MTC implemented a centralized advising model in which advising responsibilities shift from faculty to professional advisors who are assigned to students throughout their enrollment at the college. As part of this new model, instructors within the six targeted courses in the QEP will beta-test an early alert system starting in Spring 2020. Faculty within those six courses will send alerts to underperforming students' advisors during weeks three and five of the semester. The advisors will then reach out to the students to determine the nature of their issue and refer them to appropriate resources such as financial aid, counseling services, online or in-person tutoring, and/or their instructor.

Students within the QEP's six targeted courses will also be beta-testing online advising. This will give students the option of meeting with their advisor through web conferencing software rather than meeting face-to-face or over the phone. This option will benefit students in two primary ways. Students in the targeted courses will be contacted for advising early for advisors to check in on students' progress and help with any question or concerns the students might have. Additionally, the convenience of online advising, particularly for online students, will make it easier for those students to utilize advising resources. Many students take online courses because their life-schedules demand the flexibility of time and location online learning affords; for these students, scheduling a traditional advising appointment can be difficult. While students will still have the option of meeting face-to-face with their advisor, this format will remove additional barriers to advising.

### Implementation of Online Tutoring System

MTC will also be expanding the availability of online tutoring to students. Currently, on-campus tutors are available at the college but are limited in terms of the hours they are available and the subject areas they are trained in. The new tutoring service will enable online students to have the benefit of a tutor with the flexibility of time and location needed by online learners. MTC is conducting demonstrations with a variety of online tutoring services during Summer 2019 with the expectation that the service will be in place for Spring 2020. A committee of QEP leads, faculty, and staff will be selecting the service based on subject availability, flexibility of hours for student access, qualifications of tutors, and viability in terms of technological integration and budget. While tutoring may not be available for all six gateway courses, the committee will look for a service that provides tutoring for as many of the courses as possible.

## Library

Library staff will also be working on enhancing the services available to online students, including refining electronic library guides, increasing the availability of assistance to online students, and providing additional research assistance to online students. Faculty within the targeted courses will assist the library staff in developing online tutorials for key resources for students within those courses. These online tutorials will help replicate the in-person demonstrations that library staff offer for in-person courses by showing how to access and use databases, collections, or other materials appropriate to those courses.

## College Support Actions Schedule

Action	Responsibility	Schedule
<b>Year 0 (FA2018-SU2019)</b>		
External review of MORE plan	External online learning consultant	Fall, Spring
Conduct MORE informational sessions, email communications, and student events	Marketing Communications / Student Life	Spring, Summer
Develop assessments for QEP components	QEP Leads	Spring, Summer
Hire/train Instructional Designer	Office of Distance Learning	Summer
Develop online form for faculty to refer students through early alert system	Academic and Career Advising	Spring, Summer
Develop automated email system for Virtual Backpack completers	Office of Distance Learning	Summer
Complete demos of online tutoring providers and select vendor	Online Services Subcommittee	Summer
<b>Year 1 (FA2019-SU2020)</b>		
Conduct MORE informational sessions, email communications, and student events	Marketing Communications / Student Life	Fall, Spring, Summer
Train faculty how to submit early alerts	Office of Distance Learning	Fall
Train advisors in the Academic and Career Advising Center (ACAC) on how to conduct an online advising session	Academic and Career Advising / Office of Distance Learning	Fall
Integrate online tutoring in each online course	Information Resource Management	Fall
Beta-test online advising in targeted courses	Academic and Career Advising	Fall
Beta-test automated email system for Virtual Backpack completers	Office of Distance Learning	Fall
Automated email system to Virtual Backpack completers fully live	Office of Distance Learning	Spring
Online tutoring subscription fully live	QEP Leads	Spring
Create lib guides	Online Services Subcommittee	Fall, Spring, Summer

Make adjustments to services as needed	QEP Leads / Academic and Career Advising	Summer
<b>Year 2 (FA2020-SU2021)</b>		
Create lib guides	Online Services Subcommittee	Fall, Spring
Make adjustments to services as needed	QEP Leads / Academic and Career Advising	Summer
Share report findings with college stakeholders	QEP Leads / Marketing Communications	Fall
<b>Year 3 (FA2021-SU2022)</b>		
Make adjustments to services as needed	QEP Leads / Academic and Career Advising	Summer
Share report findings with college stakeholders	QEP Leads / Marketing Communications	Fall
<b>Year 4 (FA2022-SU2023)</b>		
Make adjustments to services as needed	QEP Leads / Academic and Career Advising	Summer
Share report findings with college stakeholders	QEP Leads / Marketing Communications	Fall
Write SACSCOC five-year interim report	QEP Leads	Summer
<b>Year 5 (FA2023-SU2024)</b>		
Make adjustments to services as needed	QEP Leads / Academic and Career Advising	Summer
Share report findings with college stakeholders	QEP Leads / Marketing Communications	Fall
Write SACSCOC five-year interim report	QEP Leads	Fall, Spring
Submit SACSCOC five-year interim report	QEP Director	Summer

*Table 7: College Support Actions Schedule*

## Marketing: Engaging and Informing the College Community

A critical component of making MORE a success is informing the college community about the scope and intent behind the three main initiatives of the QEP. In preparation for the implementation of the QEP, the Marketing Communications department will be engaging students, faculty, and staff through a variety of methods tailored to those particular audiences, including monthly email communications, social media, and websites. On-campus marketing tools will also be used, including physical and digital signage, buttons, t-shirts, and flyers.

While the three QEP initiatives will affect students, faculty, and staff differently, all constituents will be informed of the full scope of the QEP. For instance, students will need to know about the Virtual Backpack in order to register for classes, and they will need to know about the availability of new student support

services in order to take advantage of those services. Additionally, making students aware of the faculty training component demonstrates MTC's commitment to improvement and lifelong learning. For faculty, the Online Faculty Learning Community (OFLC) is the initiative that will most directly affect them, and they also need to be well-informed about the Virtual Backpack and the enhanced student services to more effectively guide students towards those resources. Staff likewise will most directly be involved in the changes to student support services, but also need to know about the changes affecting faculty and students.

The MTC Marketing Communications department began this process by first creating a web presence for the QEP to both solicit input from stakeholders and to share updates on the QEP's progress. Marketing Communications is creating a series of email communications for faculty and staff that will provide a detailed overview of the QEP and how it will be implemented (Appendix J). The first series of these emails will be sent out during Summer 2019 and early Fall 2019, but additional communication will be sent out throughout the five years of the QEP to keep faculty and staff well informed of its progress. Simultaneously, Marketing Communications will share information about the QEP implementation with students via social media. The full document, email communications, and assessment reports will also be posted on the QEP website and intranet.

New student orientation will be critical for informing students about QEP initiatives. In addition, the college-wide faculty and staff in-service held at the beginning of each Fall and Spring semester will help inform all faculty and staff about the QEP initiatives.

The QEP budget has allocated significant resources to produce and distribute MORE branded items such as flash drives, t-shirts, and tumblers as a means of engaging stakeholders in the QEP process. Additionally, banners, VNN (Virtual News Network) screens, and in-class discussions (in both traditional and online classes) will be used to engage with students about the QEP. While marketing the QEP at the beginning of its implementation is critical, MTC is also committed to sustaining a timely dialogue with campus stakeholders throughout the five-year plan.

## Assessment and Continuous Improvement of the QEP Outcomes and Objectives

Integral to MORE is a plan to assess achievement of its goal. MTC has identified five specific program-level outcomes that, if met, will indicate successful achievement of the QEP Goal:

1. Increase the student success rate (defined as earning a C or better) in targeted online gateway courses by eight percent above the baseline.
2. Improve student performance as measured by Student Learning Outcomes in targeted online gateway courses by five percent.

3. Decrease the withdrawal rate by five percent in targeted gateway courses.
4. Increase students' perceived readiness to successfully complete online courses.
5. Increase faculty's perceived readiness to effectively teach students online.

Baseline data was collected in Fall 2018, unless otherwise noted. All desired improvement in student success will be beyond the baseline data. Improvements will be determined by comparing current data to historical data. This study does not utilize treatment or control groups, where only certain students have access to the proposed interventions such as online tutoring or the Virtual Backpack.

To achieve the QEP goals and outcomes, MTC has established three primary objectives:

1. Implement a mandatory student readiness course to prepare students for online learning.
2. Implement an Online Faculty Learning Community (OFLC) to prepare faculty for online teaching.
3. Facilitate coordination of student services in targeted online gateway courses.

All assessment instruments below will measure the degree to which the items above have been achieved.

## Implementation Assessment: Establishing an Infrastructure

Assessment outcomes are formative indicators in the assessment plan. These indicators involve the steps in training staff, and the number of students taking the online course.

Assessment for QEP Objectives			
QEP Objective	Assessment	Baseline	Target
<b>Implement a mandatory student readiness course to prepare students for online learning.</b>	Number of students taking online preparation course	New initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% of new online students each semester</li> </ul>
<b>Implement an Online Faculty Learning Community (OFLC) to prepare faculty for online teaching.</b>	Number of faculty from the six targeted gateway courses participating in an online faculty learning community (OFLC)	New initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% of targeted gateway course faculty participate in an OFLC by Fall 2021</li> <li>• At least eight faculty participate in an OFLC each year</li> </ul>
<b>Facilitate coordination of student services in targeted online gateway courses.</b>	Number of students participating in online tutoring	New initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10% of students in targeted online gateway courses utilize online tutoring each semester for courses where it is available</li> </ul>
<b>Facilitate coordination of student services in targeted online gateway courses.</b>	Number of faculty submitting Early Alert reports to professional advisors	New initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% of targeted online gateway course faculty utilizing the Early Alert system by Spring 2022</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least eight additional faculty utilize the Early Alert system each year until Spring 2022</li> </ul>
<b>Facilitate coordination of student services in targeted online gateway courses.</b>	Number of lib-guides targeting cohort courses and online learning.	New initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create one lib-guide for each cohort course by Spring 2020.</li> <li>Create lib-guide for online learning students by Spring 2021.</li> </ul>

Table 8: Assessment for QEP Objectives

## Quantitative Assessment: Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators are summative indicators tied to key areas of improvement identified in the QEP. Baseline data is collected from the Fall 2018 semester. Student Learning Outcome (SLO) reports are based on the most recent assessment cycle. Target improvements will be evaluated starting in the Fall 2020 semester. Data is collected only from the online sections of the respective courses.

### Student Success\* Rate

Course	Fall 2018 Baseline	Target	Fall 2020 Target	Fall 2021 Target	Fall 2022 Target	Fall 2023 Target
<b>AHS 102</b>	47%	Increase by 2% per year	49%	51%	53%	55%
<b>ART 101</b>	54%	Increase by 2% per year	56%	58%	60%	62%
<b>BUS 101</b>	58%	Increase by 2% per year	60%	62%	64%	66%
<b>ENG 101</b>	56%	Increase by 2% per year	58%	60%	62%	64%
<b>MAT 101</b>	39%	Increase by 2% per year	41%	43%	45%	47%
<b>PSY 201</b>	46%	Increase by 2% per year	48%	50%	52%	54%

Table 9: Student Success Rate by Course in FA2018, with Future Target Rates

\*Success is defined as earning a C or better in the course.

### Student Learning Outcomes

All courses at MTC have Student Learning Outcomes that are designed by faculty to measure the success of student learning. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) at MTC are assessed at three levels: general education outcomes, program level outcomes, and course level outcomes. General education outcomes

are based on the college’s core curriculum, program level outcomes are specific to a particular certificate or degree program, and course level outcomes are those tailored to how a particular course supports the larger goals of the program or general education outcomes.

The assessment of the learning outcomes varies in type and method across the six targeted gateway courses for the QEP (AHS 102, ART 101, BUS 101, ENG 101, MAT 101, and PSY 201). For instance, in PSY 201 faculty use embedded questions in a final examination to assess student success in the scientific reasoning and individual or social behavior components of the general education core. Alternatively, faculty in ENG 101 use a portfolio approach and a research assignment to assess student success for the general education core competencies of communication and information literacy, respectively. A core component of the QEP’s assessment will be evaluating the holistic effect of the three main QEP interventions on student learning outcomes.

Improving student learning outcomes and student success were central to both the selection of the QEP topic and the development of its three objectives. While student learning outcomes offer a critical means of evaluating student learning, this metric will be assessed in conjunction with overall student success rates and withdrawal rates to provide a more accurate and holistic approach to measuring the success of the QEP.

Courses	Baseline Cycle*	Target	Fall 2020 Target	Fall 2021 Target	Fall 2022 Target	Fall 2023 Target
<b>AHS 102</b>	61% (2016-17)	Increase by 2.5% per reporting cycle**	63.5%	-	66%	-
<b>ART 101</b>	70% (Spring 2019)	Increase by 2.5% per reporting cycle**	72.5%	-	75%	-
<b>BUS 101</b>	57.5% (Spring 2018)	Increase by 2.5% per reporting cycle**	60%	-	62.5%	-
<b>ENG 101 (SLO1) ***</b>	91% (Fall 2018)	Increase by 1.25% per reporting cycle**	92.25%	93.5%	94.75%	96%
<b>ENG 101 (SLO2) ***</b>	92% (Fall 2018)	Increase by 1.25% per reporting cycle**	93.25%	94.5%	95.75%	97%
<b>MAT 101</b>	60% (Fall 2016)	Increase by 2.5% per reporting cycle**	62.5%	-	65%	-
<b>PSY 201 (SLO1) ***</b>	63% (2017-18)	Increase by 1.25% per reporting cycle**	64.25%	65.5%	66.75%	68%
<b>PSY 201 (SLO2) ***</b>	75% (2017-18)	Increase by 1.25% per reporting cycle**	76.25%	77.5%	78.75%	80%

Table 10: Student Learning Outcomes by Course

\*Baseline data is drawn from the most current reporting cycle.

\*\*Some Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are assessed every year, but are reported out every other year. As a result, data will be collected for each reporting cycle. SLO data is collected every year for targets of 1.25% and every two years for targets of 2.5% to ensure the SLO outcome is met.

\*\*\*ENG 101 and PSY 201 each measure two program outcomes, so both will be tracked.

## Withdrawal Rates

Course	Fall 2018 Baseline	Target	Fall 2020 Target	Fall 2021 Target	Fall 2022 Target	Fall 2023 Target
AHS 102	38%	Decrease by 1.25% per year	36.75%	35.5%	34.25%	33%
ART 101	34%	Decrease by 1.25% per year	32.75%	31.5%	30.25%	29%
BUS 101	22%	Decrease by 1.25% per year	20.75%	19.5%	18.25%	17%
ENG 101	35%	Decrease by 1.25% per year	33.75%	32.5%	31.25%	30%
MAT 101	41%	Decrease by 1.25% per year	39.75%	38.5%	37.25%	36%
PSY 201	39%	Decrease by 1.25% per year	37.75%	36.5%	35.25%	34%

*Table 11: Withdrawal Rates by Course, FA2018*

As data is assessed during QEP implementation, it will be reviewed holistically to evaluate the overall success of the interventions. For instance, in ENG 101 the SLO scores for students in online sections tend to be higher than for those in on-campus sections. However, the withdrawal rates are higher in online sections than in on-campus sections. English faculty felt the additional writing exercises inherent in an online format actually benefit those students who can complete the course (resulting in higher SLOs), but only looking at the SLO data in isolation would not reveal the increased number of students who are withdrawn prior to completing the course. Conversely, it is possible that the SLOs for online sections may actually decrease to fall in line with on-campus sections of ENG 101 as withdrawal rates also decrease and more borderline students are able to successfully complete the course. In instances such as this, increased success rates and decreased withdrawal rates may be a more accurate method of assessing the interventions than only looking at SLO data.

Additionally, while the QEP will be assessed in direct ways (numbers of students using services, numbers of faculty who complete the OFLC, etc.) parsing out which of those interventions have the most significant influence on increasing student success can be more challenging. To assess this, MTC will also implement a variety of qualitative assessments to supplement the quantitative data.

## Qualitative Assessment: Surveys, Focus Groups, and Interviews

Two of MORE's outcomes are qualitative in nature:

- Increase students' perceived readiness to successfully complete online courses.
- Increase faculty's perceived readiness to effectively teach students online.

To assess these outcomes, MORE will conduct surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews. While surveys and interviews were used to help develop the QEP topic, students and faculty will also be given formative and summative assessments of their perceived readiness. Students will be surveyed after completing the Virtual Backpack about their perception of readiness for taking an online course. In the brief completion survey, students will be asked about their perceived readiness prior to taking the Virtual Backpack as well as how that perception changed after completing the training. The survey results will then be correlated with students who went on to enroll in the six targeted gateway courses. Focus groups will be convened near the end of Spring 2020 from students who have enrolled in gateway courses. These focus groups will be used to determine student perceptions of readiness after having taken their first online course, to gather suggestions for improving student readiness in future terms, and to assess the effects of the enhanced student support services. Lastly one-on-one interviews will be conducted by Virtual Backpack completers who subsequently enrolled in the six targeted gateway courses about their online experience, and to determine if they felt the Virtual Backpack sufficiently prepared them for the online environment.

Faculty members will be surveyed at the beginning and end of Online Faculty Learning Community (OFLC) participation to determine both their initial perception of readiness and their perception of readiness after having completed the semester-long training. Faculty will also be surveyed at the end of Spring 2020 to assess their perception of readiness after having completed a semester of online teaching following the OFLC. Data from both these surveys will be used to refine the curriculum within the OFLC for the following term.

## Detailed Implementation Timeline

The following timelines have been established in order to achieve the objectives set forth by the QEP. For reference, the Fall 2019 semester is highlighted as the semester corresponding to the SACSCOC On-Site visit as part of the decennial reaccreditation process.

Student Readiness		Year 0			Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4			Year 5		
		2018-2019			2019-2020			2020-2021			2021-2022			2022-2023			2023-2024		
Activities	Responsibility	FA	SP	SU															
Develop registration processes for MORE and first-time online students	Information Resources Management (IRM)	X	X																
Test Colleague enrollment block/unblock triggers	IRM			X															
Develop Virtual Backpack modules and assessments	Student Readiness Subcommittee	X	X																
Market Virtual Backpack to prospective online students	QEP Leads / Marketing Communications			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Alpha-test Virtual Backpack – Ensure components are working	IRM / Student Readiness Subcommittee		X																
Beta-test Virtual Backpack – Live, but optional, for online students	Student Readiness Subcommittee		X	X															
Assess functionality of the Virtual Backpack	QEP Leads		X	X	X			X			X			X			X		
Make adjustments to the Virtual Backpack	Student Readiness Subcommittee		X	X	X	X			X			X			X			X	

Implement Colleague enrollment block/unblock triggers	IRM				X														
Virtual Backpack fully operational for targeted first-time online students	Student Readiness Subcommittee				X*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Survey students on perception of readiness following Virtual Backpack	Office of Distance Learning				X			X			X			X			X		
Student focus groups from six targeted online classes	QEP Leads					X			X			X			X			X	

Table 12: Student Readiness Detailed Implementation Timeline

\*Virtual Backpack operational in Fall 2019 for Spring 2020 enrollment

Faculty Readiness		Year 0			Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4			Year 5		
		2018-2019			2019-2020			2020-2021			2021-2022			2022-2023			2023-2024		
Activities	Responsibility	FA	SP	SU															
Develop OFLC curriculum	Faculty Readiness Subcommittee		X	X															
Run OFLC1	Office of Distance Learning				X														
OFLC1 participants implement new strategies	Faculty in targeted gateway courses					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pre and post survey of OFLC participants perception of readiness	Office of Distance Learning				X			X			X			X			X		
Survey of faculty on effectiveness of OFLC	Office of Distance Learning					X			X			X			X			X	
Analyze effectiveness of OFLC1	QEP Leads / Faculty Readiness Subcommittee						X												
Make adjustments to the OFLC	Faculty Readiness Subcommittee						X												
Student Success, SLOs, and Fail/Withdrawal rates for targeted courses reported	QEP Leads / ARP							X			X			X			X		
Run OFLC2	Office of Distance Learning							X											
OFLC2 participants implement new strategies	Faculty in targeted gateway courses								X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Analyze effectiveness of OFLC2	QEP Leads / Faculty Readiness Subcommittee								X										

Make adjustments to the OFLC	Faculty Readiness Subcommittee									X									
Run OFLC3*	Office of Distance Learning										X								
OFLC3 participants implement new strategies	Faculty in targeted gateway courses											X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

*Table 13: Faculty Readiness Detailed Implementation Timeline*

\*Additional OFLC contingent upon new hires, retirements, or growth of online learning in the six targeted courses.

College Support		Year 0			Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4			Year 5		
		2018-2019			2019-2020			2020-2021			2021-2022			2022-2023			2023-2024		
Activities	Responsibility	FA	SP	SU															
External review of MORE plan	External online learning consultant	X	X						X						X				
Conduct MORE informational sessions, email communications, and student events	Marketing Communications / Student Life		X	X	X	X	X												
Develop assessments for QEP components	QEP Leads		X	X		X			X			X			X			X	
Implement assessments for QEP components	QEP Leads			X			X			X			X			X			X
Develop online form for faculty to refer students to advisors	Academic and Career Advising		X	X															
Hire/Train Instructional Designer	Office of Distance Learning			X															
Train online advisors	Academic and Career Advising / Office of Distance Learning				X														
Develop automated email system for Virtual Backpack completers	Office of Distance Learning			X	X														
Beta-test automated email system for Virtual Backpack completers	Office of Distance Learning				X														
Automated email system to Virtual Backpack completers fully live	Office of Distance Learning					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Complete demos of online tutoring providers and select vendor	Online Services Subcommittee			X															
Integrate tutoring service into each targeted online gateway course	IRM				X														
Beta-test tutoring service subscription in certain classes	IRM				X														
Student Success, SLOs, and Fail/Withdrawal rates for targeted courses reported	QEP Leads / ARP							X			X			X			X		
Analyze assessment results and report outcomes to the QEP Implementation Committee	QEP Leads / Academic and Career Advising						X			X			X			X			X
Tutoring subscription fully live	QEP Leads					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Create lib guides for targeted courses	Online Services Subcommittee				X	X	X	X	X										
Share report findings with college stakeholders	QEP Leads / Marketing Communications							X			X			X			X		
Write SACSCOC five-year interim report	QEP Leads															X	X	X	
Submit SACSCOC five-year interim report	QEP Director																		X

Table 14: College Support Detailed Implementation Timeline

Assessment Timeline		Year 0			Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4			Year 5		
		2018-2019			2019-2020			2020-2021			2021-2022			2022-2023			2023-2024		
Activities	Responsibility	FA	SP	SU															
Develop assessments for QEP components	QEP Leads		X	X															
Assess and establish QEP baseline data	QEP Leads / ARP		X	X															
Assess number of students taking online preparation course	QEP Leads					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Assess number of faculty from the six targeted gateway courses participating in an OFLC	Office of Distance learning				X			X			X								
Assess number of online students utilizing online tutoring for courses where it is available	QEP Leads					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Assess number of faculty submitting Early Alert reports to advisors	Academic and Career Advising					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Assess number of lib-guides developed for targeted online gateway courses	QEP Leads					X	X	X	X										
Survey students on perception of readiness following Virtual Backpack	Office of Distance Learning				X			X			X			X			X		
Student focus groups from six targeted online classes	QEP Leads					X			X			X			X			X	
Pre and post survey of OFLC participants perception of readiness	Office of Distance Learning				X			X			X			X			X		
Survey of faculty on effectiveness of OFLC	Office of Distance Learning					X			X			X			X			X	
Faculty focus groups from six targeted online classes	QEP Leads					X			X			X			X			X	

Student Success, SLOs, and Fail/Withdrawal rates for targeted courses reported	QEP Leads / ARP				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Analyze assessment results and report outcomes to the QEP Leadership Team	QEP Leads				X	X			X			X			X			X	

Table 15: Detailed Assessment Timeline

# Organizational Structure, Resources, and Budget

## QEP Committees and Responsibilities

### QEP Leadership Team

**Purpose:** The QEP Leadership Team is a group consisting of leaders from a variety of QEP Committees, as well as other key leaders at MTC. The QEP Leadership Team provides guidance, suggestions for improvement, and overall leadership for the direction of the QEP. Team members strive to eliminate barriers to the successful implementation of MORE within their respective areas.

- Ronald L. Rhames | President
- Kevin Bray | Assistant Director, Assessment, Research and Planning
- Diane Carr | Vice Provost Academic Affairs
- Rob Gilmer | Instructor, Humanities Department (Assistant QEP Director)
- Stefanie Goebeler | Associate Vice President, Marketing Communications
- Rhonda Grego | Instructor, English Department
- Mary Helen Hendrix | Director, Office of Distance Learning
- Devin Henson | Associate Vice Provost, Arts and Sciences (QEP Director)
- Barrie Kirk | Provost
- Sylvia Littlejohn | Assistant Vice President, Enrollment Management Services
- Cindy Rogers | Director, Center for Teaching Excellence
- Donna Zeek | Director of Curriculum

### QEP Topic Selection Committee

**Purpose:** The QEP Topic Selection Committee was charged with soliciting input from college stakeholders and using that input to write a proposal for the QEP Topic. The committee presented the proposal to constituents throughout the college to gather feedback. The committee submitted the proposed topic to the Executive Council, and the topic, MORE, was subsequently approved.

- Kimberly Adams-Cochran | Department Assistant, Nursing
- Mary Helen Hendrix, Director | Office of Distance Learning
- Devin Henson | Associate Vice Provost, Arts and Sciences (QEP Director)
- Melodie Hunnicutt | Adjunct Instructor, Social and Behavioral Sciences
- Cindy Rogers | Director, Center for Teaching Excellence
- Donna Zeek | Director of Curriculum

## QEP Topic Development Committee

**Purpose:** The QEP Topic Development Committee was charged with developing the QEP Topic into a full Quality Enhancement Plan. The committee designed the details of the QEP and wrote the QEP document. The committee also began preliminary tasks necessary to lay the groundwork for a successful QEP implementation, such as developing the curriculum for the Virtual Backpack course and Online Faculty Learning Community (OFLC).

- Melissa Ellington, Instructor, Developmental Studies
- Rhonda Grego, Instructor, English Department
- Mary Helen Hendrix, Director, Office of Distance Learning
- Devin Henson, Associate Vice Provost, Arts and Sciences (QEP Director)
- Suzie Lee, Batesburg-Leesville Associate Director, Student and Campus Information

## Student Readiness Subcommittee

**Purpose:** The Student Readiness Subcommittee is a subcommittee of the QEP Topic Development Committee. The committee was charged with developing the modules covered in the Virtual Backpack course. The committee reviewed national best practices, consulted with college stakeholders, and worked with technical staff to build the Virtual Backpack within D2L Brightspace.

- Errol Alger, Instructor, Humanities Department
- Elnora Campbell, Instructor, Information Systems Technology Department
- Helena Ferguson, Instructor, Social and Behavioral Sciences Department
- Brian Flynn, Instructor, English Department
- Mary Helen Hendrix, Director, Office of Distance Learning
- Elizabeth McWilliams, Instructor, Health Sciences Department
- Lindsay Weathers, Instructor, Humanities Department

## Faculty Readiness Subcommittee

**Purpose:** The Faculty Readiness Subcommittee is a subcommittee of the QEP Topic Development Committee. The committee was charged with developing the Online Faculty Learning Community for online instructors. The committee reviewed national best practices, consulted with college stakeholders, developed the OFLC curriculum, and worked with technical staff to build the online components of the OFLC within D2L Brightspace.

- Errol Alger, Instructor, Humanities Department
- Jennifer Aull, Instructor, Mathematics Department
- Elnora Campbell, Instructor, Information Systems Technology Department
- Helena Ferguson, Instructor, Social and Behavioral Sciences Department
- Brian Flynn, Instructor, English Department
- Mary Helen Hendrix, Director, Office of Distance Learning

- Elizabeth McWilliams, Instructor, Health Sciences Department
- Lindsay Weathers, Instructor, Humanities Department

## Online Services Subcommittee

**Purpose:** The Online Services Subcommittee is a subcommittee of the QEP Topic Development Committee. The committee is charged with developing enhanced online student services. The committee will review national best practices, consult with college stakeholders, determine a high-quality online tutoring system, implement early alerts in the targeted online gateway courses, and develop enhanced library services for online students.

- Laura Baker, Emerging Technology Librarian, Library
- Shawn Carraway, Systems Librarian, Library
- Rob Gilmer, Instructor, Humanities Department (Assistant QEP Director)
- Devin Henson, Associate Vice Provost, Arts and Sciences (QEP Director)
- Natasha Johnson, Instructor, Health Sciences Department
- Shinnell Jones, Director, Academic Success Center
- Susan Lass, Instructor, Mathematics Department
- Jennifer Raasch, Instructional Designer, Office of Distance Learning
- Jennifer Viereck, Instructor, English Department

## QEP Implementation Team

**Purpose:** The QEP Implementation Committee is charged with executing the plan developed by the QEP Topic Development Committee. Team members will lead efforts that complete necessary components of the QEP, such as marketing, implementing technology, evaluating interventions, generating reports, and updating curriculum. Team members may change at a later date as needed based on assessment and subsequent revision of components of MORE.

- Teigh Berg, Research Analyst, Assessment Research, and Planning
- Kevin Bray, Assistant Director, Assessment, Research and Planning
- Pi-Jung Chang, Research Analyst, Assessment, Research, and Planning
- Beth Chesnutt, Senior Database Administrator, Information Resource Management
- Rob Gilmer, Instructor, Humanities Department (Assistant QEP Director)
- Mary Helen Hendrix, Director, Office of Distance Learning
- Devin Henson, Associate Vice Provost, Arts and Sciences (QEP Director)
- Tony Hough, Director, Information Resource Management
- Dorcas Kitchings, Director, Assessment, Research, and Planning
- Erica Peake, Database Administrator, Information Resource Management
- Hampton Saussy, Microsystem Services Manager, Information Resource Management
- Jonathan Sorrenti, Systems Manager, Information Resource Management

## QEP Lines of Responsibility

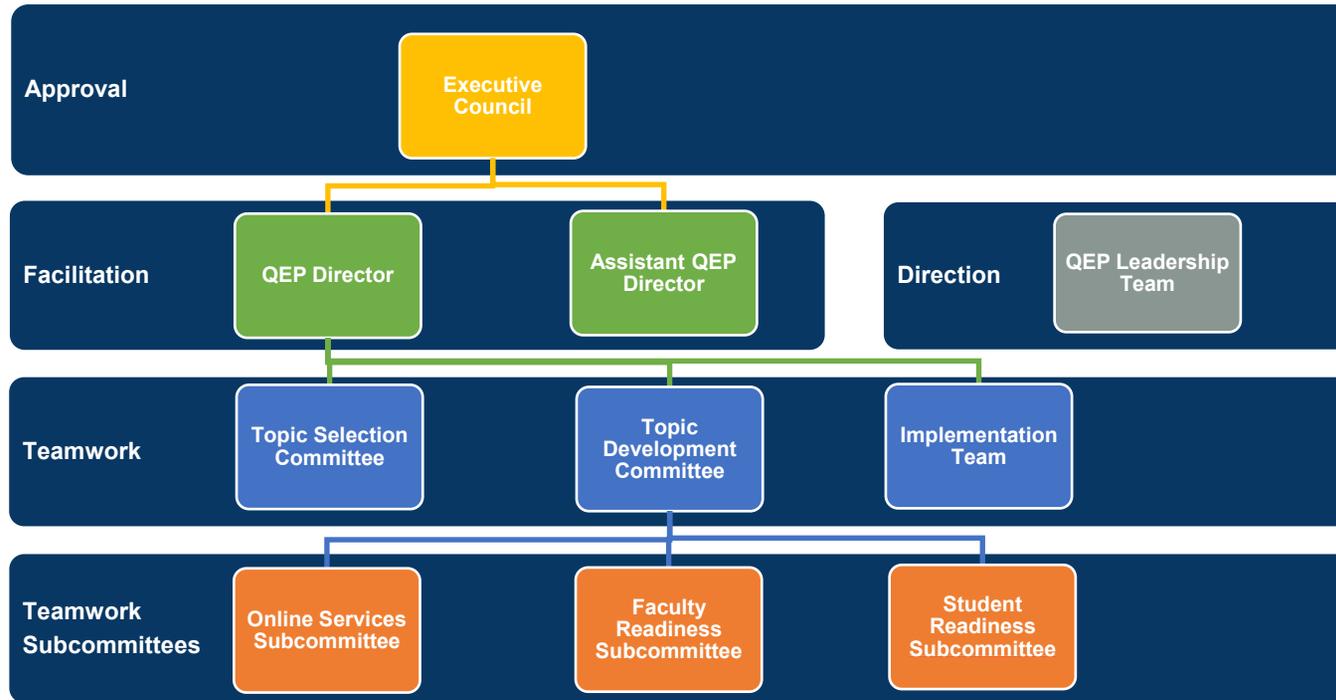


Figure 17: QEP Lines of Responsibility

## Budget and Resources

Midlands Technical College has committed both financial and human resources sufficient to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP. The three main objectives of MORE, improving student readiness, improving faculty readiness, and improving online student support all received consideration in the QEP budget, which totals \$817,332 over five years.

### QEP Staff

The development, implementation, and assessment of MORE has required the creation of three new positions that account for a combined \$489,282 over a five-year period.

#### QEP Director

The QEP Director oversees the entirety of the QEP from its development to completion and serves as the primary lead for all QEP related activities. The QEP Director is responsible for facilitating the process to identify the QEP topic, as well as shepherding it through the proposal process.

Additionally, the QEP Director is responsible for soliciting feedback from students, faculty, and staff throughout the selection process as well as sharing updates with MTC leadership. Once the topic is selected and developed, the QEP Director's role shifts to overseeing the implementation and assessment of the QEP. The QEP Director drafts and requests budget funding for the QEP, narrows and defines the interventions within the QEP, hires additional staff and oversees the initiation of QEP actions. The QEP Director will also be responsible for its assessment and continuation throughout the five-year plan. This position is included within the college's operating budget and did not need additional funding through the QEP budget.

#### Assistant QEP Director

A faculty member was appointed and provided release time starting in Summer 2019 to serve as the Assistant QEP Director. This faculty member will coordinate between the QEP Director and relevant faculty and staff to ensure the smooth implementation of, as well as assessment and adjustment of, the various QEP measures throughout the five-year plan. The Assistant QEP Director will be responsible for working with students as they complete the Virtual Backpack, assisting in the management of the Online Faculty Learning Community, and coordinating the enhancements to student services, including the selection of an online tutoring service. Additionally, the Assistant QEP Director will be responsible for analyzing the data generated by the QEP assessments and working with the QEP Director to draft reports and modify QEP interventions as necessary. The Assistant QEP Director was appointed from existing faculty and will be given a release-time of 80 percent during fall and spring semesters and 75 percent during

the summer semesters. Overall, \$125,000 was allocated for this position to cover the five years of the QEP at \$25,000 per year.

### Instructional Designer

A new full-time instructional designer position was created, and designer hired in Summer 2019 to provide support for the QEP in a variety of ways. The Virtual Backpack course will be refined based on student feedback and assessment of its success. Faculty participating in the Online Faculty Learning Community (OFLC) will need assistance with refining course shells based on experiences within the OFLC and in ensuring a consistently high-quality educational experience across all sections of those online courses. Finally, the instructional designer will also be able to provide assistance in training academic advisors in the use of online technologies. Funds of \$364,282 have been allocated to cover the salary and benefits for this position over five years.

## Academics

An additional \$293,500 in funds were requested and approved to cover the costs of the OFLC, which is the second QEP intervention, and the expanded online tutoring services, which is a major part of the third QEP intervention. The first QEP intervention, the Virtual Backpack, required no additional funds and was completed using existing college resources.

### Online Faculty Learning Community (OFLC)

Continuing resources were set aside to compensate both full-time and adjunct faculty for participation in the Online Faculty Learning Community. A total of \$80,000 over three years was budgeted to cover the cost of faculty release times for those semesters (29 faculty, each release costs approximately \$2,000). The first two years were budgeted at \$30,000 each with \$20,000 set aside for the third year of the OFLC. MTC expects the majority of participating faculty to complete the OFLC within the first two years, but funds are more than sufficient to cover all faculty, even accounting for some additional hires within that period. Additionally, \$500 per year was set aside to cover the cost of materials for faculty in the OFLC, for a total of \$1,500.

### Online Tutoring

Student support services will be enhanced through additional yearly funds to contract with a third party online tutoring service. The particular service will be selected during Summer 2019; however, \$212,000 was budgeted to cover the cost of the service during the five years of the QEP. This estimate is based on a quote from one of the potential services and includes \$2,000 in startup costs as well as recurring costs of \$42,000 per year.

## Travel

The budget also establishes \$20,000 in funds to cover travel costs for the QEP leads to travel to SACSCOC conferences during the QEP. These funds, which will cover approximately \$4,000 per year in travel costs, will allow the QEP Director and Assistant QEP Director to keep well informed of the latest research in online education and assist them to make informed decisions about modifications in QEP initiatives as it progresses.

## Marketing

The MORE budget includes \$6,000 in marketing costs to help publicize QEP interventions to the campus community (Appendix K). The majority of these funds will be used during the initial launch, particularly to pay for promotional materials like flash drives, t-shirts, flyers, banners, pens, and other items with the MORE logo. These items will be primarily aimed at educating students about the new Virtual Backpack course. Much of the additional marketing and campus-wide updates on the QEP's progress will be done through email, the website, the intranet site, and social media, which will not require any additional funds.

## Additional Expenses

Additional funds were set aside to cover the costs of hiring a QEP consultant and to provide technical equipment for online advisors. During the development phase, the college budgeted \$3,000 to hire a consultant to assist in developing an effective and targeted QEP. MTC hired Dr. Mickey Slimp as a consultant to assist the college in the development of MORE. Dr. Slimp currently serves as the Associate Provost for Teaching, Learning, and Technology at the University of Texas Health Center at Tyler, as well as the Executive Director of the Northeast Texas Consortium of Colleges and Universities. He is the author of the book *How the Internet of Things is Changing Our Colleges, Our Classrooms, and Our Students* and serves as an editor for the *Texas Distance Learning Association* journal. Dr. Slimp has also been inducted into the Texas Distance Learning Hall of Fame, helped found the Virtual College of Texas, and has extensive additional service on both a state and national level.

Finally, \$5,550 was budgeted to cover the cost of purchasing audio and video equipment to provide advisors the ability to teleconference with online students. The budget for the advisors salaries will be covered separately as part of MTC's shift to the centralized advising model. However, the QEP budget will be used to supply those advisors with headsets, microphones, and webcams to be able to engage with students in real time during online advising sessions. Altogether these additional expenses total \$8,550.

The total QEP budget, including the areas of staffing, academics, travel, marketing, and additional expenses sums to \$817,332. A detailed description of budget items can be found in Table 16.

Resource	Description	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
		2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	
<b>Staffing</b>							
Instructional Designer – (new FTE position; fringe included)	Supports the Office of Distance Learning with the implementation of the QEP activities.	\$70,000	\$71,400	\$72,828	\$74,284	\$75,770	\$364,282
QEP Assistant Director – (faculty release)	One current online faculty to get 3-4 courses release time per semester to handle coordination of QEP activities.	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$125,000
<b>Academics</b>							
Online tutoring services	Provides online tutoring services 24/7/365 to online students. Cost for prospective vendor is \$28/hour, with a recommended 1,500 hours. \$2k initial setup cost. Unused hours roll over.	\$44,000	\$42,000	\$42,000	\$42,000	\$42,000	\$212,000
Release time for OFLC participants	A monetary stipend for all OFLC completers.	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$20,000	-	-	\$80,000
Book for OFLC participants	OFLC participants will be provided a book that will be used for a portion of the professional development.	\$500	\$500	\$500	-	-	\$1,500
<b>Travel</b>							
SACSCOC conference	Travel, accommodations, and registration for QEP leadership.	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$20,000

Marketing Materials							
Promotional items	T-shirts, flash drives, pens, tumbler cups, flyers, banners, etc. with QEP logo.	\$6,000	-	-	-	-	\$6,000
Additional Resources – Equipment and Materials							
Centralized Advisement equipment	Webcams and headsets for online advising.	\$5,550	-	-	-	-	\$5,550
External consultant	Consultant to review QEP and make suggestions for improvement.	\$3,000	-	-	-	-	\$3,000
<b>Total QEP Costs</b>		<b>\$188,050</b>	<b>\$172,900</b>	<b>\$164,328</b>	<b>\$145,284</b>	<b>\$146,770</b>	<b>\$817,332</b>

Table 16: QEP Expenses

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## Appendix A: Strategic Plan Leads

MTC is using the 4DX framework by Franklin Covey to implement its Strategic Plan. In the 4DX system, initiatives are designated as Wildly Important Goals (WIGs), with corresponding Lead measures to accomplish each initiative.

### Strategic Plan 2018 - 2021

#### Enrollment

**WIG 1.1** - Increase yield of recent high school graduates

**Lead:** Convert unenrolled applicants 60 percent to 65 percent to enrolled students in subsequent terms by Fall 2021.

**Lead:** Increase Richland 1 enrollment from 150 to 250 by Fall 2021.

**Lead:** Increase High School Junior Prospective students from 0 to 1300 by Fall 2021.

**WIG 1.2** - Increase enrollment of new and first-time adult student learners

**Lead:** Increase first-time adult learners from admitted to enrolled from 1,152 to 1,440 by Fall 2021.

**Lead:** Increase the number of first-time (First-Time Freshmen/Transfer) adult learners in Career programs from 982 to 1,228 by Fall 2021

**WIG 1.3** - Increase percentage of admitted to enrolled students

**Lead:** Identify and remove 2 barriers to enrollment annually by Fall 2021.

**Lead:** Increase the percentage of admitted students with access to an interactive progress bar to enrollment from 0 percent to 100 percent by Fall 2020.

**Lead:** Increase the number of students participating in a placement test prep event from 0 to 100 by Fall 2019.

#### Advisement

**WIG 2.1** - Reduce the number of first semester students not meeting the college's standards for academic progress

**Lead:** 0 to 90 percent of faculty and applicable staff use E2E's early alert features within Appointment Manager by Fall 2021.

**Lead:** 0 percent to 100 percent of new students review instructional materials on SAP during orientation by Fall 2021.

**WIG 2.2** - Increase average student credit hours

**Lead:** Implement advising strategies from 0 to 3 for increasing course credit load by Fall 2019 for all students. (AA/AS, targeted Career Programs and New Students.)

## Retention

### **WIG 3.1 - Increase success in targeted gateway courses**

**Lead:** Increase success in select online courses from 48 percent to 56 percent by Fall 2021.

**Lead:** Increase success in select high enrollment/low success courses from 63 percent to 71 percent by Fall 2021.

**Lead:** Develop course expectations (one per course) for gateway courses from 0 to 32 by Fall 2021.

### **WIG 3.2 - Increase Fall to Spring persistence**

**Lead:** Increase persistence among AA/AS students from 70 percent to 76 percent by Spring 2021.

**Lead:** Increase emergency funds awarded from foundation sources two percent annually by 2020-21 Foundation Fiscal year.

**Lead:** Increase FWS filled positions on-campus by 10 per year, starting with 92 (target for 2018-2019, year 1), contingent on continuing to receive adequate FWS funding from the federal government.

**Lead:** Increase the number of MTC Foundation Scholarships awarded from 124 to 142 by Fall 2021.

### **WIG 3.3 - Increase the graduation rate of the first-time, full-time freshmen**

**Lead:** Increase reverse transfer graduates from nine percent to 15 percent by Fall 2021.

**Lead:** Increase completion in programs with high attrition rates from 0 to 40 percent by Fall 2021.

**Lead:** Increase the number of students mentored who are not currently in programs from 0 to 40 percent by Fall 2021.

**Lead:** Increase number of academic fairs for career programs from 1 to 9 by Fall 2021.

## Sustainability and Resources

### **WIG 4.1 - Decrease expenses**

**Lead:** Decrease utility cost from \$2,381,439 to \$2,309,996 by 2021.

**Lead:** Decrease cost of administrative support from \$26,502,932 to \$25,707,844 by 2021.

**Lead:** Reduce the number of "100 level" targeted AA/AS sections that have 18 or fewer students at start date from x to y by 2021. (Airport, Beltline and Online sections)

**WIG 4.2 - Increase revenue**

**Lead:** Increase private support from MTC Foundation from \$0 to \$932,000 by 2021.

**Lead:** Increase students in a new program from 0 to 50 by Fall 2021.

**Lead:** Increase Auxiliary Service revenue from \$1,309,065 to \$1,387,609 by 2021.

**Lead:** Institute a parking fee from 0 – \$25 per semester by Fall 2019

**Lead:** Increase businesses being served through Academic and CCE programs from 104 to 149 by Fall 2021.

**Lead:** Increase 84 of businesses working with the college through various support activities from 152 to 236 by Fall 2021

**WIG 4.3 - Automate three manual processes per fiscal year**

**Lead:** Complete the automation of 0 to 9 manual process to automated process by Fall 2021

**Lead:** Create multiple measures placement following the hierarchy for placement. Lead 1 - Multiple Measures from 0.00 to 1.00 by 07/31/2019

**Lead:** Create a batch program that creates electronic certificates for DocEserve for all public CCE classes that are graded.

**Lead:** Create a batch process to email faculty, advisor, and records of student-initiated withdrawals.

**WIG 4.4 - Increase interaction with business (Increase student placement rate by Fall 2021)**

**Lead:** Grow the number of apprenticeships and internships being offered to students by local businesses from 75 to 115 by Fall 2021.

**Lead:** Increase the annual college graduate placement rate for academic students from 89 percent to 92 percent by Fall 2021.

**Lead:** Increase the annual college graduate placement rate for CCE students from 77 percent to 82 percent by Fall 2021.

## Appendix B: QEP Listening Session Flyer

Note: Listening sessions were conducted during the Fall 2017 semester.

# QEP

## Quality Enhancement Plan

*A SACSCOC Reaffirmation Requirement*

As a component of the college's reaccreditation process, Midlands Technical College will be developing a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that focuses on improving student success over the next five years. The first step in creating the QEP will be selecting a topic.

**The college invites all faculty and staff to attend one of the QEP Listening Sessions to learn more about the QEP process and suggest QEP topics.**

### QEP Listening Session Dates

- Airport Campus – Tuesday, September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1:00–2:00 pm, AC 116
- Beltline Campus – Friday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, 9:00-10:00 am, LET 110
- Northeast Campus – Friday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, 11:00-12:00 pm, CT 105
- Beltline Campus – Wednesday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 3:00-4:00 pm, LET 110
- Airport Campus – Friday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 10:00-11:00 am, AC 116
- Web Conference – Monday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1:00-2:00 pm  
(Link: <https://mtc.adobeconnect.com/qep/>)

For more information about the QEP, please visit <http://www.midlandstech.edu/QEP>.

For questions about the QEP, contact Devin Henson, QEP Director, at [QEP@midlandstech.edu](mailto:QEP@midlandstech.edu).



## Appendix C: Online Student Survey

### STUDENT ONLINE EXPERIENCE AND CHARACTERISTICS SURVEY

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey, which focuses on your experiences in online courses at Midlands Technical College. The results of the survey will provide information about how we can improve online learning at MTC. Please keep in mind that this survey is completely anonymous and only takes five minutes to complete. By completing the survey, you will be eligible to enter into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card. Thank you for your participation!

\*For the purposes of this survey, "online" includes both online and hybrid courses. If you have taken hybrid courses, please consider only the online component.

#### PART 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Select your age range: (Dropdown Menu) Under 19 / 20-24 / 25-29 / 30-39 / 40-49 / 50+
2. Enter your current major(s): (Fill in the blank) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Select your current GPA range: 3.50-4.00 / 3.00-3.49 / 2.50-2.99 / 2.00-2.49 / Under 2.00
4. Employment Status: (Select the best fit // not listed here)
5. Rate your own computer proficiency (1=lowest skill, 5=highest skill): (Select a star representing 1 – 5) ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
6. Do you own a computer? **Yes / No**
7. Number of years you have used a computer: (Fill in the blank) \_\_\_\_\_
8. Have you taken an online or hybrid course at Midlands Tech College? **Yes / No**
9. From how many online courses have you withdrawn or been withdrawn?  
I've never withdrawn or been withdrawn from an online course. / 1-2 / 3-4 / 4-5 / 6+
10. Select your enrollment status: **Full-time / Part-time**
11. Please select the reasons you take or have taken online course(s) (Select all that apply)
  - Online courses allow for greater flexibility with my schedule
  - I would have preferred face-to-face, but face-to-face course/section was not available
  - Distance or lack of transportation
  - Family responsibilities

- Interest in technology
- I just want to do my work and move on, without the traditional face-to-face college experience

## PART 2: EXPERIENCE

### COURSE EXPECTATION

12. For any online courses from which you withdrew, were withdrawn, or received a grade of D or lower, please consider the following statements. Otherwise, select N/A and move on to the next section.

Course instructions were unclear or confusing.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
The course workload was too heavy.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
The course content was different than I expected.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
The instructor’s teaching style did not meet my expectations.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I withdrew from the course for personal reasons (family emergency, job, etc.).	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A

### PERSONAL EFFORT

Please respond to the following statements about typical online courses.

13. Rate how much time (on average) you spend in a typical online course during the first week reviewing the orientation materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less than 5 minutes</li> <li>• Between 5-10 minutes</li> <li>• Between 10-15 minutes</li> <li>• Between 15-20 minutes</li> <li>• More than 20 minutes</li> </ul>
14. Rate how much time (on average) you spend in a typical online course each week to complete the course activities or assignments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less than 30 minutes</li> <li>• Between 30-45 minutes</li> <li>• Between 60-90 minutes</li> <li>• Between 90-120 minutes</li> <li>• More than 120 minutes</li> </ul>

<p>15. Rate how much time (on average) you spend in a typical online course for the full semester participating in group projects with your classmates.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have never had a group project in an online course</li> <li>• Less than 15 minutes</li> <li>• Between 15-30 minutes</li> <li>• Between 30-45 minutes</li> <li>• Between 45-60 minutes</li> <li>• More than 60 minutes</li> </ul>
<p>16. Rate how much time you spend (on average) each week on discussion boards (reading other students' postings or responding to their posts, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have never had an online course that used discussion boards</li> <li>• Less than 15 minutes</li> <li>• Between 15-30 minutes</li> <li>• Between 30-45 minutes</li> <li>• Between 45-60 minutes</li> <li>• More than 60 minutes</li> </ul>

### PART 3: READINESS FOR ONLINE COURSES

#### LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS

17. Please read each statement carefully and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

I am able to create my own study plan.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I am able to follow my own study plan.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I seek assistance when facing learning problems.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I manage my study time well and easily complete the assignments on time.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I am able to set up my learning goals.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I am able to believe I am responsible for my own education; what I learn is ultimately my responsibility.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I am confident in my ability to excel in my program.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I can study in alternative working environments (library, home, online, etc.).	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A

I can respond to other people's ideas.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I complete task independently.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I can accept feedback without being defensive or offended.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I can work with groups for online projects.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A

### ONLINE COMMUNICATION

18. Please read each statement carefully and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

I can use online tools (email, discussion) to effectively communicate with others.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I can express myself (emotions and humor) through written communication (text).	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I can articulate my thoughts and ideas so that everybody in the online learning environment can understand what I mean.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I am able to post questions and responses in online discussions.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I am able to communicate electronically with my classmates and instructors electronically (chat, email, discussion board, etc.).	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A

### COMPUTER PROFICIENCY – BASIC SKILL

19. Please read each statement carefully and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

I am comfortable performing the basic functions of Microsoft Office programs (MS Word, MS Excel, and MS PowerPoint).	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I am comfortable using D2L Brightspace for online learning.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I am comfortable using the internet (Google, Yahoo) to do research and find information for online learning.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I am comfortable resolving or securing assistance for most technology-related obstacles (internet connection issues, difficulty with downloads, etc.)	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A

## STUDENT SERVICES

20. Please read each statement carefully and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement

21. Adequate online tutoring services were available to me.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
22. Adequate online technical support was available to me.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
23. Adequate test proctoring that was provided for me.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
24. Adequate online financial aid services were available to me.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
25. Adequate access to online academic advising was available to me.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A

## FEEDBACK

21. Please provide feedback regarding how MTC can improve its online courses or services: (Fill in the blank)

After submitting the survey, you should see a “Thank You” page with a link to a separate form to submit your name for the \$50 Amazon gift card raffle. A separate form was created in order for survey responses to be kept anonymous.

## Appendix D: Online Faculty Survey

### FACULTY SURVEY

Thank you for completing this survey and sharing information about your preparation and experience teaching online courses at Midlands Technical College. The results of this survey will give us insights about how we can improve online learning here at MTC. Please keep in mind that this survey is completely anonymous and should only take about five minutes to complete. By completing the survey, you will be eligible to enter into a reserved parking space raffle. Thank you for your time!

\*For the purposes of this survey, "online" teaching includes both online and hybrid courses.

#### PART 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Select your age range: (Dropdown Menu) **20-29 / 30-39 / 40-49 / 50-59 / 60+**
2. Academic Department: (Dropdown Menu)
3. On average, how many online or hybrid courses do you teach each semester?

Less than 1 (meaning only occasionally) / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5+

4. How many years have you taught online at MTC? **0-2 / 3-5 / 6-10 / 11-15 / 15+**
5. Have you ever taken a college course online? **Yes / No**
6. Employment Status: Full-time faculty / Adjunct faculty
7. If you are a full-time instructor, do you typically teach at least one overload course? **Yes / No**
8. Please state the reason(s) you teach online (Select all that apply):
  - Mandatory per my department/program
  - Provides time and place flexibility
  - Only available section(s) to teach are online
  - Interested in teaching using different technologies
  - Personal passion

## PART 2: ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING

### STUDENT READINESS

9. Please read each statement carefully and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

I believe student readiness (technical skills, time management, realistic expectations, etc.) is a large contributing factor for students being successful in the online environment.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
On average, my students spend an adequate amount of time online engaging with their classmates.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
On average, my students spend an adequate amount of time online engaging with course materials.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
On average, my students have the necessary technical skills to be successful in the online environment.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
On average, my students have the necessary time management skills to be successful in the online environment.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
On average, my students know where to find college resources (tutoring, Disability Services, etc.) for their online courses.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
On average, my students utilize college resources (tutoring, Disability Services, etc.) for their online courses.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A

#### QEP Feedback #1

10. (Optional) MTC is considering a QEP component that focuses on preparing students to be successful in the online environment.

What are some suggestions for how we can better prepare students for success in online courses? (Fill in the blank)

## FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF ONLINE LEARNING

11. Please read each statement carefully and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

I believe faculty readiness (technical skills, online pedagogy, student engagement, etc.) is an important contributing factor for students being successful in the online environment.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I believe online learning can be as effective as face-to-face learning.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I believe high-quality learning experiences are possible without face-to-face interactions with students.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I believe discussion boards make online learning more effective.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I believe learner-to-learner interaction is essential for online learning.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I believe collaboration (group projects) is essential for online learning	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A

## ONLINE TEACHING PRACTICES

12. Please read each statement carefully and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

I write clear and measurable module-level learning objectives for my online courses.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I am available to my students online for questions and assistance.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I participate in discussions with my students on discussion board topics in my online courses.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I ensure the alignment of the learning objectives, content, and assessments for my	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A

online courses.	
I provide opportunities for my online students to engage with their classmates via discussion boards, projects, etc.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I provide a variety of different types of assignments for my online students.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I maintain up-to-date attendance records in D2L for my online courses.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I maintain up-to-date gradebook records in D2L for my online courses.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I monitor student success and follow up with individual students who are doing poorly in my online courses.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
My students understand my assignment instructions for my online courses.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I make my online course materials (Word docs, PowerPoint docs, videos, webpages, etc.) web accessible to accommodate students with disabilities.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A

## ORGANIZATION AND TIME MANAGEMENT

13. Please read each statement carefully and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

I spend more time preparing and facilitating my online courses than my face-to-face courses.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I log into my online course multiple times each week.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I read my online students' discussion posts multiple times each week.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
As appropriate, I respond to my online students' discussion posts each week.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
Generally, I respond to my online students' emails within two business days.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A

## TECHNOLOGY SELF-EFFICACY

14. Please read each statement carefully and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

I am comfortable using document formatting tools (headings, built-in styles, alternative text for images, etc.) for Microsoft Office applications such as Word and PowerPoint.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I am comfortable performing file management tasks on my computer such as copying, finding, moving, renaming, and deleting files or folders.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I am comfortable using basic D2L features such as Attendance, Gradebook, Discussions, etc.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I am comfortable using the Internet to locate reputable resources for teaching.	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A
I am comfortable using accessibility checkers provided by different software (Word, PPT, etc.).	Likert: S. Disagree to S. Agree, or N/A

## QEP Feedback #2

15. (Optional) MTC is considering a QEP component that focuses on preparing faculty to teach in the online environment. What are some suggestions for how we can better prepare faculty to teach successfully online? (Fill in the blank)

# Appendix E: QEP Student Interview Questions

## TENTATIVE STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introduction: Hello. My name is Filiz Aktan. I am an instructional designer in the Office of Online Teaching and Learning. As part of a new Quality Enhancement Plan, we are trying to identify possible causes/reasons for high withdrawal rates in online courses. Before offering any solutions, we are gathering as much data and information as we can so that we can improve the performance of online students and decrease the number of student withdrawals. As a student who has taken an online course, we value your opinion and experience in online courses. This interview will be casual. I may ask more questions on a topic for further clarification. If you do not want to answer a question, just let me know and we will skip it. This interview will be confidential and your name will not be attached to your comments. The interview should take between 20-25 minutes. Before starting our interview, do you have any questions?

## STUDENT-FOCUSED QUESTIONS

- What do you think about the online/hybrid courses at MTC? (*general*)
- How many online/hybrid courses have you withdrawn or withdrew? (*general*)
- What were the biggest challenges you encountered when you first took an online course? (*lack of knowledge/skill*)
- Under what kinds of situations do you need help from your instructor or peers when taking an online course? (*instructor support*)
- Overall, how do you feel about the faculty's performance in online courses? (*feeling*)
- What are the biggest pitfalls you have seen in online courses? (*feedback*)
- What are the skills you think you need to complete an online course successfully? (*lack of knowledge/skill*)

## SURVEY-RELATED QUESTIONS

- In the survey, the majority of the faculty indicated that the majority of online students do not possess time management skills. What do you think about this? Did you have any problem with managing your time?
- In the survey, the majority of the faculty indicated that the students who take an online course for the first time should go through a pre-online course training. Do you agree? Why or why not? Would you be willing to take a pre-online course that teaches certain skills to become successful in online courses?

## TRAINING

- How can MTC support you when taking an online course?
- If Online Teaching and Learning offers a pre-online course, what topics would you like to see covered in the course?

Conclusion: Thank you for participating in our interview. Your input is very important to us. If you have any further comments, opinions, or thoughts, please let us know. Thank you again.

# Appendix F: QEP Faculty Interview Questions

## TENTATIVE FACULTY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introduction: Hello. My name is Filiz Aktan. I am an instructional designer in the Office of Online Teaching and Learning. As part of our Quality Enhancement Plan, we are trying to identify possible causes or reasons for high withdrawal rates in online courses. Before offering any solutions, we are gathering as much data and information as we can so that we can improve the performance of online students and decrease the number of student withdrawals. As an instructor who teaches online, we value your opinion and observation of students' performances in online courses. This interview will be casual. I may ask more questions on a topic for further clarification. If you do not want to answer a question, just let me know and we will skip it. This interview will be confidential and your name will not be associated with your comments. The interview should take between 25-30 minutes. Before starting our interview, do you have any questions?

## FACULTY-FOCUSED QUESTIONS

- How are things going with online courses? Do you think there is a problem with online courses at MTC right now? (*general*)
- How do you feel about online courses at MTC? (*feelings*)
- What were the biggest challenges you encountered as a first-time online instructor? (*lack of skill/knowledge*)
- Recent ratings revealed that 1 out of 4 students either withdrew or were withdrawn from at least one online course at MTC. Why do you think so many students withdraw? What factors do you think contribute to a high withdrawal rate in online courses?
- What are the biggest pitfalls you have seen in current faculty preparation and/or support to teach online courses? (*environmental support*) What kinds of training and support do you think the college should provide for faculty preparing to teach online?
- What kind of help do you think faculty need when teaching online? (*environmental support*)
- What do you do when you have a challenging situation in your online courses? Do you seek help? If yes, which resources are you using? (*environmental support*)
- How about other online instructors? Do you share your experiences with them? (*motivation*)
- Where should the college's attention be focused on online courses: faculty or/and students?

### **STUDENT-FOCUSED QUESTIONS**

- Overall, how do you feel about students' performance in online courses? Are you satisfied with students' performance in online courses?
- What are the common problems that a student may have when he/she is taking an online course for the first time?
- What are the skills you expect from an online student when taking an online course?
- How do you encourage and motivate your online students?

### **SURVEY-RELATED QUESTIONS**

- In the survey, the majority of the faculty indicated that the majority of online students do not possess time management skills. What do you think causes online students' time management issues? How do you deal with the students if they do not have time management skills?
- In the survey, the majority of the faculty express interest in workshops, training, certification programs. Would you be willing to participate if they were available to you?
- Would you be interested in an Online Faculty Learning Community? Why or why not?
- In the survey, the majority of the students indicated that the online faculty usually do not get back to the students in a timely manner. Do you think the students' responses are accurate?

### **TRAINING**

- If the Office of Online Teaching and Learning creates a certification program/training for online instructors, what topics would you like to see covered in the program?
- How do you think Midlands Tech can support you in teaching online courses?

Thank you for participating in our interview. Your input is very important to us. If you have any further comments, opinions, or thoughts, please let us know. Thank you again.

## Appendix G: QEP Student Flyer

# QEP

## Quality Enhancement Plan

*A SACSCOC Reaffirmation Requirement*

As a component of the college's reaccreditation process, Midlands Technical College will be developing a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that focuses on improving student success over the next five years. The first step in creating the QEP will be selecting a topic.

**The college invites all Student Advisory Board members to a special QEP Listening Session to learn more about the QEP process and suggest QEP topics. Make your voice be heard in this special session for the SAB.**

**Please join us at Airport Campus on Friday, September 15th, 11:30-12:30pm in Morris Hall 141 (Innovation Center).**

\*Morris Hall is the building across the street from the main campus.

For more information about the QEP, please visit <http://www.midlandstech.edu/QEP>.

For questions about the QEP, contact Devin Henson, QEP Director, at [QEP@midlandstech.edu](mailto:QEP@midlandstech.edu).



# Appendix H: QEP Faculty and Staff Survey



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## Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) - Questionnaire for Faculty and Staff

MTC Community -

Your feedback is vital to the QEP process. Please provide recommendations for up to two potential QEP initiatives that . . .

- Relate to Online Learning
- Support the college's Strategic Plan- including initiatives such as retention and increasing enrollment
- Focus on improving specific student learning outcomes and / or student success

Where possible, support your recommendation with an explanation of how your proposal would positively impact MTC students. If you have more than two suggested topics, complete the survey again or email QEP@midlandstech.edu.

Click "Next" to continue

<< Previous

Next >>

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**Instructions: Below are text boxes that will allow you to provide proposals for up to two initiatives. In the boxes below, please include:**

1. The title of your initiative.
2. A brief summary (Support for initiative) of the reasons why your initiative is important to the college and how it will support Online Learning, as well as how it relates to MTC priorities, such as student success, enrollment, or retention.

**Once you are finished, please click the "Submit " button to submit your responses. Thank you for your participation.**

Q1a. Title of initiative

Q1b. Support for initiative

Q2a. Title of initiative

Q2b. Support for initiative

Thank you for your participation!

<< Previous

Submit

## Appendix I: MTC Mission and Vision Statements

# Mission and Vision

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### MTC Mission Statement

Midlands Technical College is a comprehensive, multi-campus, two-year public college serving the primary region of Richland, Lexington and Fairfield counties of South Carolina. College programs and services provide accessible, affordable, quality education that prepares a diverse student population to succeed in the job market, to transfer to four-year colleges and universities, and to achieve their professional and personal goals. The college equitably provides higher education opportunities that stimulate the local economy by generating a world-class workforce and enhancing the social vitality of the community.

### MTC Vision Statement

Midlands Technical College, as the premier higher education partner, creates innovative learning environments, promotes individual and business success, drives economic vitality, and enhances quality of life.

## Appendix J: Marketing Newsletter Example

The following screenshot is one of a series of email communications for faculty and staff that provides a detailed overview of the QEP and how it will be implemented.

 MTC President's Office  
Mon 6/3, 4:33 PM  
All MTC 

 Reply all | 

Greetings,

As a part of our upcoming SACSCOC reaccreditation process, MTC has created a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) designed to increase the online learning success of our students. The QEP is titled **“MORE@MTC (Maximizing Online Readiness and Excellence),”** and is focused on increasing the success of students in our online courses.

It is important for you to know about “MORE@MTC” because it is critical for our online students to be just as successful as our students taking face-to-face classes. I’ll be in touch in the coming months with updates as the QEP takes shape. You can also stay up to date on the [QEP through MyMTC](#).

**“MORE@MTC” will embed three key strategies:**

1. A student readiness course required for all online students to prepare them for online learning
2. An Online Faculty Learning Community (OFLC) to prepare faculty for online teaching
3. Coordination of support services for students in targeted online gateway courses

In the next email, I will share details about the first QEP strategy, which focuses on improving online student readiness using a required course.

Thanks,  
Ron

## Appendix K: MTC QEP 2019 Marketing Plan

**BUDGET:** \$6,000

**STRATEGIES:** Social Media, Website, MyMTC/D2L, On-Campus Promotional Materials, Giveaways, On-Campus Events, QEP Exemplar

**AUDIENCES:** Students, MTC Faculty/Staff, MTC Councils

*Please note: All QEP marketing verbiage (including social, MyMTC/D2L updates, exemplar) to be drafted by QEP team and supplied to marketing for each deliverable.*

### AUDIENCE: STUDENTS

#### Deliverables:

##### Social Media – Twice monthly Facebook/Twitter/Instagram Post

- July – As fall registration rolls on, did you know that there's a new requirement for online courses? We're launching a virtual backpack, and we want you to know more about it: [LINK TO QEP WEBPAGE](#)
- July – Online class faculty and staff are hard at work getting geared up for Fall semester! Here are a few of our great instructors taking part in the MORE (Maximizing Online Readiness and Excellence) faculty consortium. #mtcawesome (INCLUDE PHOTO OF STAFF TAKING PART)
- August – Today at MTC in-service, QEP (Quality Enhancement Plan) Director Devin Henson presented the objectives of our new MORE (Maximizing Online Readiness and Success) initiative to all MTC faculty and staff. Thank you, Devin, for your leadership! #mtcawesome Learn about the QEP here:
- August – Students: Join us as we ring in the fall semester on the Airport Campus compass. Grab some swag and donuts, and learn more about MORE! (Maximizing Online Readiness and Success)
- September – Are you interested in enrolling in one of our shorter-term online classes? Get the help you need with the virtual backpack, part of our Maximizing Online Readiness and Success Initiative (MORE): [LINK TO QEP WEBPAGE](#)
- September – WIN A FREE T-SHIRT! Name what the MTC QEP is below, and you'll be entered in a drawing for one of our awesome swag bags. Get it while it's hot! (Pssst: there's also a VISA gift card in one of these.)

- October – Look at these awesome flags going up around campus. Learn more about MORE today: (PHOTO OF FEATHER FLAGS)
- **Public website updated on a regular basis**
  - July – Virtual Backpack: Designed to meet needs of students, brief overview of content, discussion of who is required to take it
  - August – Six Targeted Online Gateway Courses: Six courses that most students take, will serve as pilot for a number of exciting enhancements to online classes across the college
  - September – OFLC and Student Support Services: Show how the college is investing in improving online teaching, early alerts, online advising, online tutoring, and library resources (include a picture from the first OFLC or of an advisor with the new headset/webcams)
  - October – SACS Visit: Who they are, why it is good for students (ensures quality), and what it means for students
- **D2L monthly post linking to updated public website**
  - July – Are you thinking about taking any online classes this coming year?
  - August – Are you taking one of these six online classes?
  - September – Would you like to be advised or tutored online? Click here to find out about some exciting improvements to online education at MTC
  - October – New guests will be on campus this month and may want to speak with you about MORE
- **On-Campus Promotional Materials:**
  - Yard signs, window stickers, and rack cards to be designed – July 2019
  - Yard signs, window stickers, and rack cards to be distributed – August 2019
  - Feather flags created for student QEP event – September 2019
- **Giveaways:**
  - Stickers, pens, t-shirts created and produced for MORE student event – September 2019
- **Presentations begin on a monthly basis beginning August 2019 to SAB, NSLS, and Student Ambassadors from QEP representative**
- **Student event planned in conjunction with student organizations – TBA**
- **Social media contest TBA – September 2019**

**AUDIENCE: MTC FACULTY/STAFF**

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**Deliverables:**

- ❑ **Social Media – Twice monthly Facebook/Twitter/Instagram Post drafted by QEP team and supplied to marketing for posting beginning June 2019**
- ❑ **QEP Newsletter to be sent on a monthly basis beginning June 2019**
  - Issue 1: Your Role in MTC’s Quality Enhancement Plan – Sent June 3, 2019
  - Issue 2: Important Reaccreditation Information – Sent July 2, 2019
  - Issue 3: Information about the six targeted courses – July 16, 2019
  - Issue 4: Online faculty learning objective information – July 30, 2019
  - Issue 5: Student learning resources – August 5, 2019
  - Issue 6: Inservice presentation recap – August 19, 2019
  - Issue 7: What to expect for SACS on-campus visit – September 12, 2019
  - Issue 8: How to use the QEP moving forward – September 26, 2019
- ❑ **Public website updated on a regular basis**
  - July – Virtual Backpack: Brief overview along with discussion of justification behind it (literature and demand from faculty/student surveys)
  - August – Six Targeted Online Gateway Courses: Share justification for why these six courses in particular were selected, include relevant data from QEP
  - September – OFLC and Student Support Services: Justification for changes, timetable for implementation, possibility of broadening services beyond targeted courses
  - October – SACS Onsite visit: What it means for staff, faculty, and MTC. Timeline for when we should know about reaccreditation results.
- ❑ **MyMTC monthly update**
  - July – What you and your students need to know about the Virtual Backpack
  - August – Do you teach one of these six courses?
  - September – See what you and your colleagues are doing to improve online education at MTC
  - October – What to expect during the SACS onsite visit
- ❑ **On-Campus Promotional Materials:**
  - Big metal signs, window stickers, and rack cards to be designed – July 2019
  - Big metal signs, window stickers, and rack cards to be distributed – August 2019
  - Feather flags created for “welcome back” events – August 2019
  - T-shirts for faculty/staff and student giveaways – August 2019

□ **Giveaways:**

- Stickers, pens, t-shirts created and produced for on-campus student QEP event – September 2019

**AUDIENCE: MTC COUNCILS**

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**Deliverables:**

- **Presentations begin on a monthly basis to Faculty Council, Staff Council, and Academic Affairs Council beginning June 2019 to request action from each council to help educate MTC community on QEP initiatives**
- **QEP Exemplar – to be shared through each council**
  - June 5 – Update to EC on QEP Marketing Plan, and deliver QEP initial draft to EC (not for formal review)
  - June 14 – QEP Director will provide completed QEP draft to EC for review by email
  - June 21 – QEP comments and suggestions due to QEP Director from EC
  - June 28 – EC comments and suggestions incorporated into QEP document by QEP Director; document ready for final review
  - July 1 – Final review due from Ron and Barrie; finalized document due to Marketing for rebranding (4 weeks requested by Marketing for rebranding the document, but I will ask if 3 is sufficient so ARP can get it close to your requested date -- Also, we will also try to expedite things on our end so Marketing can have 4 weeks for their work)
  - July 16 – Final rebranded document returned from Marketing; ready for submission for SACSCOC