



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an effort to significantly improve student learning at Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC), Students Providing Alternative Resources for Knowledge (SPARK), was chosen as the focus area for the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). SPARK represents GTCC's ongoing commitment to student learning and student success through the educational practice of peer learning.

SPARK is an institution-wide approach to peer support programs. In addition, SPARK is an integrated component of the First Year Experience & Retention (FYER) strategy. Enabling students to make connections with more experienced peers is understood to promote a sense of belonging and facilitate engagement (e.g., Tinto, 2009; Wilcox, Winn & Fyvie-Gauld, 2005). The implementation of formalized peer learning in the college experience will positively enhance the quality of education at GTCC for all students.

GTCC will implement the peer learning strategy of supplemental instruction (branded as SPARK) to enable our students to attain success in selected college courses with high failure/withdrawal rates. Currently, SPARK is focused specifically on anatomy and physiology classes, but the strategies and techniques taught during SPARK student sessions by student leaders will fortify students' learning approaches beyond the one biology class by penetrating their learning strategies and techniques in other classes.

SPARK will adopt a multi-level approach toward improving student learning based upon constituent input and examination of college data. As a result of SPARK, students will:

- 1) Develop learning strategies and apply them in their current course of study.
- 2) Demonstrate competence (a grade of "C" or better) in selected high-risk courses and decrease course withdrawal rates.
- 3) Demonstrate non-cognitive factors of self-efficacy, motivation, and resilience which are essential to student success.
- 4) Establish a connection with other members of the community college.

The QEP reflects GTCC's learner-centered approach to higher education. Assessments will utilize both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Through the SPARK initiative, GTCC will continue its commitment to quality education and a comprehensive, holistic learning experience for students.

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