

***Simply the BEST: Building Engaged Students thru Technology***  
**Mountain Empire Community College**

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**Executive Summary**

The MECC Quality Enhancement Plan presents a framework for engaging students in a technology-rich learning environment, while preparing them for success in a technology driven world. The plan will ensure that both the students and faculty are ready for this experience.

***Simply the BEST: Building Engaged Students thru Technology*** is a collaborative effort of all sectors of Mountain Empire Community College. Various issues were considered in the selection of the topic, spanning a timeframe of several months. The increase in distance learning students and their success rates were among the most common issues discussed, as well as the issue of decreased engagement of students in both the traditional classroom and online environments. The technology tie between the two concerns helped to refine the topic.

MECC has used the Blackboard online course management system since 2001. Currently 35 of 46 full-time faculty members annually deliver instruction via online courses to over 2,000 students (51% of the student population). Many of the techniques used by faculty for online instruction have been self-developed, with few faculty utilizing the interactive and performance tracking tools available. More effective use of BlackBoard has the potential to bridge the gap between engagement and success in the online learning environment.

The BEST initiative will focus on student learning as it affects changes in the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and values of students to effectively engage in online learning through their levels of presence, interaction, and commitment. Essentially, the essence of this Quality Enhancement Plan is to improve online academics at Mountain Empire Community College making students' experiences ***Simply the BEST***.