

Focus on Success: Enhancing the Experience of First Year Students

The purpose of Pamlico Community College's (PCC) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is to improve student academic success and persistence through enhancing the first year experience. PCC's QEP leadership team solicited broad-based, service area input before selecting the topic. A needs assessment determined that a first year experience program would best enhance the student learning environment at the college. This program, called "Focus on Success", has three primary components, each of which is supported by a different goal. Through *Focus on Success*, first year students will be:

- connected and engaged with academic resources and programs (to take place through the enhancement of the new student orientation program),
- engaged in planning and integrating career and educational goals (to take place through the creation of a comprehensive advising model), and
- provided with skills to effectively function in the college environment (to take place through enhancing student success courses).

Focus on Success will be implemented through three strategies. The implementation team has reformatted the college's existing orientation program to ensure student access and engagement while key information is conveyed. The *Focus on Success* team has also created an online orientation in the interest of serving a large segment of PCC's student body that are enrolled in distance learning courses.

The QEP implementation team has created a comprehensive model for PCC advisors working with first year students. The team is compiling an advising handbook as a first step in the professional development of advisors. Advisors are also expected to register their students in the student success course and developmental courses if/as needed in their students' first semester of enrollment. The implementation team will continue to facilitate professional development for advisors throughout the course of the *Focus on Success* program.

In conjunction with student success course instructors, the implementation team has created a common course syllabus for ACA-111 (College Student Success) and ACA-122 (College Transfer Success) classes, which includes common educational outcomes within them. All first year students will be strongly encouraged to enroll in a student success course their first semester, as well as complete developmental coursework, if needed, during their first academic year.

The PCC community expects *Focus on Success* to increase the retention and subsequent persistence of first year students. The *Focus on Success* Director, along with his advisory committee and other campus leadership will continue to coordinate the implementation of *Focus on Success* until its completion. *Focus on Success* will be assessed through a variety of ways, such as focus groups, student success rates, as well as other evaluation instruments. The data gathered will be used to determine how the QEP leadership team will make adjustments and decisions about the plan. PCC's goal is to have *Focus on Success* support the college mission, one tenet of which is to provide a quality education to the students it serves.

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