

Learning Communities

Southwest Tennessee Community College

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Executive Summary

Southwest Tennessee Community College's (Southwest) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) creates a carefully crafted experience for first-time, full-time students in the form of learning communities. The structure creates first-year learning communities for students at various levels of college readiness, and across multiple disciplines at the College. The purpose is to create learning communities that focus on one of the most successful elements of learning communities that the literature review revealed, connectedness.

Learning Communities at Southwest are structured as two specific sections of courses that a cohort of students register for together. Experiences in the classroom are designed to begin to build community amongst those students. Those experiences are also supported by co-curricular activities offered by student services, the student success center and the library to help the student answer the question "do I belong here?" The intent is to increase a student's level of relatedness to other students, faculty, and staff at the institution.

The QEP will develop processes in order to build capacity to support increasing varieties of learning communities and increasing numbers of students. Learning communities include Transitional Studies, designed to support students at the lowest levels of college readiness, and Honors, for highly prepared and academically able students. Other communities are more content oriented, such as Business, Health Professions and STEM; while still others appeal to specific student interests such International Studies and Leadership.