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GUILFORD TECHNICAL
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
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Executive Summary

Guilford Technical Community College's mission statement "People. Pathways. Partnerships" affirms that the College is focused on serving its students, faculty, staff, and the Guilford County community. GTCC has a long history of data-driven decision-making, an established Institutional Effectiveness process, and a commitment to Guided Pathways. The College's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) and its emphasis on improving student success in the first 12 hours is aligned with the Strategic Plan and specifically Goal 1: "*Improve and measure student access, success, progress, and completion.*" Key Performance Indicator data have shown that students who earn 12 credit hours are more likely to complete, transfer, or remain enrolled at the institution after two years. In addition, student achievement gaps are virtually eliminated when students reach this critical threshold.

Beginning in 2020, GTCC launched a college-wide Guided Pathways 2.0 initiative that reevaluated the College's progress and identified processes and practices that required further changes to improve student success outcomes. Building from this intensive work, GTCC identified and gained broad-based support for its QEP, which will seek to increase overall student success and to reduce achievement gaps in student success.

GTCC's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) entitled "Here to Succeed" is the culmination of extensive research and continuous efforts to improve academic success early in a student's educational pathway. As will be described below, insight gained from analyzing numerous data points has led the College to realize that improvement in student performance within the first 12 credit hours of instruction significantly increases overall student success. Recent data obtained from the College's participation in the American Association of Community College's Voluntary Framework of Accountability shows that 41% of students who come to GTCC do not earn 12 credit hours in their first two years of enrollment. There is also a significant achievement gap between white students and students of color. As a majority student-of-color institution, the College is committed to raising student achievement for all. Consequently, GTCC's QEP project strategies are centered around improving attendance and engagement in a student's first 12 credit hours attempted at GTCC.

The QEP aims to accomplish the following student success outcomes.

QEP Student Success Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Improve student attendance and engagement.2. Increase course success rates (C or better) in students' first 12 credit hours, which will decrease achievement gaps in student sub-populations.3. Improve overall student persistence.4. Increase the percentage of students in Good Academic Standing.5. Decrease financial burden on students by increasing students meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress.

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Profile of Guilford Technical Community College

Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) is a comprehensive, public two-year college that has been serving the community since 1958 (66 years). GTCC focuses on training and retraining Guilford County's workforce and preparing students for further education. GTCC's value is in its mission: "People. Pathways. Partnerships." A focus on people is GTCC's promise to ensure students achieve their educational and career goals and that employees are devoted to supporting students in a dynamic, diverse, inclusive environment. An emphasis on pathways guarantees that the College is continuously improving the student experience leading to successful outcomes through enhanced guidance, communication, and non-academic support. The focus on partnerships is intended to highlight GTCC's commitment to promoting economic development in the region by providing a highly skilled workforce for employers.

GTCC is the third largest community college in North Carolina and is one of seven institutions of higher education in Guilford County. The other institutions include four private, non-profit, four-year institutions (Bennett College, Greensboro College, Guilford College, and High Point University) and two public, non-profit, four-year institutions (North Carolina A&T State University and University of North Carolina at Greensboro). Guilford County is located in a diverse and expansive geographic region called the Piedmont Triad, and GTCC understands the importance of remaining committed to meeting the needs of this community, especially considering the highly competitive higher education environment in the region. The majority of GTCC's students are from Guilford County, and they reflect the diversity of the county's population. The majority of GTCC's students are non-white (64%) and female students comprise 59% of the student body. In terms of age, 70% of students are younger than 25, and an estimated 19% are 25-34 years old.

GTCC has an open-door admissions policy and serves more than 30,000 students annually across six campuses and through more than 80 for-credit, workforce development/continuing education, and basic skills programs of study. The College offers associate degrees, diplomas, and certificates, and non-credit courses in professional development, personal enrichment, job training, career development, English as a second language, and adult basic education. In Fall 2024, GTCC enrolled 11,340 credit-program students, which represents a 9% increase over Fall 2023. In Fall 2023, GTCC had 6,495 continuing education students and 2,195 basic skills and adult education students.¹

The majority (57%) of GTCC students who apply for financial aid are eligible for Pell grants, and almost 29% of GTCC students fall at or below the federally-defined poverty line. Approximately 66% of GTCC students are enrolled part-time. With these demographics in mind, GTCC seeks to provide equitable educational outcomes for all students representing all backgrounds.

¹ Fall 2024 data for non-credit is not complete until the end of the current semester.

GTCC's Culture of Inquiry

Building an Institutional Culture that Supports Data-Based Continuous Improvement

GTCC has a long record of seeking and implementing innovative approaches to improve the student experience. As one of the original community colleges comprising the first Achieving the Dream cohort in 2004, GTCC began developing a culture of inquiry using student achievement data to inform decisions about needed improvements to processes, practices, programs, and policies. As a result of this work, in 2011, GTCC and six other community colleges were selected for a 10-year transformative journey, first with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Completion by Design initiative, and then with the Frontier Set initiative. Through Completion by Design, GTCC used the Guided Pathways whole-college redesign model as a structure and the Loss/Momentum Framework as a process to identify issues negatively impacting student success and to develop initiatives to address them. The Frontier Set continued this work by adding evidenced-based practices to further improve outcomes for students through advising, developmental education, digital learning, college transfer, and equity.

Additionally, in 2015, GTCC embarked on a comprehensive internal review of all academic curricula. This process was driven by the College's desire to improve the educational experience and graduation rates for students, and the analysis included assessment of local industry needs, evaluation of current student success metrics, and a robust curriculum review. Some significant changes were made as a result such as: decreasing required credit hours to earn a credential, reviewing/selecting required general education courses appropriate to the specific credential, placing English and math requirements into the first year of the program of study, and removing local pre-requisites that were not supported by data. These changes continue to positively impact GTCC state performance measures and the Federal Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) graduation rates for GTCC students.

Then in June 2016, the College welcomed a team from the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program who spent two days conducting interviews with GTCC students, staff, faculty, administration, and community partners. As a result, they recommended improving the presentation of transfer pathways, including labor market information on all degree programs, integrating student onboarding and student support services, developing a more proactive approach to advising, and increasing the engagement of faculty in student success activities. The College has undertaken initiatives to address each of these areas.

Also in 2016, GTCC received a five-year U.S. Department of Education Title III Strengthening Institutions Program grant that focused on improving support services offered including the addition of Academic Intervention Specialist staff and credentialed professional and peer tutors, the use of additional Early Alert technology, and increased non-cognitive support provided through Titan Link. The grant helped GTCC establish the Center for Teaching and Learning and develop faculty training focused on culturally inclusive classroom strategies that support greater student engagement. Through grant implementation, GTCC increased graduation rates, fall-to-fall retention rates, and course success rates for gateway courses (Bucci et al., 2022).

In 2020, GTCC began participating in the American Association of Community Colleges' Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA) to benchmark student progress and completion

against peer institutions nationwide. Many of the measures are based on elements of the Loss/Momentum Framework initiated through Completion by Design that helped lead GTCC to its proposed QEP topic and will be continued in the efforts to achieve its QEP.

Topic Identification

The Role of Comprehensive Planning and Institutional Effectiveness

As outlined in Core Requirement 7.1, GTCC has a long-established process for assessing institutional quality and effectiveness that is data-based, inclusive of representatives from across the College, and evaluative in nature. This process helps improve college programs and services, and as described below, is also the genesis of the proposed Quality Enhancement Plan.

GTCC annually evaluates all seven goals identified in the College's Strategic Plan by creating a discrete set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each goal.² While all seven strategic plan goals are critical to the Institution, Goal 1 - *"Improve and measure student access, success, progress and completion"* - is core to the College's mission and purpose. The KPIs identified to assess Goal 1 attempt to measure overall student achievement and critical momentum points that impact success. One of these KPIs is the Two-Year Success Measure developed as part of the VFA, and this provides GTCC a way to benchmark progress against other regional and national institutions of similar size and demography.

Voluntary Framework of Accountability Two-Year Success

Core to the QEP topic selection was analyzing the disaggregation of data in the VFA Two-Year Success KPI. Specifically, the Two-Year Success measure looks at the percentage of students in the cohort who complete a certificate or degree, successfully transfer, or are still enrolled in their third fall term. The VFA disaggregates data into three cohorts as follows:

- 1) **New to GTCC Cohort:** students who come to GTCC for the first time in a fall semester but may have previous college experience
- 2) **Credential Seeking Cohort:** Students who have earned 12 credit hours (grade of C or better) within the first two years of enrollment
- 3) **First-Time-in-College Cohort:** Students who do not have previous college experience and come to GTCC for the first time in a fall semester.

Table 1 presents longitudinal data on these three cohorts. While two-year success has slightly increased over the participation period, the significant interpretation of the data is the nearly 25% differential observed between the Credential Seeking student cohort and the New to GTCC cohort.

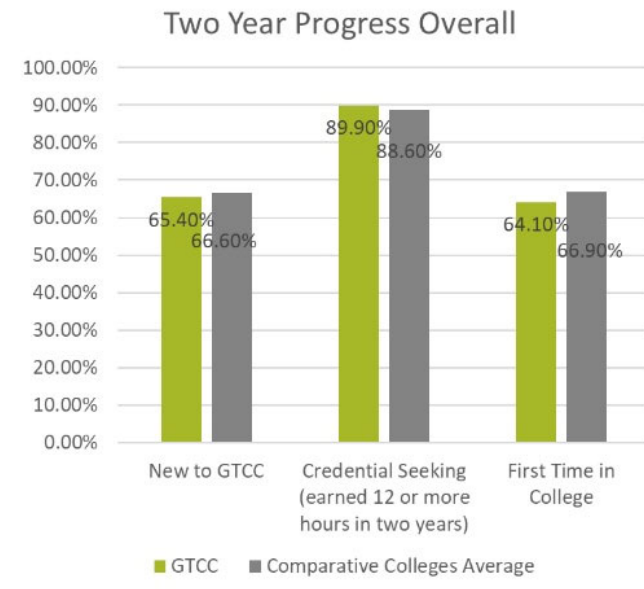
² Data related to all of GTCC's KPIs are located on the Student Achievement webpage: <https://www.gtcc.edu/about/accreditation/student-achievement.php>

Table 1: Voluntary Framework of Accountability Two-Year Success Measure

	Fall 2017 Cohort	Fall 2018 Cohort	Fall 2019 Cohort	Fall 2020 Cohort	Fall 2021 Cohort
New to GTCC	64.30%	65.90%	62.50%	65.40%	64.5%
Credential Seeking	88.00%	89.70%	88.30%	89.90%	89.7%
First Time in College	62.50%	64.00%	59.70%	64.10%	61.1%

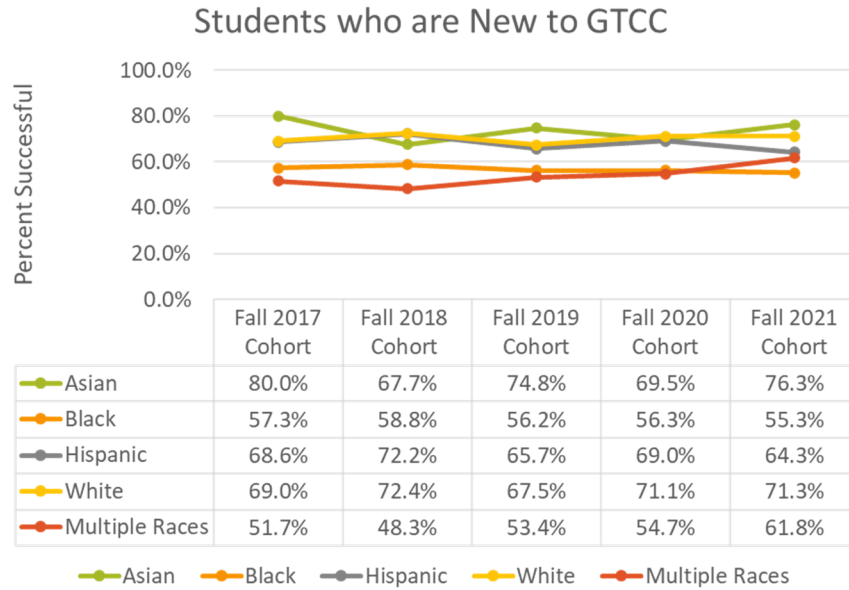
To provide context to GTCC’s two-year success levels, Graph 1 gives peer data for comparison of the two-year success measure for the latest cohort available, Fall 2020. Data indicates that GTCC compares favorably with peer institutions nationally for all three cohorts but highlights again the significantly higher success of the Credential Seeking student cohort.

Graph 1: GTCC VFA Two-Year Success Measure with National Comparisons

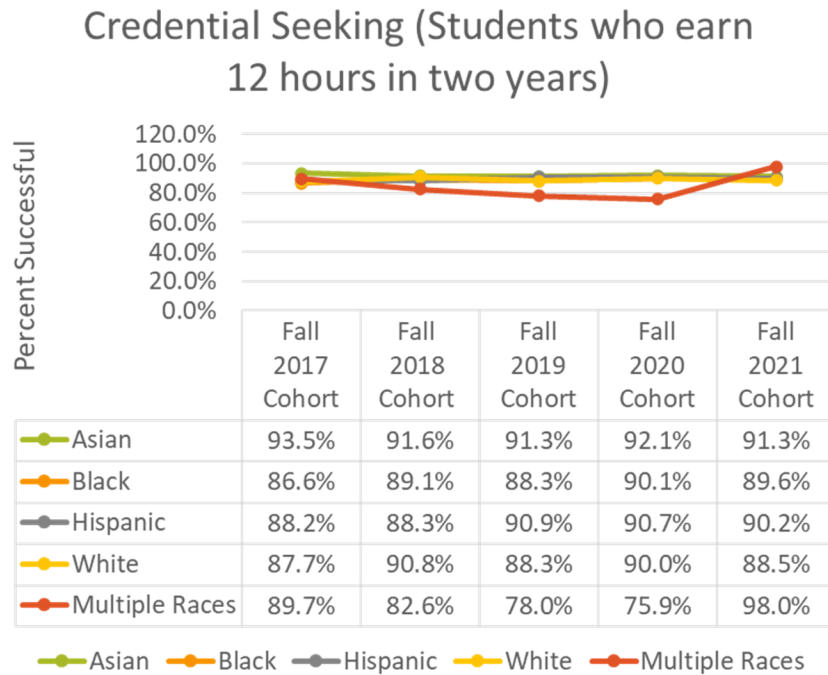


The College also reviewed the two-year success data disaggregated by race and ethnicity and made a significant finding. Comparing data in Graphs 2 and 3 below reveals that when students are in the Credential Seeking cohort, they all achieve at the same high level (approximately 90%), no matter their race and ethnicity (“Multiple Races” is a small subpopulation and success rates vary). In other words, current GTCC data shows that successfully achieving 12 credit hours within the first two years of attendance removes the disparity in achievement between white students and students of color. This realization has led GTCC to focus on success in the first 12 hours of attendance for all students, as it clearly has a significant impact on student achievement levels.

Graph 2: VFA New to GTCC Two Year Success Measure



Graph 3: VFA Credential Seeking Two Year Success Measure



After the critical realization that success in the first 12 hours was important to reducing and possibly eliminating the achievement gap for all student populations, GTCC conducted an analysis of three cohorts of students who were classified in the New to GTCC VFA category to identify both positive and negative predictors of success in achieving the Credential Seeking VFA status. For context, the demographics for students in the three cohorts analyzed were 54% female, 73% person of color (54% black), 65% part-time, 41% First Generation (when data are available), 53% receiving Pell, and an average age of 22. Table 2 below delineates both the

positive and negative predictors of these students achieving credential-seeking status, in order of significance at GTCC.

Table 2: Predictors of “New to GTCC” Achieving “Credential Seeking” Status

Positive Predictors	Negative Predictors
Full-time status (attempting 12 or more credits)	Earning zero credit hours in the first term
High School grade point average	First-time-in-college status
Completion of English and math in the first year	Female gender

Many of the positive predictors are expected and have been noted in previous national data sets. However, the negative predictors identified were both instructive and actionable. Of the identified negative predictors, the most significant predictor of a negative outcome was earning zero credit hours in the first term of attendance (Frye & Corbell, 2021). To remove this negative predictor and to make a significant impact on moving students from New to GTCC to Credential Seeking, GTCC needed to evaluate and address barriers to earning credits in the first term. To do so, the College analyzed student survey results to learn more about student experiences, disaggregated and disseminated course success rates to faculty to guide training on effective classroom retention strategies, and used a Guided Pathways framework to collect broad-based input on strengths and weaknesses of the current student experience.

Student Survey Results

Additional indicators that helped identify current student engagement trends at GTCC are provided by two student surveys: the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). Since 2017, GTCC has administered the CCSSE and SENSE alternating every other calendar year. The CCSSE is administered in spring to returning students, and the SENSE is administered early in the fall to new students to gauge their initial experiences at the College. Both surveys provide some insight into current student engagement and overall growth in cognitive student engagement. SENSE is especially telling in understanding the experiences of the First Time at GTCC student cohort, whose success in the first 12 hours is critical to their overall success.

Some of the critical data from the SENSE that informs the QEP revealed that students in the first three weeks of class reported that:

- 50% turned in at least one assignment late
- 36% did not turn in at least one assignment
- 43% came to class without completing readings or assignments at least one time
- 26% skipped class at least one time
- 29% have not worked with other students on a project or assignment during class
- 28% have not discussed an assignment or exam with an instructor
- 19% have not asked for help from an instructor

These responses help in understanding the students’ approach to their college classes in their first semester, and they reveal that students do not see the correlation between attendance/class engagement and their long-term success.

Overall Course Success

As part of GTCC's Institutional Effectiveness Framework (see Core Requirement 7.1), course success (defined as a C or better grade) is a metric included in all program review data sets that are distributed to faculty and academic leaders for their review and action. Since 2019, all program areas have developed action plans to address course success, as it represents one of the greatest opportunities to improve overall student achievement. For instance, targeted professional development around classroom practices that promote equitable learning outcomes became a focus of some action plans to aid faculty in addressing course success gaps. GTCC also compares success rates for all courses with those from the other 57 members of the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) to include a meaningful, external benchmark for improvement. An evaluation of college-wide course success rates indicates that many high-volume, gateway courses (taken in the first 12 credits) fall well below the NCCCS average. The College also disaggregates the data by student demographic and has identified significant achievement gaps among races/ethnicities. Table 3 shows the change in course success rates over the last four years.

Table 3: GTCC Course Success Rates Overall and Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
GTCC Overall Course Success Rate	67.3%	68.2%	69.8%	72.1%	74.7%
NCCCS Overall Course Success Rate	74.0%	74.0%	74.0%	76.0%	77.0%
Black or African American	58.0%	57.1%	60.4%	63.2%	66.7%
Hispanic	68.3%	66.8%	69.5%	73.8%	75.3%
White	74.9%	76.8%	77.0%	78.6%	81.2%
Other Races/Unknown	62.6%	63.3%	66.6%	71.8%	74.0%

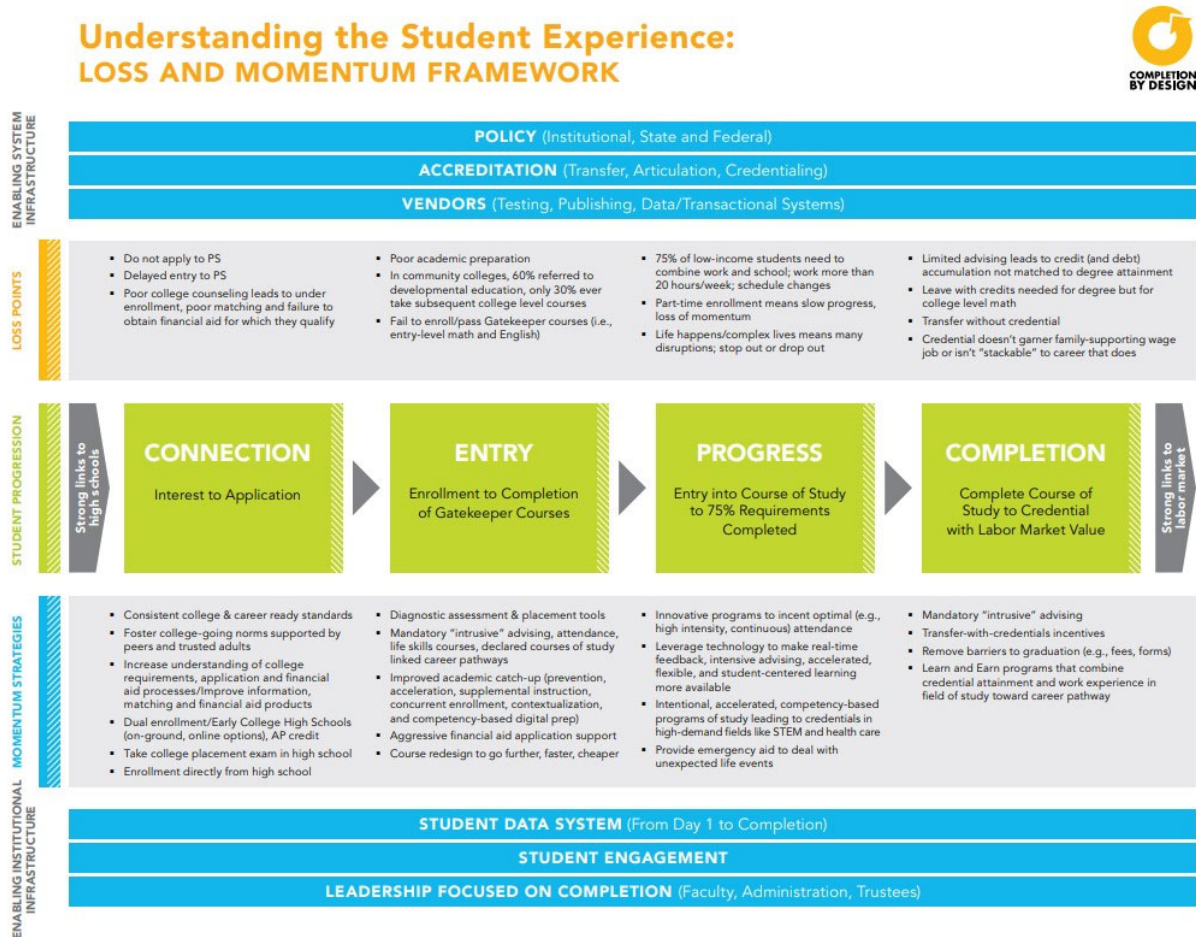
While overall course success rates have increased 5% and the gap with the NCCCS system average has narrowed over the four-year period, achievement gaps for black/African American students remain significant (14.5-17%). The interventions, including data-sharing and targeted faculty development, made some overall impact on course success but failed to catch GTCC up to NCCCS success rates or to erase disparities between races. For students enrolled in gateway courses, there remain some barriers to success that still need to be addressed.

Building Broad-Based Support

Development of the Guided Pathways 2.0 Project and the Loss/Momentum Framework

Building off earlier Guided Pathways work and as part of its goal of continuous improvement, GTCC launched a college-wide Guided Pathways 2.0 initiative in 2020. Guided Pathways 2.0 re-evaluates the College's progress and identifies additional processes and practices that might require further changes to improve student success outcomes. Using the Loss/Momentum Framework, GTCC focused on the student experience and engagement at four key points of the student's pathway: connection, entry, progress, and completion (Rassen et al., 2013). As Figure 1 illustrates for each point, the framework defines loss points and momentum strategies to help educators understand how to help students continue their path to completion.

Figure 1: Loss/Momentum Framework



Using two different surveys, Guided Pathways 2.0 solicited broad-based feedback from all GTCC faculty and staff in student-facing departments and from mid- and high-level leadership. Survey questions were categorized into the four segments of the Loss/Momentum Framework (connection, entry, progress, and completion). Survey results identified strengths and areas for improvement. Strengths included the availability of high-quality academic program maps, strong curricular alignment with four-year partners, strong career-technical credential alignment to workforce expectations, availability of opportunities to advance basic academic skills through developmental education, and equitable access to programs that lead to living-wage careers. Areas for improvement included implementing proactive assessments that help students access non-cognitive student support measures, improving strategies to assist students in making an informed initial choice of a career pathway, assisting students who are initially undecided about their major select a focus, and creating more holistic first-semester experiences by career pathway. Notably, all areas that need improvement directly relate to students' experiences early in their enrollment. This realization greatly influenced the selection of the QEP topic.

In January of 2021, the College brought in two consultants from the National Center for Inquiry and Improvement to facilitate discussions with mid-level leadership around the survey results

and other pertinent college data to help identify discrete areas for further development. Four areas of focus were identified: getting students admitted and oriented to college; choosing a career channel; student connection and belonging; and first semester experience. The president and senior leadership team then met to review the proposed focus areas, survey results, and other data, and finalized the four focus areas as follows:

- Student interest and onboarding
- Career and program selection
- Student belonging and communication
- Student success in the first twelve hours.

The president and senior leadership team then discussed the next steps in the process and decided to create four teams to coordinate the work on the identified themes. Team members were selected based on their area of expertise and potential contribution, and the membership included college-wide representation (see Appendix I). Members of the senior leadership team were intentionally not included to allow for freedom of thought and to encourage a broad base of support through the inclusion of ideas. Each design team received training on their expected deliverables and were provided with an initial set of data, such as student survey results. At the conclusion of this process, design teams developed recommendations and multi-year action plans to increase student achievement and presented them to the president and senior leadership, who serve as the Guided Pathways Steering Committee. Results on progress are regularly shared with the college community and the GTCC Board of Trustees.

The design team addressing student success in the first 12 hours used both the survey and the data elements described in the previous sections to inform recommendations that aim to improve overall student achievement and significantly reduce the current achievement gap observed in sub-populations of students. This included a recommendation to adopt a college-wide attendance policy. To fully explore this recommendation, a new cross-functional committee of academic and student services professionals began to develop what a college-wide attendance policy might look like at GTCC. Additionally, to provide necessary context to these efforts, a brief history of attendance policy implementation at GTCC is provided below.

History of Attendance Policy Implementation at GTCC

In July 2011, the Federal Government issued two changes to regulations governing programs authorized by the Higher Education Act of 1965, including the treatment of Title IV financial aid funds (“GEN-11-14,” 2011). One of the changes issued guidance on the definition of an “attendance-taking institution” and states that an institution that does not have an established college-wide attendance policy does not have to monitor the last date of attendance for students. This policy decision effectively reduced a college’s obligation to return Title IV funds if it does not have an attendance requirement. In good faith, GTCC adopted this position in the 2011 timeframe as the College served many low-income, Pell-awarded students who would not be able to return funds once awarded. As a reminder: approximately 56% of GTCC degree-seeking students are Pell-eligible and 71% of degree-seeking students receive Pell and/or other federal loans.

After adopting this position, recording attendance was no longer required for federal financial aid

purposes. However, the North Carolina Community College System requires all colleges to document a student's first date of attendance during the census period for FTE funding calculations. Outside of this requirement, it is left to the instructor of record to individually determine attendance requirements for the course. Exceptions to that include externally regulated/accredited programs that have specific attendance requirements, such as cosmetology, aviation, and veteran students receiving benefits.

This policy-change effectively altered how GTCC students valued class attendance. Attendance through the census period (10%) was emphasized consistently by all faculty. However, after that point in the semester, course attendance policies varied widely, which created significant inconsistencies for students. Without an administrative withdrawal process, students were also responsible for dropping their courses if they were unable to attend, fell behind, or could not maintain course engagement. As a result, when the College stopped requiring attendance, student course success rates in critical gateway courses decreased substantially, which meant more students failed classes, and thus, did not meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) for financial aid purposes. In Fall 2023, the College reported that 1,262 (15%) of its traditional students receiving financial aid failed to maintain SAP. The QEP Development Committee recognizes that attendance and SAP are critically linked, and both must be addressed to ensure student success.

Due to the unintended negative consequences that were created by the lack of attendance tracking, GTCC faculty are greatly in favor of moving to a college-wide attendance policy with administrative withdrawal. Faculty feel strongly that poor student attendance is seriously impacting their ability to increase student success metrics particularly in high volume gateway courses. With no financial incentive to stay after the census period, classroom engagement strategies have been less effective in promoting retention. Conversely, financial aid staff have expressed concerns about ensuring compliance with federal monitoring requirements to report the last date of attendance. Given the large number of full- and part-time faculty employed at GTCC, this is a valid concern. Additionally, financial aid staff hypothesized that the College's financial obligations to return funds based on Title IV attendance rules might increase due to the change. To validate or refute this assertion, the Chief Financial Officer produced a history of financial aid reversals over the past 20 years, which indicated that the return of Title IV financial obligations was lower when GTCC had a college-wide attendance policy. These efforts have helped increase support for the initiative.

Through the Guided Pathways 2.0 efforts, GTCC also learned how other North Carolina community colleges adjusted their financial aid distribution methods to align with the 2011 policies and to ensure Title IV compliance. They found that some colleges changed distribution methods from paying out financial aid in one lump sum at the beginning of the term to a system of multiple disbursements over the semester. Currently at GTCC, federal loans have been distributed in three payments with the last one occurring after the 60% point of the semester. However, Pell grant recipients receive the total amount of their funds just after the 25% point of the term.

This information led the QEP Development Committee to learn more about the connection between the structure of aid disbursement and student success outcomes. They realized that by

distributing financial aid to students in multiple disbursements, GTCC can reduce debts that students owe to the College because they would only receive part of their financial aid, rather than all of it, if they stop attending. Currently, students unable to repay their debts to the college cannot re-enroll until their debt is paid in full. By dividing Pell and federal loan amounts into multiple disbursements, students who stop attending will have less financial aid they must repay to return to College in the future. This reinforces the stance that financial aid disbursement is tied to maintaining attendance and is more effective at fulfilling its purpose: to support students while they work toward the completion of a degree. This change in distribution might also alleviate the number of students who do not maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress, which is a requirement of all students receiving financial aid.

Guided Pathways Attendance Committee

In 2021, the newly developed Guided Pathways Attendance Committee began by examining policies at the other 57 community colleges in North Carolina. Initial review indicated that there were four types of institutions across the state: those who had attendance policies, those who had administrative withdrawal, those who had both, and those who had neither. GTCC was one of only five community colleges that had neither. Course success rates across the community college system were also considered, and the highest were in colleges with both attendance policies and administrative withdrawal procedures. Additionally, it was noted that GTCC's large peer colleges in North Carolina, Wake Technical Community College and Central Piedmont Community College, both had attendance policies and administrative withdrawal procedures. The committee felt that both elements (attendance and administrative withdrawal) were critical in helping GTCC's most vulnerable students succeed. They also recognized that implementation of both would require a culture shift at the Institution for students, faculty, and staff.

The committee then conducted a research exercise to document the last day of attendance in critical gateway and developmental courses during the fall 2021 semester. Each faculty member was asked to submit the last date of attendance of students who failed or withdrew from the course. Table 4 uses this data to summarize the percentage of students who failed a course due to attendance concerns. For example, in the first row, the table shows that 27% of the students who failed a gateway college-level course did not attend beyond the 25% point of the course. This data presented some disturbing trends in student attendance and highlighted the reason why previously implemented classroom engagement strategies may have had minimal impact. Even after the 25% point of the course, it also became apparent that non-attendance contributes to a significant number of students failing a developmental or gateway course.

Table 4: Percentage of Students who Failed the Course Due to Attendance Concerns

% of Term Attended	% of students failing a Gateway College-level Course	% of students failing a Developmental Course
1% - 25%	27%	29%
26% - 50%	22%	25%
51% - 60%	8%	6%
61% - 80%	15%	15%
81% - 90%	10%	8%

The committee reviewed the data and discussed the reasons that might be behind the metrics. In the evaluation of disaggregated course success rates, academic leadership began a discussion about what was behind these disappointing metrics. Several faculty department chairs reported anecdotal observations that many students stopped attending class shortly after the census period. It was also noted that once students stopped attending, it was very difficult to contact them and get them to return. In pursuit of data to support or refute this observation, the College began a review of early alert data. GTCC uses Education Advisory Board's (EAB) Navigate Early Alert system to support student success and retention. Early alerts can be issued at any point by concerned faculty members for a student who is showing difficulty with attendance, coursework, and/or reported barriers that could hinder success. Early alerts then connect students to an Academic Achievement Specialist and campus resources designed to encourage and support continued participation.

Table 5 shows the total number of Early Alerts issued in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 and the reason for the alert. Over the two-term timeframe, 3,051 students (>50%) were reported for attendance concerns.

Table 5: EAB Navigate Early Alerts, Fall 2020 and Spring 2021

Term	Total Alerts	Attendance Concern	Academic Concern	Other Concern
Fall 2020	2535	49%	50%	1%
Spring 2021	3474	52%	46%	2%

It is especially notable that most of these alerts were reported **before** the 25% point of the course, which implies that students were not attending even before their first scheduled Pell disbursement.

Best Practices for Attendance Taking at Central Piedmont Community College

In another attempt to glean best practices that can inform attendance policy development and identify the impact moving to an attendance-taking institution could have on GTCC, the College reached out to a large, peer college, Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC). There were several meetings held with the academic administration and financial aid staff to discuss tracking attendance and managing compliance. These discussions underscored some important considerations for large schools implementing attendance policies.

- Success with an institutional attendance policy depends on faculty consistently recording

student attendance promptly and recording the Last Date of Attendance for any students failing to comply with the attendance policy. Based on the large number of faculty employed at institutions of this size, the process must be simple and uniform. CPCC reported that a full-time employee conducts training for faculty on how to enter attendance, they manage the compliance with federal guidelines, and they produce reports for all attendance tracking at their college.

- Large schools must prioritize attendance training for all full- and part-time faculty. With over 600 full-time and part-time faculty, keeping the process simple and easy is critical to ensuring compliance. It is recommended that this process become part of mandatory training for all instructors. As the part-time faculty population changes frequently, this training would need to be conducted each semester.
- Large schools must also leverage technology to streamline attendance tracking to ensure both reliability and timeliness. CPCC had not figured out how to get a “Last Date of Attendance” report automated, and they expressed interest in learning from GTCC if this is accomplished as part of the QEP.
- Rapid notification of absences would maximize achievement coaches’ efforts in conducting retention interventions.

Crafting of Attendance Policy

The Guided Pathways Attendance Committee brought forth their findings to the Guided Pathways Steering Committee. The Steering Committee supported the recommendation that the College should become an attendance taking institution with administrative withdrawal. The President and The Board of Trustees subsequently approved the recommendation as well. The decision was announced at the next faculty department chair council meeting where it was received very positively. The chairs then participated in a facilitated session to glean additional feedback on what they considered important factors to consider in development and implementation of a policy. This feedback and the original recommendations of the Guided Pathways Attendance Committee were transitioned to the QEP Development Committee who completed the policy development. See Appendix II for complete policies. The College is piloting the policy in Fall 2024 and Spring 2025. Data will be collected and reviewed at the end of the pilot and changes will be made, as needed. The entire College will adopt the attendance policy and administrative withdrawal in Fall 2026.

It should be noted that while this decision was foundational in the QEP Development, it represents only one of multiple strategies required to improve student success in the first 12 hours of attendance.

QEP Development Committee and Subcommittee Work

Through the intensive work previously described, GTCC identified and gained broad-based support for its QEP topic “Here to Succeed” which will seek to increase overall student success and to reduce achievement gaps in student success. Moving into the QEP development phase, GTCC used similar comprehensive processes as those used previously during topic selection and included a variety of stakeholders from across the College. Representatives were selected from

multiple areas, divisions, and levels of the College including faculty, staff, and administration to comprise the membership of the QEP Development Committee (see Appendix I). In July 2023, two co-chairs³ were selected to lead the QEP Development Committee and by September 2023, the QEP Development Committee Kick-Off Meeting took place.

The initial meeting set the stage for the QEP initiative and focused on several key areas to ensure engagement, clarity, and direction, including an overview of the SACSCOC QEP standard, the recent work of Guided Pathways 2.0 that led to the QEP topic selection, and the goals and objectives of the QEP process. Additionally, a communication plan (Appendix III) was created to ensure all participants were informed on progress and challenges as well as a timeline for completion of work.

As was outlined in the topic selection narrative, the initial focus of the QEP was around re-establishing a college-wide student attendance policy. The data around early student attrition particularly in courses taken within the first 12 hours of attendance was deeply concerning and many believed that this was a major factor in the inability of GTCC to improve several critical student success metrics. Thus, early QEP Development Committee meetings were dominated by evaluating the challenges of moving toward this goal, including issues with current attendance documentation systems, how best to change both the faculty and student existing culture around class attendance, and how financial aid distribution methods may or may not be impacting continued attendance.

Later in fall of 2023, the committee shifted focus to identifying student success outcomes aligned with improved class attendance. A brainstorming session was held in October with a follow-up meeting in November where the group initially identified three very broad outcomes around improving student attendance, course success, and persistence. Additional discussions and feedback from GTCC's Advisory Visit resulted in further refinement of the outcomes to include data disaggregation to assess the impact on existing achievement gaps, and adding outcomes that address student classroom engagement and financial aid impacts. The proposed outcomes were developed in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research to ensure each was measurable and could be effectively evaluated over the course of the QEP. The final student success outcomes were finalized in February of 2024 and are listed below.

Desired Student Success Outcomes

In accordance with SACSCOC Standard 7.2, GTCC has chosen to address the following specific student success outcomes through its QEP activities.

1. Improve student attendance and engagement
2. Increase course success rates (C or better) in students' first 12 credit hours, which will decrease achievement gaps in student sub-populations
3. Improve overall student persistence

³ Due to added responsibilities concerning state-wide, developmental education changes, Amanda Fields, Department Chair English stepped down from the QEP committee to lead that charge. Kristen Corbell, Director of Institutional Research stepped in as co-chair in her stead.

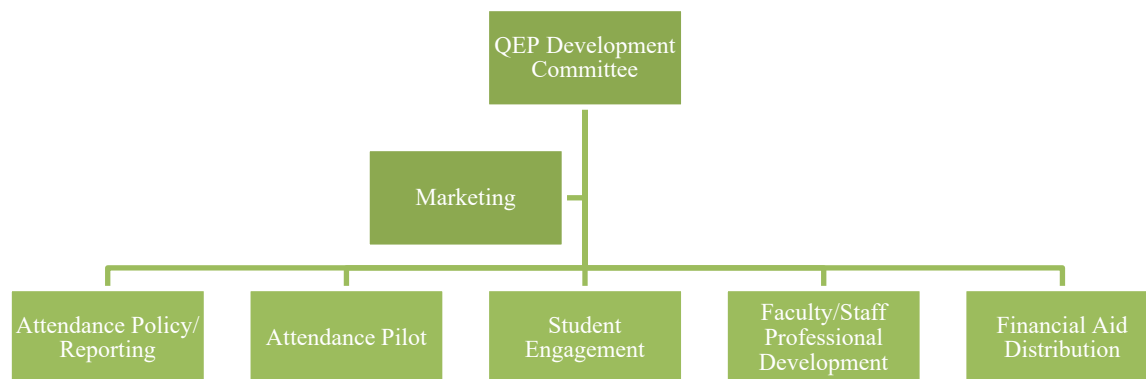
4. Increase the percentage of students in Good Academic Standing
5. Decrease financial burden on students by increasing the number of students who make Satisfactory Academic Progress

In a parallel timeline, the QEP Development Committee also began to identify necessary strategies to achieve these goals. Through these discussions, the major strategies of the QEP were identified and discussed by the committee. Development phases and faculty/staff participation were also initially discussed. The five QEP strategies included:

1. Creating/implementing an attendance policy and administrative withdrawal process
2. Developing an attendance policy pilot
3. Enhancing student engagement strategies in the classroom
4. Creating relevant professional development training for faculty and staff
5. Establishing a system for financial aid distribution that promotes student attendance and completion

To further flesh out actions and activities around each of the strategies, five subcommittees were created. To ensure the QEP strategies were well developed, faculty and staff were selected for each subcommittee based on their relevant expertise, strengths, experiences, and skills (see Appendix I). Beginning in March of 2024, subcommittees convened and began analyzing/gathering data and reviewing relevant literature related to their charge. Figure 2 illustrates the structure of the QEP Development Committee and Subcommittees.

Figure 2: QEP Committee Structure



Each subcommittee created detailed activities and listed any budget requirements as described in the QEP Operating Budget below (Table 7). During the development timeframe, subcommittee co-chairs met monthly with the QEP Development Committee to present progress and get feedback. Subcommittee meetings have also served to continue the process of building broad-based support by addressing concerns, gathering feedback, and encouraging collaboration.⁴

The GTCC marketing team also played an integral role in the QEP process, from establishing the brand identity and developing key messaging to orchestrating events and executing a

⁴ Notes from QEP meetings are available on GTCC's QEP webpage: <https://www.gtcc.edu/qep/>

comprehensive student communication plan and marketing strategy (Appendix III). Their efforts included creating a cohesive visual identity, crafting tailored communications for various stakeholders, and implementing a multi-channel approach to effectively promote the "Here to Succeed" initiative.

To foster community engagement and ownership, the College invited the GTCC community to participate in the branding of the QEP. The team designed multiple logo options and phrasing alternatives that were then presented to faculty, staff, and students for a vote. Despite the voting period occurring during the summer semester, the response was robust, with more than 350 faculty and staff members and over 250 students casting their ballots. The clear favorite emerged as the logo featured on the cover of this report, along with the compelling phrase "Here to Succeed"

In August 2024, the team launched a dedicated QEP website (gtcc.edu/QEP), to serve as a central information hub. This resource-rich platform featured an overview of the QEP, frequently asked questions, an informational video, and various other resources. To reach the campus community, the marketing department produced informational materials for division and department meetings across all GTCC campuses, setting the stage for a broader rollout at the Celebration of Excellence (COE) event on August 12, 2024.⁵

The team also capitalized on a new student welcome event "Titan Takeoff" to introduce incoming students to the QEP. They created informative postcards with QR codes linking to the QEP website and designed eye-catching posters emphasizing the importance of the first 12 credit hours. At the COE, the marketing team further amplified the QEP's message by providing informational postcards and elevator speech cards to all faculty and staff, complementing the presentations presented by College leadership and the QEP co-chairs. Throughout these efforts, the marketing team maintained a consistent message across multiple channels, including web content, printed materials, and social media, ensuring that the "Here to Succeed" initiative resonated with the entire GTCC community.

In addition to the marketing efforts described above, the QEP Development Committee Co-Chairs scheduled meetings with a broad range of College departments and groups to present the plan, address questions and gather additional feedback (see Appendix IV for full list of meetings). This approach allowed for small group discussions with over 640 faculty and staff.

Strategies to Improve Student Success

Four strategies have been identified to address the five QEP components and achieve the desired student success outcomes listed in previous sections. For clarity, QEP outcomes 1 and 2 listed above are addressed together in Strategy 1 below. The remaining three outcomes are assigned a unique strategy below. As previously stated, each strategy section considered applicable institutional data and employee feedback as well as information gleaned from a thorough

⁵ Presentation slides and video of the All College Opening meeting are available on GTCC's QEP webpage: <https://www.gtcc.edu/qep/>

literature review and analysis of best practices (see Appendix VII for annotated bibliography). Detailed plans are described below for each strategy, followed by a chart of activities by year that will track progress on the QEP.

Strategy 1: Implementing an Attendance Policy and Administrative Withdrawal Procedure

Strategy 1 serves as the foundation for the entire plan and includes both the development of policy/process and piloting them in a set of programs. As has been previously noted, attrition rates in high volume gateway courses are significant and are negatively impacting the College's student success measures. Key to student success is the work forged in the classroom. Students need to hear from faculty as subject matter experts and engage with course materials to understand how to think about and master content. In consideration of the early work done on attendance policy and administrative withdrawal procedure development, the QEP Development Committee completed the approval process for a new college-wide attendance policy and administrative withdrawal process that will be piloted, analyzed, and adapted in preparation for full College implementation in Fall 2026. A key component to the pilot's success - and future success - is overcoming barriers to efficient and accurate documentation and making sure the communication of the policy and process is widespread and completely transparent. The QEP Implementation Team will need to address any concerns that arise in the pilot, and make necessary changes prior to full implementation. As the QEP is an iterative process, quantitative and qualitative data will be gathered and analyzed each year to determine if changes are needed to the attendance policy and/or administrative withdrawal procedure to best support student success.

Documenting Attendance

To meet federal financial aid mandates on reporting Last Date of Attendance (LDA) within tightly-controlled timelines, GTCC will need to train, monitor, and provide feedback to all full- and part-time faculty on documenting attendance. As previously noted, the College has not been taking attendance after the census date for over 10 years, and documenting attendance each day and recording at a minimum of once a week in online classes will be a culture shift. The attendance policy that has been approved for pilot in Fall 2024 defines in detail what attendance rules will be followed for all course platforms (face-to-face, hybrid, and online), as well as when the administrative withdrawal process is initiated for students who stop attending. The QEP Attendance Subcommittee will investigate all possibilities for an automated process that assists faculty in populating the LDA field in the College's student information system to help eliminate human error. The College also plans to hire an additional staff position (outlined in the QEP budget) whose duties will include ensuring the processes and automated systems work and that faculty are supported in their efforts to track attendance.

Communicating the Attendance Policy and Administrative Withdrawal Procedures

The QEP Attendance Subcommittee recognizes that another key to success is helping students better understand that regular attendance can lead to stronger classroom performance, and this will require a two-sided approach. First, the College needs to ensure that all student-facing faculty and staff are familiar with the attendance policy and administrative withdrawal procedures. This will help guarantee that students are receiving consistent guidance during

implementation.

Additionally, the College needs to develop communications to send to students in multiple formats, and the communications need to be administered repeatedly from onboarding through the beginning of each course. GTCC has found that students respond more to personalized messages from faculty rather than a generic, standardized message. As part of the communications development, a message template will be provided to all faculty that can be sent via email and/or text message to students when they are absent for a week and when they could be administratively withdrawn if they do not return to class. Faculty can customize their own messages, but the College has found that providing a basic template increases the likelihood of consistent and clear communication. The College will use the Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 pilots to test different communication methods to students and determine best methods for educating faculty and staff in student-facing areas.

Piloting the Attendance Policy and Administrative Withdrawal Process

The attendance policy/academic withdrawal pilot planned for Year 0 of the QEP will help the College determine the viability of the proposed plan and assist in testing tracking methods for student attendance documentation. The College can also conduct both a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the pilot to determine impact and identify best practices faculty may have utilized to promote student attendance. During the pilot design process, strategies that include attendance as part of the final grade were discussed at length, as the literature indicates this is a critical element in enhancing student attendance (Comeford 2023; Bergin 2019; Zhu, et.al. 2019; Ancheta, et. Al. 2021). Additionally, Institutional Research staff will be working with Information Technology Services to build reports that can extract attendance data entered by faculty and identify students who have not attended class. IT staff will also be able to investigate what it will take to automate a Last Date of Attendance (LDA) with a small number of students. New students entering the following programs in Fall of 2024 will be subject to the new policy/process: Aviation Systems Technology, Cosmetology, and Surgical Technology.

Based on the pilot results, the College will amend processes and procedures in preparation for professional development in Fall of 2025 and full implementation of the attendance policy and administrative withdrawal in Fall 2026.

Strategy 2: Increasing Student Engagement in the Classroom

The second strategy of GTCC's QEP builds on the foundation of the new attendance policy by making the time students spend in the classroom more valuable and better supported. Regardless of instructional modality, students need to interact with content materials, subject matter experts, and other students to build knowledge, skills, and meta-cognitive abilities that prepare them for their career pathways. The QEP team has reviewed student experiences in the recent past at GTCC and considered best practices (McMurtrie 2023; Cohen et. al. 2014; Tinto 2003) to identify strategies that can increase valuable student engagement.

Improve Classroom Engagement Activities

GTCC will launch a full-scale faculty development effort that will provide training in active learning strategies so that each course will feature at least one activity meant to encourage

attendance via active student engagement strategies. The strategies below are a selection of different techniques that instructors can use to help increase students' cognitive engagement (thinking deeply about the content) and affective/emotional engagement (interest, enjoyment, and sense of belonging). GTCC will partner with Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) to offer their "Promoting Active Learning" course (discussed in more detail in Strategy #3) to all faculty to enhance student engagement. Table 6 illustrates some of these strategies.

Table 6: Promoting Active Learning Course Student Engagement Strategies

Strategy	Description
Think-Pair-Share	Pose a question to the class to have students think individually, discuss their thoughts with a partner, and then share with the larger group. This approach encourages all students to engage with the material and articulate their ideas.
Interactive Lectures	Incorporate live polls, quick quizzes, or short group discussions into lectures to break up long sessions, maintain attention, and check for understanding in real-time.
Peer Teaching	Assign students to teach concepts or topics to their peers through presentations or peer-reviewed assignments. This strategy reinforces learning by requiring students to explain concepts and respond to questions.
Case Studies and Problem-Based Learning	Use real-world scenarios or complex problems that require students to analyze and solve. These activities foster critical thinking, collaboration, and practical application of knowledge.
Small Group Discussions	Facilitate discussions on specific topics or questions in small groups to deepen engagement with the material and encourage diverse perspectives.
Jigsaw Method	Divide a topic into sections and assign each section to different groups. Each group becomes an expert on their section and then shares their findings with the rest of the class, promoting collaboration and comprehensive understanding.
Exit Tickets	At the end of a class, ask students to submit brief responses to questions related to the lesson. This provides quick feedback on understanding and encourages reflection.
Fishbowl Group Discussions	This activity allows students inside the "fishbowl" to actively discuss a topic, while other students outside the "fishbowl" carefully listen to the inner conversation. They then take turns in these roles to practice being the speakers and listeners in a group discussion, allowing an entire group to participate.
Gamification	Introduce game-like elements, such as quizzes, competitions, or role-playing activities, to make learning interactive and enjoyable.
Hatful of Quotes	In class, students take turns drawing random quotes predetermined by the instructor from the hat. They will read and comment on their drawn quote and place it back in the hat for someone else to draw. There will intentionally be fewer quotes than participants so they can place them back in and allow for different perspectives from

	each reader.
Flipped Classroom	Assign lecture materials as homework and use class time for interactive activities, discussions, and problem-solving to maximize active learning.
Real-World Connections	Relate course content to practical applications and current events to make the material more relevant and engaging.

Assess Students and Provide Timely Feedback

Regular and timely feedback on completed assignments in developmental and credit-level classes has been shown to increase student engagement and overall academic success (Tinto 2003; Cohen et. al. 2014). Currently, there is no established college-wide requirement for faculty to use the course grade book in Canvas, making it more difficult for some students to track their progress or see the impact of their performance in various aspects of the course (i.e., class participation, homework assignments, group projects, exams). To ensure that students can track their course progress more easily, the College will develop a procedure that requires all courses, regardless of course delivery method, to use the grade book functionality in the LMS.

A policy on the use of the LMS and its grade book functionality will be crafted in 2024-25, with implementation in Fall 2025. Communication of the procedure to full- and part-time faculty will occur through professional development, mandatory online training modules, and the provided course syllabus template.

Revise the College's Early Alert Referral Model

Currently, the College uses the EAB's "Navigate" for its Early Alert referral system. Faculty must enter early alerts for all attendance, academic, and personal concerns manually. As the College moves to taking attendance and requiring all faculty to update the Canvas grade book regularly, revisions will be made to the Early Alert model to better connect data from the LMS to the Student Information System. Through this system integration, the College can offer rapid responses to faculty concerns about student progress at critical junctures. The earlier interventions are made, the more likely the College can realize a successful outcome, such as getting students back in class and engaged to improve their grades.

Moving this information more swiftly into the early alert system means that GTCC's team of Academic Achievement Specialists will also be able to intervene much sooner to help students find the resources they need. All students are assigned to an Academic Achievement Specialist when they enroll. These Specialists meet with students who have had an early alert notification to get a better understanding of the barriers to their success and to connect them to support services that will help them overcome these challenges.

Revise Academic Standing Policy and Procedures

To create a tracking system for students who fall out of good academic standing and ensure early intervention, the College will revise the Academic Standing policy. To better align GTCC's policies to Financial Aid requirements, the Academic Standing policy will be based on cumulative GPA (vs. program GPA), which is accessible in EAB Navigate. Students with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 will be considered in "Good Academic Standing." For students on Academic Warning, which will occur when their cumulative GPA falls below 2.0, early

intervention and support from the Academic Achievement Specialists can help them get on track from the onset of their first semester on warning. At the end of Fall 2023, 76% of all students had a cumulative GPA above 2.0. Of the 24% of students who had a cumulative GPA below 2.0, only 1 in 8 successfully raised their GPA above 2.0 by the end of Spring 2024. By having tools and supports systems in place and earlier engagement with Academic Achievement Specialists, the expectation is with early intervention students on Warning will have a much better opportunity for success in future semesters and avoid more serious consequences.

Revise the Onboarding Experience

A student engagement practice that has experienced sustained success across all types of colleges is a thorough, inclusive, “in-person” orientation (Tobolowski 2008; “Retention” 2024).

Orientations are designed to introduce students to the college experience, equip them with the learning strategies necessary for success, inform them of college resources, and connect them to the personnel who support their continued journey at the College. GTCC plans to revise the current onboarding orientation program for new students to lay a solid foundation of student expectations and examples of how to best engage for success in the first 12 hours.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, GTCC moved new student orientation to an exclusively virtual online format to deliver essential orientation information to students, while ensuring the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff. Since then, the College has not conducted any in-person new student orientation. Moving forward, GTCC will create a revised orientation in both formats, face-to-face and online to serve the college’s diverse student population and instructional modalities. Taking this action will allow the College to make the orientation mandatory for all new students.

Regardless of instructional modality, the revised orientation will provide important information about academic expectations and available resources. Specifically, an interactive module or session will be developed that emphasizes the importance of attendance and engagement.

Focusing on key points and discussing how being in class regularly will help students manage course expectations, keep them more connected with the material, get to know their instructors better, and build relationships with classmates. It will highlight how missing class negatively affects understanding and learning and quickly impacts academic performance. Further, it must be stressed that physically attending and being present is not enough to be successful, students must actively engage by asking questions, taking notes, and being part of classroom activities and discussions. Beneficial strategies such as preparing questions before class, connecting with classmates for study groups, effectively utilizing office hours, and communicating with instructors will be emphasized.

The version designed for students attending in person classes will leverage the Titan Takeoff Welcome Event that has been held since 2023. This event engages students socially while reinforcing key components of the existing online orientation. The goal over the course of the QEP is to build a more robust offering that can be extended through the first semester via signature events that reinforce messages regarding student success in the first 12 credit hours.

Lastly, the online student orientation will be reimaged and placed in the College’s learning management system, Canvas, to best serve students taking a majority of courses from a distance.

It will also focus on elements that will help students be successful early in their academic journey and include interactive video content to improve engagement.

Increasing course load

In general, students who are more engaged in their studies are more successful, have stronger study and academic routines, and have better time management, leading their enhanced momentum towards greater retention and graduation rates. Kuh et al. (2008) provided that students who take more credit hours exhibit higher levels of engagement, improved persistence, and benefit from stronger peer/faculty relationships and academic habits. Further, Miller, Duffy, and Miller (2017) found that students with heavier loads were more engaged in campus activities, which contributed to their academic success.

Additionally, and specific to GTCC's population, recent research in higher education student engagement considers diverse populations and the current higher education environment. Traditional students are not the majority, with over a third of undergraduate students working full-time, almost half attending school part-time, and one-quarter being parents (Scobey, 2020). Nontraditional students bring social and emotional complexities that education institutions often overlook when designing the academic environment for traditional students, such as the external time commitments and responsibilities, stress, and lack of sense of belonging, and collegiate barriers that make it difficult for adult learners to complete their educational goals (Scobey, 2020). Cohen, Brawer, and Kisker (2014) focus on how students can become more engrossed in the learning environment, inside of the classroom setting, while also acknowledging the commitment that immersion requires. The authors state, "All learning requires an investment of students' time and effort, and student development in every dimension depends on the scope and quality of their engagement with the institution" (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014, p. 211).

The QEP will develop activities/exercises to help students see the value of taking more classes per term while ensuring they are aware of and supported by college resources during their academic journey. These activities can be implemented in the new student orientation as well as in advising sessions with faculty and professional advisors as well as sessions with Academic Achievement Specialists (GTCC's retention coaches).

Strategy 3: Ensuring Appropriate Professional Development for All Faculty and Staff

GTCC plans to provide multiple professional development opportunities for both faculty and staff related to the QEP student success outcomes and strategies. This training will help each College employee understand the importance of the QEP and the role they can play during the implementation process. Additionally, it will address administrative policy and procedure changes that may impact students.

Faculty and Staff QEP Professional Development

The QEP Professional Development Sub-committee will collaborate with the Faculty Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL), Human Resources Office of Employee Development and Engagement, and departments that oversee QEP-related administrative changes to create online and face-to-face tutorial modules to equip faculty and staff with the additional layers of

information required to support QEP student success outcomes at GTCC. The primary purpose of the online tutorials is to provide short, just-in-time educational content that supports employees in their jobs thus increasing productivity and engagement in the QEP. Face-to face sessions will also be developed to provide an alternative instructional model that lets faculty and staff practice administrative processes in a lab setting.

Additionally, all faculty and student facing staff will receive training on financial aid distribution and Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) criteria to ensure everyone has a common understanding of these critical processes and how they impact students. These sessions will be conducted in a workshop format, using case studies and a problem-based learning approach. In this way, the College hopes to increase the foundational knowledge of employees so they can better advise students about the negative impacts of poor attendance/engagement.

Faculty-Specific Professional Development

GTCC will leverage the well-established faculty-led Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL) to assist with development and implementation of QEP professional development opportunities. The CTL's mission includes advocating for and practicing excellent teaching both inside and outside the classroom to facilitate student learning and growth. As such, opportunities will be developed along two tracks: 1) Operational training on new systems and administrative practices and 2) Promoting the integration of best practice engagement strategies in the classroom.

Operational training

Critical to the success of the QEP is the accurate and timely documentation of student attendance across the entire semester. As has been previously mentioned, this will be a significant culture change for GTCC as the College has not had a uniform attendance policy since 2011. Currently, the College uses the Colleague Student Information System Self-Service module (Self Service) to record student attendance. During the session, participants will learn the operational requirements of Self Service as well as the importance of timely submission of attendance. Specifically, the impact to Return to Title IV will be emphasized. A second part of this training will include techniques for incorporating assignments or grading criteria that value student participation. These strategies have been shown to improve student attendance without lowering course expectations. All faculty (full- and part-time) will be required to attend this mandatory session in a face-to-face format prior to full implementation of the attendance policy and administrative withdrawal procedure.

Classroom Student Engagement Professional Development

It is well documented in higher education literature that active student engagement in the classroom encourages continued attendance (McMurtie 2023; Keup & Barefoot 2005; Strayhorn 2012, 2019). Therefore, to realize the greatest impact of the proposed attendance policy changes, GTCC must ensure that faculty have the tools to create the most engaging classroom learning environment possible. As a community college that teaches a variety of technical and transfer programs, faculty are hired based on discipline expertise but often have variable classroom teaching experience. In consideration of this fact, the QEP Professional Development Subcommittee, proposed a significant professional development initiative for all full-time faculty that has the potential to significantly impact the QEP student success metrics. To accomplish this effort, the CTL will partner with the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) to

implement the “Promoting Active Learning” course. By equipping faculty with proven activities and strategies through this course, the College will create more interactive and dynamic learning environments, essential for increasing student success in the first 12 credit hours. ACUE certifies and equips faculty in evidence-based teaching practices that have been shown to reduce achievement gaps and enhance student success. According to ACUE, numerous independent studies show that students learn more, are more engaged, and complete courses at higher rates more equitably with their peers, when taught by ACUE-certified faculty (“Meta-analysis” 2022)

Faculty Reflection Process

Faculty participating in ACUE training will engage in structured reflection at three key points over the course to assess their implementation of evidence-based teaching strategies. These guided reflections will allow faculty to critically examine their engagement practices, identify successes and challenges, and refine their approaches to student learning. By providing a structured space for meaningful self-assessment, this process ensures that faculty continuously improve their instructional methods while reinforcing student engagement as a core priority. The insights gathered from these reflections will be shared with the CTL, the QEP Implementation Team, and ACUE to inform continuous improvement. Any recommendations or emerging needs identified through this process will be communicated back to ACUE to refine future course offerings and ensure the training remains relevant, actionable, and impactful for faculty. This feedback loop strengthens the professional development framework, fosters continuous instructional enhancement, and supports the broader institutional commitment to student success.

Peer Review Process

Additionally, a structured peer review process will ensure that ACUE strategies are embedded in instructional practices and sustained over time. Over the five-year QEP implementation timeline, faculty will participate in an annual peer review, using a standardized rubric to assess and provide feedback on engagement strategies, active learning techniques, and student-centered instruction. This faculty-led process will encourage meaningful collaboration, allowing instructors to learn from one another while refining their teaching approaches. To ensure broad support and consistency, deans, directors, and department chairs will play an active role in facilitating peer observations, fostering mentorship, and guiding faculty discussions within their respective disciplines. Their leadership will help ensure that best practices are consistently applied across courses and departments.

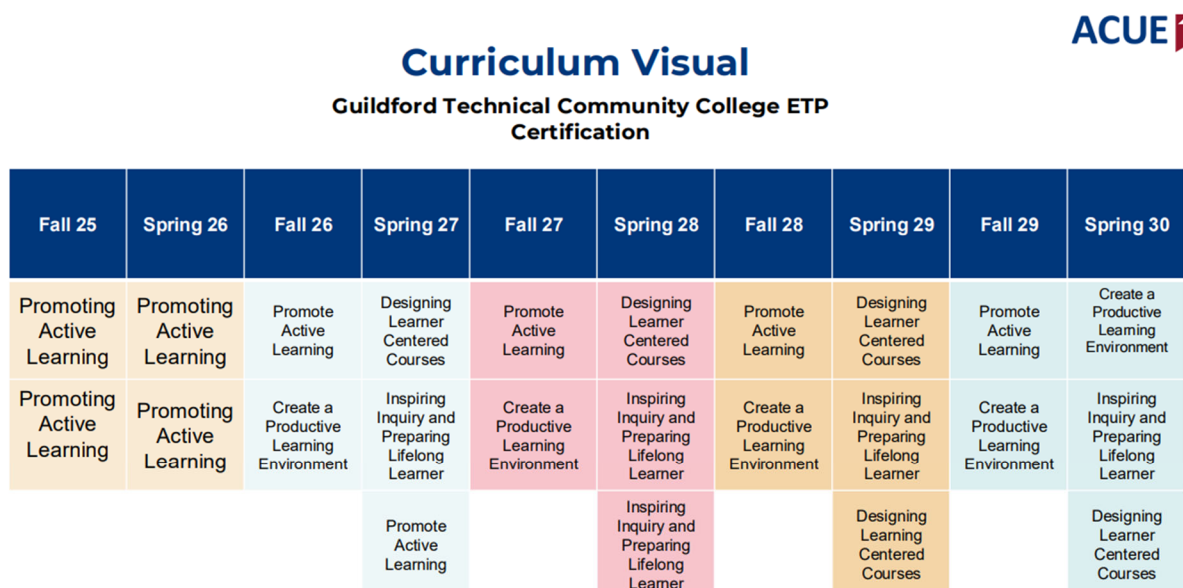
The CTL will coordinate the process, provide training on effective peer review techniques, facilitate structured discussions, and synthesize key insights for continuous improvement. Findings and recommendations from the peer review process will be communicated to the QEP Implementation Team, ensuring that faculty feedback shapes the ongoing refinement of instructional practices.

By fostering a culture of professional collaboration and continuous improvement, the peer review process will enhance teaching effectiveness, strengthen student engagement, and support the overall success of the QEP.

ACUE Active Learning Course Implementation Timeline

Figure 3 provides a visual of the phased plan to offer ACUE training across the QEP implementation timeline, including the layering of additional courses for 165 faculty to complete the full ACUE Effective Teaching Practice Framework certification. The additional trainings included in the full certification will help establish a culture of continuous improvement, leading to sustained enhancements in teaching practices and student outcomes across the College.

Figure 3: GTCC-ACUE Curriculum Timeline Visual



Year 1: Early Adopters and Pilot Program (Fall 2025 - Spring 2026)

In the first year, the focus will be on implementing the "Promoting Active Learning" course with approximately 132 early adopters and influential full-time faculty members. Each cohort will have a maximum of 30-33 faculty participating. In Fall 2025, GTCC will begin with two cohorts representing faculty who have instructional responsibility for courses typically taught in the first twelve hours of a student's program. They include the English and mathematics departments and a few others from high-enrollment gateway courses. Feedback from the Fall cohort will be used to inform the three cohorts slated to go through the course in the Spring 2026.

Year 2: Continued Rollout and Introduction of Additional Courses (Fall 2026 - Spring 2027)

In the second year, the "Promoting Active Learning" course will be offered to additional full-time faculty members, continuing with the 30 - 33 participant cohort models. The rollout will continue to focus on high-enrollment and gateway courses while also beginning to address courses facing specific challenges. This will allow for roughly two new cohorts to participate over the fall and spring semesters. Faculty who completed the course in Year 1 will be offered additional courses: "Creating a Productive Learning Environment," "Designing Learner-Centered Courses," and "Inspiring Inquiry and Preparing Lifelong Learners." These courses will lead to full ACUE Effective Teaching Practice Framework certification.

Year 3: Expanded Rollout and Continued Certification (Fall 2027 - Spring 2028)

In the third year, the "Promoting Active Learning" course will continue to reach additional full-time faculty, with more cohorts of 30 - 33 faculty members each. Those who completed the course in Year 2 will progress to the additional certification courses. The process will repeat in the fall and spring semesters, ensuring that more faculty move toward full certification.

Year 4: Full Implementation and Ongoing Support (Fall 2028 - Spring 2029)

By the fourth year, the program will focus on including the remaining full-time faculty who have not yet completed the "Promoting Active Learning" course, with new cohorts formed in both the fall and spring semesters. Faculty who have already completed this course will continue with the additional certification courses. The focus will be on finalizing implementation and providing continuous support and mentoring to all faculty. Any challenges that emerge will be addressed, and the program will be refined based on faculty feedback. Ongoing mentoring and support will be provided to all participants.

Year 5: Comprehensive Review (Fall 2029 - Spring 2030)

In the final year, the program will focus on the remaining full-time faculty who have not completed the "Promoting Active Learning" course, with the final cohort starting in the fall. Additional certification courses will continue to be offered to full-time faculty members. This phase will ensure that active learning strategies and the ACUE Effective Teaching Practice Framework become integral parts of the College's professional development offerings if they are shown to be effective.

Part-time Faculty Professional Development

With more than 250 part-time (PT) faculty teaching at GTCC each year, it is also important to provide professional development on student engagement and active learning strategies to this population to achieve maximum impact to student success metrics. These sessions must be efficient, engaging, and accessible for faculty who have variable work and life commitments. Currently, part-time faculty professional development is limited to a three-hour session at the beginning of each term that acclimates them to the College's procedures and administrative systems. To accomplish the goal of this QEP strategy, the eLearning Department will work with the CTL to create a self-paced, six-hour PT Faculty Academy training module titled "Engaged to Make Amazing Happen". The module will be developed in Canvas and will focus on student engagement strategies and activities in the classroom. The goal will be to train half the part-time faculty in Year 1, with priority given to those instructing first-year courses and those who have taught for the College the longest. The remaining part-time faculty will be trained in year 2. New part-time faculty will participate upon hire in their first term with the College. The course will run through the fall and spring semesters, and part-time faculty will be compensated for their participation. Feedback from this group will be collected to refine the course for future sessions.

Strategy 4: Establishing a System for Financial Aid Distribution that Supports Student Completion

The final strategy of GTCC's QEP is to establish a financial aid distribution system that supports students throughout their enrollment and in their future education and life pursuits. Students need

to see the correlation between the progress they make through college and the financial aid they receive. By changing the financial aid distribution plan to a multiple disbursement system for Pell grants and federal loans, GTCC is effectively tying financial aid funds to student attendance and continued academic success. Best practices indicate that persistence and student completion rates increase when financial aid is disbursed at multiple points rather than in one lump sum (Choitz & Widom 2003; Chen & DesJardins 2008; Perna & Kurban 2013). Consequently, GTCC will have to adjust financial aid processes and develop clear communication methods to ensure students understand these changes and how they are more effective in supporting academic success.

Proactive Support for Students at Risk of Losing Financial Aid

GTCC is committed to helping students who face challenges that may impede their academic progress, particularly those at risk of losing federal financial aid. To maintain eligibility for financial aid, students must:

1. Maintain a 2.0+ cumulative GPA (CGPA)
2. Achieve a 67% completion ratio for all attempted courses
3. Complete their program within 150% of the required credit hours (e.g., 90 credits for a 60-credit program)

Currently, GTCC evaluates students' academic progress at the end of each semester. If a student falls below SAP standards, they enter a Warning term, allowing them to continue receiving financial aid while working to improve their academic standing. If SAP is not regained, students are placed on Unsatisfactory Academic Progress (USAP) status, losing financial aid eligibility until they meet SAP requirements.

To proactively address this issue, GTCC will enhance its financial aid resources and communication strategies to improve student success, especially within the critical first 12 credit hours. The strategy will include personalized outreach, interactive tools, and targeted interventions to support students at risk of losing financial aid.

Years 0-1: Enhancing Resources

- Research best practices from other colleges, including Maricopa, Lane, and Wake Technical Community Colleges
- Improve financial aid webpage navigation and messaging for clarity and ease of use
- Add tools like a GPA calculator to help students track and plan for SAP

Years 1-2: Targeted Outreach & Faculty Engagement

- Create communication plans to notify students of their SAP status and available resources
- Train faculty and staff to guide students and refer them to appropriate support services
- Focus outreach on three key student groups:
 - ✓ **Students on Warning but Projected to Regain Good Standing:** Early identification and proactive outreach, including progress reviews, reminders about attending class and completing assignments, and encouragement to utilize academic support services, such as tutoring.

- ✓ **Students Projected for Suspension Regardless of Performance:** Early detection and meaningful conversations to explore alternatives like withdrawing from courses, reducing course loads, or filing academic appeals. These students will also be referred to support services such as Counseling, Student Success Center, and Titan Link to address any external challenges.
- ✓ **Students in Good Standing but Approaching Credit Limits:** Proactive outreach to guide these students in managing their course load and financial aid eligibility, helping them avoid exceeding the allowable credit-hour limits for financial aid.

Years 3-5: Full Implementation & Continuous Improvement

- Use Element 451, GTCC's customer relationship management system, to automate SAP-related outreach and direct students to the appropriate resources, such as the Student Success Center and financial aid advisors
- Organize workshops and webinars on GPA and completion ratio requirements, and help students understand how financial aid policies support long-term success
- Host awareness campaigns to reinforce the importance of maintaining SAP and encourage early intervention for students who may need additional assistance

All communications will align with GTCC's commitment to student success and emphasize financial aid as a resource for academic achievement. Redesigned materials will clearly explain how financial aid policies support both financial well-being and academic progress. Success stories will highlight the positive impact of these interventions, reinforcing the connection between financial aid and student success.

By integrating these strategies into the QEP, GTCC will strengthen support for students, particularly in the first 12 credit hours. The early identification of students at risk, combined with automated communication and tailored support, will foster greater student engagement, retention, and success, ultimately helping students maintain their financial aid eligibility and complete their programs.

Increase student awareness of Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress

The College recognizes that fully understanding the requirements to continue receiving financial aid is pivotal to students making Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). The College has seen that although most students understand the GPA requirements, most are not able to articulate the completion ratio requirements or to apply this concept to schedule planning. GTCC will increase student and employee awareness through revising its Financial Aid website to provide resources regarding how to maintain student financial aid eligibility. The website revision will include information in various formats from short videos, interactive short mini-courses, and informational text. In addition, case-studies will be used during new student onboarding to assist students in seeing the connection between academic progress and maintaining their financial aid. Just-in-time communications with students also will provide links to important information for students who are showing signs of academic difficulty. Lastly, as was mentioned in Strategy 3, all faculty and student facing staff will participate in a face-to-face training on SAP. As the resources for this will be the same as the resources needed for the change in financial aid disbursement, work on these changes will begin in Spring 2026 and will be fully implemented in Year 2 of the QEP.

Financial Aid Distribution and Communication

Starting in Fall 2025, GTCC will change the distribution of financial aid for students taking classes spanning a 16-week semester to a new model that will award 50% of Pell grant and federal loan amounts just after the 25% of the term and the remaining 50% after the 8-week mark of the semester. To prepare for the new disbursement schedule, the Financial Aid Distribution Subcommittee is exploring options for an effective method to inform students about the dates and amounts of financial aid that will be distributed to them throughout each semester. Currently, students call the financial aid office to inquire about the amounts and dates of disbursements, but there is no automated way that this information is communicated and no website where a student can look up this information. If students know when to expect their aid and how much aid they will receive, they will be able to budget more effectively to facilitate improved completion of courses and credentials. As students become aware of their anticipated financial aid payments, they will also know if any additional funding for education-related expenses will be required to supplement their monthly funds to complete the full semester.

Before the new disbursement system's rollout, multiple methods will also be used to provide clear and repetitive updates to students about the changes they can expect. As rollout begins, the College will update its online chatbot, train faculty and staff so that they can respond to student inquiries, and work with GTCC's call center team to observe chatbot questions and improve messaging in response to requests for clarification. Throughout the semester, students will be encouraged to check their grades, and they will be reminded about the progress they are making toward earning their credential and the next steps in planning for their career or college transfer upon completion.

Conclusion

The four strategies that GTCC plans to implement through the QEP will work together to help students succeed in the first 12 hours, and beyond. Each strategy addresses a weakness at the College identified as a significant barrier to student success. Implementing an attendance policy and administrative withdrawal process will encourage students to be more present to learn, interact, and build knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for career preparation. With a focus on developing student engagement techniques both in and out of the classroom, the time spent attending classes becomes more effective, and thus more valuable to student success. Through additional professional development, faculty and staff will be prepared to engage students and to provide them with the support they need to succeed. Finally, adjusted financial aid disbursement reinforces the value of the education students receive at GTCC and aligns their college financial needs with their progress towards a degree or certificate completion. These four strategies help students be "Here to Succeed."

Transition to QEP Implementation

A transformed version of the QEP Development Committee will monitor the QEP during the five years of implementation, ensuring that the plan achieves its goals of improving attendance, student engagement, and success within the first 12 credit hours. Key members of the new QEP

Implementation Team will include faculty and staff from Instructional Leadership, Institutional Research, the Center for Teaching and Learning, Student Services, and Financial Aid. This includes the QEP Development Committee and subcommittee co-chairs. To monitor progress, the committee will work with Institutional Research to collect and analyze data from class attendance, student engagement, academic performance, and course completion rates. Quarterly and annual reports will be created to track these metrics and provide insights into the QEP's effectiveness. These reports will be shared and reviewed by the Guided Pathway Steering Committee and become part of the continued Guided Pathways 2.0 work at the College.

The timeline below provides the initial plan that GTCC will follow to implement each activity and strategy described above. The timeline begins one year before the official start date of the QEP, so pilot studies and procedures can be developed for activities to begin at a later date. This timeline is a guideline, and it will be adjusted based on assessment and analysis of activity successes and new challenges.

Implementation Timeline

Strategy/Activity	Year 0		Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4		Year 5	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
Strategy 1: Implementation of Attendance Policy												
Craft an attendance policy and administrative withdrawal procedures to be used in the pilot and Year 2	X	X										
Document attendance through a simple, computer-assisted process	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pilot attendance policy and admin. withdrawal procedures	X	X	X	X								
Analyze data on student attendance and administrative withdrawal to make changes as necessary to the attendance policy and administrative withdrawal procedure					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Communicate attendance/admin policy changes to students			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Implement college-wide attendance policy and administrative withdrawal					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Strategy 2: Increasing student engagement in the classroom												

Improve classroom student engagement activities			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Update procedures for using LMS and LMS gradebook in all courses	X	X										
Assess students and provide timely feedback			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Revise the College's early alert referral model					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Revise Academic Standing Policy and Procedures			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Revise the onboarding experience			X	X								
Strategy 3: Ensuring Appropriate Professional Development for all Staff and Faculty												
Faculty and staff QEP Professional Development (PD) rollout			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Faculty operational training			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Classroom student engagement PD via ACUE			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Part-time faculty student engagement PD			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Conduct a peer-review process and make necessary changes for the implementation of strategies learned in the ACUE Professional Development.				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Strategy 4: Establishing a system for financial aid distribution that supports student completion												
Implement a tiered financial aid distribution process			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Financial Aid distribution communication plan to students	X	X										
Increase student awareness of Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Resources

GTCC has committed the necessary funds to support the development and implementation of the QEP. In the detailed budget outlined below in Table 7, most QEP funds are allocated to project personnel and professional development for faculty and staff. Additional costs include attendance tracking technology, resource materials, travel, and marketing materials. Year 1 is frontloaded with funds to implement the plan, fill positions, and move the QEP forward.

Table 7: QEP Operating Budget

ACTIVITY	YEAR 0 2024-25	YEAR 1 2025-26	YEAR 2 2026-27	YEAR 3 2027-28	YEAR 4 2028-29	YEAR 5 2029-30	ITEM TOTALS
FACULTY DEVELOPMENT							
1. Professional Development FT Faculty	0	\$77,750	\$38,563	\$38,563	\$38,563	\$38,563	\$232,002
2. PD (FT) Full Certification	0	0	\$57,687	\$57,687	\$57,687	\$57,687	\$230,748
3. Professional Development PT Faculty	0	\$21,600	\$21,600	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$70,200
ASSESSMENTS							
4. QEP External Evaluator	0	0	0	\$5,000	0	0	\$5,000
EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES							
5. Attendance Tracking Technology	0	\$30,000	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$60,000
6. Resource Materials/Supplies	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$12,000
ADMINISTRATIVE/OPERATIONAL COSTS							
7. Attendance Compliance/Data Analyst Position (Institutional Research) [Salary w/ Benefits]	0	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$400,000
8. Consulting, Student Support Services (Financial Aid) Software & Process Development	0	\$160,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$160,000
9. QEP Marketing and Promotion	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$3,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$19,000
10. CTL Course Release & Contract Extension to Manage ACUE	0	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$150,000
TOTALS	\$8,000	\$407,350	\$239,850	\$231,250	\$226,250	\$226,250	\$1,338,950

Budget Narrative: The detailed budget above indicates how College funds will be allocated to support the success of the QEP. An explanation of each item follows:

1. Professional Development (PD) Full-Time Faculty – Promote Active Learning Course (\$232,002): Funding will cover costs for 132 full-time faculty to complete the ACUE Promote Active Learning Course in year 1, 66 full-time faculty in year 2, and 33 each for years 3 through 5 (p.28-9). By the end of the QEP, all full-time faculty will have completed this course.
2. PD Full-Time Faculty Full Certification (\$230,748): Full-time faculty will also be able to complete the additional three courses offered by ACUE to earn the Effective Teaching Practice certification, starting in Year 2.
3. Professional Development Part-Time Faculty (\$70,200): GTCC will pay approximately 250 part-time faculty to complete a six-hour Faculty Academy “Engaged to Make Amazing Happen” provided online through GTCC’s e-Learning department. This mandatory training will provide part-time faculty with strategies for incorporating active learning and student engagement into their courses.
4. QEP External Evaluator (\$5,000): GTCC will employ an external evaluator to assess the progress of the QEP project at the halfway point. The evaluator will provide recommendations for the successful completion of the QEP.
5. Attendance Tracking Technology (\$60,000): GTCC will research technology compatible with current College software programs to provide a simple, efficient way to track attendance. This addresses feedback from other colleges on the challenges of implementing attendance policies.
6. Resource Materials/Supplies (\$12,000): operating costs for the QEP include office supplies, instructional supplies, and resources for assessment, evaluation, and dissemination of information across the entire College.
7. Attendance Compliance/Data Analyst Position (Institutional Research) (\$400,000): GTCC will hire an additional data analyst position within the Office of Institutional Research to provide support in developing attendance policy compliance and to assist in the assessment and evaluation of the QEP. The full-time position will have a salary commensurate with the College’s salary grade and will include all full-time fringe benefits (approximately 41% of salary).
8. Consulting, Student Support Services (Financial Aid) Software & Process Development (\$160,000): Financial Aid staff will hire a consultant to assess software needs for the new financial aid disbursement plan. The consultants will develop software compatible with current GTCC technology that accurately and efficiently adapts the current disbursement procedures to the new format. They will also provide procedures, training, and communication materials so that GTCC has consistent communication for all faculty, staff, and students about the new financial aid disbursement plan.
9. QEP Marketing and Promotion (\$19,000): Successful rollout and completion of the QEP requires substantial communication and marketing efforts to the entire college community. GTCC’s Marketing department will create multi-modal materials to spread the efforts of GTCC’s QEP message: “Here to Succeed.”
10. Course Release Contract Extension for CTL Co-Chair (\$150,000): The CTL Co-Chair will need 9 hours of course release each semester and a 3-month summer contract

extension to successfully manage the successful roll-out of ACUE including recruitment of faculty in each cohort, working with faculty engaged in ACUE to ensure successful completion, reflection, and the peer review process to ensure the skills taught are utilized in the classroom.

Additional full-time personnel will continue to contribute to the development of the QEP as part of their full-time capacity with the College (no additional compensation):

- **Faculty:** Veteran faculty who work voluntarily as mentors and guides to their fellow faculty, contributing a significant amount of time and effort to the QEP.
- **Deans/Department Chairs/ Program Directors:** These personnel help with promoting the QEP and its initiatives, raising awareness, and gathering feedback.
- **Instructional Designers:** eLearning staff who help implement and create student learning strategies and professional development as part of their job descriptions.
- **Support Staff:** Administrative staff from the Office of Instruction, Student Services, Center for Academic Engagement, Information Technology Services, and the Center for Teaching and Learning were responsible for coordination, support, scheduling, and additional communications relative to the QEP.
- **Institutional Research Staff:** Personnel that have not received QEP funding or resources who dedicate a significant amount of time collecting, analyzing, and reporting for the QEP.

These personnel contribute to the overall success of the QEP with their time, passion, institutional knowledge, and effort, although their contributions are not reflected in the QEP budget.

Assessment Plan

As required by Standard 7.2, the College has designed an assessment plan that spans the five years of project implementation comparing results whenever possible to those obtained in the baseline Year 0. Various measures have been selected to help GTCC evaluate each identified student success outcome and the impact of each project strategy. This approach will enable the College to make decisions and adjustments throughout the QEP that maximize the overall impact to student success. The range of measures includes qualitative and quantitative, direct and indirect, and formative and summative.

The college will engage in an evaluative process at a minimum of once a year to evaluate the data gathered and make changes as needed the following year. There are two specific areas that the College anticipates will need adaptations throughout the five years and these are the attendance policy and the ACUE professional development for a successful culture change in attendance and student engagement.

Appendix V provides a table that summarizes all success outcomes, assessment measures, benchmarks, targets, assessment timelines, and responsibilities for data collection and analysis. The table also includes current baseline data related to each measure. Additionally, it illustrates

the linkages between project strategies, success outcomes and the College's overall strategic goal.

Student Success Outcome 1: Improve student attendance and engagement

Measurement 1.1 Increase the percentage of students attending class. (Direct Formative)

GTCC will create user-friendly attendance reports that document the Last Date of Attendance for each student. Throughout each academic term of the QEP, an analysis will be conducted to determine at what part of the term students stop attending class. GTCC has strategically selected a series of increasing attendance thresholds to monitor that include 25%, 50%, 60%, 70%, and 80%. The 25% point is prior to financial aid disbursement, the 50% is the midterm point, the 60% point allows a student to retain all disbursed financial aid, and the 70% point is the current deadline for student course withdrawal. If a student persists to the 80% point of the course, the likelihood of successful completion is high. As the College does not currently have an attendance policy, baseline data for this measure will need to be collected during the first year of implementation. The QEP 5-year target for this measure is 90% of enrolled students attending 80% or more of a class.

Measurement 1.2 Decrease the number and percentage of early alerts that are attendance related. (Direct Formative)

GTCC will analyze all early alerts issued through the College's student engagement software and categorize each into three categories: attendance concerns, academic concerns, and other concerns. The goal is to significantly decrease the percentage of early alerts with noted attendance concerns over the course of the QEP. Baseline data for this measure is provided in Table 5.

Measurement 1.3 Increase percentage of faculty structuring classes to promote engagement and attendance. (Indirect Summative)

A key premise of the QEP is that student engagement in the classroom promotes continued attendance. As such, GTCC will create an initial faculty self-assessment survey to help identify whether current course policies and structure promote and value student engagement and class attendance. The survey will assess the organization of assignments and examinations, interactivity of assignments, weighting methodology, course-specific policies, and in-class/online activities for all courses regardless of modality. The survey will be aligned with the ACUE professional development modules to maximize opportunities for improvement.

To attain baseline data, the College will assess all faculty prior to QEP implementation. The survey will be analyzed to ensure each item assesses the proposed strategies using an Exploratory Factor Analysis. Only the strongest items will be retained and used in subsequent surveys to show changes over the time of the QEP. The revised survey will then be administered and analyzed each semester for the first three years. Results will be used to determine if additional training or communication is needed. During the last two years of the QEP, survey administration will occur once per year.

Measurement 1.4 Improvement in student behaviors that demonstrate increased engagement (Indirect Summative)

Measurement 1.4 will use results from selected questions on three student surveys that will allow the College to assess student engagement over a student's academic experience. Two of these instruments are nationally benchmarked: the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The third survey is a segment of the GTCC end-of-course evaluation document. This approach will allow the College to measure student engagement across programs and campuses, as well as at different enrollment points.

Measurement 1.4A Improve positive student behaviors in the first 3 weeks of attendance

Analysis of selected questions on the SENSE survey will provide an actionable data point at the beginning of a student's academic journey that assesses how classroom strategies are impacting student engagement and attendance.

Selected questions/responses from the 2023 administration of the SENSE survey will be used as baseline data. The goal is to achieve a 10% improvement in each of the positive student behaviors as a result of QEP strategy implementation as compared to peer institutions.

Measurement 1.4B Improve Active and Collaborative Learning behaviors in the second year of attendance

The CCSSE Active and Collaborative Learning question set provides another assessment of student engagement during a student's spring semester to capture returning student's feedback. While baseline data indicate that GTCC compares favorably with its peers there is still significant room for improvement. (Appendix VI). The goal is to achieve a 10% improvement in each active/collaborative learning behavior as a result of QEP strategy implementation as compared to peer institutions.

Measurement 1.4C Improve the frequency of instructor feedback across all curricula

It is well documented that regular instructor feedback is important to ensuring student engagement. GTCC administers course evaluations each semester to gather student feedback on the course, instructor, and other aspects of the student experience. Two specific existing questions will be used to assess the student experience regarding instructor feedback and grading practices. Additional items will be added that align with the ACUE professional development modules to help assess the impact of these engagement strategies; for instance, gauging confidence in managing time effectively, participating in class discussions, and attending office hours of faculty. Baseline data for selected questions will be gathered in Year 0 before training takes place to allow the College to set a target.

Measurement 1.5 Increase the percent of new students attending an orientation

The college will be making an effort to increase the percentage of new students attending an orientation. The college currently uses Element 451 for students to register for "Titan Take-off". The same platform will be used for registering moving forward because will allow matching to new students who attend classes. The online orientation attendance will be data matched using Canvas enrollments. Baseline data for "Titan Takeoff" will be gathered in Year 0. The goal will be for 90% of all new-students to attend an orientation that is aligned with their instructional delivery method of classes.

Student Success Outcome 2: Increase course success rates (C or better) in students' first 12 credit hours, which will decrease achievement gaps in student sub-populations

As discussed, course success in the first 12 credit hours of attendance significantly increases student persistence and completion while eliminating achievement gaps between student subpopulations. As this is a cornerstone of GTCC's QEP efforts, several measurements have been selected to look at both overall course success rates as well as early momentum metrics defined by the AACC Voluntary Framework of Accountability. All measures can be utilized and benchmarked nationally for both full and part-time students.

Measurement 2.1 Increase course success in high enrollment courses (Direct Formative)

The College has identified a set of courses typically taken in the first year of enrollment. They include both general education and gateway career-technical courses. The course success rates, defined as grade C or better, will be compared to an aggregate state average. The goal is to increase the course success rate to 3% above the state average over the course of the QEP.

Course success will also be disaggregated by race/ethnicity. Currently, GTCC has an overall 15% achievement gap in course success between white and black students. The goal is to reduce this achievement gap to less than 10% by the end of the five-year implementation of the QEP. Baseline data will be established in Year 0 of the QEP.

Measurement 2.2 Increase the percent of students meeting Early Momentum Metrics

Measurement 2.2 will use several Early Momentum Metrics that significantly predict longer term success rates for students. Belfield, Jenkins, Fink (2019) state "To formatively assess whether reforms being implemented in the present are likely to improve student outcomes several years hence, college leaders need leading metrics of longer term-success." Their research has shown that a higher percentage of students will successfully complete at community colleges who have higher early momentum metrics. The metrics are also shown to typically have achievement gaps, but research has shown that closing the achievement gaps in these metrics in turn yields closing of the gaps in completion rates. Metrics have been chosen that can be applied to all students and not just full-time students, as 65% of GTCC's students attend part-time.

Measurement 2.2A Increase the percent of students earning 6 college-level hours in their first semester (Direct Formative)

The College has identified a significant achievement gap of 25% between Black and White students in earning 6 college-level hours in the first term. Baseline data will be collected using the Fall 2024 entering student cohort. Data will be measured overall for the entire cohort and disaggregated by race/ethnicity. The College will also be able to measure itself against other VFA colleges on a year-behind basis. Fall 2023 will be used for benchmarking data with other VFA colleges. Currently, GTCC's rate is 6% below all other VFA colleges. The target will be to have rates at or above other VFA colleges at the end of the QEP.

Measurement 2.2B Increase the percentage of students earning 15 college-level hours in their first year (Direct Summative)

A second Early Momentum Metric that will be analyzed is completing 15 college-level hours in the first year. Similar to Measurement 2.2A, the College has a 24% achievement gap in the

percent of students earning 15 college-level hours in their first year. Baseline data will be collected using the Fall 2023 cohort. GTCC's current rate is 3% below other VFA colleges (43%). The target will be to be 3% above other VFA colleges at the end of the QEP.

Measurement 2.2C Decrease the percentage of students earning zero credits in their first semester (Direct Formative)

Earning zero credits in the first semester is a negative predictor of a student successfully completing 12 hours in two years (Frye, Corbell, 2021). Like other Early Momentum metrics, GTCC has an achievement gap of more than 20% on this measure. The College will use Fall 2024 data to establish a baseline. Currently the College has more than 25% failing to earn any credits in its first term. Benchmarking colleges from the VFA are performing 5% better than GTCC on this measure. The target will be to decrease this rate by 6% by the end of the QEP.

Measurement 2.2D Increase the percentage of students passing college-level math and English in the first year (Direct Summative)

Much like other community colleges, GTCC has fewer students passing college-level math in the first year compared to English, though both are low. The Fall 2024 cohort will be used to establish a baseline. The College's target will be to increase each by 6% at the end of the QEP, as current rates are 2-5% below benchmarking colleges.

Measurement 2.3 Improve student course success in classes where the faculty member has been trained in Active Learning by ACUE. (Indirect Summative)

Student outcomes will be a critical outcome of the ACUE training. This includes tracking completion rates in courses with active learning and analyzing retention and success rates to determine the program's impact on student achievement.

This measurement will be analyzed in two ways. The first, GTCC will analyze course success at the aggregate level over three semesters: before, during, and after faculty training is conducted. The target will be to improve course success by 5% after the completion of ACUE training. In addition, the College will analyze the success rates of those faculty who complete the entire 4-class certification by ACUE compared to those just completing the first class. This will enable the College to determine if it should invest in more faculty completing all 4 classes for the certification.

Measurement 2.4 Faculty will successfully complete the first course in ACUE Active Learning (Indirect Formative)

The success of the ACUE "Promoting Active Learning" program will be measured through an established comprehensive set of assessment outcomes. First, faculty participation and engagement will be tracked by monitoring enrollment and completion rates in the program. This will provide insights into how many faculty members are actively involved and committed to the program. The target will be for 95% of all faculty who teach more than one year at GTCC to enroll in the first course of the ACUE "Promoting Active Learning" program and 90% will successfully complete all aspects of the course. Given faculty turnover and a roll out of the training, some may not get trained before leaving the College and others may have situations that prevent the course's successful completion.

Student Success Outcome 3: Improve student persistence

The three measurements for this outcome are an aspect of the data from the VFA, with disaggregation available for gender, race/ethnicity, Pell, and College Readiness. In addition, the GTCC Institutional Research Office formulates the “New to GTCC” cohort each fall using Zogotech, the College’s data reporting and dashboarding tool. This allows the College to track preliminary data ahead of sending it to the VFA each June.

Measurement 3.1 Increase Fall to Spring persistence in the first year. (Direct Formative)

Measurement 3.1 is another Early Momentum Metric that measures persistence. Achievement gaps in fall-to-spring persistence are 10% between Black and White students. Baseline data will be gathered using the Fall 2024 cohort, with Fall 2023 cohort being used to provide benchmarking data, as that will be the latest available. Contrary to other Early Momentum metrics, GTCC is performing at the same level as benchmarking colleges. Thus, the target will be based upon improving GTCC’s rate to 6% above the baseline; which at the time of this writing is a 10% increase in persistence.

Measurement 3.2 Increase the percentage of “New to GTCC” students achieving 12 credits within two years (Direct Summative)

As has been previously presented in this document, if students can reach the threshold of successfully completing 12 credit hours within the first two years of attendance, noted achievement gaps between subpopulations of students are significantly reduced. With that knowledge, the College will measure how many students in the “New to GTCC” cohort described in *Measurement 3.1* attain this critical momentum point with a goal to increase the percentage over the QEP timeframe. Baseline data will be gathered based upon the Fall 2022 cohort. A target will be set to increase this to 6% above the baseline. This will be about a 10% change in students reaching this critical threshold.

Measurement 3.3 VFA Two-Year Success: Increase the percentage of students completing, persisting to the 3rd fall, or successfully transferring (Direct Summative)

The final measure is one of GTCC’s KPI’s that was fundamental in identifying the QEP topic. This measure is a two-year measure, and thus the impacts of the later years of the QEP will not be seen immediately. It is because of this that other measures are tracked throughout the semester, after each semester, and after each year. Baseline data will be from the Fall 2022 cohort. The goal is to increase the two-year success rate of the “New to GTCC” cohort to 69% by the 2030 report, reporting on the 2027 cohort. This will represent approximately a 4% increase. It is lower than other measures because the latest reporting will not include measures put in place the first semester of the last two years of the QEP.

Student Success Outcome 4: Increase the percentage of students in Good Academic Standing

Measurement 4.1 Increase the percentage of students in Good Academic Standing (Direct Summative)

Baseline data will be based upon all students in the Fall before revisions to Academic Standing. The target will be to increase the percentage of students in Good Academic Standing to 80% by

the end of the QEP. If the baseline is significantly higher than current data, the target will be revised to be a 1% increase for each year of implementation.

Measurement 4.2 Increase the percent of students not in Good Academic Standing who are able to return to Good Academic Standing the next semester (Direct Summative)

Baseline data will be gathered at the end of the Spring term immediately following the baseline data in Measurement 4.1. The target will be to increase this to 20% by the end of the QEP.

Student Success Outcome 5: Decrease financial burden on students by increasing the number of students who make Satisfactory Academic Progress

An important outcome for the QEP is improving student achievement for the many students who receive the Pell Grant and other financial assistance. In doing so, GTCC hopes to increase the number of students making satisfactory academic progress, decrease student default rates and allow students to more efficiently utilize financial aid awards to achieve their academic goal.

Measurement 5.1 Decrease in the percent of students who do not meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements for continued financial aid

Baseline data of the percent of financial aid recipients who do not meet Satisfactory Academic Progress will be collected after Fall 2024 semester. The goal will be to decrease this percentage by 6% over the course of the QEP.

Measurement 5.2 Minimize the College's financial liability to return Title IV funds

To ensure compliance with federal financial aid rules, attendance reporting will be monitored on a weekly basis with the goal of having 90% of faculty accurately documenting student attendance. Return to Title IV amounts will be monitored over the timeframe of the QEP with a goal of decreasing the amount returned each year. A baseline will be set using funds returned to Title IV during 2024-25, and an average amount returned per student will be used to take fluctuations in enrollment into account.

Measurement 5.3 Increase student awareness of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements for continued financial aid

The College has a financial aid survey that is a part of the Financial Aid department's regular assessment. This survey will be modified in Year 0 to include items that assess this measure and will form the baseline. The goal will be to increase the percentage of students who can accurately define the key aspects to maintaining SAP by 10% by the end of the QEP. Student awareness will also be measured through assessments conducted in college skills (ACA) courses and survey questions embedded in direct messaging.

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Appendix I: Committees

Guided Pathways Committee: Student Success in the First 12 Credit Hours

Name	Title
Kirby Moore, Co-Chair	VP Student Services
Dr. Craig Rhodes, Co-Chair	Dean of STEM (former)
Brandon Belcher	English Instructor
Kashonda Bynum	Math Instructor
Deana St. Peter	Director, Center for Academic Engagement (former)
Jessica McKoy	Director, Counseling and DisAbility Access Services (former)
Scott Jaeschke	Student Conduct and Community Standards
Joseph Rowbottom	Assistant Registrar
Ryan Bonner	Assistant Director, Financial Aid
Bartholomew Trescott	English Instructor
Dr. Kristen Corbell	Director, Institutional Research

QEP Development Committee

Name	Title
Jeremy Bennett, Co-Chair	Associate VP of Instruction
Amanda Fields, Co-Chair (7/5/2023 to 6/12/2024)	Department Chair, English
Dr. Kristen Corbell, Co-Chair (6/13/2024- present)	Director of Institutional Research
Dr. Kara Baldwin	Director of Grant Sponsored Programs
Rich Depolt	Faculty/Department Chair, Accounting, Business, and Supply Chain Management
Kristin Dotson	Director, Institutional Support and Special Projects
LaTia Hairston	Faculty/Program Director, Cosmetology
William “Keith” Karriker	Registrar
Lisa Koretoff	Director, Financial Aid
Justin Lyons	Director, Marketing and Communications

Amanda Melniczek	Faculty/Co-Chair, Center for Teaching and Learning
Kirby Moore	Associate VP, Onboarding and Admissions
Dr. Ann Proudfit	VP of Student Services
Brad Spielman	Director, Center for Academic Engagement
Ronnie Smith	IT Systems Manager
Nick Yale	Faculty/Interim Director, Aviation Programs

QEP Attendance Policy/Reporting Subcommittee

Name	Title	Relevant Experience
Jeremy Bennett, Co-Chair	Associate VP of Instruction	Attendance and Policy
Kristen Corbell, Co-Chair	Director of Institutional Research	Assessment and Reporting
Amanda Fields	Department Chair, English	Teaching and Department Leadership
Nicholle Stone	Director, eLearning	Teaching, Instructional Design, and Attendance
Curtis Way	Senior Programmer Analyst	Technology and Programming
William “Keith” Karriker	Registrar	Registrar, Reporting, and Administrative Withdrawal
Kirby Moore	AVP, Onboarding and Admissions	Student Services

QEP Attendance Pilot Subcommittee

Name	Title	Relevant Experience
Jeremy Bennett, Co-Chair	Associate VP of Instruction	Attendance, Scheduling, Curriculum, and Policy
Kristen Corbell, Co-Chair	Director of Institutional Research	Assessment, IR, Curriculum, and Reporting
Amanda Fields	Department Chair, English	Faculty and General Education Courses
Nick Yale	Director, Aviation Programs	Faculty and Aviation Courses
LaTia Hairston	Program Director, Cosmetology	Faculty and Cosmetology Courses
John Ratliff	Program Director, Surgical Technology	Faculty and Surgical Technology Courses
Kristen Johnson	Department Chair, Sciences	Faculty and General Education Courses
Robert Stoesen	Research Specialist, Institutional Research	Data and Reporting
Jason Johnson	Assistant Director, Financial Aid Operations	Financial Aid

Joseph Rowbottom	Assistant Registrar	Registrar and Student Experience
Jen Whisman	Director, Instructional Support and Special Projects	Scheduling, Faculty, Reporting, Tracking, and Curriculum

QEP Student Engagement Subcommittee

Name	Title	Relevant Experience
Brad Spielman, Chair	Director, Center for Academic Engagement	Student Engagement
Richard Worley	Coordinator, Student Success Coach	Student Engagement
Jesse Cross	Director, Admissions	Student Engagement, Recruiting, and Admissions
David Pittman	AVP, Student Retention and Completion	Student Engagement, Onboarding, Retention, and Completion
Karla Solis	Director, Advising and Onboarding Services	Student Engagement, Onboarding, Retention, and Completion
Shannon Grayson	Academic Achievement Specialist	Student Engagement and Retention
Jane Brandsma	Faculty, Mathematics	Faculty and Student Engagement
Rhonda McDonnell	Faculty, English	Faculty and Student Engagement
Darin Webster	Faculty, Business Administration	Faculty and Student Engagement

QEP Faculty and Staff Professional Development Subcommittee

Name	Title	Relevant Experience
Jeremiah Underwood, Co-Chair	Program Director, Emergency Medical Science	Faculty and Staff Training
Amanda Melniczek, Co-Chair	Faculty, Communications, Co-Chair Center for Teaching and Learning	Faculty Training and Training Development
Kristen Corbell	Director, Institutional Research	Institutional Research, Surveys, System Office
Nicholle Stone	Director, eLearning	Instructional Design, Teaching and Learning
Ann Proudfit	VP, Student Services	Student Services Administration and Campus Initiatives
Carla Ugboro	Director, Employee Development, Engagement, and Organizational Development	Employee Training and Development

Nicholas Zavediuk	Faculty, Philosophy	Classroom Engagement and 5G Coaching Certification
Ashley Mackey-Whitworth	Student Success Coach, Career and College Promise	Student Success Initiatives
Brad Spielman	Director, Center for Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement Strategies, Campus Initiatives, Retention
Jonathan Skeen	Faculty, Diesel/Heavy Equipment Technology	Career Technical Education Classroom Engagement Strategies
Jay Smith	Department Chair, Creative and Performing Arts	Creative Classroom Engagement Strategies, Professional Development
Martha Barham	Faculty, Nursing	Regulatory Program Engagement
Rachael Gibson	Faculty, Mathematics	Classroom Engagement
Monica Young	Director, Library	Library and Information Literacy
Catalina Aldana Archila	Student Government Association President	Student Experience

QEP Financial Aid Distribution Subcommittee

Name	Title	Relevant Experience
Jeremy Bennett, Co-Chair	Associate VP of Instruction	Attendance and Policy
Ann Proudfit, Co-Chair	Vice President, Student Services	Attendance, SAP, and Financial Aid
Rich Depolt	Department Chair, Accounting, Business, Supply Chain	Faculty Teaching and Departmental Leadership
Kristin Dotson	Director, Institutional Support and Special Projects	Business and Finance
Lisa Koretoff	Director, Financial Aid	Financial Aid Rules and Regulations
Justin Lyons	Director, Marketing and Communications	Marketing
Mike Mackey	Director, Student Recruitment	Recruitment and Student Admissions
Ronnie Smith	Manager, IT Systems	Technology and Process
Curtis Way	Senior Programmer Analyst	Technology and Process

QEP Marketing

Name	Title	Relevant Experience
Justin Lyons	Director, Marketing and Communications	Marketing
Jan Knox	VP, College Advancement	Marketing

Appendix II: Attendance Policy and Administrative Withdrawal Procedures

Attendance Policy

Class attendance and participation in developmental and credit-level classes are necessary for academic success. The student's record of attendance will begin on the first day of the course, even if registration occurs after the semester has begun. Students are expected to attend and complete all scheduled instructional activities, both in class and online. Instructors must record attendance each day the class meets and in online portions of a class at least once a week. Attendance in a face-to-face class is based on the student's physical presence. Attendance for an online portion of the class is denoted by a graded activity submitted onto Canvas.

A student may withdraw from any course up to the published deadline. Refer to the [Refund Policy](#)¹ for details about if any tuition will be refunded based upon the date the student withdraws.

14-Day Rule: At any time during the semester and regardless of a student's use of financial aid benefits, the college will administratively withdraw a student who is not in attendance for 14 consecutive calendar days including weekends, and canceled class sessions (in which there is an option for, or completion of, an "Out of Class Assignment"). College breaks will be excluded from the 14-day attendance count. Additionally, the college will administratively withdraw a student who has not completed any graded activities for 14 consecutive days in their fully online course.

With the approval of the Senior Vice President of Instruction/ Chief Academic Officer, individual departments may set attendance requirements that are more stringent than those stated above if they are required by programmatic accreditation or regulatory agencies. Those requirements must be published in the course syllabus and respective programmatic handbooks. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the course attendance policy. Students will be made aware that course drops and/or withdrawals will change their enrollment intensity, which may affect a student's Veterans Affairs, financial aid, and other benefits.

Administrative Withdrawal Procedure

Attendance is required and will be taken at each class meeting and once a week in all online portions of classes. For more information about attendance requirements, see the attendance policy. Per the 14-day rule, students who fail to attend developmental and for-credit classes for 14 consecutive calendar days will be administratively withdrawn and a "Withdrawn Administratively" (WA) grade will be entered. Students who are withdrawn from class after census will be responsible for course payment and will not be eligible for a refund.

At any point of the semester once the student stops attending for 14 days, the college will assign a grade of WA for the course. No credits or grade points will be awarded, and the WA will not affect the GPA. Students who have not attended class for 7 or more days will be notified via the

¹ GTCC Return of Funds Policy: <https://www.gtcc.edu/admissions-and-aid/how-to-pay-for-college/financial-aid/return-of-funds.php>

student's official college email and/or text. Withdrawal from a class may impact current Financial Aid.

For students receiving financial aid, the course will be recorded as an attempt, will count against the completion rate of the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) calculation, and may affect future financial aid awards and eligibility.

Appendix III: QEP Communication & Marketing Plan

Building student understanding about the importance of attendance and class engagement is essential. GTCC will need to create a culture that values attendance and explains how active participation contributes to a positive and effective learning environment. Communication of these new policies will be included in all front-end messaging to students, including in orientation, onboarding, and course registration. Student Services will need to revise all student communications regarding attendance to include the policy and explain what is expected in both online and in-person classes. For those students currently attending GTCC and/or returning, their contact is more likely to be with the Financial Aid Office rather than through onboarding. When any student comes in for any financial aid discussion, it is suggested that the message provided promotes attendance as part of attaining Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). This ensures they are also aware of the new policies.

GTCC will help students understand the importance of attending classes by repeating this message in multiple modalities and at multiple touchpoints. GTCC's Marketing team will create short video testimonials that have current students sharing advice with prospective and new students about their experiences at GTCC. These videos will emphasize attendance and engagement in class and will highlight making the most of opportunities to meet with faculty and other students to fully experience college and to improve success. Links to the videos can be placed on Canvas in all courses, and faculty in gateway courses, like the Academic Success Course, can spend time in the first few days of class to emphasize the messages of these videos.

Additionally, collateral materials that can be displayed around campus will reinforce the attendance policy and its importance to achieving academic goals. Displays in high-traffic spaces will include mood screens, window clings, and posters. These will include images of students with motivational affirmations, such as "I'm here to succeed in [insert program]" or "I'm here to succeed for [insert purpose e.g. my family, my mom, my daughter, my community]".

To learn more about the struggles that students are having with attending, GTCC will institute student focus groups. Department and Divisional meetings already in place are excellent places to learn what is working and what needs refining from faculty and staff. The lessons learned will be brought to the QEP committee to determine what, if any, changes need to be made.

Communication to students will include:

1. Importance of attending class will be presented in all orientations (online and face-to-face), financial aid meetings, and advising meetings
2. Syllabi in all classes have consistent attendance policies
3. Signs promoting attendance throughout campus
4. Social media promoting attendance
5. Student panels promoting attendance at Student Services events
6. All faculty, Academic Achievement Specialists, and Student Success Coaches discuss attendance on first day and throughout semester
7. Communication with students who are not consistently attending

QEP Marketing Overview

What is the Quality Enhancement Plan?

A Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is the main component of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) reaffirmation of accreditation process. Every 10 years, colleges accredited by SACSCOC are required to engage in a broad-based self-study and discovery process to identify and become involved in a “plan” that will enhance overall student learning and/or learning environment at the institution. This QEP is a five-year project that is aimed at becoming a part of the college’s culture.

GTCC’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

GTCC’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), “Here to Succeed,” is a five-year initiative to boost student success in the first 12 credit hours. By improving student engagement and attendance in classes, the plan aims to close achievement gaps, especially among students of color. Research shows that completing 12 credits within two years greatly enhances overall student success. This initiative reflects GTCC's commitment to raising achievement for all students.

QEP Elevator Speech:

GTCC’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), "Here to Succeed," is a five-year initiative to boost student success in the first 12 credit hours by enhancing student engagement and attendance, as well as faculty and staff development to maintain student engagement both in the classroom and the broader community.

Key Components of the QEP Marketing Plan

Audience & Outcomes:

- Key Stakeholders (Audience) - each will require their own messaging
 - Students & Parents
 - Faculty/Staff
 - Board/Leadership
 - Donors/Alumni
 - Corp Partners

Messaging

- QEP Name: “Here to Succeed”
- Talking Points based on audience.
 - Students: Talking points that convey how GTCC will support them; setting in-class expectations related to assignments, attendance, and projects; info related to financial aid payout
 - Faculty and Staff: Talking points on how to convey support resources to students; changes to financial aid payout; what the attendance policy is; and why success in the first 12 credit hours is critical for students
- Top key messages for all audiences
- FAQs

Visuals

- Logo: Currently being voted on by students, faculty, and staff
- Design assets for use across multiple channels (Web, Print, Social Media, Video, etc..)

Short & Long-Term Execution: Employ multi-channel approach:

- **Internal Comms:** Mood / Watchfire / GTW / Posters / Orientation Material all point to single QEP webpage via QR code
- **Webpage:** HereToSucceed.gtcc.edu
- **Collateral:** Posters / Banners / Swag / Postcards for Orientation & Classroom Distribution
- **External:** Messaging for Alumni / Sonors / Board / Corporate Partners / State and Local Officials
- **Faculty:** Onboarding Materials
- **Presentation for Information Sessions:** Student Gov. / Staff Assoc. / Faculty Assoc. / Board / CLT / Students on all Campuses / Virtual Students
- **Milestone Events:** Celebrations when goals are achieved / opportunity to message and celebrate success

Feedback

- Survey Key Stakeholders at key points leading up to, during, and after campaign launch
- Collect feedback from students, faculty, and staff utilizing focus groups, surveys, and feedback forms.

Fall 2024 Roll-Out

The GTCC marketing team will use an integrated marketing approach to coordinate and unify various marketing tactics to ensure a consistent message across all channels. For GTCC's QEP, "Here to Succeed," this approach entails a strategic mix of audience-specific messaging, visual branding, and multi-channel execution to boost student success in the first 12 credit hours.

Key tactics include tailored communication for students, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders, a cohesive visual identity, and diverse channels such as web content, printed materials, social media, and informational events. The strategy behind this approach is to create a unified and impactful message that enhances awareness and engagement, driving the initiative's goals of improving student engagement, attendance, and overall success within the broader college community. Feedback mechanisms are also integrated to continuously refine and enhance the marketing efforts based on stakeholder input.

Webpage

Launch a central hub for all information related to the QEP on GTCC's website. All informational assets (printed pieces, digital communications, presentations, etc...) will point back to this page.

Page to include:

- QEP Overview
- FAQs
- Video
- Resources
- Meeting Minutes
- Timeline
- QEP Committee

Division and Department Meetings

Leading up to, and into, Fall semester, members of the QEP committee will begin presenting and discussing the QEP at division and department meetings across all GTCC campuses. This is meant to start the discussion internally and serve as a preamble to the Celebration of Excellence all-staff/faculty meeting.

- Presentation Deck
- Informational Postcard with Link to QEP Website

Titan Takeoff (Student Orientation)

New student orientation is a great opportunity to start informing new students of the QEP. This will be done by incorporating information into their materials and experience for the day.

- **Postcard:** Front and back postcard with QR to QEP website providing elevator speech about QEP and high-level bullets impacting them with link to learn more at the website.
- **Signage:** Execute a series of posters with important messages about the importance of students' first 12 credit hours and about the QEP with QR to website.
- **Laminated Info Card:** Wallet-sized and containing elevator speech on one side and "Here to Succeed" logo on the other side.

First-Day of Class

On the first day of class, faculty will provide students with a printed and digital postcard that contains high level information about the QEP and what it means to them. The piece will contain a QR code that will drive students to the QEP web page for more information. This information will be available for faculty to share with online students.

- **Postcard:** Front and back postcard with QR to QEP website providing elevator speech about QEP and high-level bullets impacting them with link to learn more at the website.
- **Laminated Info Card:** Wallet-sized and containing elevator speech on one side and "Here to Succeed" logo on the other side.

Celebration of Excellence

Opportunity to roll out the QEP to all faculty and staff. We will create a QEP presence by providing info postcard (w/ QR code to webpage), laminated QEP elevator speech card, and swag to faculty and staff. Dr. Clarke will play a short introductory video to the QEP, then give short remarks about the process and outcomes. Dr. Clarke will recognize committee members (who will all be wearing their QEP shirts) and have them stand so faculty and staff can approach them later to ask questions.

To be developed:

- **Video:** Short 2min or less video featuring QEP committee chairs and Dr. Clarke on what the QEP is, why we're doing it, what the focus is, and intended impact.
- **Short Presentation:** 3 or 4 slides for Dr. Clarke to reference during his QEP remarks
- **T-shirts:** "Ask me about GTCC's QEP!" for all QEP committee members to wear on that day. They can stand to be recognized and be available to answer questions
- **Postcard:** Front and back postcard with QR to QEP website providing elevator speech about QEP and high-level bullets impacting them with link to learn more at the website.
- **Laminated Info Card:** Wallet-sized and containing elevator speech on one side and "Here to Succeed" logo on the other side.
- **Swag:** Giveaway with QEP logo to have available on everyone's chair at meeting

Appendix IV: College-Wide Division/Department - QEP Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Group	Presenter
9/29/24	11:00 am	LRC 211	Faculty Association General Meeting	Dr. Jeremy Bennett Amanda Fields
6/13/24	2:15 pm	Teams	Bookstore Staff	Dr. Jeremy Bennett
6/17/24	9:00 am	MCC 4422	Finance – Accounting and Reporting	Dr. Jeremy Bennett
6/18/24	10:00 am	MCC 4900	Student Services Directors Meeting	Dr. Jeremy Bennett
6/19/24	10:45 am	TC 1128	Mitch Johnson’s Managers Staff Meeting	Dr. Jeremy Bennett
6/28/24	8:00 am	Teams	Student Services Division	Dr. Ann Proudfit
7/16/24	3:00 pm	MCC 4900	College Advancement Team (Jan Knox)	Justin Lyons
7/23/24	9:00 am	CADM 1534/1535	ITS Staff	Dr. Kristen Corbell
7/31/24	9:00 am	TC 1172	Purchasing Staff	Dr. Jeremy Bennett
7/31/24	3:00 pm	Cameron Campus 219	WCE Meeting (Claire Ricci)	Dr. Jeremy Bennett
8/02/24	1:00 pm	Koury Auditorium	Buildings and Custodial staff, Physical Plant staff, Campus Police and VP office staff	Dr. Jeremy Bennett
8/12/24	9:55 am	Celebration of Excellence	All Employee Meeting	Dr. Jeremy Bennett Dr. Kristen Corbell
8/14/24	9:00 am	HT 101	STEM Division	Dr. Jeremy Bennett
8/14/24	10:30 am	TEC 305	ICTT Division*	Dr. Jeremy Bennett

8/14/24	8:30 am	HM 170	BCPA Division Meeting	Dr. Kristen Corbell
8/14/24	11:30 am	LRC 3 rd floor	HSS Division Meeting	Dr. Kristen Corbell
8/14/24	10:00 am	HT 103	Health Sciences Division	Dr. Kristen Corbell
8/14/24	8:00 am	PS 127	HSPS	Dr. Jeremy Bennett
8/14/24	6:30 pm	AT Auditorium	Adjunct Academy	Dr. Jeremy Bennett
8/15/24	9:45 am	AV3, 3rd Floor, Double Room	Aviation	Dr. Jeremy Bennett

Rev. 9/13/24

Appendix V: Assessment Plan

Institutional Goal:						
Strategic Goal 1: Improve and measure student access, success, progress, and completion						
QEP Goal:						
Here to Succeed Goal: The focus of Here to Succeed at GTCC is to improve student success in the first 12 credit hours by increasing student engagement and attendance.						
QEP Success Outcomes	Assessment Measures and Instruments	Measure Type	Benchmark	Target	When	Person Responsible
Improve Student Attendance and Engagement	1.1 Increase the percentage of students attending class	Direct Formative	Collected in Spring 2026	90% of students will attend 80% or more of the class.	Throughout the semester	Faculty/QEP Compliance/IR Director
	1.2 Decrease the number and percentage of early alerts that are attendance related.	Direct Formative	50% of early alerts are related to attendance; Baseline Year 1	Less than 20% of all early alerts will be from attendance related concerns.	Throughout each course	QEP Compliance and Analyst/Academic Achieve Specialist
	1.3 Increase percentage of faculty structuring classes to promote engagement and attendance using Faculty Survey Results	Indirect Summative	Collect in Fall 2024		End of the semester	Institutional Research
	1.4: Increase student reports of student engagement activities using national benchmarking surveys and course evaluations					
	1.4A Improvement in student behaviors that demonstrate increased engagement	Indirect Summative	2023 SENSE results	baseline + 10%	Fall 2025, 2027, 2029	Institutional Research
Improve course success	1.4B Improve Active and Collaborative Learning behaviors in the second year of attendance	Indirect Summative	2023 CCSSE results	baseline + 10%	spring 2025, 2027, 2029	Institutional Research
	1.4C Improve the frequency of instructor feedback across all curricula	Indirect Summative	Collected in Fall 2024-Spring 2025	set based upon results	End of the semester	Institutional Research
	2.1: Increase course success in high enrollment courses	Direct Formative	2023-24: 65% General Education, 70% CTE; Baseline gathered in 2024-25	3% above the state average with equity gaps less than 10%	End of the semester	Institutional Research
	2.2 Increase the percent of students meeting Early Momentum Metrics					
	2.2A: Increase the percent of students earning 6 college-level hours in their first semester	Direct Formative	Fall 2021: 52.2%, Fall 2023: 55.9%, Baseline collected in Fall 2024. Current rate is 6% below other VFA colleges.	At or above VFA comparative colleges	End of the semester	Institutional Research

rates in the first year	2.2B: Increase the percent of students earnin 15 or more college level credits in their first year	Direct Summative	Fall 2021 - 38.7% currently 3% below comparative colleges, baseline - Fall 2023 Cohort	3% above comparative colleges	End of the semester	Institutional Research	Strategy 1, Strategy 2, Strategy 3
	2.2C: Decrease the percent of students earning zero college credits in their first semester	Direct Formative	Current from VFA: 26.5%; Baseline: Fall 2024	Baseline minus 6%	End of the semester	Institutional Research	Strategy 1, Strategy 2, Strategy 3
	2.2D: Passed College Level Math and English in the first year	Direct Summative	Math: 23.9%, English: 34.8%, Both: 16%; Baseline Fall 2024	Baseline + 6%	Each year	Institutional Research	Strategy 1, Strategy 2, Strategy 3
	2.3 Improve student course success in classes where the faculty member has been trained in Active Learning by ACUE	Indirect Summative	2024-25 academic year	Baseline + 5%	Year before training and one year after training	Institutional Research	Strategy 3
Improve Student Persistence	2.4 Faculty will successfully complete the first course in ACUE Active Learning	Indirect Formative	Not available	90%	each semester	Institutional Research	Strategy 3
	3.1 Increase Fall to Spring persistence in the first year	Direct Formative	Fall 2022 = 70.1%, Fall 2023 = 74.4%, baseline Fall 2024	Baseline + 6%	Each Spring Semester	Institutional Research	Strategy 1, Strategy 2, Strategy 3
	3.2 Increase the percentage of "New to GTC" students achieving 12 credits within two years	Direct Summative	Cohort: 57%, Baseline: Fall 2022 Cohort	Baseline + 6%	Once a year we will track a cohort.	Institutional Research	Strategy 1, Strategy 2, Strategy 3
	3.3 Increase the percentage of students completing, persisting to the 3rd fall, or successfully transferring	Direct Summative	Fall 2022 Cohort	Baseline + 4%	Tracked each year for completing cohort.	Institutional Research	Strategy 1, Strategy 2, Strategy 3
Increase students earning Academic Standing	4.1 Increase the percentage of students in Good Academic Standing	Direct Summative	Fall 2025	Baseline + 4%	End of the semester	Student Information System: Colleague	Strategy 1, Strategy 2
	4.2 Increase the percent of students not in Good Academic Standing who are able to return to Good Academic Standing the next semester	Direct Summative	Fall 2023: 15%; Baseline Fall 2024	20% (if baseline remains around 12.5%)	End of the semester	Student Information System: Colleague	Strategy 1, Strategy 2
	5.1 Decrease in number of students who do not meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements for continued financial aid.	Direct Summative	Fall 2023: 15%; Baseline Fall 2024	Baseline minus 6%	End of the semester	Financial Aid	Strategy 4
	5.2 Minimize the college's financial liability to return Title IV funds	Indirect Summative	Baseline: 2024-25	decrease from baseline	End of the year	College Financial Aid Office	Strategy 4
Decrease financial burden on students	5.3 Increase student awareness of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements for continued financial aid	Indirect Formative	Baseline: 2024-25	baseline + 10%	End of the year	Financial Aid and Institutional Research	Strategy 4

Appendix VI: CCSSE Data at GTCC

CCSSE ITEM	GTCC Frequencies		Large Colleges Frequencies		2023 Cohort Frequencies	
	Never-Sometimes	Often-Very Often	Never-Sometimes	Often-Very Often	Never-Sometimes	Often-Very Often
4a. Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	37.5	62.4	35	65	33.4	66.7
4b. Made a class presentation	75.3	24.7	72.3	27.7	71.4	28.6
4f. Worked with other students on projects during class	49.6	50.4	61.2	38.7	60.8	39.3
4g. Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	80.9	19.1	79.9	20.1	78.6	21.5
4i. Participated in a community-based project (service-learning activity) as part of a regular course.	93.6	6.4	93	7	92	8
4q. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.	53.6	46.4	54.5	45.4	54	46.1

Student Engagement Items

4a. Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions

4b. Made a class presentation

4f. Worked with other students on projects during class

4g. Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments

4i. Participated in a community-based project (service-learning activity) as part of a regular course.

4q. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.

Appendix VII: Annotated Bibliography

Ancheta, R., Daniel, D., Ahmad, R. (2021). Effect of Class Attendance on Academic Performance. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 8(9), 115-131.

In their study of how class attendance effects overall academic performance, the authors found that class absences negatively correlate with academic performance; specifically, as absences decreased, academic performance increased. This research shows a significant effect of lack of attendance on academic performance in first-year English classes.

Bergin, J. (2019). How Student Attendance Can Improve Institutional Outcomes. <https://er.educause.edu/blogs/sponsored/2019/4/how-student-attendance-can-improve-institutional-outcomes>

A meta-analysis by Macmillan Learning reviewed the impact of attendance on student outcomes. This meta-analysis found that attendance positively affects both course grades and GPA and is the single strongest predictor of college grades. It also found that the relationship between attendance and academic performance is strongest for nontraditional and/or underperforming students.

Chen, R., & DesJardins, S. L. (2008). Exploring the effects of financial aid on the gap in student dropout risks by income level. *Research in Higher Education*, 49(1), 1-18.

The structure and timing of financial aid disbursements were found to significantly influence outcomes, with separate increment disbursements mitigating the financial emergencies or situations that may arise throughout the term, ultimately improving student completion and retention

Choitz, V., & Widom, R. (2003). *Money matters: How financial aid affects nontraditional students in community colleges*. MDRC.

Different disbursement methods have been found to negatively impact student success. Two-year college students often encounter financial instability shown to benefit more from financial aid distributed in separate increments, rather than in one-time lump sum payments. According to Choitz & Widom, this approach allows students to manage their expenses more effectively throughout the academic term resulting in increased persistence and reduced stress.

Cohen, A.M., Brawer, F.B., & Kisker, C.B. (2014) *The American community college* (6th ed.) San Francisco, CA : John Wiley

Cohen, Brawer, and Kisker found that one specific engagement strategy that is gaining support is the practice of reporting successful progress based on what they refer to as a “momentum point” (p. 393). Examples of momentum points include creating course mile

markers where faculty provide in-class formative and summative assessments throughout the course to assess the student's learning journey.

Comeford, L. (2023). Attendance Matters! Supporting First Year Students' Success with a Structured Attendance Policy. *A Practice Report. Student Success*, 14(1), 71–75.

Comeford found differences in chemistry classes between two types of attendance policies. Both introductory and upper-level Chemistry classes were included in the study. In the first group, the attendance policy stated that students were responsible for the material covered in the class. The following year, the same course had an attendance policy that reduced the student's final grade for excessive absences. Attendance and final exam scores were tabulated for each group. Implementation of the new policy increased attendance and final exam scores for introductory students, but it had no effect on attendance and final exam scores for upper-level majors. This result suggests that introductory students (i.e. students in their first two years) would benefit most from course policies with specific expectations for attendance.

Keup, J. R., & Barefoot, B. O. (Eds.). (2005). Learning outcomes: Implications for first-year seminars. *National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition*.

While Keup and Barefoot's research focuses on first-year seminar courses, their findings describe how interactive classrooms engage students early in their higher education experiences. Revised and updated seminars promote engagement through interactive learning experiences that encourage active participation and peer collaboration, therefore enhancing student motivation and commitment to their academic journey.

McMurtrie, Beth. (September 20, 2023). Americans value good teaching. Do colleges? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/americans-value-good-teaching-do-colleges>

New methods for engaging college students have continued to gain ground and have been assessed through a range of studies, from the Center for Community College Student Engagement to articles in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. McMurtrie's article states: "High on the list of strategies that have repeatedly been shown to bolster learning: teaching that is interactive, connects with students' prior knowledge, provides regular feedback, and resonates with their values."

"Retention and student success - best practices and successful initiatives." (2024). *University of Maine System*. <https://www.maine.edu/student-success/retention-and-student-success-best-practices-and-successful-initiatives/>

According to the University of Maine System, a comprehensive and effective orientation program helps students get acclimated and connected to their institution, and thus they are more likely to persist and succeed. Many students come from diverse backgrounds,

including working adults or first-generation college students, and an improved orientation can make their transition to college smoother and less stressful.

Strayhorn, Terrell. (2012, 2019). *College students' sense of belonging: a key to educational success for all students*. New York: Routledge. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203118924>

Strayhorn (2012) pursued research on how a sense of belonging impacted a student's emotional connection to the campus community, directly impacting academic motivation. Strayhorn defines a sense of belonging as "students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group or others on campus" (p. 3). Strayhorn's (2012, 2019) research highlights the role faculty can play in affirming a student's ability and defeating the existence of imposter syndrome by highlighting various classroom strategies that build a climate of community and safety, including 1) co-creating classroom norms 2) connecting content to lived experiences, 3) ensuring easy, organized access to content, 4) addressing microaggressions and 5) executing consistent formative feedback tools. These strategies place the student at the center for learning, ensuring a safe, clear, and productive environment is developed for their benefit.

Tinto, V. (2003). Promoting Student Retention through Classroom Practice. Paper presented at the *Enhancing Student Retention: Using International Policy and Practice*, Amsterdam. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/255589128_Promoting_Student_Retention_Through_Classroom_Practice

Tinto's research consistently takes into account diverse populations and the current higher education environment. In this paper, Tinto discusses the value of student investment (time, money, energy) into their education. Tinto argues: "students are more likely to succeed when they are placed in supportive educational settings that hold high expectations for their success, provides frequent feedback about their performance, and requires them to be actively involved with learning" (p. 4).

Tobolowsky, B.F. (Ed.). (2008). *Effective practices in first-year seminars: New directions for higher education* (No. 121). Jossey-Bass.

According to Tobolowsky, a sense of community is especially crucial for students who commute daily to the campus. Interactive activities and peer interactions during orientations can foster a sense of belonging and community among incoming students, reducing feelings of isolation and enhancing social integration.

Zhu, L., Huang, E., Defazio, J., & Hook, S. A. (2019). Impact of the Stringency of Attendance Policies on Class Attendance/Participation and Course Grades. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 19(2), 130–140.

Research by Zhu, et.al. found attendance and course success increase when attendance policies are coupled with including attendance as part of the course's grading. Instructors with more stringent attendance policies impacting grades had better class attendance and better course grades. The study found that the combination of a graded attendance policy and a detailed explanation of the importance of attending class serves as motivation for increasing class attendance