

Nash Community College ***A FOCUSed First Year Experience***

The Nash Community College (NCC) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), "FOCUS," is the result of a comprehensive and collaborative process to identify and address needs to enhance student learning. The goal of FOCUS is evidenced in its name that stands for Fostering Opportunity and Cultivating Unparalleled Success. This goal is achieved by positively impacting student learning in the first year of college.

NCC selected "first year experience" as the topic for its QEP after nine months of broad-based qualitative and quantitative research with internal and external stakeholders. First year experience programs are designed to help students transition into the demands and expectations of college and empower them to achieve greater success. This echoes the NCC mission of preparing students for college transfer and rewarding careers and providing students with high quality instruction. NCC determined that focusing on the first year experience would provide an opportunity to impact a wide variety of desired student learning outcomes identified in the planning process.

After conducting in-depth research of various components nationwide that commonly comprise first year experience programs, the decision to develop a first year seminar course was made. Additionally, an increased focus on student advising and utilization of other student support services will be integrated. Objectives of the QEP will be emphasized in a first year seminar course and include assisting students to develop effective learning strategies, be aware of academic and support services and realize the value and benefit of goal setting.

The course, Success and Study Skills (ACA 115) includes systematic faculty professional development and support. Based on an incremental rollout, the first year seminar will be required in each associate degree curriculum program and taught by full-time faculty and professional staff.

Student learning outcomes for the QEP reflect the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that students should possess upon completion of the first year seminar course. Student learning outcomes identified for the NCC QEP are as follows:

- Students will demonstrate effective note taking skills.
- Students will define and explain strategies for effective studying.
- Students will identify and describe test-taking strategies.
- Students will locate and utilize academic tutorial services and learning resource services.
- Students will access and utilize a campus course management system such as Blackboard or CampusCruiser.
- Students will develop a semester-by-semester plan of study for degree completion.

Core assignments, grading rubrics, a master syllabus, and a common textbook will be used across all seminar sections. The course framework and materials were piloted in the 2010-2011 academic year to perfect the measures and assessment plan prior to implementation.

Implementation is supported with leadership, personnel, and realistic timelines. A gradual rollout of the Success and Study Skills course (ACA 115) ensures opportunity to assess and evaluate progress. Broad-based implementation is reflected in the fact that the plan will impact student learning outcomes across all curriculum programs with the collaboration of Administration, Institutional Effectiveness, Instruction, and Student and Enrollment Services.

The program includes a detailed assessment plan that contains both direct and indirect measures incorporating both internal and external assessment tools. Direct measures will be assessed in the first year seminar course. Indirect measures will be assessed through assessment of annual student critical success factors measured by the College before and after implementation of the QEP program.

The faculty, staff, and administration of NCC are enthusiastic about the opportunity presented by its first year experience QEP. FOCUS represents a culture shift of improved advising, customer service, and compassion for students in their most vulnerable first year of college. It reinforces the premise that the purpose of the College is not only facilitating knowledge acquisition, but changing lives.

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