

## **Focus of the Quality Enhancement Plan**

GTCC's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) will focus on increasing student success in the first 12 hours by increasing student engagement and attendance in class. The QEP is a culmination of over four years of research and efforts to improve course success early in a student's academic pathway. As was described in the topic selection summary, many data insights have led the College to realize students successfully earning 12 credits in two years significantly increases student overall success and reduces the achievement gap noted between subpopulations of students at GTCC. As a majority student of color institution, the College is committed to raising student achievement for all.

### **Student Engagement**

GTCC strategies for improving classroom engagement will be focused on incentivizing students to increase class attendance, successfully complete assignments, and engage in class activities, as described by Emory University and adapted from Appleton, et.al. (2008). The College will identify and implement intentional engagement strategies that enhance overall student learning outcomes. One effective approach involves incorporating attendance as a factor in grading or participation scores, thereby positively encouraging regular presence. As an example, faculty will design attendance-taking processes to include brief interactive activities or quizzes, directly linking attendance to immediate engagement with course content. By intertwining attendance with active learning mechanisms, faculty will cultivate a classroom environment where attendance becomes synonymous with meaningful participation and enriched learning experiences. The College's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), Faculty-In-Training (FIT) program, eLearning, and the Center for Academic Engagement will work together to develop additional ways to increase student engagement through faculty development opportunities and course development within the classroom and the learning management system, Canvas.

### **Attendance Policy and Reporting**

One of the key strategies to increase student engagement is becoming an attendance taking college with administrative withdrawal in Year 1 of the QEP. A pilot is planned in the Fall of 2024 to include one or two programs that already have regulatory requirements to track attendance, e.g. Aviation Systems Technology and Cosmetology. This will allow the College to engage general education faculty in the attendance tracking process and assess how well reporting is working for the pilot group. The pilot group will also help inform the development of training materials for faculty as the QEP project moves to full implementation. Existing department and divisional meetings provide a venue to discuss what strategies/processes are effective and what needs to be refined from the fall pilot project.

Additionally, to learn more about the struggles students are having with attending, GTCC will institute student focus groups. This will provide important feedback on the challenges students face with regular attendance, and perhaps elucidate how they might be best addressed. This process will also help calibrate the larger college community around the important link between engagement and attendance.

## **Professional Development**

One important strategy for increasing student engagement and attendance is developing and offering intentional, structured professional development for faculty and staff. GTCC plans to provide multiple focused opportunities for faculty and staff related to both the operational requirements of taking attendance and developing successful strategies for encouraging attendance and student engagement. All student-facing employees will be included in these customized trainings to ensure that the student success outcomes in the QEP are fully understood and supported. The trainings will be critical to ensuring continued broad-based support during implementation.

### *All Employee Professional Development*

To continue broad-based buy-in to the QEP topic, all employees need to understand the rationale behind moving back to a college-wide attendance policy with administrative withdrawal. Professional development sessions that summarize the College's QEP selection process and how each position at the College can best support student success through increased engagement and attendance are critical to long-term success.

Additionally, the College is committed to ensuring all faculty and student-facing staff gain a general understanding of the financial aid process and how negative attendance patterns can impact Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) and future eligibility to receive federal financial aid. It is critical that all college employees are knowledgeable so that they can provide direction to students with confidence.

### *Faculty Focused Professional Development*

In developing the faculty trainings, GTCC will leverage a well-established Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) committee. This group will determine how best to integrate this critical content into their regular programming. Special consideration will need to be given to part-time faculty training options as many of these individuals have complex schedules. GTCC has demonstrated previous success using a train-the-trainer model for sustainability and seeks to use this knowledge in implementing student engagement related sessions. Currently, two discrete sessions are envisioned. The first would provide the regulatory and operational requirements for institutions with a college-wide attendance policy. The second session will help faculty assess their current classroom engagement strategies and learn about other best practice approaches that can encourage student engagement. This will include assessing the weight of multiple types of graded assignments and fostering a learning environment that promotes student engagement and is culturally inclusive. These approaches will underscore to students that engagement and attendance is directly related to success.

## **Developing Financial Aid Distribution Processes**

Federal financial aid rules mandate that colleges with an attendance policy must have a process for tracking attendance and reporting the last date of attendance within tightly controlled timelines. This tracking process will be developed and adjusted as needed throughout the QEP. Additionally, GTCC will investigate multiple financial aid disbursement methods to provide a financial incentive to attend and limit financial risk to students and the institution in cases where students do not attend and complete their courses.