



# RISE to the Top:

Infusing high-impact practices  
to increase student success at  
Southwest Texas Junior College

## Quality Enhancement Plan

Prepared for the Commission on Colleges of the  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
as a component of reaffirmation

**Southwest Texas Junior College**

October 18 – 21, 2015



Southwest Texas Junior College  
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**Quality Enhancement Plan**

*Submitted by Southwest Texas Junior College  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
Commission on Colleges*

SACSCOC Onsite Review:  
October 18 - 21, 2015

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Chapter 1

Southwest Texas Junior College embraces the QEP process to improve student success.



## CHAPTER 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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*Southwest Texas Junior College embraces the QEP process to improve student success.*

Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) embraces the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) process to improve student success. The faculty, staff, and administration of the college recognize the importance of focusing on student success and are committed to providing a high quality educational experience for all students who come to the college to better their lives. The experience of developing a QEP was a welcome opportunity to focus on important issues. A wealth of data concerning student performance and needs along with information from the body of related research literature led the planning committee to choose Critical Thinking and Student Engagement as the topic for the plan.

In an effort to improve student learning and institutional capacity systematically, SWTJC developed a five-year (2015-2020) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) titled ***RISE to the Top***. RISE stands for **Resources** plus **Interactions** equal **Student Engagement**, or  $R + I = SE$ . The title of the QEP reflects the desire of faculty and staff for students to attain higher levels of skills and academic success during their educational experience at SWTJC. Also, the title symbolizes the goal of SWTJC to gain recognition as belonging to the top tier of its peer institutions in the country. The first letter “**R**” refers to the institution’s **resources**, including faculty, counselors, students, community members, as well as the writing center, student success center, library, student support services, and their respective staff members. The second letter “**I**” refers to well-designed student **interactions** inside and outside of the classroom (students with other students, students with faculty, students with the community, and students with staff). The last two letters “**SE**” refer to the concept of **Student Engagement**, which provides a measure of students’ overall college experience. Measured with the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), **Student Engagement** is defined as educational practices and student behaviors associated with higher levels of learning, persistence, and completion.

### **Institutional Process Used to Identify Key Issues**

The QEP Planning Committee ([Appendix A](#)) used an institutional eight-step planning process, “Moving from Vision to Action,” to develop the plan. In steps one through three the planning committee collected and analyzed data to describe the current situation and prioritize the most important challenges requiring attention. After describing the current situation and deciding what needed to change, the future situation (five years later) was imagined. The planning committee developed a vision that described how SWTJC would look when the QEP has been implemented. Next, measurable goals were created with specific targets to reach over the next five years in order for the vision to be realized. After defining goals, the committee turned to questions of how to accomplish the goals through strategy development. Developing a strategy required analysis of institutional and political factors working for and against change, and research on model strategies from around the region and country. A stakeholder analysis ensured that all parties with a vested interest in the vision will be brought into the planning and implementation process. Finally, an action plan and an evaluation plan were developed to describe (a) who will do what (b) when will it happen, and (c) how to assess progress toward the goals and vision.

## Data Driven Decisions

A perennial topic of discussion among faculty, staff, and workforce representatives is the concern that the ability of students to solve problems (academic and nonacademic) that require critical thinking is lacking. Another ongoing topic is how to increase Student Engagement. However, until the college conducted an in-depth analysis of comparative data detailing SWTJC students' strengths and weaknesses in relation to national college standards and other institutions' scores, these concerns were unfocused. Critical Thinking is directly related to student learning outcomes embedded in the college's core curriculum. Data from the 2012, and 2014 administrations of the ETS Proficiency Profile show that only one out of twelve SWTJC students who complete the core curriculum, are proficient or marginally proficient in critical thinking as defined by the ETS documentation. Obviously, there is a great need to increase the number of students who demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking. Data from the 2010, 2012, and 2014 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) administrations show SWTJC needs to improve student-faculty interactions and collaborative learning. The assessment results from ETS and CCSSE were used to formulate QEP goals related to Student Learning Outcomes.

## Focus of the Plan

The primary focus of *RISE to the Top* is to increase student success through increased student engagement and critical thinking. This two-pronged approach (student engagement and critical thinking) provides the framework for many of the QEP strategies. The strategies identified by SWTJC to improve student engagement and critical thinking are categorized as "high-impact educational practices" (HIP) and include the following activities and programs:

- First-year seminars and experiences (*e.g. Learning Frameworks and College Success Skills courses*)
- Common intellectual experiences (such as the core curriculum)
- Learning communities
- Writing-intensive courses
- Collaborative assignments and projects
- Undergraduate research
- Diversity and global learning in courses or programs that examine "difficult differences"
- Service- or community-based learning
- Internships
- Capstone courses and projects (Kuh, 2008).

SWTJC will improve the quality of instruction by infusing high-impact educational practices throughout the college curriculum. High-impact practices lead to greater student engagement, which leads to higher student success rates. SWTJC's QEP recognizes that some faculty and staff are using elements of several of the HIP activities, but assessment data indicates that the college needs to broaden and enhance the activities (*capstone courses and projects, common*



*intellectual experiences, and collaborative assignments*) to increase student success. In addition, some of the activities listed above (*first year seminars and experience, service or community-based learning, and undergraduate research*) are either brand new or not currently part of the array of strategies employed by faculty and staff to promote student success. When possible, the plan will capitalize on existing strengths already present by identifying specific faculty and staff who use high-impact practices. Also, activities which encourage collaboration and coordination among student support departments with the faculty to create well-designed student interactions will be identified and/or developed.

## **QEP Goals and Outcomes**

In alignment with the principles outlined in the College mission statement and strategic plan, the QEP established three goals for ***RISE to the Top***:

1. Improve critical thinking through high-impact educational practices
2. Improve student engagement through high-impact practices
3. Enhance student learning through professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, focusing on high-impact practices.

These major goals will achieve four outcomes:

1. Faculty and staff will demonstrate inclusion of high-impact practices in the learning environment.
2. Students will actively engage in their course work.
3. Students will demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking.
4. Faculty and staff will reflect on ways to engage students through their roles at Southwest Texas Junior College.

The professional development activities of the faculty and staff will allow them to reflect on strategies to increase student engagement through efficient coordination of their roles at SWTJC and improve their teaching skills. These goals and outcomes are aligned with SWTJC's Strategic Plan 2014 - 2019 and mission. ([Appendix B](#))

*Institutional Goal 1: Identify and serve the learning needs of the community (Learning)*

*Institutional Goal 2: Cultivate excellence in teaching, instructional delivery, student services, and administrative support (Quality)*

Through the implementation of the QEP, it is expected that students will demonstrate increased engagement in their classes and acquire the critical thinking skills necessary to achieve their goals. ***RISE to the Top*** leads to a student success-oriented campus culture rich with opportunities for meaningful collaboration and engagement between and among students, faculty, and staff through the development and implementation of customized, systematic high-impact practices. A comprehensive system of well-developed lessons and activities is utilized by faculty and staff in order to systematically engage students with institutional resources, build relationships and partnerships that support learning, and deliver activities and experiences that provide clear pathways to success in college (Kuh et al., 2006).

## **Institutional Capability and Broad-Based Involvement**

SWTJC possesses the human and material resources to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP during the 2015-2020 time period. Currently serving approximately 5000 students each semester and with over \$40,000,000 as an annual budget, SWTJC has demonstrated its ability to provide quality educational services to the region. The 114 full-time faculty and 209 full-time staff are dedicated to carrying out the mission of the college to serve students. SWTJC has budgeted the necessary funds for personnel, supplies, professional development, and other resources to complete the QEP. The initial budget for the QEP is \$126,541 for the first year. The projected budget for the five-year period is \$818,000 (see Chapter 5). The QEP Planning Committee, composed of representatives from the three main campuses in Uvalde, Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and the smaller instructional facilities in Hondo and Castroville, purposefully involved students, staff, community members, and faculty in a broad-based manner. System-wide surveys and meetings during the beginning of the semester convocations were held to make sure all of the constituents of the college had input into the QEP process. Special presentations were held for students on each campus, high school counselors responsible for dual credit students, as well as for the SWTJC top administrative officials and the Board of Trustees ([see list of presentations in Table 3.2 in Chapter 3](#)).

## **Assessment and Evaluation Plan**

At the end of each academic year, the QEP Implementation Team will conduct a formative and qualitative evaluation of the overall QEP progress to date in line with SWTJC's strategic plan and institutional effectiveness cycle (see Figure 3.1). The results will be included in an annual QEP progress report that will be compiled by the QEP Director and submitted to the President's Cabinet (See [SWTJC Organization Chart in Appendix C](#)), who will then share the information with the SWTJC community and other appropriate stakeholders. The formative and qualitative evaluation will include a review of the overall administration of the QEP and an overview of all projects, activities, and budget. Adjustments to the plan will be made based on the results of the annual evaluations.

## **QEP Implementation Team**

The QEP Implementation Team composition will include three faculty members, three staff members, and a student representative in addition to the QEP Director, Instructional Design & Technology Specialist, and Administrative Assistant. Academic division chairs and service directors will serve as implementation liaisons as needed throughout the course of the project.

- QEP Director (fall 2015)
- Instructional Design & Technology Specialist (fall 2016)
- Administrative Assistant (fall 2015)
- Del Rio Faculty Representative
- Del Rio Staff Representative
- Eagle Pass Faculty Representative
- Eagle Pass Staff Representative
- Uvalde Faculty Representative
- Uvalde Staff Representative
- Student Representative
- Implementation Liaisons (division chairs and service directors as needed)

The QEP Implementation Team will meet bi-monthly (every two months) to review and evaluate the implementation of *RISE to the Top*. In addition, the committee will review and analyze formative and summative assessments of *RISE to the Top* activities. A complete description of the positions and duties can be found in Chapter 5.

More details about the assessment and evaluation plan can be found in Chapter 7 of this document.

## Conclusion

The administration, faculty, and staff at SWTJC look forward to the successful initiation, implementation, and completion of the *RISE to the Top* QEP. The first year of implementation includes offering a first-year experience for all new students at the college in the form of an EDUC 1100 - Learning Frameworks class, or a similar course named COLS 0300 - College Success Skills. Students placed in one or more developmental education areas will be placed in the COLS 0300 class. Designed to enhance student engagement and increase proficiency in critical thinking, the courses will be required for all entering first-time-in-college students. This high-impact educational practice will be the first of several that SWTJC will implement in the 2015-2020 time period of the QEP.

## Index of Indicators to QEP Quality

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# THE INSTITUTION

## Chapter 2

RISE to the Top is designed to mesh with the existing campus culture and the needs of students served by the college.





## CHAPTER 2: THE INSTITUTION – Southwest Texas Junior College

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description of the institution so that readers will gain an appreciation for how the ***RISE to the Top*** plan is uniquely designed to mesh with the existing campus culture and the needs of students served by the college.

### Institutional Background

Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) is a Hispanic Serving Institution (84% Hispanic) serving eleven counties in rural southwest Texas. SWTJC has provided higher education services to rural southwest Texas for the past 69 years. SWTJC was one of the first colleges to be chosen in the Lumina Foundation's Achieving the Dream (ATD) initiative and is one of the "Leader Colleges" for the organization. In 2011, SWTJC was recognized by the Aspen Institute's Community College Excellence Program as one of the Top Ten Community Colleges in the United States. The following vision, mission, and service area statements for SWTJC illustrate the unique context for the delivery of higher education in the region.

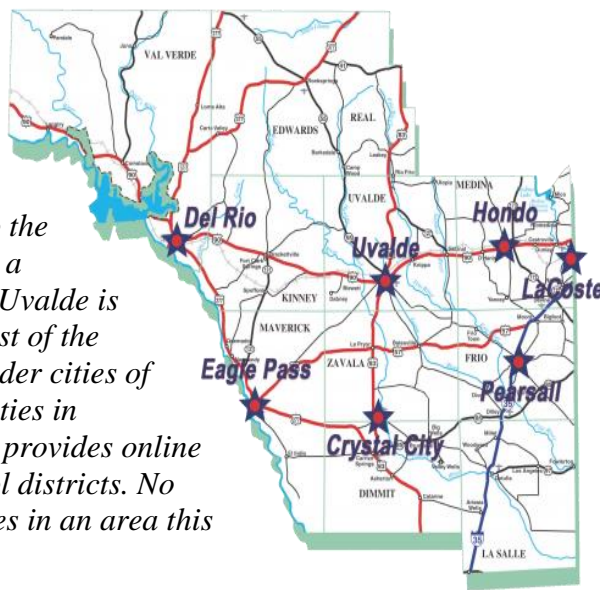
#### SWTJC Vision, Mission, and Service Area Statements

***Vision Statement:*** Create and nurture a learning-centered environment in which students, faculty, staff, and the community at-large can achieve their greatest potential.

***Mission Statement:*** Southwest Texas Junior College is a comprehensive, public college serving eleven counties in Southwest Texas. The College provides accessible, affordable, high-quality education that prepares students to successfully transfer to senior colleges and universities; enter the job market; pursue their professional and personal goals; and contribute to the economic growth of the region.

***Service Area Statement:*** Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) is a regional, "open door" institution serving an 11-county area that stretches from the Texas Hill Country to the US-Mexican border. Our main campus is located in Uvalde, a city of 15,000 located in the foothills of Texas Hill Country. Uvalde is approximately 70 miles west of San Antonio and 70 miles east of the Mexican border. Additional campuses are located in the border cities of Del Rio and Eagle Pass. We also operate instructional facilities in Castroville, Crystal City, Pearsall, and Hondo. SWTJC also provides online instruction and distance education links to twenty-two school districts. No other state community college provides educational resources in an area this large.

Figure 2-1. Map of SWTJC Service Area



## Student Demographics

As mentioned earlier, SWTJC serves an 84% Hispanic student body. Poverty rates in the service region range from 18% in Medina County (on the outskirts of the San Antonio metropolitan region) to 36% in Zavala County. The Bachelor's (or higher) attainment rate is 14% for the region, and Spanish is spoken as a primary language in over 50% of homes. Table 2.1 shows that 65% of the students are classified as part-time students. In many cases, students need to work to help support their family and cannot afford to become a full-time student. It is also true that many of our full-time students have full-time jobs (OIE Data).

Table 2-1. Student Demographics for Fall Semester 2014

<b>Total Headcount</b>	5,572		
<b>Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)</b>	3,749		
<b>Full-Time/Part-Time Status</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
1-6 Hours	2,454	44%	
7-11 Hours	1,157	21%	
12 or more Hours	1,963	35%	
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	2,264	41%	
Female	3,308	59%	
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
Hispanic	4,686	84%	
White, non-Hispanic	684	12%	
Black, non-Hispanic	57	1%	
Other	132	2%	
Multi-Racial	13	0.20%	

(Data from SWTJC Office of Institutional Effectiveness)

## Faculty and Staff Statistics

The faculty and staff have a student-centered attitude about their jobs at SWTJC. With almost 600 full-time and part-time people working, the institution is one of the largest employers in the 11-county service area. Table 2.2 shows that 76.6% of the classes are taught in the traditional face-to-face classroom and usually by a full-time faculty member. Many of the part-time faculty are very experienced and have been teaching classes for the college for 10 years and more. They are active members of the communities served by the college and are an integral part of the educational delivery system in the region.

Table 2-2 Faculty and Staff, Modes of Instruction

Faculty and Staff Statistics			
Type	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Faculty	114	61	175
Staff	209	173	382
Totals	323	234	557
Courses by Mode of Instruction			
Type	% of courses	% of enrollment	
Traditional	63.5%	76.6%	
Interactive Video	25.0%	15.4%	
Internet and VTC	9.1%	7.4%	
Special/Linked	2.1%	0.4%	
Total Classes	1,142		
Total Enrollments	16,754		

(Data from SWTJC Office of Institutional Effectiveness)

## Culture of Success

Southwest Texas Junior College employees have worked hard at improving success rates and have been successful, as evidenced by the nomination from Aspen Institute in 2011, recognition as an Achieving the Dream (ATD) Leader College since 2009, and as one of only twelve colleges in the nation to be chosen for Lumina’s “Increasing Latino Student Success Initiative” in 2012. Some of the measures that Aspen, ATD, and Lumina monitor and measure include career placement and labor market outcomes, learning outcomes assessment, and transfer/completion rates. The college has made great gains in learning outcomes assessment with a robust Unit Action Planning process, which guides planning and assessment for academic programs.

A recent economic impact study, (EMSI, December 2014) showed SWTJC contributed 156.9 million dollars to the region’s economy. In an article in the *Uvalde Leader News*, Kim Eagle wrote:

The study looked and analyzed the impact of each dollar spent from three different perspectives: student, social and taxpayer.....*and that*..... The college’s biggest impact results from the education and training it provides for local residents, allowing them to enter the workforce with new skills. The study claims that today, thousands of former students are employed in the SWTJC service area, generating \$132.3 million in added income each year (Eagle, February 2015).

Clearly, SWTJC has been working to achieve its mission. SWTJC’s past successes are good indicators of the college’s ability to successfully initiate, implement, and complete the ***RISE to the Top*** QEP. Faculty and staff know that while a good plan provides a vision of success, it is also true that people at the institution must commit to performing the actions in the plan necessary to reach the end result.

# THE INSTITUTIONAL PROCESS

## Chapter 3

SWTJC uses a proven institutional process to create its Quality Enhancement Plan.





## CHAPTER 3: THE INSTITUTIONAL PROCESS - Vision to Action

*Southwest Texas Junior College uses a proven institutional process to create its Quality Enhancement Plan.*

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the “institutional process” the QEP Planning Committee used to develop the ***RISE to the Top*** QEP. Fortunately, SWTJC has a well-developed planning and assessment process in place which provided the QEP Planning Committee with large amounts of data as well as qualitative information about the college. The existing process also served as a foundation for the QEP Planning Committee’s work. In essence, the creation of the ***RISE to the Top*** plan can be viewed as an additional strategic plan focused on student success.

### QEP Connection to Institutional Planning

*The plan is directly related to institutional planning efforts.*

Southwest Texas Junior College uses an integrated, institution-wide research-based planning, evaluation and effectiveness process that incorporates a systematic review of programs and services resulting in 1) the use of outcomes for continuing improvement and 2) demonstration that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission.

Figure 3-1. SWTJC Institutional Planning Process



The planning pyramid pictured at left illustrates the planning process at SWTJC and is organized as follows: mission (at the top), goals and objectives, strategic planning cycle (5 year increments), organizational planning cycle (1 year increments), and foundational planning. Foundational planning includes assessment of college programs, review of college programs and services, employee/staff evaluation, and environmental scanning.

The planning and development process culminated in the completion of SWTJC’s 5-year strategic plan for 2014-2019. The successful development of each of these major planning efforts provided the foundation

for the QEP Committee’s efforts to closely connect ***RISE to the Top*** with the SWTJC Strategic Plan. The SWTJC Strategic Plan includes two institutional goals and several strategic objectives that are closely connected to ***RISE to the Top***:

***Institutional Goal 1:*** Identify and serve the learning needs of the community (Learning)

***Institutional Goal 2:*** Cultivate excellence in teaching, instructional delivery, student services, and administrative support.

The *RISE to the Top* goals and outcomes connect to the Strategic Plan as follows:

***QEP Goal 1 - Improve critical thinking through high-impact educational practices.***

The first goal is connected to Institutional Goal 1 because it focuses on providing a “learning” need for students. This goal is also connected to Institutional Goal 2 because it cultivates excellence in teaching through implementing high-impact educational practices.

***QEP Goal 2 - Improve student engagement through high-impact practices.***

The second goal is connected to Institutional Goal 2 because it cultivates excellence in teaching through implementing high-impact educational practices and improves instructional delivery.

***QEP Goal 3 - Enhance student learning through professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, focusing on high-impact practices.***

The third goal is connected to Institutional Goal 2 because it cultivates excellence in teaching through implementing high-impact educational practices and improves instructional delivery.

## **Moving from Vision to Action: An Eight-Step Planning Process**

The planning committee for the QEP met 20 times during the last two years to explore different topics that might serve as the centerpiece of the SWTJC QEP. In the spring 2015 semester, the committee began a Vision to Action planning process designed to crystalize the past efforts of the committee into an effective written plan.

Table 3-1. Moving from Vision to Action Steps

<b>STEP</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>KEY QUESTION</b>
<b>1. Collect and Analyze Data</b>	Understand the current situation.	<i>Where are we now?</i>
<b>2. Describe the Current Situation</b>	Prioritize key issues/challenges.	<i>What needs to change?</i>
<b>3. Create a Vision</b>	Depict the ideal future.	<i>What should be the results of our efforts?</i>
<b>4. Set Goals</b>	Define the ideal future situation.	<i>What specific outcomes do we want to achieve?</i>
<b>5. Develop Strategies</b>	Determine programmatic actions that will produce the desired future.	<i>What approach will we take to reach those outcomes?</i>
<b>6. Analyze Stakeholders' Influence</b>	Determine who needs to be involved.	<i>What political/ institutional factors should we consider?</i>
<b>7. Plan for Action</b>	Define implementation responsibilities.	<i>Who will do what, when?</i>
<b>8. Plan an Evaluation</b>	Define benchmarks to measure progress and approach to measurement.	<i>How will we know when we have achieved our goals?</i>

The “Moving from Vision to Action” process was driven by both data collected for analysis and the vision of an ideal future for students at SWTJC. It began with data collection and analysis to define the current strengths and weaknesses of the institution and its ability to fulfill its mission. SWTJC first used this process in 1994 when the Ford Foundation invited the college to be part of a ten-year-long Rural Community College Initiative. The process was so effective that many individual programs at the college adopted the basic steps to use for cyclical program planning and improvement.

Table 3.1 on page 18 provides a description of each step of the process, its purpose, and the key question addressed through each step. Members of the committee were given a 26 page, planning guide ([see Appendix D](#)) to use during this phase of the planning process beginning in January 2015 and ending in July 2015. Below is a summary of the process used by the committee. Subsequent chapters of this document show the details of the committee’s work, which includes topic identification, goal setting, strategy development, action plans and evaluation plan. It is important to note that the eight-step process is not designed to be a linear process. By nature, this sort of process is sometimes recursive and may involve revisiting and revising the answer to the questions posed in each step.

In steps one through three, the planning committee collected and analyzed data to describe the current situation and prioritize the most important challenges requiring attention. After describing the current situation and deciding what needed to change, the future situation (five years later) was imagined. The planning committee developed a vision that described how SWTJC would look when the QEP has been implemented. The vision is the image of an ideal future toward which the QEP is directed. Next, measurable goals were created with specific targets to reach over the next five years, in order for the vision to be realized.

After defining goals, the committee turned to questions of how to accomplish the goals through strategy development. Developing a strategy required analysis of institutional and political factors working for and against change, and research on model strategies from around the region and country. A stakeholder analysis ensured that all parties with a vested interest in the vision will be brought into the implementation process.

Finally, an action plan and an evaluation plan were developed to describe (a) who will do what, (b) when will it happen, and (c) how to assess progress toward the goals and vision.

Table 3.2 presents a list of the QEP Planning Committee’s meetings to provide a timeline of the institutional process which created the Southwest Texas Junior College’s *RISE to the Top* Quality Enhancement Plan.

Table 3-2. List of QEP Planning Committee Meetings

DATE	PURPOSE
August 17, 2013	Organizational meeting to discuss QEP and system-wide survey
January 6, 2014	Preliminary QEP ideas discussed with deans and division/departments chairs
January 7, 2014	General session-presentation of possible topics to all faculty and staff
January 8, 2014	Breakout session by division to discuss possible topics
January 10, 2014	Collect and post emergent ideas from breakout sessions
April 8, 2014	Site based dialogue of instructors leading change
May 2, 2014	Objectives, expectations, and duties reviewed, Site leaders appointed
May 12, 2014	Literature Review and Discussion of High-Impact Practices
August 17, 2014	Awareness presentation at Convocation
Sept. 18, 2014	Development of engagement and collaboration definition
Nov. 14, 2014	Development of COLS 0300 and ENGL 1301 lesson plans and activities
Dec. 4, 2014	QEP schedule, open discussion of documents, timelines, deliverables
January 15, 2015	Explanation of “Moving from Vision to Action” planning process
Feb. 12, 2015	Steps one –three of Vision to Action, Acronym survey designed
March 5, 2015	Steps four, five and six of Vision to Action process
April 9, 2015	Continue work on step five and six and begin step seven and step eight
May 5, 2015	Kick off Presentation to faculty of <i>RISE to the Top</i> at VP’s Breakfast
May 29, 2015	Retreat to finalize strategies and evaluation

## Literature Review of Student Engagement, High-Impact Practices, and Critical Thinking

During the fall 2014 semester, members of the QEP Planning Committee worked to learn more about the possible topics for the focus of the QEP. Many worthwhile topics and concerns were brought to the committee for consideration. During a review of the literature, the committee found that many of the topics could be grouped under the heading of Student Engagement and that many of the intervention strategies could be grouped under the heading of High-Impact Educational Practices. Though it is well beyond the scope of this plan to provide an exhaustive review of the professional literature, the following review of literature focuses on articles and books that the committee found useful in developing the *RISE to the Top* plan. Many more articles and books were read by various members of the committee, but are not included in this review. A list of the books and articles cited is included in the References section of this document.

### STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Several articles on student engagement focused on students who were taking online classes. One article by Australian researchers (O’Shea, Stone, and Delahunty, 2015) “qualitatively explored the online learning experience for undergraduate and postgraduate students. The project adopted a narrative inquiry approach and encouraged students to story their experiences of this virtual environment, providing a snapshot of how learning is experienced by those undertaking online studies.” The authors found that, though there were barriers to student engagement in online



courses, it was possible for students to have positive experiences interacting with other students online and be challenged intellectually through well-designed learning experiences. They also found that “Learner engagement can be manifested in the development of critical thinking skills, higher grades and a general embracing of learning by taking responsibility and actions to achieve intrinsically motivated goals.” The members of the QEP Planning Committee discussed the need to make sure that online students at SWTJC could experience the same level of engagement as students who are taking face-to-face classes. It was also interesting that these researchers found a connection between “critical thinking” and “student engagement.” This article provided some evidence to show it was possible to link student engagement and critical thinking. The title of the article is actually relevant to this discussion, “I ‘feel’ like I am at university even though I am online” and reflect the “narrative” approach used in their research.

Research in engagement of students in their learning in higher education contexts has often focused on what students are doing and the effect of this on academic performance (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006). One of the best articles (Kuh, 2013) reviews and critiques four dominant research perspectives on student engagement: the behavioral, psychological, socio-cultural, and holistic. Key problems are identified, in particular poor definitions and a lack of distinction between the state of engagement, factors that influence student engagement, and the immediate and longer term consequences of engagement. The second part of the article presents a conceptual framework that overcomes these problems, incorporating valuable elements from each of the perspectives, to enable a better shared understanding of student engagement to frame future research and improve student outcomes. Kuh states, “The behavior dimension, paralleling parts of the behavioral perspective... discussed, has three elements: positive conduct and rule following including attendance; involvement in learning, including time on task and asking questions; and wider participation in extracurricular activities.” This dimension seems closely related to the CCSSE definition of student engagement which focuses on student behaviors that lead to student success.

The next article (Schuetz, 2008) focuses on developing a theory-driven model of community college student engagement. Schuetz quotes various luminaries in the field such as Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) who assert, “Since individual effort or engagement is the critical determinant of the impact of college, then it is important to focus on the ways in which an institution can shape its academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings to encourage student engagement” (p. 602). Student engagement is defined as “a state of interest, mindfulness, cognitive effort and deep processing of new information that partially mediates the gap between what learners can do and what they actually do (Saloman and Globerson, 1987). The results of Schuetz’s study “suggest that [*community colleges*] could strengthen student engagement by fostering campus structures, processes, and relationships that help students feel an initial sense of belonging, buying time to develop stronger senses of autonomy, which, in turn, support competence and achievement.” Some of these concepts were adapted for use in the *RISE to the Top* plan by including high-impact practices, such as the first year experience course, part of the initial implementation activities.

## HIGH-IMPACT EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

Authors of literature on high-impact educational practices usually assume that the principles underlying high-impact practices were self-evident, but one article (Seifert, et al. 2014) warns “that high impact/good practices are not a panacea and require a greater degree of critical evaluation by higher education scholars.” The study used a multi-institutional sample of undergraduate students and found “that the relationships between engaging in high impact/good practices and liberal arts outcomes differ based on students' precollege and background characteristics.” This information made sense to the QEP Planning Committee, which recognized that not every student body is the same and that what might work at one institution may not serve the students at SWTJC in the same way. This article and another one by Ashley Finley (2011) led the committee to consider which high-impact practices to use in the plan. The article by Finley focused on national trends in student participation in high-impact practices reported in the National Survey of Student Engagement, which is a similar instrument to the CCSSE that is used at SWTJC to measure student engagement. Finley found “the practices have [a] high degree of positive effect on the self-reported outcomes of students in three state systems such as California, Oregon and Wisconsin State Systems Data; however, they are not uniformly effective. It mentions that campuses within the state systems have performed a good job in expanding first-year programming.”

One difference of interest to the QEP Planning Committee was noted in the article based on research by George Kuh (2008), who found that engagement in high-impact activities was strongly correlated with increasing first-year to second-year retention. But, Kuh (2008) also found “that the likelihood of returning for the second year was even greater for Hispanic students participating in these activities, compared to white students.” As an institution with an 84% Hispanic population, the committee felt our institution would do well to initiate a first-year experience course.

An interesting article (Brownell and Swaner 2009) reports on the study by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) which identifies several innovative and high-impact practices gaining attention in higher education in the U.S. It reviews four practices, including first-year seminars, learning communities, service learning and undergraduate research. It reveals that students who participate in the practices consistently persist at a higher rate than those who do not. It also shows the practices result in higher rates of faculty and peer interaction, increased critical thinking and writing skills, and higher levels of engagement.

In discussing the evidence for the success of these practices, Gonyea, Kinzie, Kuh, and Laird (2008) recommend that all students in higher education participate in at least two high-impact practices, one in their first year and another in their academic major. The authors (Brownell and Swaner 2009) report “Of the five practices reviewed, much has been written about four of them. For first-year seminars, learning communities, undergraduate research and service learning, there are many published descriptive and prescriptive pieces talking about program elements, advocating for the development of these experiences as a response to current criticisms and challenges in higher education, or providing advice for implementing the activities.” The article also lists many articles and books “describing case studies of successful programs.”

Of particular interest to the QEP Planning Committee, the authors say, “Unfortunately, there has been little attention paid to capstone courses.” This is interesting because one of the features of many technical programs at SWTJC is a capstone course or experience. This offers an area where SWTJC scholars might be able to add to the research literature in a significant manner.

Another article of interest to the QEP Planning committee, by Kristen Roney and Sarah Ulerick (2013), discusses how to engage part-time faculty in high-impact practices addresses one of the needs at SWTJC. With over 60 part-time faculty working for SWTJC, it is necessary to make sure that implementing high-impact practices will be feasible for the part-time faculty as well as the full-time faculty. The authors report, “Many of the HIPs are classroom-based, in keeping with the substantial research by Vincent Tinto and others that reminds us that ‘for many students, especially in community colleges, if involvement does not occur in the classroom, it is unlikely to occur at all’ (Tinto 2012, 68). Pedagogies and practices of engagement, such as service learning, diversity/global studies, and project-based learning, require professional development support for all faculty.” This article brought home the fact that in order for the high-impact practices to succeed, the ***RISE to the Top*** plan must include a strong professional development component for all faculty (full-time and part-time).

Probably the most useful information comes directly from George Kuh, who is often cited when the term “high-impact educational practices” is used. One of the most often cited works is the 2008 report “High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter,” by George Kuh from the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative of the U.S. Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). The report includes a definition of a set of educational practices that were considered as significant on student success. The QEP Planning Committee made extensive use of the information in this report as part of the plan. This list of high-impact practices is listed in the executive summary and bears repeating as part of this review of literature. The strategies used by SWTJC to improve student engagement and critical thinking are categorized as “high-impact educational practices” (HIPs) and include the following activities and programs:

- First-year seminars and experiences (*e.g. Learning Frameworks and College Success Skills courses*)
- Common intellectual experiences (such as the core curriculum)
- Learning communities
- Writing-intensive courses
- Collaborative assignments and projects
- Undergraduate research
- Diversity and global learning in courses or programs that examine "difficult differences"
- Service- or community-based learning
- Internships
- Capstone courses and projects  
(Kuh, 2008)

Kuh identifies the following common elements across the practices that—when employed—make the practices high-impact:

1. They are effortful: they “demand that students devote considerable time and effort to purposeful tasks [and] require daily decisions that deepen students’ investment in the activity as well as their commitment to their academic program and the college.”
2. They help students build substantive relationships and “interact . . . with faculty and peers about substantive matters . . . over extended periods of time” during which relationships develop that “put students in the company of mentors and advisers as well as peers who share intellectual interests and are committed to seeing that students succeed.”
3. They provide students with rich feedback and frequent feedback, not limited to the assessment of classroom work but also including feedback from supervisors and colleagues.
4. They help students apply and test what they are learning in new situations and provide “opportunities for students to see how what they are learning works in different settings, on and off campus. These opportunities to integrate, symmetrize, and apply knowledge are essential to deep, meaningful learning experiences.”
5. They provide opportunities for students to reflect on the person they are becoming. Reflection “deepen[s] learning and bring one’s values and beliefs into awareness; [it] help[s] students develop the ability to take the measure of events and actions and put them in perspective. As a result, students better understand themselves in relation to others and the larger world, and they acquire the intellectual tools and ethical grounding to act with confidence for the betterment of the human condition.”

## CRITICAL THINKING AND INFORMATION LITERACY

During the QEP Retreat event on May 29, 2015, the QEP Planning Committee was shown courseware that teaches critical thinking skills. Developed by CREDO, a well-known database company that serves many college libraries, the courseware can serve as a resource for faculty and students as a component of a class or as a stand-alone activity provided by the SWTJC Library. Based on the latest framework for Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education and developed by the Association of Colleges and Research Libraries (ACRL), the courseware is:

- (a) ACRL aligned, ADA compliant, aimed at improving students' research and critical thinking skills, embeddable in learning management software platforms (Moodle and Portal),
- (b) an assessment platform that will provide analytics highlighting learning gaps and outcomes achieved, and
- (c) includes consulting and customization services to ensure that the lessons delivered to students meet SWTJC criteria and learning outcomes.

The *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* are available for downloading at: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency>. There are five standards with accompanying outcomes, which include “higher-order” thinking skills, which is one of the definitions of critical thinking. The report details how the standards were developed.

These standards were recently updated to a *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, which can be found at:

<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>

The six concepts that anchor the frames are presented alphabetically:

1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
2. Information Creation as a Process
3. Information Has Value
4. Research as Inquiry
5. Scholarship as Conversation
6. Searching as Strategic Exploration

Because this Framework envisions information literacy as extending the arc of learning throughout students' academic careers and as converging with other academic and social learning goals, an expanded definition of information literacy is offered here to emphasize dynamism, flexibility, individual growth, and community learning:

Information literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning. (<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>)

In addition to information provided by CREDO, a well-known database company that serves many college libraries, the QEP Planning committee read several articles about Critical Thinking. Paul Walkner and Nicholas Finney (1999) provided useful information in their article about "Skill development and critical thinking in higher education." They state, "The development of 'critical thinking' is often put forward as an ideal of higher education. However, there is a significant contention over what is meant by the phrase. This paper looks at how a critical approach might be encouraged as an aspect of skills development in higher education." The authors studied students in a Master of Research (MRes), degree where a variety of research-orientated skills is taught. The results of focus group and interview sessions conducted with participating students, showed a development of self-awareness about their skills could be gained through reflection activities. These activities also led to a more general awareness of how they learn. They state "This, in turn, seems to have led to the development of a more thoughtful, enquiring and open-minded approach, in both professional and personal life. This approach appears to embrace many of the ideals of a critical mind, irrespective of which definition of 'critical thinking' is preferred." One thing noted by the QEP Planning Committee was the variety of definitions for critical thinking in the literature. This article seems to allude to the use of "reflection" and "skill attainment" as important elements of a program.

Another excellent article proposed a "Stage Theory" for critical thinking. Written by Linda Elder and Richard Paul (1996) the article defines critical thinking as, "the ability and disposition to improve one's thinking by systematically subjecting it to rigorous self-assessment." The authors point out that "Persons are critical thinkers, in the fullest sense of the term, then, only if they display this ability and disposition in all, or most, of the dimensions of their lives (e.g., as a parent, citizen, consumer, lover, friend, learner, and professional). We exclude from our concept

of the critical thinker one who thinks well in only one dimension.” The various stages proposed by the authors include:

- Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker
- Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker
- Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker
- Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker
- Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker
- Stage Six: Master Thinker

Detailed descriptions are provided by the author detailing the characteristics of each stage. They conclude the article by stating, “Our present approaches to critical thinking are typically unrealistic. They are not based on a realistic model of the process by which students could actually advance as critical thinkers. They naively assume that teachers are already critical thinkers.” They further state, “We believe the theory of critical thinking development presented provides a useful way to conceptualize this most important task: the task of developing our own thinking and that of our children and students through a series of stages of continual self-improvement.” This information provides much food for thought to the QEP Planning Committee as they seek to improve the critical thinking skills of students at SWTJC. Perhaps one reason the current efforts have been lacking in producing critical thinkers is the fact that our students may not be prepared to learn critical thinking skills and need to go through the various stages described in the article.

An article by Ken Petress (2004) offers the following viewpoint, “Critical thinking is a pervasive academic literature term that is seldom clearly or comprehensively defined. The definitions that are available in various sources are quite disparate and are often narrowly field dependent. Definitions tend to be so broad they are not always helpful in the sense of defining a concrete entity.” This article offers food for thought and debate. It includes a brief literature review related to critical thinking. They state, “It is readily understood that not all users of the term will wish to utilize every possible definitional aspect of critical thinking in their work and conversation: however, having a broad definition resource available for reference may be a valuable tool when the term is broached by scholars.” A few of the definitions discussed include:

One definition of critical thinking found in a general psychology text is: "Critical thinking examines assumptions, discerns hidden values, evaluates evidence, and assesses conclusions."

Warnick and Inch, communication scholars define critical thinking as "involving the ability to explore a problem, question, or situation; integrate all the available information about it; arrive at a solution or hypothesis; and justify one's position."

Paul and Elder define critical thinking as: "That mode of thinking - about any subject, content, or problem - in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them."



Petress gives several other definitions and concludes that, “Critical thinking, it has been shown, has varied definitions. There are several aspects of the term common to many sources and there are some characteristics unique to various disciplines.”

After reviewing the literature on critical thinking, the QEP Planning Committee plans to adopt the definition from the AACU LEAP rubric as an operational definition for evaluation purposes. It reads: “Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.” The assessments used by the CREDO courseware will be used as formative evaluations of students’ critical thinking skills as part of individual courses. The ETS Proficiency Profile will continue to be used to evaluate progress of students achieving critical thinking skills. Positive indicators for the ETS Proficiency Profile are the “Level 2 Proficient” and “Level 3 Proficient and Marginally Proficient” categories described on page 37.

## SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

To conclude the literature review of student engagement, high-impact educational practices, and critical thinking, three studies listing some general principles for effective teaching and learning were read by members of the committee. Whether one teaches writing, chemistry, economics, or engineering, the following principles gleaned from these studies help form the foundation of effective educational practice.

The first list of principles appears in an article that has become a classic: “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education,” by Arthur W. Chickering and Zelda F. Gamson, first published in *The Wingspread Journal* in June 1987. These principles, based on fifty years of research, were compiled in a study supported by the American Association of Higher Education, the Education Commission of the States, and the Johnson Foundation. The principles and explanations are taken verbatim from the article:

### *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*

#### **1. Good practice encourages student-faculty contact.**

Frequent student-faculty contact in and out of classes is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Faculty concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. Knowing a few faculty members will enhance students’ intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans.

#### **2. Good practice encourages cooperation among students.**

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one’s own ideas and responding to others’ reactions improves thinking and deepens understanding.

#### **3. Good practice encourages active learning.**

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in class listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments and spitting out answers. They must talk about

what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.

**4. Good practice gives prompt feedback.**

Knowing what you know and don't know focuses learning. Students need appropriate feedback on performance to benefit from courses. In getting started, students need help in assessing existing knowledge and competence. In classes, students need frequent opportunities to perform and receive suggestions for improvement. At various points during college, and at the end, students need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how to assess themselves.

**5. Good practice emphasizes time on task.**

Time plus energy equals learning. There is no substitute for time on task. Learning to use one's time well is critical for students and professionals alike. Students need help in learning effective time management. Allocating realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty. How an institution defines time expectations for students, faculty, administrators, and other professional staff can establish the basis for high performance for all.

**6. Good practice communicates high expectations.**

Expect more and you will get it. High expectations are important for everyone – for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when teachers and institutions hold high expectations of them and make extra efforts.

**7. Good practice respects diverse talents and ways of learning.**

There are many roads to learning. People bring different talents and styles of learning to college. Brilliant students in the seminar room may be all thumbs in the lab or art studio. Students rich in hands-on experience may not do so well with theory. Students need the opportunity to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learning in new ways that do not come so easily.

The second study is based on the research of George D. Kuh of the Center for Postsecondary Research, Indiana University Bloomington. As mentioned earlier, his work is often referred to by studies concerning high-impact practices and student engagement. Analyzing information from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Kuh and his associates found five general “Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice.” According to Kuh, these benchmarks are related to “many of the most important aspects of the student experience. These student behaviors and institutional features are some of the more powerful contributors to learning and personal development.” This information is taken verbatim from a workshop conducted by Kuh and from two books by Kuh and associates: *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter* (2005), and *Assessing Conditions to Enhance Educational Effectiveness: The Inventory for Student Engagement and Success* (2005).



### *Five Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice*

#### **1. Level of Academic Challenge**

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Colleges and universities promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.

#### **2. Active and Collaborative Learning**

Students learn more when they are intensely involved in their education and asked to think about what they are learning in different settings. Collaboration with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material prepares students for the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after college.

#### **3. Student-Faculty Interaction**

Students learn firsthand how experts think about and solve practical problems by interacting with faculty members inside and outside the classroom. As a result, their teachers become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, life-long learning.

#### **4. Enriching Educational Experiences**

Complementary learning opportunities in and out of class augment academic programs. Diversity experiences teach students valuable things about themselves and others. Technology facilitates collaboration between peers and instructors. Internships, community service, and senior capstone courses provide opportunities to integrate and apply knowledge.

#### **5. Supportive Campus Environment**

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups on campus.

The third study is by Ken Bain, *What the Best College Teachers Do* (2004). For more than fifteen years Bain has looked “at the practices and thinking of the best teachers, those people who have remarkable success in helping their students achieve exceptional learning results” (3). Bain and his researchers came to six major conclusions about outstanding teaching. Here is a summary:

#### *What the Best College Teachers Do*

##### **1. What do the best teachers know and understand?**

“... whether well published or not, the outstanding teachers follow the important intellectual and scientific or artistic developments within their fields, do research, have important and original thoughts on their subjects, study carefully and extensively what other people are doing in their fields, often read extensively in other fields (sometimes far distant from their own, and take a strong interest in the broader issues of their disciplines: the histories, controversies, and epistemological discussions” (15-16).

**2. How do they prepare to teach?**

“Exceptional teachers treat their lectures, discussion sections, problem-based sessions, and other elements of teaching as serious intellectual endeavors as intellectually demanding and important as their research and scholarship’ (17).

**3. What do they expect of their students?**

“... they avoid objectives that are arbitrarily tied to the course and favor those that embody the kind of thinking and acting expected for life” (17-18).

**4. What do they do when they teach?**

They create a “‘natural critical learning environment.’ In that environment, people learn by confronting intriguing, beautiful, or important problems, authentic tasks that will challenge them to grapple with ideas, rethink their assumptions, and examine their mental models of reality. These are challenging yet supportive conditions in which learners feel a sense of control over their education; work collaboratively with others; believe that their work will be considered fairly and honestly; and try, fail, and receive feedback from expert learners in advance of and separate from any summative judgment of their effort” (18).

**5. How do they treat students?**

They trust students and “usually believe that students want to learn, and they assume, until proven otherwise, that they can.” They are reflective and “encourage their students to be similarly reflective. . . . Above all, they tend to treat students with what can only be called simple decency” (18).

**6. How do they check their progress and evaluate their efforts?**

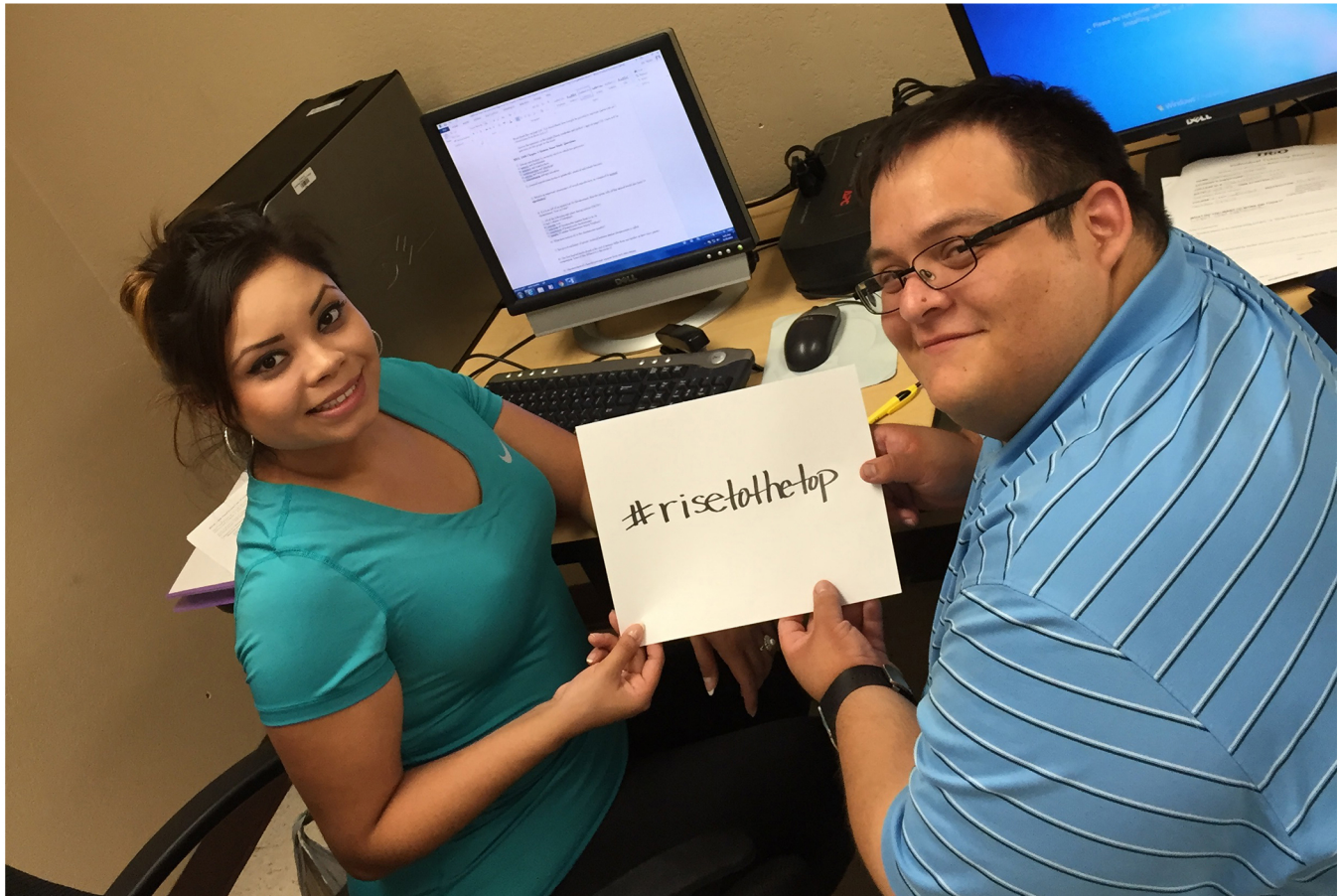
“All the teachers we studied have some systematic program . . . to assess their own efforts and to make appropriate changes. . . . assessment of students flows from primary learning objectives” (19).

In summary, the wealth of information from the professional literature provides a secure theoretical and practical background to the SWTJC *RISE to the Top* quality enhancement plan. The principles listed in the preceding three articles, along with the information in the section on critical thinking, student engagement, and high-impact practices, represent some of the best research to date related to student success. The information in these works was used by the QEP Planning Committee throughout the development, initiation, and initial implementation of the plan.

# IDENTIFICATION OF THE TOPIC

## Chapter 4

The QEP Planning Committee sets goals for the 2015-2020 RISE to the Top project.



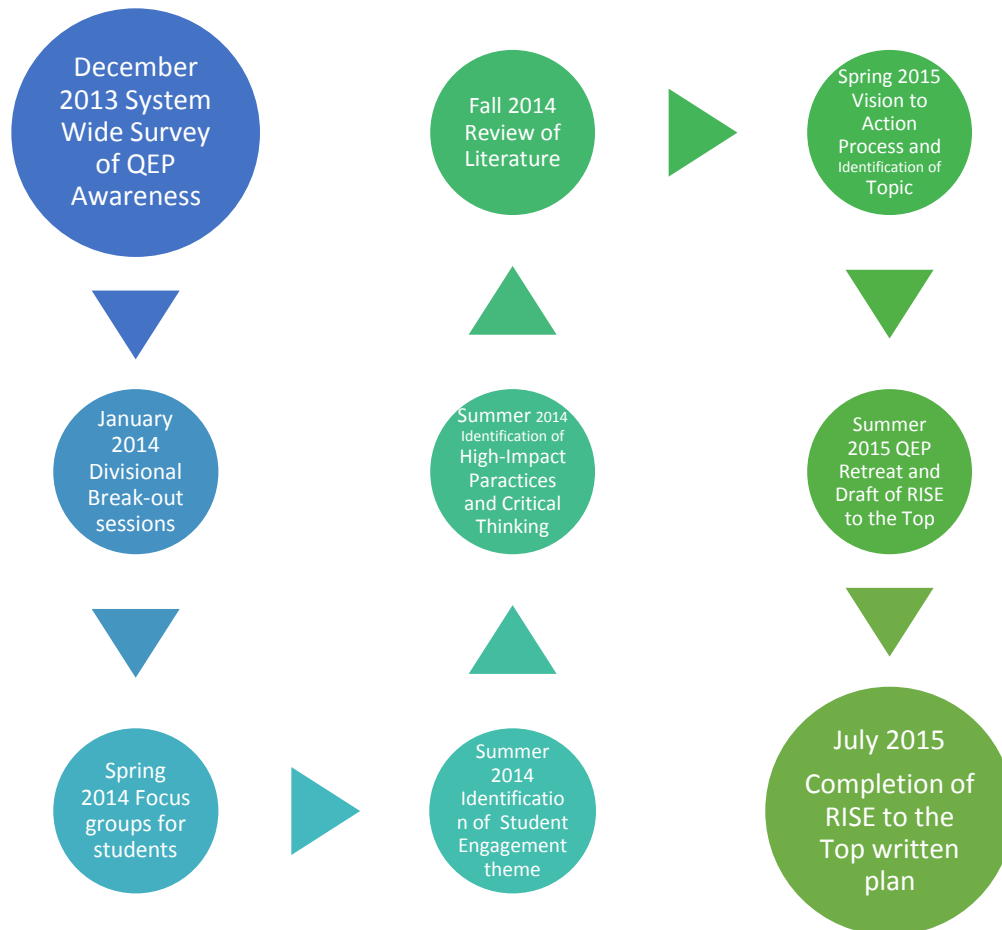
## CHAPTER 4: IDENTIFICATION OF TOPIC

*The QEP Planning Committee sets goals for the 2015-2020 RISE to the Top project.*

### Exploratory Meetings

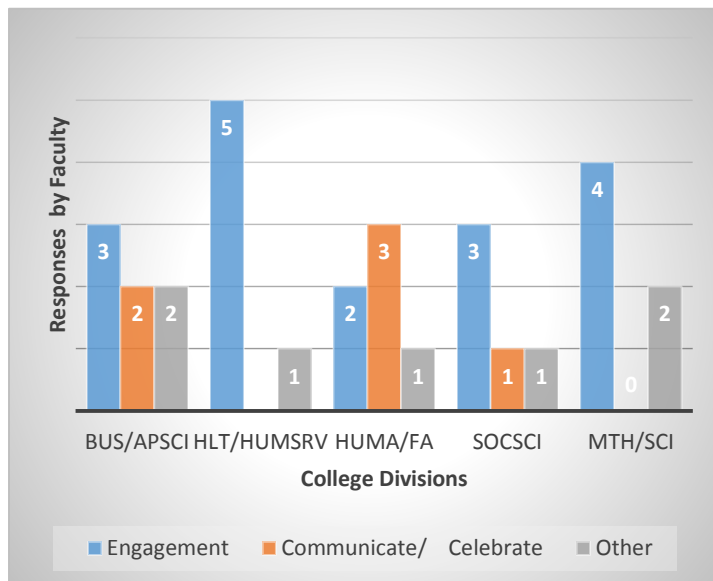
Topic identification and selection for SWTJC's QEP began in the 2013 fall semester. The process involved naming a planning committee and included the analysis and synthesis of data from multiple organization-wide focus groups, faculty/staff meetings, survey data from the annual Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), as well as longitudinal departmental, divisional, and college-wide academic data. The process of identifying the topic was characterized by periods of clarity and confusion, ending finally in March 2015 with the topic of increasing student success by improving student engagement and critical thinking (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4-1. QEP Process Timeline



Southwest Texas Junior College initiated the QEP process in Fall 2013 with the organization-wide survey of QEP background, where 64% of the faculty/staff respondents said they had never “actively participated in QEP specific initiatives, interventions or planning at SWTJC,” and a similar majority of respondents felt the institution should focus more on student engagement and increased organizational collaboration. The results of this survey were communicated to the faculty during the regular beginning of the semester convocation. After reporting the results to the assembled staff and faculty, divisional break-out sessions were scheduled to discuss

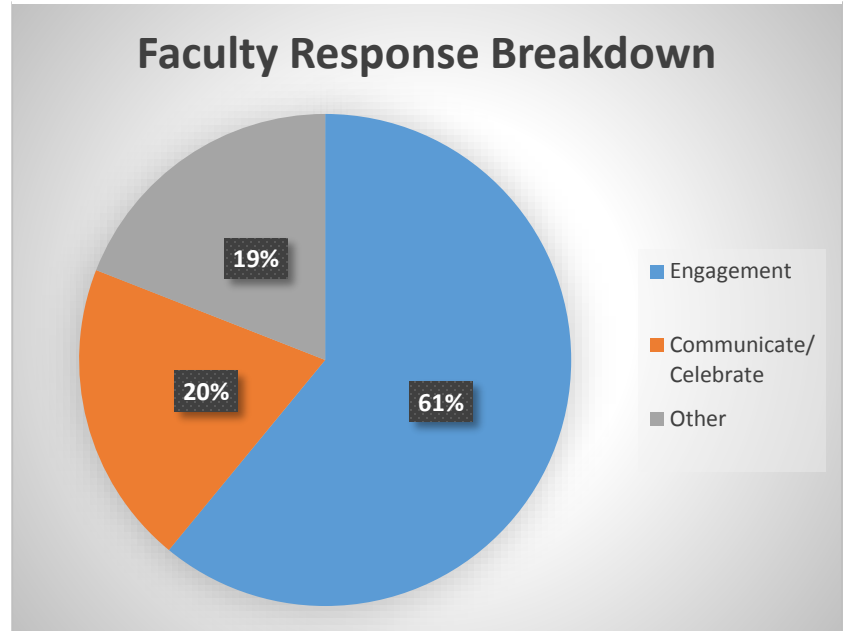
**Chart 4-1 QEP Topic Interest by Division**



technical). Another emergent idea 20% from the faculty was to increase the campus activities that recognized and celebrated student success with more communication from the administration and an increased web page presence. The QEP planning committee reviewed this feedback and conducted additional focus groups and surveys with faculty, students, and support services staff.

Many worthwhile topics were presented to the committee during meetings and at times it seemed that a topic was identified, but after reflection the topic was either too broad or too narrow. Conceptual frameworks were developed that seemed too complex for the college as a whole to

**Chart 4-1. Faculty Response to Survey of QEP Topics**



what topic should be the focus for the QEP. Feedback from these meetings verified that many faculty members did not feel that they were involved in the QEP process in the past, but that they were willing to become involved if a clear direction for the five-year plan was determined. The majority of the faculty, 61% wanted to institute a system of tracking student engagement (Chart 4.1). This sentiment was the most popular in four of the five academic divisions of the college (Chart 4.2). Strategies for accomplishing this included increased collaboration between support services (counseling, writing center, library, etc.) and faculty (academic and



embrace. This was a struggle for the planning committee and the college. In December 2014, subcommittees to test the idea of increased collaboration produced two pilot assignments. The Colleges Success Skills course (COLS 0300) and Composition One (ENGL 1301) were chosen to see if meaningful collaboration among various college departments could be designed. The end result was two detailed assignments (one for each course) that created the opportunity for a student to become deeply engaged with the library, writing center, student success center, members of the community, and the faculty ([Appendix E](#)). The communication among various individuals representing college resources (faculty, members of the library staff, student success center staff, writing center staff, and counselors) to develop the assignments was difficult at first, but became easier once everyone involved realized the purpose was to simply help students be successful. Originally scheduled to be field tested in the spring 2015 semester, the date was moved to the fall 2015 semester to give time for the planning team to identify specific “student learning outcomes” that would be measured and to develop a logo and name for the SWTJC QEP.

## Moving from Vision to Action Process Begins

In January 2015, during the regular beginning of the semester convocation, the committee committed to an eight-step vision to action process that crystalized the topic for the QEP. The first four steps of the process were accomplished by March 5, 2015. In a way, the committee members felt like they were starting all over again since the first few steps of the process involved looking at data and deciding what needs to change at the institution (see Table 4.1).

**Table 4-1. Steps 1-4 of Vision to Action**

STEP	PURPOSE	KEY QUESTION
<b>1. Collect and Analyze Data</b>	Understand the current situation.	<i>Where are we now?</i>
<b>2. Describe the Current Situation</b>	Prioritize key issues/challenges.	<i>What needs to change?</i>
<b>3. Create a Vision</b>	Depict the ideal future.	<i>What should be the results of our efforts?</i>
<b>4. Set Goals</b>	Define the ideal future situation.	<i>What specific outcomes do we want to achieve?</i>

However, as the committee worked through the systematic vision to action steps some of the previous confusion about the QEP topic became clear. Step One of the process revisited some of the data resources looked at before by the committee, but committee members went “deeper” into the reports and statistics that were available and added new data resources that helped describe the realities of the current situation.

## WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The following examples are presented to share the type of information uncovered in Step One. Specific items on the three years of Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) results showed that SWTJC needed to have more “student/faculty interactions” and that one of the most common complaints from students was the “lag time” in receiving timely feedback from tests and assignments. Other items on the survey indicated students desired more

collaborative learning activities in the classroom. A data trend connected to Critical Thinking skills emerged from the Educational Testing Service (ETS) Proficiency Profile, which really caught the attention of the committee. The test from ETS is administered every other year to a sample drawn from students at SWTJC who have completed the 42-hour core curriculum. The results show that 8% of the students scored proficient or marginally proficient in critical thinking. Subsequent research showed that this score would put SWTJC in the bottom half of (46% rank) of the 80 community colleges who took part in the 2014 administration of the test (source ETS website with results).

## WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

The latest data from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and ETS Proficiency Profile showed that SWTJC could enhance the quality of the institution by choosing student engagement and critical thinking as the top priorities for a five-year plan. SWTJC student success and achievement indicators are direct measures of student learning that are indirectly measured by student engagement. Earlier work by the committee identified student engagement as an important issue, but for the purposes of the QEP, the plan needed to have a clear focus on student learning outcomes, too. Student engagement is certainly tied to student success, but the primary way it is measured at SWTJC is through the national survey (CCSSE) which relies on student responses to survey questions, not on student learning outcomes.

Critical thinking, on the other hand is a required component of the core curriculum and can be directly measured in each of the 43 core curriculum courses at SWTJC ([see Appendix F for Matrix of Core Curriculum Courses](#)). The following list of SWTJC core curriculum courses have critical thinking listed in the syllabus as a required component and student learning outcome (see Table 4.2). The college needs to ensure that the students acquire critical thinking skills as they successfully complete these courses. The ETS Proficiency Profile indicates that most are not gaining these skills. There is a definite need of change in the way the students are taught critical thinking. *RISE to the Top* will provide resources to faculty and students to improve critical thinking.

**Table 4-2. Core Curriculum Courses Addressing Critical Thinking**

SWTJC Core Curriculum Courses					
ENG 1301	BIOL 1306	PHYS 1302	ENGL 2332	DRAM 2361	SOCI 1301
ENGL 1302	BIOL 1307	PHYS 2325	ENGL 2333	HIST 1301	ECON 2301
SPCH 1311	BIOL 1308	PHYS 2326	PHIL 1301	HIST 1302	BCIS 1305
SPCH 1321	BIOL 1309	ENGL 2322	PHIL 2306	GOVT 2305	PHED 1304
MATH 1314	CHEM 1311	ENGL 2323	HUMA 1301	GOVT 2306	BUSI 1307
MATH 1324	CHEM 1312	ENGL 2327	ARTS 1301	PSYC 2301	COSC 1301
MATH 1332	PHYS 1301	ENGL 2328	MUSI 1306	PSYC 2314	HECO 1322
MATH 1342					

Part of the learning curve for members of the QEP planning committee was taking sufficient time to understand the data collected by the institution, state, and federal agencies. A full year (2013-2014) of dealing with the development of the QEP and looking at many data resources can be overwhelming and confusing. By using a systematic process (Vision to Action Handbook),

the committee was able to identify several key issues, prioritize them and provide an accurate description that includes the “need” and “feasibility” of addressing each issue (Step Two). The previous year of searching for the right combination of issues to form a topic was not wasted. The committee had gained valuable experience and read significant amounts of the professional literature about the topic. They now had the ability to choose the right topic for the institution’s QEP.

## WHAT SHOULD BE THE RESULTS OF OUR EFFORTS?

The vision statement generated in March by Step Three of the “Moving from Vision to Action” process answers the question, “What should be the results of our efforts?”

### ***Vision Statement for QEP***

***RISE to the Top*** leads to a student success-oriented, campus culture rich with opportunities for meaningful collaboration and engagement between and among students, faculty, and staff through the development and implementation of customized, systematic high impact practices. These high impact practices assist in cultivation of student success outcomes including grades, graduation, transfer, employment, and lifelong learning (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006).

*A comprehensive system of well-developed lessons and activities is utilized by faculty and staff in order to systematically engage students with institutional resources, build relationships and partnerships that support learning, and deliver activities and experiences that provide clear pathways to success in college (Kuh et al., 2006).*

This vision statement was developed collaboratively by the QEP Planning Committee members during regular meetings and through an online discussion board ([see Appendix G](#)).

## WHAT SPECIFIC OUTCOMES DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

Following the process in the “Moving from Vision to Action” planning guide, the QEP Planning Committee developed five-year goals for the priority issues discovered through data analysis and research. Tables 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 (pages 37 – 41), show the goal planning worksheets completed by the committee. These led to the formulation of the three QEP goals listed on page 9 and also on page 42. The body of literature on student engagement and critical thinking recommends professional development activities focused on high-impact educational practices as one strategy to increase student success (see Literature Review in Chapter 5).

Interpreting the results of the ETS Proficiency Profile necessitated taking an in-depth look at the instrument and how it defined “Critical Thinking.” Experts at ETS viewed critical thinking as closely related to reading levels. Proficiency classification as a critical thinker was only given to students who demonstrated Level 3 skills. Other definitions of critical thinking, such as those developed by CREDO, Critical Thinking Foundation, and the AACU LEAP Rubric, would include skills from Level 2 as evidence of critical thinking ([see Appendix H](#)). The ETS



Proficiency Profile used the following information to gauge student achievement in critical thinking:

### Reading and Critical Thinking (ETS)

To be considered proficient at **Level 1**, a student should be able to:

- recognize factual material explicitly presented in a reading passage
- understand the meaning of particular words or phrases in the context of a reading passage

To be considered proficient at **Level 2**, a student should be able to:

- synthesize material from different sections of a passage
- recognize valid inferences derived from material in the passage
- identify accurate summaries of a passage or of significant sections of the passage
- understand and interpret figurative language
- discern the main idea, purpose, or focus of a passage or a significant portion of the passage

To be considered proficient at **Level 3**, a student should be able to:

- evaluate competing causal explanations
- evaluate hypotheses for consistency with known facts
- determine the relevance of information for evaluating an argument or conclusion
- determine whether an artistic interpretation is supported by evidence contained in a work
- recognize the salient features or themes in a work of art
- evaluate the appropriateness of procedures for investigating a question of causation
- evaluate data for consistency with known facts, hypotheses or methods.

(Source ETS documentation)

**Table 4-3. Critical Thinking Goals Worksheet (Step 4)**

<i>CURRENT SITUATION</i>				<i>DESIRED FUTURE SITUATION FIVE-YEAR GOALS</i>			
Data from the ETS Proficiency profile (August 2014) indicates students (n=98) from SWTJC perform at the Proficient, Marginal, and Not Proficient Levels as follows:				Data from the ETS Proficiency profile (August 2020) indicates students from SWTJC perform at the Proficient, Marginal, and Not Proficient Levels as follows:			
Skill Dimension	Proficiency Classification			Skill Dimension	Proficiency Classification		
	Proficient	Marginal	Not Proficient		Proficient	Marginal	Not Proficient
Reading Level 1	43%	31%	27%	Reading Level 1	75%	15%	10%
Reading Level 2	14%	19%	66%	Reading Level 2	40%	40%	20%
Critical Thinking	1%	7%	92%	Critical Thinking	20%	40%	40%

In Table 4.3, the data show that 92% of the students (in the 2014 administration of test) from SWTJC were classified as “Not Proficient” for the highest level of the skill dimension. Similar results were reported in 2012. Even if one considers the “Marginal” and “Proficient” classification together, only 8% of the students are demonstrating critical thinking skills at “Level 3.” By broadening the definition of critical thinking to include the skills mentioned in

Level 2, which are included in the CREDO definition and AACU Leap Rubric, one can see that 14% of the students scored well enough to be placed in the proficient category. This is still a very low number of students (~ one out of seven) who demonstrate that they have critical thinking skills after completing the core curriculum.

The documentation from ETS sets the number of students needed in a sample at 50 ( $n=50$ ) or more in order to generalize results to the overall population being studied. Since the number of students in the sample was 98 students for 2014 and 160 student in 2012, it is reasonable to conclude that there is a significant problem with students at SWTJC gaining the critical thinking skills they need to succeed in their chosen careers and future higher education courses. The QEP Implementation Committee will monitor the scores on the ETS Proficiency Profile during the 2015-2020 period. Specifically, the test will be administered in 2016, 2018, and 2020. Though this is only one measure to gauge attainment of critical thinking skills, the committee judges it an important one since it is nationally recognized as a reliable and valid measurement.

The data from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) provide information about the strengths and weaknesses of SWTJC's student engagement level. The "Key Findings for 2014" show that the lowest scores on specific survey items fell in the categories of Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, Academic Challenge, and Student Effort (see Table 4.4).

A careful review of survey item "4a" (Active and Collaborative Learning category) shows that 57.6% of the students indicated they did not "often ask questions or contribute to class discussion" during class meetings. Since several items contribute to an overall score in a category, it made sense to determine how SWTJC performed on the "benchmark" score of CCSSE for Active and Collaborative Learning. The data show SWTJC scored 52.4% compared to the 2014 cohort of colleges 50% for the benchmark measure. However, the top performing colleges in the cohort scored 60.3% on this measure. While SWTJC scores slightly higher (2.4%) than the average score of the 2014 cohort, the benchmark score for SWTJC is 7.9% lower than the top performing colleges in the cohort. The QEP Planning Committee discussed the relative value of using the specific items from CCSSE rather than the "Benchmark" data and concluded that both would be used. The overall benchmarks provide a way to gauge the progress of students at the college as a whole (summative evaluation) and show what scores would be needed for SWTJC to become a "Top Performing" college. The CCSSE documentation says that the top ten percent of colleges in a cohort are designated as such. The individual item scores give specific information that can be used to improve student engagement in a classroom over a year-long period (formative evaluation). Faculty can design activities and modify their own behaviors to improve student engagement. So it seems reasonable to use both types of information to improve student engagement at SWTJC.

**Table 4-4. Student Engagement Goals Worksheet “Weaknesses” (Step 4)**

CURRENT SITUATION	DESIRED FUTURE SITUATION FIVE-YEAR GOALS
Student engagement at SWTJC as reflected in the 2014 CCSSE Key Findings Report indicated that the following items in the survey received lower scores than the 2014 CCSSE Cohort.	Student engagement at SWTJC as reflected in the 2020 CCSSE Report will indicate that the following items in the survey improved to the following levels
4a - Active and Collaborative Learning 57.6 % vs. 65.4 %	4a - Active and Collaborative Learning 66%
4o - Student-Faculty Interaction 46.9% vs. 59.7%	4o - Student-Faculty Interaction 60%
5e - Academic Challenge 58.1% vs. 59.1	5e - Academic Challenge 61%
6a - Academic Challenge 51.8% vs. 55.8%	6a - Academic Challenge 60%
10a – Student Effort 20.1% vs. 29.2%	10a – Student Effort 30%
<b>See items descriptions below*</b>	<b>See items descriptions below*</b>

\*Lower scores on these items

Active & Collaborative Learning	4a	Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions (often or very often)
Student-Faculty Interaction	4o	Received prompt feedback (written/oral) from instructors on your performance (often or very often)
Academic Challenge	5e	Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations (quite a bit or very much)
Academic Challenge	6a	Number of assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or book-length packs of course readings (5 or more)
Student Effort	10a	Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to your program (11 or more hours)

The Key Findings for 2014 show that the highest scores on specific survey items fell in the categories of Active and Collaborative Learning, Support for Learners, and Student Effort (see Table 4.5). The QEP Planning Committee believes that SWTJC should build upon existing strengths in its programs and practices. The CCSSE scores in Table 4.5 show that SWTJC is capable of achieving high levels of student engagement, but the committee believes that these scores should also improve during the five-year ***RISE to the Top*** project and has set realistic goals to improve the scores.

**Table 4-5. Student Engagement Goals Worksheet “Strengths” (Step 4)**

CURRENT SITUATION	DESIRED FUTURE SITUATION FIVE-YEAR GOALS
Student engagement at SWTJC as reflected in the 2014 CCSSE Key Findings Report indicated that the following items in the survey received higher scores than the 2014 CCSSE Cohort.	Student engagement at SWTJC as reflected in the 2020 CCSSE Report will indicate that the following items in the survey improved by 5%
4g - Active and Collaborative Learning 34.1% vs 24.6%	4g - Active and Collaborative Learning 35.8%
9f - Support For Learners 67.8% vs 53.5%	9f - Support For Learners 71.2%
13b1 - Support For Learners 52.2% vs 29.6%	13b1 - Support For Learners 54.8%
13d1 - Student Effort 43% vs 30.3%	13d1 - Student Effort 45.2%
13e1 - Student Effort 57.1% vs. 42.5%	13e1 - Student Effort 60%
<b>See items descriptions below**</b>	<b>See items descriptions below**</b>

\*\*Higher Scores on these CCSSE items

Active and Collaborative Learning	4g	Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments
Support For Learners	9f	Providing the financial support you need to afford your education
Support For Learners	13b1	Frequency: Career counseling
Student Effort	13d1	Frequency: Peer or other tutoring
Student Effort	13e1	Frequency: Skill labs (writing, math, etc.)

## CCSSE 2014 Benchmark Scores

The CCSSE benchmarks are groups of conceptually related survey items that address key areas of student engagement. The five benchmarks denote areas that educational research has shown to be important to students’ college experiences and educational outcomes.

**Active and Collaborative Learning** - Students learn more when they are actively involved in their education and have opportunities to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings. Through collaborating with others to solve problems or master challenging content, students develop valuable skills that prepare them to deal with real-life situations and problems.

**Student Effort** - Students’ own behaviors contribute significantly to their learning and the likelihood that they will successfully attain their educational goals.

**Academic Challenge** - Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. These survey items address the nature and amount of assigned academic work, the complexity of cognitive tasks presented to students, and the rigor of examinations used to evaluate student performance.

**Student-Faculty Interaction** - In general, the more contact students have with their teachers, the more likely they are to learn effectively and to persist toward achievement of their educational

goals. Through such interactions, faculty members become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, lifelong learning.

**Support for Learners** - Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that provide important support services, cultivate positive relationships among groups on campus, and demonstrate commitment to their success.

Table 4.6 shows the CCSSE Benchmarks for the 2014 Cohort. There are three scores listed in the “Current Situation” column, but only one score, the projected five-year score for SWTJC, is shown in the “Desired Future Situation” column. The three scores in the “Current Situation” column are (1) the average score of students from SWTJC who took part in the survey in 2014, (2) the average score of all the students from various institutions (the CCSSE 2014 cohort), and (3) the average score of the students from institutions ranked in the top 10% of all institutions forming the 2014 cohort.

**Table 4-6. Student Engagement Goals Worksheet “CCSSE Benchmarks” (Step 4)**

CURRENT SITUATION	DESIRED FUTURE SITUATION FIVE-YEAR GOALS
Active and Collaborative Learning SWTJC 52.4% 2014 Cohort 50.0% Top-Performing Colleges 60.3%	Active and Collaborative Learning SWTJC 61.0%
Student Effort SWTJC 54.2% 2014 Cohort 50.0% Top-Performing Colleges 58.6%	Student Effort SWTJC 59.0%
Academic Challenge SWTJC 49.2% 2014 Cohort 50.0% Top-Performing Colleges 57.4%	Academic Challenge SWTJC 58.0%
Student-Faculty Interaction SWTJC 50.0% 2014 Cohort 50.0% Top-Performing Colleges 59.1%	Student-Faculty Interaction SWTJC 60%
Support for Learners SWTJC 57.7% 2014 Cohort 50.0% Top-Performing Colleges 60.2	Support for Learners SWTJC 61%

### Other Student Success and Achievement Goals

SWTJC keeps track of several key indicators related to student success and achievement. Members of the QEP Planning Committee felt that the literature review showed these indicators are correlated with student engagement. Since these are student learning outcomes, tracking the improvement in these indicators would serve the purpose of the QEP. In Table 4-7 the current situation and the desired situation in five years of these student learning outcomes related to student engagement are shown.

**Table 4-7. Other Student Success Indicators Goals Worksheet (Step 4)**

CURRENT SITUATION	DESIRED FUTURE SITUATION FIVE-YEAR GOALS
<b>Graduation Rate</b> - Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) definition – full-time first-time degree seeking students graduating in 150% of normal time to completion is <b>25%</b> for 2011 to 2015 Cohort.	The <b>Graduation Rate</b> (as previously defined) for the 2016 to 2020 Cohort will be <b>30%</b> .
<b>Transfer Rate</b> – IPEDs definition – full-time first-time degree seeking students transferred out within 150% of normal time to completion is 15% for 2011 to 2015 Cohort.	The <b>Transfer Rate</b> (as previously defined) for the 2016 to 2020 Cohort will be <b>20%</b> .
<b>Fall to Spring Retention Rate</b> – percent of fall students still enrolled the following spring semester (excluding graduates) is <b>79%</b> for Fall 2014 to Spring 2015.	The <b>Fall to Spring Retention Rate</b> (as previously defined) for Fall 2019 to Spring 2020 will be <b>80%</b> .
<b>Fall to Fall Retention Rate</b> - percent of fall student enrolled the following fall semester (excluding graduates) is <b>47%</b> for Fall 2013 to Fall 2014.	The <b>Fall to Fall Retention Rate</b> (as previously defined) for Fall 2018 to Fall 2019 will be <b>50%</b> .
<b>Course Success Rate</b> - percent of A-C grades awarded is <b>77%</b> for 2014.	The <b>Course Success Rate</b> (as previously defined) for the 2019 will be <b>80%</b> .
<b>Course Completion Rate</b> - Legislative Budget Board (LBB) definition: The number of contact hours for which students are enrolled on the last day of the fall semester divided by the number of contact hours for which students were enrolled on the official census day of the fall semester is <b>92%</b> for 2014.	The <b>Course Completion Rate</b> (as previously defined) for 2019 will be <b>95%</b> .
<b>Licensing/certification Exam Passing Rate</b> - LBB definition/Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board data for number of students taking licensure exam divided by the number passed is <b>81%</b> for 2014.	The <b>Licensing/certification Exam Passing Rate</b> (as previously defined) for the 2019 will be <b>85%</b> .
<b>Job Placement Rate</b> - Graduates found employed during the 4th quarter of a given year in the Texas Workforce Commission UI wage records or in the Office of Personnel Management or Department of Defense databases is <b>67%</b> for 2014.	The <b>Job Placement Rate</b> (as previously defined) for 2019 will be <b>70%</b> .

## QEP Goals and Outcomes

In alignment with the principles outlined in the College mission statement and strategic plan, the QEP established three goals for *RISE to the Top*:

1. Improve critical thinking through high-impact educational practices
2. Improve student engagement through high-impact practices
3. Enhance student learning through professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, focusing on high-impact practices.

These overarching goals will achieve four outcomes:

1. Faculty and staff will demonstrate inclusion of high-impact practices in the learning environment.
2. Students will actively engage in their course work.
3. Students will demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking.
4. Faculty and staff will reflect on ways to engage students through their roles at Southwest Texas Junior College.

In order to reach the ***RISE to the Top*** outcomes and goals, specific strategies were developed by the QEP Planning Committee. These strategies were the result of finishing Step Five of the “Moving from Vision to Action” process and are described in Chapter 5 of the plan. It is important to note that outcomes and goals will form the foundation for the evaluation plan contained in Chapter 7.



# INSTITUTIONAL CAPABILITY

## Chapter 5

SWTJC possesses the resources to initiate, implement, sustain, and complete the QEP



## CHAPTER 5: INSTITUTIONAL CAPABILITY FOR THE INITIATION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND COMPLETION OF THE PLAN

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*Southwest Texas Junior College possesses the resources to initiate, implement, sustain, and complete the QEP.*

### Step 5 – 8 Key Questions

#### WHAT APPROACH WILL WE TAKE TO REACH THOSE OUTCOMES?

Chapter 2 of this plan provided information about the resources and track record of SWTJC with past achievements. The institution has the human, financial, and material resources to initiate, implement, and complete the *Rise to the Top* QEP. To demonstrate the capability of the institution to achieve the goals and outcomes for the plan, detailed action plans have been developed describing programmatic actions that will produce the desired future. The action plans contain a goal and then one or more strategies to reach the goal.

The QEP Planning Committee determined these strategies by working through Step 5 of the “Moving from Vision to Action” planning process (Developing Strategies). Some of the work was done during the regular committee meetings in April and through online collaboration among members, but a large part of the work was accomplished during a day-long QEP Retreat on May 29, 2015. Two presenters were invited to provide information to the committee members attending the retreat. Kathy Fagan from CREDO demonstrated “information literacy” (IL) courseware designed to develop critical thinking skills in students. Dr. Russ Hodges shared his expertise on developing a “First-Year Experience” course. After listening to the two presenters, the committee decided to do a pilot study of the CREDO Information Literacy courseware during the 2015 Summer I semester. Two members of the planning committee, Karen Baen and April Cole (both librarians), volunteered to spearhead the pilot program with a freshman English class taught by Karen Quiroz. Based on the feedback from students who attended the QEP Retreat and the results of the pilot program, the QEP committee will recommend that the college purchase the courseware license (\$7,500.00 annually) for implementation in the fall 2015 semester. The QEP Planning Committee was very impressed with Dr. Hodges’ presentation on the Learning Frameworks course and invited him to do additional training in the fall semester. The one-hour course is designed to improve student engagement and foster critical thinking. The textbook, *Academic Transformation 3e*, comes with several ancillary resources including an instructor’s resource manual with lesson outlines and activities as well as PowerPoint presentations for each chapter and a test bank of questions.

After the retreat, committee members developed action plans for QEP Goals One, Two, and Three of *RISE to the Top*. These action plans are the result of Steps 5, 6 and 7 of the planning process. The strategies developed in Step 5 looked to the literature on student engagement and critical thinking for guidance. Strategy development was also part of brainstorming sessions during regular meetings. Next, the planning committee needed to analyze various components of the college (stakeholders) and find out who needed to be involved (Step 6). This question was addressed by making a series of public presentations about the *RISE to the Top* QEP.

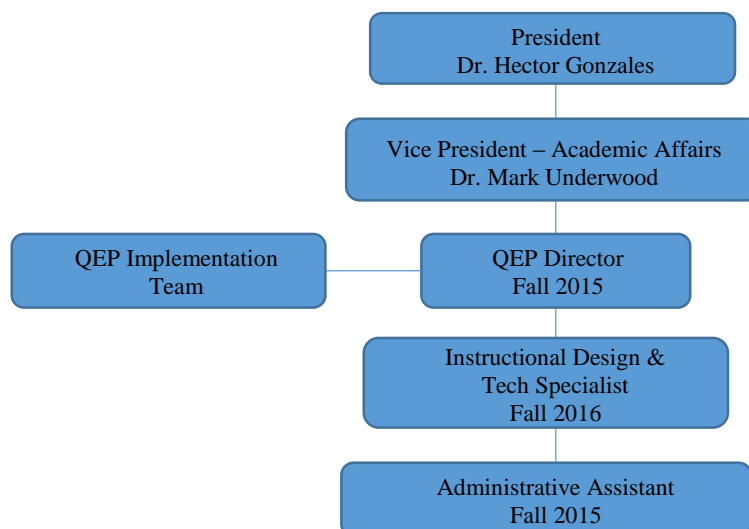
## WHAT INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS SHOULD WE CONSIDER?

The committee realized that each campus and department needed a targeted presentation to encourage participation from students, faculty, administrators, board of trustees, and staff in the ***RISE to the Top*** QEP. The presentations for students were part of a student activities event, “Crossroads,” featuring a showcase of institutional resources. A contest to design a logo was launched to get student involvement. The first place winner would receive a free Kindle tablet. PowerPoint presentations, titled as a “status report,” were shown to Eagle Pass faculty at a Deans Forum on March 31, 2015, with subsequent presentations (see Table 3.2 on page 19) to faculty in Uvalde. Additional presentations designed to allow input from all constituencies were given to the College President’s Cabinet, the Board of Trustees, and community members, as well as an end of the year VP’s Breakfast attended by faculty and staff from all college locations. Part of the process involved considering institutional factors that might help or hinder the implementation of the strategies (Vision to Action Step 6). By communicating with all components of the college, the QEP Planning committee was able to choose strategies acceptable to all stakeholders. It also gave the committee the opportunity to enlist help in carrying out the strategies. Because the QEP sought broad-based involvement from its inception, the strategies and goals were positively received by the students, staff, faculty, administration, board of trustees, and community (see Chapter 6 for more details). With input from these groups, a QEP Implementation Team was chosen.

### Human Resources

The development phase of *Rise to the Top* was coordinated by the QEP Planning Committee co-chairs, Dr. Mitchel Burchfield and Randa Faseler Schell under the supervision of Dr. Mark Underwood, Vice President of Academic Affairs. Upon implementation of *Rise to the Top*, the initiatives will be coordinated by the QEP Director who will report to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. *Rise to the Top* will continue to be supported by faculty and staff who are enthusiastically committed to the implementation and evaluation of QEP activities.

Figure 5-1. Organizational Chart for RISE to the Top





### *QEP Director*

The QEP Director will be appointed from existing faculty/staff ranks during the fall of 2015. The Director will receive 75% course release time for the *Rise to the Top* project. The figures below are reflective of a full-time faculty member paid at \$60,000 per year with 75% of time spent on QEP implementation (cost of living adjustments are included).

### *General duties and responsibilities of the QEP Director include:*

The Director of Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) provides transformational leadership to support faculty and staff in the implementation of the QEP as designed by the QEP Planning Committee.

- Coordinates all activities of the *RISE to the Top* project
- Leads the activities of the QEP Implementation Committee
- Acts as a liaison with internal and external stakeholders to obtain input into QEP implementation
- Prepares a detailed analysis of QEP implementation, as well as status and performance through a set of benchmarks to measure the progress toward achieving QEP goals
- Leads the QEP Assessment Plan which provides for an annual formative assessment of student learning outcomes and a summative assessment at the end of five years
- Acts as a liaison between all relevant constituencies to ensure the successful implementation of the QEP
- Communicates to the College community important and relevant information regarding student progress towards the expected goals
- Maintains all records and data on the project and coordinates the production of the final report
- Manages the QEP budget
- Works with appropriate College personnel to further implement awareness and participation in QEP activities
- Provides updates to the Colleges' Executive Leadership and the District Board of Trustees'

### *QEP Implementation Team*

The QEP Implementation Team comprises three faculty members, three staff members, and a student representative in addition to the QEP Director, Instructional Design & Technology Specialist, and Administrative Assistant. Academic division chairs and service directors will serve as implementation liaisons as needed throughout the course of the project.

QEP Director (fall 2015)

Instructional Design & Technology Specialist (fall 2016) Administrative Assistant (fall 2015)

Del Rio Faculty Representative

Del Rio Staff Representative

Eagle Pass Faculty Representative

Eagle Pass Staff Representative

Uvalde Faculty Representative

Uvalde Staff Representative

Student Representative

Implementation Liaisons (division chairs and service directors as needed)

The QEP Implementation Team will meet bi-monthly (every two months) to review and evaluate the implementation of *RISE to the Top*. In addition, the committee will review and analyze formative and summative assessments of *RISE to the Top* activities.

*Responsibilities of the QEP Implementation Team include:*

- Review and analyze data from CREDO, ETS Proficiency Profile, and CCSSE
- Review other data presented by the SWTJC Office of Institutional Effectiveness
- Review and critique reports prepared by the QEP Director
- Provide support and feedback to faculty and staff regarding the effect of high impact practices on the courses in which they are implemented

*Instructional Design & Technology Specialist*

The Instructional Design & Technology Specialist will be hired in the fall of 2016 (Year 2) and will be primarily responsible for the design, development, and deployment of all high-impact practices associated with *RISE to the Top*. The position requires a bachelor's degree.

*General duties and responsibilities of the Instructional Design & Technology Specialist include:*

This position supports online, blended, and in-class training programs. This position is responsible for managing all aspects of their instructional design project load.

- Responsible for providing assistance to faculty in the development of instructional materials
- Works collaboratively with faculty/subject matter experts to assist them in the development of various instructional and technology elements
- Assists in the creation of innovative solutions to challenges faced by faculty in designing and implementing high-impact practices
- Helps instructors select tools for the optimal delivery of content in all modalities
- Advises on media production or presentation issues
- Consults with technical staff as needed
- Responsible for developing and delivering training to meet QEP goals
- Direct and highly visible responsibility for the quality of instruction and services as related to *RISE to the Top*.

*Administrative Assistant*

The Administrative Assistant will be appointed from within the existing pool of staff. The figures below are reflective of a full-time staff member paid at \$24,228 per year with 75% of time spent on QEP implementation.

*General duties and responsibilities of the Administrative Assistant include:*

- Provides services to support the daily operations of ***RISE to the Top***
- Creates, organizes, and maintains accurate files, records, and reports required for program documentation
- Performs clerical and secretarial duties at the direction of the director
- Maintains program expenditure files
- Assists in generating and processing paperwork, materials, and forms required for the program and disseminates information to interested parties
- Performs other duties as assigned



## Financial Resources

**Table 5-1. Proposed QEP Budget FY 2015-FY 2020**

	Year 0 (2014-2015)	Year 1 (2015-2016)	Year 2 (2016-2017)	Year 3 (2017-2018)	Year 4 (2018-2019)	Year 5 (2019-2020)
<i>Personnel</i>						
<i>QEP Director (75%)</i>	\$0	\$45,000	\$46,350	\$47,441	\$49,173	\$50,648
<i>Inst. Design Specialist (100%)</i>	\$0	\$0	\$38,194	\$40,520	\$41,736	\$42,988
<i>Admin. Asst. (75%)</i>	\$0	\$18,171	\$18,716	\$19,278	\$19,856	\$20,452
<i>Fringe Benefits</i>	\$0	\$11,370	\$18,587	\$19,303	\$19,938	\$20,536
<i>Travel</i>	\$500	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
<i>High Impact Practices</i>						
<i>FYE Course</i>	\$0	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,000	\$2,000
<i>HIPs Training</i>	\$750	\$4,000	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$7,500
<i>Service Learning Projects</i>	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
<i>Capstone Projects</i>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$2,500	\$2,500
<i>Student Research Forum</i>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$500	\$1,500	\$1,500
<i>Internship Development</i>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,000	\$2,000
<i>Supplies &amp; Equip.</i>	\$500	\$5,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
<i>Professional Consultants</i>	\$500	\$8,500	\$8,500	\$8,500	\$8,500	\$8,500
<i>Printing &amp; Promotion</i>	\$14,750	\$10,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
<i>Assessment Instruments</i>						
<i>ETS Prof. Profile</i>	\$0	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
<i>CCSSE</i>	\$0	\$8,500	\$0	\$8,500	\$0	\$8,500
<i>CREDO</i>	\$0	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$7,500
<b>ANNUAL QEP EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$17,000</b>	<b>\$126,541</b>	<b>\$156,847</b>	<b>\$175,542</b>	<b>\$174,203</b>	<b>\$187,624</b>

**Personnel:** All positions listed are necessary for the implementation, revision, and scaling of the SWTJC QEP: *RISE to the Top*. Salaries reflect economy and cost of living in southwest Texas; they are consistent with SWTJC salary schedules and include a 3% cost of living adjustment for each year of implementation.

The QEP Director will be appointed from existing faculty ranks during the fall of 2015. The Director will receive 75% course release time for the *Rise to the Top* project. The figures below are reflective of a full-time faculty member paid at \$60,000 per year with 75% of time spent on QEP implementation (cost of living adjustments are included).

The Instructional Design Specialist will be hired with a fall 2016 start date. The figures below are reflective of a full-time staff member paid at \$38,194 per year with 100% of time spent on QEP implementation for years two through five (cost of living adjustments are included).

The Administrative Assistant will be appointed from within the existing pool of staff. The figures below are reflective of a full-time staff member paid at \$24,228 per year with 75% of time spent on QEP implementation (cost of living adjustments are included).

Personnel benefits are calculated at 18% and include health insurance and retirement.

Table 5-2. Proposed Budget for QEP Personnel

<b><i>QEP Director</i></b>						
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
75% (\$60,000)	\$0	\$45,000	\$46,350	\$47,441	\$49,173	\$50,648
<b><i>Instructional Design Specialist</i></b>						
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
100% (\$38,194)	\$0	\$0	\$38,194	\$40,520	\$41,736	\$42,988
<b><i>Administrative Assistant</i></b>						
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
75% (\$24,228)	\$0	\$18,171	\$18,716	\$19,278	\$19,856	\$20,452
<b><i>Fringe Benefits</i></b>						
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	\$0	\$11,370	\$18,587	\$19,303	\$19,938	\$20,536

**Travel:** The SWTJC service region covers over 16,000 square miles with three full-service campuses each delivering classes to over 5,000 students. Travel is a defining characteristic of the SWTJC service region and is required for successful implementation of *RISE to the Top* at all SWTJC campuses and services sites.

Table 5-3. QEP Travel Budget

<b><i>Travel</i></b>						
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	\$500	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000

**High Impact Practices (HIPs):** Costs are specific to QEP activities. Through design, development, and implementation of High-Impact Practices, *RISE to the Top* will provide a student success-oriented, campus culture rich with opportunities for meaningful collaboration and engagement between and among students, faculty, and staff. These high impact practices assist in cultivation of student success outcomes including grades, graduation, transfer, employment, and lifelong learning (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). A comprehensive system of well-developed lessons and activities will be utilized by faculty and staff in order to systematically engage students with institutional resources, build relationships and partnerships that support learning, and deliver activities and experiences that provide clear pathways to success in college (Kuh et al., 2006).

Table 5-4. Budget for High-Impact Educational Practices

<b>High Impact Practices (HIPs)</b>						
<i>First Year Experience Course (EDUC 1100 or PSYC 1100)</i>						
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	\$0	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,000	\$2,000
<i>HIPs Training (Faculty)</i>						
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	\$750	\$4,000	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$7,500
<i>Service Learning Projects</i>						
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
<i>Capstone Projects</i>						
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$2,500	\$2,500
<i>Student Research Forum</i>						
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$500	\$1,500	\$1,500
<i>Internship Development</i>						
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,000	\$2,000

**Supplies and Materials:** Costs are specific to implementation of *RISE to the TOP* activities.

<b>Supplies, Materials &amp; Equipment</b>						
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	\$500	\$5,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000

**Professional Consultants:** Costs are specific to guest speakers, trainers, and expert consultants who will be engaged to support implementation and best practices of *RISE to the Top* High-Impact Practices. These activities will be designed to improve critical thinking skills and increase student engagement. Faculty and staff will be required to participate in training programs and workshops that promote the systematic application of High-Impact Practices.

<b>Professional Consultants</b>						
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	\$500	\$8,500	\$8,500	\$8,500	\$8,500	\$8,500

**Printing and Promotion:** These funds include internal and external communication and marketing of *RISE to the Top* activities. Marketing materials include brochures, flyers, cards, posters, course schedules, website design, videos, emails, banners, etc... Budget variations correspond to implementation and scaling of the project.

<b>Printing &amp; Promotion</b>						
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	\$14,750	\$10,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000

**Assessment Materials:** These materials include the ETS Proficiency Profile, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), and the CREDO. These assessments will be administered according to the SWTJC Office of Institutional Effectiveness assessment schedule.

<b>Assessment Materials</b>						
	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
ETS Prof. Profile	\$0	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
CCSSE	\$0	\$8,500	\$0	\$8,500	\$0	\$8,500
CREDO	\$0	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$7,500

## Action Plans and Timetable – Initiate, Implement, and Complete

To demonstrate the capability of the institution to achieve the goals and outcomes for the plan, a detailed action plan describing programmatic actions that will produce the desired future was developed. The action plan includes an implementation timeline. The QEP Planning Committee determined these strategies by working through Step 5 of the “Moving from Vision to Action” planning process. Development of the action plans was completed during regular committee meetings, through online collaboration, and during the day-long QEP Retreat on May 29, 2015.

### INITIATING *RISE TO THE TOP*

The first phase of the plan takes place in the fall 2015 semester, pending approval from the SACSCOC visiting team in October. The college has scheduled EDUC 1100 Learning Frameworks classes on each campus. Students are preregistered for the fall 2015 semester. The syllabus has been developed and textbooks have been ordered. This course is the first “high-impact” educational practice being implemented. The college will focus on this first year experience for students during the fall 2015 and spring 2016 semesters. The following is a narrative of how SWTJC will initiate the *RISE to the Top* plan:

#### YEAR ONE: 2015-2016

Starting in the fall 2015 semester, new students at SWTJC will participate in a Learning Frameworks course (EDUC 1100 or PSYC 1100) as part of a high-impact educational practice. This first year experience (FYE) course (Gardner, Kuh) will provide students with opportunities for increased student engagement and improvement of critical thinking skills. In preparation for these classes, faculty and staff attended a QEP Retreat on May 29, 2015 with the author of the textbook for the class. Attendees also heard from a company representative of CREDO, which has developed critical thinking courseware for students. A pilot program using the critical thinking courseware was conducted during the summer with positive results. The courseware will be used in 10 of the EDUC 1100 - Learning Frameworks classes during the fall 2015 semester. The program will be expanded in the spring 2015 semester to include an additional 10 classes. A series of workshops designed to prepare more faculty and staff to teach the Learning Frameworks course will begin in August 2015 and continue on a regular basis during the fall 2015 and spring 2016 semesters. A “Best Practices” workshop will be held at the beginning of each semester during the college’s convocation meetings. Selected faculty and staff will showcase a “Best Practices” activity that focuses on critical thinking and service learning that was used successfully in the previous semester. Results from the Learning Frameworks course will be collected and analyzed in the summer of 2016 as a regular part of SWTJC’s institutional effectiveness cycle at the yearly assessment summit (held in June). Results of students’ critical thinking skills measured in core curriculum courses will be collected and analyzed to gauge progress toward QEP goals. Other indicators of success (see evaluation plan in Chapter 7) will be reviewed and used as part of the annual evaluation report for *RISE to the Top*. The “Initiation Phase” of the plan will end in December 2015 and the “Implementation Phase” will begin.

#### WHO WILL DO WHAT, WHEN?

The following action plans were developed to provide a strong beginning for *RISE to the Top*.

Identify courses and instructors who are using high impact educational practices. There are 43 core curriculum courses at SWTJC, all of which are required to have critical thinking as a student learning outcome. Division Chairs and faculty will review their syllabus and evaluation method for determining critical thinking skills in their individual courses.

**Table 5-5. Action Plan for Goal 1 in Year One**

<b>Goal #1 Improve critical thinking through high-impact educational practices</b>			
<b>Strategy 1 - Provide course material that focuses on critical thinking skills.</b>			
<b>What</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>How/Notes</b>
CREDO Pilot program	Karen Baen and April Cole, Librarians	Summer I 2015	5 English 1301 Students in Karen Quiroz's class will test program. Free gift cards will be provided as incentives for the students to do this "outside of class" work.
Embed CREDO courseware in EDUC 1100 and COLS 0300 students as part of course	Collaboration of library staff and faculty	Fall 2015	QEP budget will purchase the \$7500 license to use the courseware.
Embed CREDO courseware in selected core curriculum and technical programs.	Collaboration of library staff and faculty and division chairs	Spring 2016	5 courses that list critical thinking as an SLO will be selected by Division Chairs and faculty
<b>Strategy 2 – Provide training to faculty and staff on the use of CREDO courseware.</b>			
<b>What</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>How/Notes</b>
<b>CREDO Training</b> To faculty and staff	April Cole Library staff Dr. A. Garcia, PD Officer	August 2015 – May 2016 Monthly sessions	Training scheduled at Library or computer lab.
<b>Strategy 3 – Develop a depository of high-impact education practices focused on critical thinking that can be used by faculty and staff at SWTJC.</b>			
<b>What</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>How/Notes</b>
Identify courses taught at SWTJC that are currently using high-impact practices focused on critical thinking	Division Chairs and QEP Director	Begin in Fall 2015 and continue in Spring 2016	Conduct a survey of faculty in each division and review syllabi of all courses.
Adapt the high-impact practices focused on critical thinking, that were identified, for use in other courses taught at SWTJC	QEP Instructional Design Specialist and Faculty	Begin in Fall 2015	Faculty and QEP staff will present a "Best Practices" session. (Fall and Spring Convocation)



Table 5-6. Action Plan for Goal 2 in Year One

<b>Goal #2 Improve Student Engagement through high-impact educational practices</b>			
<b>Strategy 1 - Require first time in college students to participate in a “First Year Experience” course designed to improve student engagement and critical thinking.</b>			
<b>What</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>How/Notes</b>
EDUC 1100 will be required for FTIC students not enrolled in developmental education classes.	Designated Faculty	Fall 2015	Training provided at retreat and in August 2015 by Russ Hodges
Expanded offerings of COLS 0300 for developmental education students.	Designated Faculty	Fall 2015	Experienced faculty will teach the course
<b>Strategy 2 – Provide training to faculty and staff who will teach EDUC 1100 and COLS 0300</b>			
<b>What</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>How/Notes</b>
Overview of a Learning Frameworks course at the QEP Retreat, attended by planning committee members and guests	Russ Hodges, author of Learning Frameworks textbook	May 29, 2015	Copies of book, materials, and an interactive presentation by Russ Hodges
August training meeting for faculty scheduled to teach EDUC 1100	Dr. A. Garcia, Professional Development Officer and Dr. M. Burchfield, Division Chair for Education and Developmental Studies	August 6, 2015 August 11, 2015 August 12, 2015	IRM, Test bank, and PowerPoint slides will be sent to each faculty member ahead of time. Syllabus will be available online. Meeting will be conducted by Russ Hodges or Dr. Burchfield
Training meeting with COLS faculty to discuss expanded offerings of course for all developmental education students	Dr. A. Garcia, Professional Development Director and Dr. M. Burchfield, Division Chair for Education and Developmental Studies	August 6, 2015 August 11, 2015 August 12, 2015	IRM, Test bank, and PowerPoint slides will be sent to each faculty member ahead of time. Syllabus will be available online.

The QEP is an enhancement to the institution because it adds quality instruction as a priority that can be incorporated into the existing strategic plan for the college. There were no strategic objectives for cultivating excellence in teaching and instructional delivery in the current strategic plan. The work of the QEP committee has developed a viable strategy to satisfy this need for the institution. During the regular planning cycle for the college, the SWTJC Strategic Plan will be amended to reflect activities of the ***RISE to the Top*** plan.

**Table 5-7. Action Plan for Goal 3 in Year One**

<b>Goal #3</b> Enhance student learning through professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, focusing on high-impact practices (HIP).			
<b>Strategy 1 - Schedule monthly professional development training sessions for faculty and staff.</b>			
<b>What</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>How/Notes</b>
PD training on HIP and Student Engagement	Dr. Garcia and QEP Director	Begin in fall 2015	Use the activity hour and schedule presenters
<b>Strategy 2 - Schedule a “Best Practices” session for fall and spring convocations to showcase faculty members using high-impact practices</b>			
<b>What</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>How/Notes</b>
Create session in Convocation to present and identify “Best Practices”	Dr. Garcia	Fall 2015	Schedule presenters
Send faculty to state, regional, and national conferences to attend training.	Dr. Garcia and Division Chairs	Fall 2015	Check budgets and conference schedules. Make sure travel money is allotted.
Schedule field trips to colleges with successful HIPs	QEP Director	Spring 2016	Use contacts at Achieving the Dream to locate colleges

## **Implementation of *RISE to the Top***

As shown in the projected budget, ample funds are allocated for the full implementation of *RISE to the Top*. During the summer months of 2016, new action plans will be devised that take into account the lessons learned detailed in the first QEP Annual Evaluation Report (see chapter 7). This “institutional effectiveness” activity will make use of the results from the prior year’s assessments and evaluation to improve the quality of the next year’s activities.

### **YEAR TWO: 2016-2017**

The major difference in year two, will be new action plans which focus on the high-impact practice of “Service Learning.” These action plans will be produced by the newly hired QEP director and the rest of the QEP Implementation Team. Since the Implementation Team includes all of the Division Chairs, many of the details related to implementation of the high-impact practice will be attended to by the division chair whose courses contain “service learning” as a

component of the core curriculum. The ***RISE to the Top*** QEP will use the regular planning cycles of the college to improve the EDUC 1100-Learning Frameworks course with faculty input to the Division Chair and SWTJC Curriculum Committee. Part of the SWTJC Unit Action Plan process for each division reviews the results of evaluations and plans program improvement. The COLS course for developmental education students has a proven track record and the expansion of the courses should be routine. SWTJC will continue to offer the Learning Frameworks class to new students. Faculty will review the data analysis from the previous semester's Learning Frameworks courses. Selected faculty and staff will showcase "Best Practices" activities that focus on critical thinking used successfully in the previous semester. Results from the Learning Frameworks course will be collected and analyzed in the summer of 2017 as a regular part of SWTJC's institutional effectiveness cycle at the yearly assessment summit (held in June). Results of students' critical thinking skills measured in core curriculum courses will be collected and analyzed to gauge progress toward QEP goals. Results from service learning projects will be reviewed and included in the ***RISE to the Top*** Annual Evaluation Report. During the summer months of 2017, new action plans will be devised that take into account the lessons learned detailed in the second ***RISE to the Top*** QEP Annual Evaluation Report (see chapter 7). Also, new action plans for Collaborative Learning and Student Research projects will be devised for fall 2017 implementation. As before, this "institutional effectiveness" activity will make use of the results from the prior year's assessments and evaluation to improve the quality of the next year's activities.

#### YEAR THREE: 2017-2018

SWTJC will continue with the previous QEP activities of Learning Frameworks courses for new students, critical thinking activities embedded in the core curriculum courses, and service learning projects. Faculty and staff workshops will provide professional development opportunities focused on Collaborative Learning and Student Research projects. As before, faculty members who are using high-impact educational practices will share their expertise and experience with other faculty during the fall and spring "Best Practices" sessions during convocation. Results from the Learning Frameworks course will be collected and analyzed in the summer of 2018 as a regular part of SWTJC's institutional effectiveness cycle at the yearly assessment summit (held in June). Results of students' critical thinking skills measured in core curriculum courses will be collected and analyzed to gauge progress toward QEP goals. Results from service learning projects will be reviewed and included in the ***RISE to the Top*** Annual Evaluation Report. During the summer months of 2018, new action plans will be devised that take into account the lessons learned detailed in the third ***RISE to the Top*** QEP Annual Evaluation Report (see chapter 7). Also, new action plans for Capstone Courses and projects will be devised for fall 2018 implementation. As usual, this "institutional effectiveness" activity will make use of the results from the prior year's assessments and evaluation to improve the quality of the next year's activities.

#### YEAR FOUR: 2018-2019

SWTJC will continue with the previous QEP activities of Learning Frameworks courses for new students, critical thinking activities embedded in the core curriculum courses, and service learning projects. Faculty and staff workshops will provide professional development opportunities focused on Capstone Courses and projects. As before, faculty members who are using high-impact educational practices will share their expertise and experience with other

faculty during the fall and spring “Best Practices” sessions during convocation. Results from all of the previously implemented high-impact strategies and critical thinking activities will be evaluated and become part of the ***RISE to the Top*** QEP Annual Evaluation Report. During the summer months of 2019, the college will conduct its annual “institutional effectiveness” activity and make use of the results from the prior year’s assessments and evaluation to improve the quality of the next year’s activities.

#### YEAR FIVE: 2019-2020

The fifth year of ***RISE to the Top*** will continue to support the previous QEP activities and will continue to ease back on the budget from the plan to allow the activities to become institutionalized and sustained through regular funding. Though the plan will be “Complete” at the end of the fifth year, the high-impact practices will continue and more importantly, the students who benefitted from the ***RISE to the Top*** courses and activities will have a brighter future. The five –year QEP report to SACSCOC will be submitted. As mentioned earlier, the division chairs will play a major role in the implementation of the plan as each year of the plan focuses on a different high-impact educational practice. The QEP Director and staff will work directly with the division chair and faculty or staff involved.

**Table 5-8. Five-Year Action Plan Summary**

Implementation of <b><i>RISE to the Top</i></b> QEP	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
High-impact Practice	First Year Experience Course for all first-time-in college students	Service Learning in targeted courses	Collaborative Learning in targeted courses	Capstone courses and Internships in targeted programs	Undergraduate Research in targeted courses and clubs
Critical Thinking	CREDO courseware made available to college	Targeted Core Curriculum Course use HIPs to increase Critical Thinking	Targeted Core Curriculum Course use HIPs to increase Critical Thinking	Targeted Core Curriculum Course use HIPs to increase Critical Thinking	All core curriculum courses use HIPs to increase Critical Thinking
Training Focus	Faculty and Staff Training Activities focused on First Year Experience and Critical Thinking	Faculty and Staff Training Activities focused on Service Learning and Critical Thinking	Faculty and Staff Training Activities focused on Collaborative Learning and Critical Thinking	Faculty and Staff Training Activities focused on Capstone Courses and Critical Thinking	Faculty and Staff Training Activities focused on Undergraduate Research and Critical Thinking
Data collection and analysis	QEP Annual Report	QEP Annual Report	QEP Annual Report	QEP Annual Report	QEP Annual Report
Planning activity	New Action Plans Developed during the Summer for Year 2	New Action Plans Developed during the Summer for Year 3	New Action Plans Developed during the Summer for Year 4	New Action Plans Developed during the Summer for Year 5	New Action Plans Developed during the Summer for Year 6



# BROAD-BASED INVOLVEMENT

## Chapter 6

The institutional process for design of the plan involved all relevant constituencies.





## CHAPTER 6: BROAD-BASED INVOLVEMENT

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*The institutional process for design of the plan involved all relevant constituencies.*

Southwest Texas Junior College commenced the QEP planning process in fall 2013 with an inaugural session at the college's Fall Convocation Conference. Over two hundred faculty and staff from all divisions, departments, and campuses met during the session to discuss and select possible QEP topics. In spring of 2014, the QEP Committee was created with members from all academic divisions and student services departments. Two co-chairs (one from faculty and one from staff) were selected by the President's Cabinet to lead the efforts. As previously mentioned, the committee adopted the Vision to Action planning process. Step six of Vision to Action includes analysis of stakeholder influence and investigation of political and institutional factors that will help determine who should be involved in implementation of the plan. The QEP Committee worked to open communication and discussion about the QEP by conducting regular meetings, holding sessions at all subsequent convocation conferences, conducting focus groups, participating at campus wide events, conducting presentations, developing marketing materials, and creating a website with the goal of broadly involving all constituents in the planning process. The proposed implementation of *RISE to the Top* will utilize specific strategies to focus efforts toward a more highly engaged campus culture rich with opportunities for meaningful collaboration and engagement between and among students, faculty, and staff.

### Connection to Planning

*The plan is directly related to institutional planning efforts.*

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Southwest Texas Junior College uses an integrated, institution-wide research-based planning, evaluation and effectiveness process that incorporates a systematic review of programs and services resulting in 1) the use of outcomes for continuing improvement and 2) demonstration that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission.

One example of how the QEP planning efforts involved the wider college community is shown by the work from the SWTJC Curriculum Committee. This committee is one of the most active committees at the institution, with broad-based membership. Any new addition to the curriculum is brought before the committee and must be recommended by the committee before final approval by the President's Cabinet and SWTJC Board of Trustees. Therefore, part of the QEP plan necessitated getting a recommendation from the Curriculum Committee to create a "First Year Experience" course (EDUC 1100 – Learning Frameworks) that would be required for all qualified first-time-in-college students. A sample syllabus and textbook were required as part of the process. A presentation was made and the SWTJC Curriculum Committee voted to approve the new course on March 26, 2015 ([see agenda and syllabus submitted to SWTJC Curriculum Committee – Appendix I](#)). Since key members of the college belong to the SWTJC Curriculum Committee, their involvement in the QEP planning process brings high credibility and "buy-in" to the project. The importance of the immediate implementation of the First Year Experience course (EDUC 1100) in the fall 2015 semester is shown in the following list:

- **Provides the right start for all 1<sup>st</sup> time in college students**
- **Makes an major impact within 5 years**
- **Utilizes CREDO (software) to provide immediate critical thinking component**
- **Promotes Student engagement in the activities and lessons**
- **Introduces students to college resources (Student Success and Library etc.)**
- **Provides critical thinking foundation for Core Curriculum classes**
- **Provides faculty mentors for incoming students**
- **Teaches study skill strategies, including the formation of student led study groups**
- **Identifies Successful Pathways for all students as part of the coursework**

As a result of this recommendation and the following approval by the President's Cabinet, there are 22 sections of the new EDUC 1100 course on the schedule for the fall 2015 semester. Qualified faculty and staff have been assigned to teach the sections and have begun receiving the necessary training or have been scheduled to receive the training. Each faculty member and those involved in the registration and advisement of students are working together for a successful launch of the QEP. The early implementation of this initiative reflects the confidence that SWTJC faculty and administrators have in this proven, high-impact practice.

Because there is a direct relationship between *RISE to the Top* and meeting the goals and objectives of the College's five-year strategic plan and regular planning efforts (like the SWTJC Curriculum committee), broad-based involvement in the planning and implementation of the QEP occurs. As the *RISE to the Top* plan unfolds opportunities for meaningful collaboration and engagement between and among students, faculty, and staff will increase. As a result, shared data and implementation structures will work to support the success of both plans and solidify the institutional commitment to student learning and student success.

## **Institution-Wide Support**

*All relevant constituencies have direct involvement in implementation of the plan.*

As discussed above, institution-wide support for *RISE to the Top* is directly and strongly related to SWTJC's Strategic Plan. Further evidence of strong support includes commitment of time and resources to QEP Committee processes and active participation by a majority of faculty in QEP Committee Convocation sessions. Other examples include student and community participation in ongoing interactions such as focus groups, surveys, acronym selection, and a logo contest. In fact, one of the winners of the logo contest was a dual credit student from a local high school. Among the most beneficial activities were participation by faculty, staff, and students in various workshops presented at Deans' Forums, College Crossroads, Service Forums, Staff Convocations, and the Vice Presidents' Annual Awards Breakfast.

*RISE to the Top* was originated from a faculty-driven process that drew on existing collaborative efforts between faculty, staff, and administration. As QEP energy built on all SWTJC campuses, Dr. Mitchel Burchfield and Randa Schell focused efforts on informing as many faculty, staff, and students as possible about the QEP process. Dr. Burchfield initiated contact with the College Deans and secured a presentation at the Deans' Forum held on each major SWTJC campus. Randa Schell reserved spots at the student event known as College Crossroads and presentations

were planned at summer Service Forums, VP's Breakfast, and SWTJC Board of Trustees meetings. In addition, the QEP Committee held breakout sessions at Faculty Convocation in fall 2013, spring 2014, fall 2014, and spring 2015. A series of articles in the SWTJC Southwest Texan and on the SWTJC website is planned for summer and fall 2015. The first article ran on swtjc.edu on May 28, 2015. An article showing the winners of the Logo Contest appeared in the Uvalde Leader News on July 5, 2015 ([Appendix J](#)).

Institution-wide support for the implementation of *RISE to the Top* has been established through the formation of the QEP Implementation Team which will consist of the QEP Director, Instructional Design & Technology Specialist, and Administrative Assistant plus three faculty members, three staff members, and a student representative. Academic division chairs, service directors and general faculty and staff will serve as implementation liaisons as needed throughout the course of the project. For example, during year one of the project, stakeholders such as faculty, Student Success Center staff, Library staff and the Professional Development Officer will work in collaboration with the QEP Implementation team to successfully implement the First Year Experience course for all first-time-in-college students. The division chair for the First Year Experience course (EDUC 1100) will function as a liaison to the QEP Implementation team during this time. During the next four years of the plan, other division chairs will take this role as courses in their divisions become part of the action plans.

## **Naming the QEP**

After holding breakout sessions at the spring 2015 Faculty Convocation, it was apparent that the QEP was ready for a name. Dr. Mitchel Burchfield utilized the QEP Committee Message Board to garner support for a QEP Acronym. The Message Board conversation took place over the course of three weeks and culminated in a survey that contained seven potential QEP Acronyms ([Appendix K](#)). On February 26, 2015 an email containing the seven potential acronyms and a survey link ([Appendix K](#)) was sent to all faculty and staff. After a tally of the votes, the QEP was named RISE (Resources + Interactions = Student Engagement). After some further discussion in subsequent QEP Planning Committee meetings, a decision was made to call the QEP *RISE to the Top* because it connotes that a good idea does not go unnoticed, just as cream poured into coffee rises to the top. With support for the acronym building, the QEP Planning Committee decided to turn to the student body for help designing a logo to represent *RISE to the Top*.

## QEP Logo Contest

The QEP Planning Committee started soliciting entries for the QEP Logo Contest at the college wide student event known as College Crossroads ([Appendix L](#)). More entries were acquired from emailing all students about the QEP Logo Contest. In the end, SWTJC students submitted 15 entries for the contest. The logos ranged from a car driving up the “Success Highway” to a *RISE to the Top* official seal ([Appendix M](#)). All entries were sent out to students, faculty, and staff for voting and the results came back in a virtual tie between the two logos displayed on this page and the next. In the April 9, 2015 meeting, members of the QEP Planning Committee agreed to use both winning logos for the *RISE to the Top* plan. The RISE arrow will be used on all promotional materials and the RISE seal will be used to denote courses with high-impact practices in the SWTJC class schedule.



Each student who entered the contest received an SWTJC “goody bag” full of helpful items and the winners of the contest each received a Kindle Fire. The winning students and their logos were announced at the VP’s Breakfast on May 15, 2015 and the subsequent article was published on swtjc.edu on May 28, 2015. The RISE arrow was designed by Brian Kimble, a dual credit student from Uvalde High School, and the *RISE to the Top* seal was designed by Rolando Delgado, a student on the

Eagle Pass Campus. Each logo represents a certain aspect of the *RISE to the Top* theme. The RISE arrow symbolizes increased collaborations, interactions, and student engagement that will be the result of the increased high impact practices at SWTJC. The RISE seal is a regal symbol of accomplishment that will be bestowed only on those courses that offer students opportunities to participate in high-impact practices as defined by the QEP Implementation Team.

## QEP Song and Retreat

*RISE to the Top* was officially announced at the SWTJC VP’s Breakfast on May 15, 2015. The Logo Contest Winners were announced and an official flyer ([Appendix N](#)) was distributed to all faculty and staff in attendance. The VP’s Breakfast is the largest yearly college-wide event and encompasses faculty and staff from all campuses and service sites. As a special treat, Diane Underwood and Hector Lopez (SWTJC faculty members) wrote and performed the SWTJC QEP Song, sung to the tune of “Comin’ Round the Mountain” ([Appendix O](#)). All QEP Planning Committee members sang “back up” and the crowd received a performance they will not soon forget! Spring semester QEP activities were rounded out by the QEP Retreat on May 29, 2015. While attending the retreat, QEP Planning Committee members heard a presentation from CREDO representative, Kathy Fagan, about information literacy and critical thinking assessment tools. Attendees also participated with Dr. Russ Hodges (textbook author) from Texas State University in a workshop about using a learning frameworks course as part of a “First Year Experience” high-impact practice.

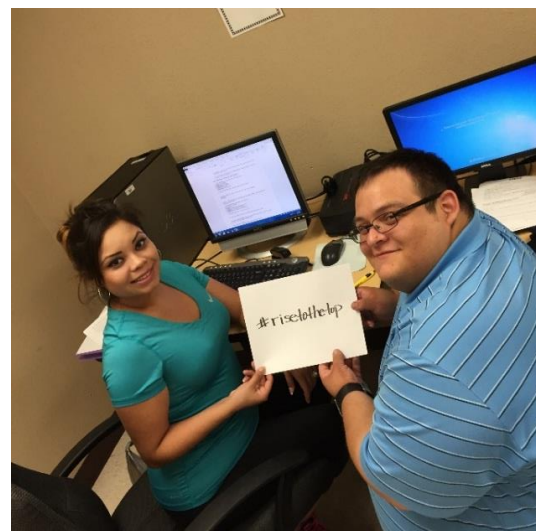
## QEP Website and Marketing Plan

In June of 2015, the QEP website was launched ([Appendix P](#)) and a college-wide email informing all faculty and staff about the QEP website was distributed. Further marketing and communication of *RISE to the Top* initiatives is planned for summer and fall of 2015. The QEP Marketing Committee was convened in summer 2015 to initiate a targeted and comprehensive marketing and communications campaign in fall 2015. A major challenge for marketing *RISE to the Top* at SWTJC is the fact that our campuses and service sites are spread out over 16,500 square miles and 11 counties. Therefore, much of the communication of the plan will be done electronically through email, the QEP website, and activities targeted for each service region community. Each element of the marketing campaign will utilize the *RISE to the Top* moniker and logos.

The marketing plan includes structured and unstructured activities that will provide thorough communication about the plan and the process and solicit comments and contributions from all SWTJC constituents. The major strategy for marketing *RISE to the Top* at SWTJC is to embed activities (high-impact practices) in the regular structure of the college. For example, faculty who participate in high-impact practices training and actively employ a high-impact practice in their classes will receive the *RISE* seal of approval in the form of a lapel pin and placement of the *RISE* seal of approval next to their courses in the course schedule.

To actively engage SWTJC in *RISE to the Top*, the QEP Marketing Committee plans to utilize the QEP website to periodically post feature stories about successful implementations of high impact practices inside and outside the classroom. This strategy will serve two purposes: (1) feature stories will be distributed to the college newspaper and other news outlets keeping the campus community and public informed about QEP activities and (2) all SWTJC constituents will have access to a repository of information for implementing specific high-impact practices. Another QEP marketing strategy has been fondly termed “*RISE to the Top* Blitz.” During the first four weeks of the fall 2015 semester, a short QEP video will be posted to both the QEP website and the main SWTJC website (swtjc.edu). The video will explain the basics of the *RISE to the Top* plan and challenge students, faculty, and staff to learn as much as they can about the QEP so that they will be ready to compete in random *RISE to the Top* quizzes. During the four week Blitz, QEP Marketing Committee members will randomly choose students, faculty, and staff to answer questions about the QEP. Those answering the questions correctly will obtain a scratch-off ticket that can be redeemed for a number of *RISE to the Top* branded prizes. Another planned marketing activity is the “*RISE to the Top* Selfie Contest” which will run in the two weeks immediately after the *RISE to the Top* Blitz. During the Selfie Contest, students will be asked to post Instagram photos of themselves actively engaging in classroom activities and/or campus events. The photo must include the hashtag #risetothetop. After the two-week contest period has ended, three winners will be drawn from the pool of #risetothetop photos. Prizes will include Kindles and iPads.

Figure 6-1. Example of Twitter “photo” Contest for QEP





In addition to the marketing activities detailed above, the QEP Marketing Committee plans to commence a comprehensive print and electronic media campaign including posters, emails, yard signs, sidewalk chalk, and newspaper articles. In addition, there will be t-shirt surveys, chalk/white board advertisements, presentations at various college wide events, and QEP screen savers on all campus computers. The purpose of all of these activities is to not only promote awareness of *RISE to the Top*, but also to gather additional ideas that will further augment the QEP. Table 6.1 notes the various marketing methods planned and implemented by the QEP Marketing Committee.

**Table 6-1. QEP Awareness Campaign Activities**

<b>Table 6.1 QEP Awareness Campaign Activities</b>				
	<b>AUDIENCE</b>	<b>DISTRIBUTION</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
<b>Presentations</b>				
Faculty Convocation	Faculty and Administration	200	August 20, 2014	QEP Update
College Crossroads – Del Rio	Students	100	March 24, 2015	QEP Awareness
College Crossroads – Eagle Pass	Students	100	March 26, 2015	QEP Awareness
College Crossroads – Uvalde	Students	100	March 31, 2015	QEP Awareness
Deans' Forum – Eagle Pass	Faculty	40	March 31, 2015	QEP Update
President's Cabinet Meeting	Administration	15	April 1, 2015	QEP Update
Dual Credit Counselors' Workshop	Counselors	50	April 15, 2015	QEP Awareness
SWTJC Board of Trustees Meeting	Trustees and Community	25	April 17, 2015	QEP Awareness and Update
Deans' Forum – Uvalde	Faculty	50	April 28, 2015	QEP Update
VP's Breakfast – Uvalde	Faculty, Staff, Administration	300	May 15, 2015	QEP Update
Services Forum – Crystal City	Staff	5	July 9, 2015	QEP Awareness and Update
Services Forum – Eagle Pass	Staff	20	July 9, 2015	QEP Awareness and Update
Services Forum – Del Rio	Staff	20	July 31, 2015	QEP Awareness and Update
Services Forum – Uvalde	Staff	50	July 8, 2015	QEP Awareness and Update
New Student Information Sessions	Students	1000	Summer 2015	QEP Awareness
Faculty Convocation	Faculty and Administration	200	Fall 2015	QEP Awareness and Update
<b>Focus Groups</b>				
Services Focus Group - Uvalde	Staff	30	February 28, 2014	QEP Update Discussion and Planning
Services Focus Group – Eagle Pass	Staff	11	March 4, 2014	QEP Update Discussion and Planning
Services Focus Group – Del Rio	Staff	7	March 6, 2014	QEP Update Discussion and Planning
Phi Theta Kappa Meeting	Students	5	April 3, 2014	QEP Awareness and Planning
Conversation w/ President - Uvalde	Students and Administration	15	April 29, 2014	QEP Awareness and Planning
Student Focus Group – Eagle Pass	Students	18	April 29, 2014	QEP Awareness and Planning
Student Focus Group – Del Rio	Students	6	May 2, 2014	QEP Awareness and Planning

<b>Table 6.1 QEP Awareness Campaign Activities (continued)</b>				
	<b>AUDIENCE</b>	<b>DISTRIBUTION</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
<b>Print Media</b>				
Logo Contest Flyer (hard copy)	Students	300	March 24, 26, and 31, 2015	QEP Awareness and Planning
Logo Contest Winners Article (Uvalde Leader News)	Community	5,000	July 5, 2015	QEP Awareness
Successful HIP Implementation Articles (newspaper articles)	Faculty, Staff, Students, Administration, Community	TBD	Spring 2016	QEP Awareness, Documentation, Assessment
<i>RISE to the Top</i> Infographic	Faculty, Staff, Students, Administration, Community	TBD	August 3, 2015	QEP Awareness
<i>RISE to the Top</i> posters, yard signs and sidewalk chalk	Faculty, Staff, Students, Administration, Community	TBD	August 24, 2015	QEP Awareness
<i>RISE to the Top</i> chalk/white board advertisements	Faculty and Students	5,300	August 24, 2015	QEP Awareness
<b>Electronic Media</b>				
Acronym Email	Faculty, Staff, Administration	600	February 26, 2015	QEP Awareness
Logo Contest Flyer and Email	Students	5,300	April 2, 2015	QEP Awareness
QEP Contest Winners Article (www.swtjc.edu)	Faculty, Staff, Students, Administration, Community	5,000	May 28, 2015	QEP Awareness
QEP Website Launch Email	Faculty, Staff, Administration	600	June 26, 2015	QEP Awareness
Successful HIP Implementation Articles (website repository)	Faculty, Staff, Students, Administration, Community	TBD	Spring 2016	QEP Awareness, Documentation, Assessment
QEP Video	Faculty, Staff, Students, Administration, Community	TBD	August 24–September 18, 2015	QEP Awareness
<i>RISE to the Top</i> Selfie Contest	Faculty, Staff, Students, Administration, Community	TBD	September 21–October 2, 2015	QEP Awareness
<i>RISE to the Top</i> screen savers	Faculty, Staff, Students, Administration, Community	TBD	August 24, 2015	QEP Awareness
<b>Other</b>				
<i>RISE to the Top</i> Song	Faculty, Staff, Administration	300	May 15, 2015	QEP Awareness
<i>RISE</i> Seal of Approval – Course Schedule	Faculty and Students	TBD	Spring 2016	QEP Awareness
<i>RISE</i> Seal of Approval – Label Pins	Faculty and Students	TBD	Spring 2016	QEP Awareness
<i>RISE to the Top</i> Blitz Quiz	Faculty, Staff, Students, Administration, Community	TBD	August 24 – September 18, 2015	QEP Awareness

# ASSESSMENT OF THE PLAN

## Chapter 7

How will we know when we  
have achieved our goals?



## CHAPTER 7: ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION PLAN

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Using the Moving from Vision to Action planning guide, the QEP Planning Committee developed an evaluation plan that would answer the question, “How will we know when we have achieved our goals?” Step Eight of the planning process instructs the committee to answer the following questions for each of the goals that were developed in Step Four with Action Plans from Step Seven.

1. When will we achieve the goal?
2. How will we know when we have achieved it?
3. Are there intermediate benchmarks we can shoot for?
4. How will we measure whether we have achieved the goal?
5. Who will carry out the measurement?
6. Who on the team will carry out which parts of the evaluation?

At the end of each academic year, the QEP Implementation Team will conduct a formative and qualitative evaluation of the overall QEP progress to date in line with SWTJC’s strategic plan and institutional effectiveness cycle. The results will be included in an annual QEP progress report that will be compiled by the QEP Director and submitted to the President’s Cabinet (See Organization Chart in Appendix C), who will then share the information with the SWTJC college community and other appropriate stakeholders. The formative and qualitative evaluation will include a review of the overall administration of the QEP and an overview of all projects, activities, and budget. Adjustments to the plan will be made based on the results of the annual evaluations as part of the normal “institutional effectiveness” activities that occur annually.

### **The Three *RISE to the Top* Goals**

1. Improve student engagement through high-impact practices
2. Improve critical thinking through high-impact educational practices
3. Enhance student learning through professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, focusing on high-impact practices.

These major goals will achieve four outcomes:

1. Faculty and staff will demonstrate inclusion of high-impact practices in the learning environment.
2. Students will actively engage in their course work.
3. Students will demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking.
4. Faculty and staff will reflect on ways to engage students through their roles at Southwest Texas Junior College.



## Evaluation Plan Worksheets (Step 8 of Moving from Vision to Action)

The assessment and evaluation plan for these goals and outcomes are shown in Tables 7.1-7.7 and accompanying definitions and narrative.

### Worksheet and Definitions of Indicators: Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)

Table 7-1. *Rise to the Top* Goal One: Evaluation Plan Worksheet with Success Indicators for QEP Goals (Step 8)

Indicators of Success	Baseline Year 2015-2016	Benchmarks				Measurement Tool	Who
		Year 2016-2017	Year 2017-2018	Year 2018-2019	Year 2019-2020		
<b>Student Engagement CCSSE Benchmarks 1-5</b>							
<b>1. Active and Collaborative Learning</b>	52.4 %	n/a	57%	n/a	61.0%	CCSSE	Carol Larue and Rene Zimmermann
<b>2. Student Effort</b>	54.2%	n/a	56.5%	n/a	59.0%	CCSSE	Carol Larue and Rene Zimmermann
<b>3. Academic Challenge</b>	49.2%	n/a	54%	n/a	58.0%	CCSSE	Carol Larue and Rene Zimmermann
<b>4. Student-Faculty Interactions</b>	50%	n/a	54.5%	n/a	60.0%	CCSSE	Carol Larue and Rene Zimmermann
<b>5. Support for Learners</b>	57.7%	n/a	59.2%	n/a	61.0%	CCSSE	Carol Larue and Rene Zimmermann

The results from the assessments in Table 7.1 will be used by the QEP Director and Implementation Team to measure the progress (summative) on Goal #1 - *Improve student engagement through high-impact practices*. These are benchmark measures from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) that the college administers each year. Information from the CCSSE results on individual items that make up the key benchmark results will be used by faculty and staff to develop annual action plans that target specific weaknesses or strengths. In essence, these individual items will be used as “formative assessments” that will help inform faculty and staff about possible classroom or college procedures that will address the specific items. For instance the student-faculty interactions contained an item that indicated students did not feel like they were getting timely feedback on

tests and assignments. The training received by faculty and staff will stress the importance of this kind of student-faculty interaction.

#### DEFINITIONS - CCSSE.

#### **Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)**

CCSSE is a qualitative measure that provides information on student engagement, a key indicator of learning and, therefore, of the quality of community colleges. The survey asks questions that assess institutional practices and student behaviors that are correlated highly with student learning and student retention.

### **Worksheets and Definitions of Critical Thinking Success Indicators: ETS, LEAP rubrics, CREDO, and End-of-Course Student Learning Outcomes**

Table 7-2. *Rise to the Top* Goal 2: Evaluation Plan Worksheet with Success Indicators for QEP Goals (Step 8)

Indicators of Success Critical Thinking Indicators	Baseline Year 2015-2016	Benchmarks				Measurement Tool	Who
		Year 2016-2017	Year 2017-2018	Year 2018-2019	Year 2019-2020		
<b>1. ETS Biannual Results Proficiency</b> Level 2 Level 3	14.0% 1.0%	n/a n/a	25.0% 10.0%	n/a n/a	40.0% 20.0%	ETS Proficiency Profile	Carol Larue and Rene Zimmermann
<b>2. Critical Thinking Rubric Scores from Annual Assessment Summit</b>	1.58	1.7	2.0	2.5	3.0	LEAP Rubric	Carol Larue and Rene Zimmermann
<b>3. CREDO Information Literacy courseware</b>	25%	30%	35%	40%	50%	CREDO courseware Report Generator	QEP Information and Technology Specialist and April Cole, Librarian
<b>4. End-of Course Results for critical thinking in core curriculum classes</b>	N/A	5%+	5%+	5%+	5%+	To be developed as part of Unit Action Plans	Division Chairs and Faculty

The results from the assessments in Table 7.2 will be used by the QEP Director and the QEP Implementation Team to measure the progress on Goal #2 - Improve critical thinking through high-impact educational practices. The results of the ETS Proficiency Data from Table 7.2 is only collected every other year and is summative in nature. If annual administrations of the

instrument are considered important by the QEP Implementation Team, they will be given to students. The LEAP Rubric data is collected every year and may provide enough information to determine if students are learning critical thinking skills. The information from the CREDO program will be used as formative assessments to gauge student achievement of critical thinking skills. In addition, there are end of course evaluations in core curriculum classes that will be developed to accurately measure the progress of students in specific classes where critical thinking is a student learning outcome. As high-impact practices are implemented, the college will be able to collect useful data from each core curriculum course. For evaluation purposes the LEAP Rubric information combined with the ETS Proficiency Profile results should provide the best overall measure of students' abilities in the area of Critical Thinking. As the training and knowledge of the faculty and staff increase, it is expected that more ways to measure Critical Thinking will be discovered. As shown in the literature, there are many definitions of critical thinking and the college is currently using the one developed for the LEAP Rubric.

#### DEFINITIONS – ETS, LEAP CRITICAL THINKING RUBRIC, CREDO, and END-OF-COURSE SLOs

##### **ETS Proficiency Profile**

The ETS Proficiency Profile is a quantitative measure that provides data regarding student proficiency in four core skill areas, including critical thinking. Scores are summarized and reported, allowing SWTJC to measure and document program effectiveness, gauge student learning, and compare SWTJC student performance against their peers.

##### **Critical Thinking Rubric**

The Critical Thinking Rubric developed by AACU will be used by the SWTJC assessment committee to evaluate student artifacts produced by students enrolled in core curriculum courses. These results will be shared with the QEP Implementation Team and used to help measure the success of the project.

##### **CREDO Courseware**

The CREDO courseware is designed to develop critical thinking skills by leading students to become better consumers and producers of information. The courseware is aligned with the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) newly developed Framework for Information Literacy.

##### **End-of-Course Student Learning Outcomes**

Critical thinking is identified as a student learning outcome in the SWTJC Master Syllabi of all 43 core curriculum courses. Students are evaluated for mastery of this skill at the course level, as identified by the assessment plan within the syllabus. Division chairs and faculty members will be developing and reporting “discipline-specific” measures of critical thinking at the end of each semester.

## Worksheets and Definition of other Success Indicators

Table 7-3. *Rise to the Top* Goal Three: Evaluation Plan Worksheet with Success Indicators for QEP Goals (Step 8)

Indicators of Success	Baseline Year 2015- 2016	Benchmarks				Measurement Tool	Who
		Year 2016- 2017	Year 2017- 2018	Year 2018- 2019	Year 2019- 2020		
Number of Faculty and Staff who received HIP training	25	30	30	30	30	Record of training activities and reflection journals	Professional Development Officer, Dr. Amada Garcia
Number of <i>RISE to the Top</i> (HIP) Courses	2 courses (over 20 sections EDUC 1100 COLS 0300)	10	10	10	10	QEP Annual Report	QEP Director
Number of students attending EDUC 1100 or COLS 0300	400	500	600	750	1000	Data collected by query of college MIS	OIE, Rene Zimmerman and Carol Larue
Number of students in Service Learning Projects	100	200	300	400	500	Data collected each semester through report form to be developed	Faculty and Division Chairs and Student Success Center staff
Number of students in Collaborative Learning Activities	N/A	N/A	5%+	5%+	5%+	Data collected from report form to be developed	Faculty and Division Chairs and Student Success Center staff

The results from the assessments in Table 7.3 will be used by the QEP Director and the QEP Implementation Team to measure the progress on Goal #3 - Enhance student learning through professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, focusing on high-impact practices. The number of students participating in the high-impact practice will be monitored each year.

Table 7-4. Evaluation Plan Worksheet with Success Indicators for QEP Goals (Step 8)

Indicators of Success	Baseline Year 2015-2016	Benchmarks				Measurement Tool	Who
		Year 2016-2017	Year 2017-2018	Year 2018-2019	Year 2019-2020		
<b>SWTJC Student Achievement and Success Measures</b>							
<b>Graduation Rate</b>	25%	26.0%	27.0%	28.0%	30%	IPEDS	Carol Larue and Rene Zimmermann
<b>Transfer Rate</b>	15%	16.0%	17.0%	18.0%	20%	IPEDS	
<b>Retention rate for Fall to Fall</b>	47.0%	48%	49.0%	49.5%	50.0%	THECB & OIE Reports	
<b>Course Success rate</b>	77%	77.5%	78.5%	79.5%	80%	THECB & OIE Reports	
<b>Course Completion Rate</b>	92%	92.5%	93.5%	94.5%	95%	LBB	
<b>Licensing exam passing rate</b>	81%	82%	83%	84%	85%	LBB	
<b>Job Placement rates</b>	67%	68%	68.7%	69.5%	70%	TWC	

The following tables and accompanying definitions contain the historical data that will be used to compare the results of the QEP projected indicators of student success in Table 7.4. As shown in Tables 7.5-7.7, SWTJC has been collecting this type of student success data for some years. Since the QEP goal to increase student engagement (QEP Goal #1) is related to successful student success, the QEP Planning Committee believes that these would be relevant measures to track as part of the QEP evaluation plan.



Table 7-5. Student Success Indicators

<b>Graduation</b>		for cohort of IPEDS students	2007 to 2011	2008 to 2012	2009 to 2013	2010 to 2014	2011 to 2015	<b>Target for 2020</b>
	Graduation Rate *		<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Transfer</b>		for cohort of IPEDS students	2007 to 2011	2008 to 2012	2009 to 2013	2010 to 2014	2011 to 2015	<b>Target</b>
	Transfer Rate*		<b>15%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>20%</b>

## DEFINITIONS OF OTHER INDICATORS OF SUCCESS:

*\*Graduate Rate* - Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) definition - full-time first-time degree seeking students graduating in 150% of normal time to completion

*\*Transfer Rate* - IPEDs definition - full-time first-time degree seeking students transferred out within 150% of normal time to completion

Table 7-6. Student Success Indicators

<b>Retention</b>			<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Target for 2020</b>
	Fall to Spring Retention		<b>76%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>80%</b>
	Fall to Fall Retention Rate		<b>44%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>47%</b>		<b>50%</b>

**Definitions of Indicators of Success:**

*Fall to Spring Retention Rate* - percent of fall students still enrolled the following spring semester (excluding graduates).

*First Year Retention Rate* - percent of Fall FTIC students still enrolled at the end of the following Spring semester

*Fall to Fall Retention Rate* - percent of fall student enrolled the following fall semester (excluding graduates)

Table 7-7. Student Success Indicators

<b>Course Completion &amp; Success</b>		<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Target for 2020</b>
	Course Success Rate	<b>72%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>77%</b>		<b>80%</b>
	Course Completion Rate	<b>88%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>92%</b>		<b>95%</b>
<b>Other Successful Outcomes</b>		<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Target</b>
	Licensing/certification exam passing rate	<b>79%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>81%</b>		<b>85%</b>
	Job placement rates	<b>58%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>67%</b>		<b>70%</b>

**Definitions of Indicators of Success:**

*Course Success Rate* - percent of A-C grades awarded.

*Course Completion Rate* - Legislative Budget Board (LBB) definition: The number of contact hours for which students are enrolled on the last day of the fall semester divided by the number of contact hours for which students were enrolled on the official census day of the fall semester.

*Licensing/certification exam passing rate* - LBB definition/Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board data for number of students taking licensure exam divided by the number passed.

*Job placement rates* - Graduates found employed during the 4th quarter of 20XX in the Texas Workforce Commission UI wage records or in the Office of Personnel Management or Department of Defense databases.

**Closing Comments**

The *RISE to the Top* evaluation plan uses multiple methods and levels of assessment to gain an accurate perspective on progress toward the stated goals. As a quality enhancement plan, *RISE to the Top* will serve as a “best practices” model for SWTJC’s institutional effectiveness process. The results of the regular assessments and the yearly evaluation report will be used to improve the quality of the QEP activities in the following year.

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## **Appendix A: QEP Planning Committee**

### **QEP 2015 CO CHAIRS**

Dr. Mitchel Burchfield, Division Chair of Developmental Studies  
Randa Schell, Director of Student Engagement and Success

### **QEP 2015 SITE LEADERS**

**Uvalde** - Ana Lisa Conde (Student Success Coordinator), Pat Garcia (Allied Health and Human Services, Faculty)

**Del Rio** - Stephanie Cerna (Student Success Coordinator, Gabriella Rosales (Arts and Sciences, Faculty)

**Eagle Pass** - Claudia Valdez (Student Success Coordinator)

### **ACADEMIC AND TECHNICAL DIVISION REPRESENTATIVES**

#### **Allied Health and Human Services**

Joan Garcia (HHS-Eagle Pass)  
Denise Vanderlick (HHS-Uvalde)  
Roland Lira (Nursing-Del Rio)

#### **Arts and Sciences**

Abel Ortiz (Art – Uvalde)  
Muraya Gonzalez (Science-Uvalde)  
Oscar Gaytan (Math-Eagle Pass)  
Claudio Valenzuela (Math-Uvalde)  
Karen Quiroz (English-Uvalde)  
Valarie A. Ruiz (English-Eagle Pass)

#### **Business, Industrial and Technical Studies**

Juan Aviles (Applied Science-Uvalde)  
Albert Ybarra (Applied Science-Uvalde)  
Luis Perez (Applied Science-Eagle Pass)

#### **Social and Behavioral Sciences**

Xavier Haynes (History/Government- Uvalde)

### **Student Representatives**

Hannah Gonzalez (Uvalde)  
Chris Martinez (Uvalde -PTK)

### **STUDENT SERVICES STAFF**

#### **Library**

Karen Baen, Director of Library  
April Cole (Library-Uvalde)  
Sandy Colombo (Library-Del Rio)

#### **Student Engagement and Success**

Albert Alonzo (SSS Coordinator, Uvalde)  
David Conde (Testing Center)  
Diana A. Rodriguez (Writing Center, Eagle Pass)

#### **Registrar and Outreach**

Luis Fernandez, Registrar  
Rosie Lara (Registrar/Admissions-Uvalde)  
Rita Ortiz (Outreach-Medina Valley Center)  
Michelle Torres (Outreach-Uvalde)

## **Appendix B: SWTJC Strategic Plan**

### SWTJC Strategic Plan 2014-2019

#### **INSTITUTIONAL GOAL 1: IDENTIFY AND SERVE THE LEARNING NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY (LEARNING)**

S1-1 Increase the percentage of developmental education students who become college-ready and become college ready in a timely manner.

S1-2 Increase the number and FTE percentage of students achieving awards and transfers with 30+ semester hour credits.

S1-3 Increase the number of students transferring in STEM areas.

#### **INSTITUTIONAL GOAL 2: CULTIVATE EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING, INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY, STUDENT SERVICES, AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT (QUALITY)**

S2-1 Improve student services in advising and counseling, at-risk management, enrollment management, and registration.

S2-2 Increase the quality and support of students off campus (not attending on Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde campuses) in order to achieve parity with students on-campus (attending on Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde campuses) instruction and services.

S2-3 Make more effective use of the technology resources.

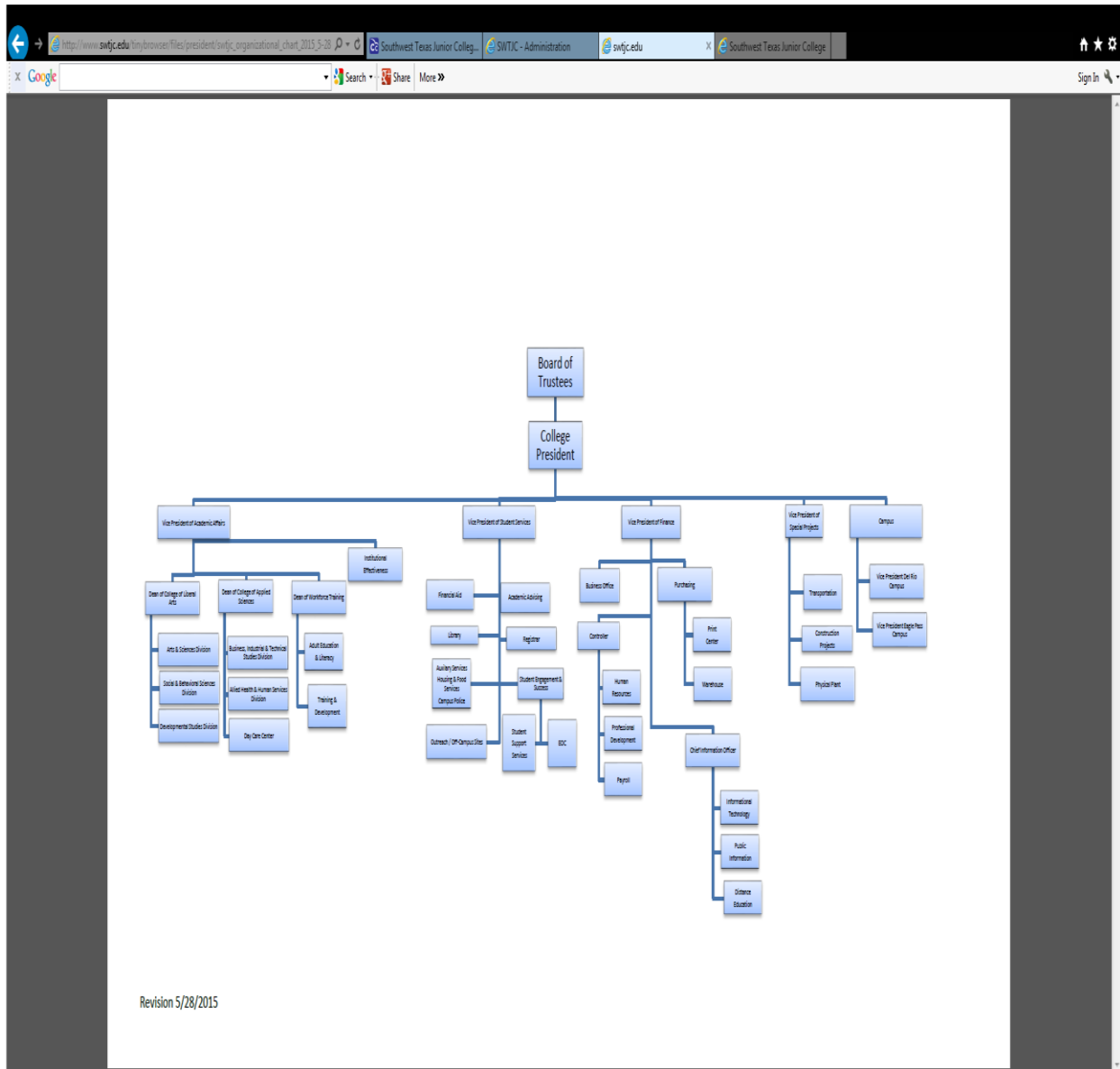
#### **INSTITUTIONAL GOAL 3: PROVIDE RELIABLE AND SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES AND FUNDING FOR THE COLLEGE (EFFICIENCY)**

S3-1 Establish partnerships that maximize our resources for mutual benefit.

S3-2 Develop a self-sustaining office that attracts local, state, and national resources to benefit the college.

S3-3 Improve operational efficiencies.

## Appendix C: SWTJC Organization Chart



## Appendix D: Vision to Action Planning Guide

The following excerpt is from the introduction of the 26 page planning guide. A complete copy can be found posted on the *RISE to the TOP* website:

### Moving from Vision to Action: A Planning Guide for Developing the Southwest Texas Junior College Quality Enhancement Plan

Adapted with permission from:

Moving from Vision to Action  
A Planning Guide for the  
Rural Community College Initiative  
MDC, Inc.  
Chapel Hill, NC

#### INTRODUCTION

*Moving from Vision to Action* is a step-by-step planning process for community and institutional change. The process has been used by groups as diverse as educators, boards of directors of community-based organizations, and volunteers involved in regional strategic planning efforts.

The process has eight steps. We have laid them out in a sequence that has worked for other groups. But the sequence is not sacred. You can, to some extent, change the order. You can skip steps, and you can (and probably will) come back and redo earlier steps.

The *Moving from Vision to Action* process is driven both by data that you will collect and by your vision of an ideal future for your program. It begins with data collection and analysis -- to define the current strengths and weaknesses of the program and the institution vis-à-vis economic development and access. You will use the data to describe the current situation and prioritize the most important challenges requiring attention.

After describing the current situation, you look to the future. First, you develop a vision that describes how your institution and program will look when the change process has been implemented. The vision becomes the image of an ideal future toward which the change process is directed. Next, the process "unpacks" the vision. You create measurable goals, specific targets to be attained over the next three to five years, in order for the vision to be realized.

After defining goals -- what you wish to achieve -- the process turns to questions of how, through strategy development. Developing a strategy requires analysis of institutional and political factors working for and against change, and research on model strategies from around the region and country. A stakeholder analysis ensures that all parties with a vested interest in the vision will be brought into the implementation process.

Finally, an action plan and an evaluation plan are developed to describe who will do what when, and to assess progress toward the goals and vision.

Note that these steps are laid out in this guide in a rational, linear fashion. But life is not rational or linear. The planning process should be seen as flexible: you should go back and forth between steps as needed. It should also be seen as cyclical. Ideally, planning will be institutionalized in your community so that you revisit your vision and goals after a few years and determine what additional strategies should be undertaken. Finally, some problems cannot or should not wait. When critical issues are identified and can be addressed fairly simply and quickly, there is no need to wait until the planning process is complete before addressing them. But make sure that you do not get off track in the planning process by initiating new efforts along the way.

## Appendix E: Sample Lessons

### English Composition I (ENG 1301): Achieving Together QEP Experience

**Goal:** To develop, implement, and assess a Collaboration-based Learning Process, whereby we use collaborative student projects, intrusive advising, and embedded support (High Impact Practices HIPs) to bring together students, faculty, and staff in a mutually educational learning experience.

**QEP Activities & Implementation Process:** Cohort instructors will modify the ENG 1301 curriculum to include a greater focus on the development and presentation (in essay form) of a career field research project. Course instructors will work together with Advisors, Service Centers and Library staff to support student learning throughout the research development processes. Students will be required to work with assigned advisors and the service centers during the career field interview, analysis, and essay writing development stages, to include a minimum of two advisor visits, and two writing center visits. Additionally, instructors will partner with library staff to develop and refine students' database navigation and usage skills via a database workshop session.

**Rationale:** The direction of our QEP emerged from data contributed by broad based input sources from throughout our organization. This intervention focus ties into the selected areas of increased student engagement and improved collaboration between faculty, staff, and students. These correlated focus areas were identified through a thorough analysis of our longitudinal completion rates for first year students, QEP workshops where faculty and staff documented their perceptions about areas in need of quality enhancement, and several years of CCSSE data.

**Assessment:** At the classroom level, student achievement will be measured and tracked for the five year span of the QEP implementation, with expectations of incremental growth occurring as the project becomes a more central component of the ENG 1301 classroom. Rubric scores will serve as the primary means of local assessment. It is expected that 70% of the initial cohort will achieve a score of 70% or better, based on the same assignment rubric.

Additionally, the intervention ENG 1301 groups will be measured against non-intervention ENG 1301 students based on:

- Communication SLOs in their other general education courses (i.e. Govt 2305/2306)
- Fall to Spring retention rates
- Year one to year two retention rates.

Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
70% of students in cohort sections achieve a score of 70% or greater	72% of students in cohort sections achieve a score of 70% or greater	75% of students in cohort sections achieve a score of 70% or greater	77% of students in cohort sections achieve a score of 70% or greater	80% of students in cohort sections achieve a score of 70% or greater



## College Success Skills (COLS 0300): Career Field Research Project- Fall 2014

**Assignment:** Will count as Your Test 4 Grade

**Portfolio:** Additionally will count as 20% of your overall portfolio grade

### **RATIONALE**

*Your COLS research project is an assignment designed for you to get to know a little more about the major field you have chosen or are most interested in (I understand that some of you are very unsure about majors still). If you are still very unsure then this assignment should be looked at as an opportunity to investigate one of the career fields that you have ever wondered about.*

### **Directions & Timeline**

**Before Thursday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> (25pts):** Email your instructor (hdlopez@swtjc.edu) your career field of interest. Include in the email, the name of a professional currently working in that career field that you are planning to interview.

- If you are having trouble thinking of a major or finding a person, be sure to communicate with your instructor as early as possible.
- This means that you should communicate any problems well before the October 31<sup>st</sup> deadline.

**On or Before Sunday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> (25pts):** Email instructor your interview protocol. See attached sample interview protocol.

- While you are expected to base your own interview protocol on the sample protocol attached, your own voice and interests should be reflected
- In other words: \*\*\*Do not simply copy the information from the attached sample.\*\*\*

**Between November 2<sup>nd</sup> and November 18<sup>th</sup>:**

1. Conduct and record your interview. Be sure that you are considerate 1<sup>st</sup> of the person you are interviewing, especially when scheduling time and place. Ask what works best for them? Not meet me at \_\_\_\_\_. To record the interview you can use cell phone or any recorder you have access to.
2. Review your recorded interview, and begin to setup your power point presentation summarizing the interview.
  - a. Power point presentation should include at least 1 title slide, 3 slides about concepts that you found interesting. 1-2 slides summarizing the interview. 1-2 slides describing what you learned about the major and how your own ambitions fit or don't fit within the scope of the profession.

**November 20<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, and 27<sup>th</sup> (50pts) :** 5 minute presentations to the class.

COLS 0300- Interview Protocol Instructions and examples

Rationale/Directions

***Your interview protocol must include at least at total of 5 questions.***

The interview protocol creation process is your preparation as the interviewer. In your preparation you must remember the following points:

- Good questions convey/show your interviewee that you regard/think about them in a positive way.
- Good questions raise the possibilities for your interviewee to tell a story, to provide details and clarity.
- Good questions are phrased in conversational talk, not reporter talk
- Good questions give the interviewee some freedom to extend their ideas and answers

### **Sample Interview Protocol:**

Introduce the project to the interviewee. I.E., I thank you for your time in meeting with me. As I told you when I asked you for your time, I am working on an assignment for a college course. The assignment is supposed to help me to better understand a career field I am interested in. Let's begin.

1. What helped you to decide to enter this career field?
2. Can you explain your feelings, when you first began your work in this career field?
3. What have been the most exciting or memorable work experiences that you have had in your career?
4. In what ways has your career changed you as a person?
5. Are there any things you have not done yet in your career that you look forward to doing?

—Again I would like to thank you for your time, and tell you that I really appreciate you visiting with me.

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## Appendix G: Vision Statement Discussion from QEP Committee “Message Board”

### Discussion on QEP Planning Committee Message Board about Vision Statement

Posted on Tuesday, February 17, 2015

Mitchel Burchfield

The vision to action process asks that we devise a "vision" statement that describes what the College would look like after we implement the QEP plan. I think the best time frame to consider is 5 years in the future. So let's say that it is 2020.

By the way this is a serendipitous time frame....we can use the 20 20 vision concept.

Anyway, try to describe what it would be like at SWTJC in 2020.

We can incorporate the slogans, but we really do not have to do so at this moment.

Here is my initial draft of a vision statement to get things started:

*In the year 2020--SWTJC offers a variety of learning experiences for its students that engage the student through interactions with several facets of the college (faculty, library staff, student success staff, counseling, etc). These high impact practices develop valuable skills for students which are reflected in higher assessment scores. The level of reading, critical thinking, writing, and mathematics attained by students leads to higher "successful" completion rates, transfer rates, graduation rates and intrinsic motivation of students to pursue life-long learning.*

*Every faculty member of the college (Uvalde, Del Rio, Eagle Pass, etc.) has access to well-developed lessons and activities that require the student to interact with a variety of institutional resources (faculty, library staff, student success staff, counseling, etc.) These efforts are coordinated through a dedicated staff/faculty team that ensures the students have a series of valuable learning opportunities at SWTJC.*

**Reply to this message with your "vision statement" proposal. We will look at all of them and consolidate the best ideas into a final vision statement for the QEP.**

Re: possible vision statements

Patricia Garcia

Tue 02/17/2015 05:40 PM 214 words

Vision 2020

Southwest Texas Junior College envisions a future in which the student excels in reading, writing, math and critical thinking. A future in which the public views this institution as intellectually challenging, economically advantageous and a superior institution of higher education.

The goal for the student at SWTJC

- 1) Complete their degree, diploma or certificate.
- 2) Encourage and improve transfer rates to college and universities.
- 3) Improve completion rates for Bachelor's Degrees or Master's Degrees in students who start at this institution.
- 4) Be actively involved in the community.

The goal for the faculty at SWTJC

- 1) Provide interesting and challenging course.
- 2) Provide tutoring in subject areas where the students is struggling.
- 3) Provide an active social, cultural, recreational and leadership activities where the students can participate and be able to socialize with students from different backgrounds.
- 4) Encourage students to explore different subjects of interest which can ultimately lead to a rewarding career.
- 5) Provide counseling services to assist the students with their personal, health problems or concerns and help the students complete college successfully.

Reply Quote Mark New Mark Read E-mail Show Hide Delete

Re: possible vision statements

Mitchel Burchfield, Division Chair of Developmental Studies

Sat 02/21/2015 09:47 PM 2 words

Great work.

Reply Quote Mark New Mark Read E-mail Retract Show Hide Edit Delete

Re: possible vision statements

Patricia Garcia

Tue 02/17/2015 05:45 PM 8 words

SWTJC 20/20: A Clear Vision for your future.

Reply Quote Mark New Mark Read E-mail Show Hide Delete

Re: possible vision statements

Mitchel Burchfield, Division Chair of Developmental Studies

Sat 02/21/2015 09:48 PM 11 words

Excellent slogan. I wonder if we would even need an acronym?

Reply Quote Mark New Mark Read E-mail Retract Show Hide Edit Delete

Re: possible vision statements

Randa Schell

Mon 02/23/2015 05:01 PM 323 words

I REALLY like the SWTJC 20/20: A clear vision for your future!! I took a little of Dr. Burchfield's vision statement, a little of Patricia's vision statement, and added a little twist of my own for the following shot at a vision statement:

SWTJC 20/20 provides a student success-oriented, campus culture ripe with opportunities for meaningful collaboration and engagement between and among students, faculty, and staff through the development and implementation of customized, systematic high impact practices. These high impact practices assist in cultivation of student success outcomes including grades, graduation, transfer, employment, and lifelong learning (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006).

A comprehensive system of well-developed lessons and activities is utilized by faculty and staff in order to systematically engage students with institutional resources, build relationships and partnerships that support learning, and deliver activities and experiences that provide clear pathways to success in college (Kuh et al., 2006).

Just a side note – I believe we should take care in not “re-inventing the wheel” with some of these high impact practices. For example, the Student Success Centers and Writing Centers provide and have provided tutoring for several years now. In my opinion, the high impact practice should be more focused on a stronger collaboration between faculty and staff to cultivate student success through tutoring. Does that make sense? Advising and orientation are additional examples, we currently provide advising and orientation, but the research shows that both programs are most effective when they are “integrated into academic support services,” when they “address questions of coherence and sequencing of the educational program, and when they encourage students to become involved with peers in campus events...organizations...and educational activities known to promote student learning and development “ (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). Long story short, it seems that many of our existing programs need tightening up, but, in my mind, we should make sure that we utilize what already exists and build it.

Reply Quote Mark New Mark Read E-mail Show Hide Delete

Re: possible vision statements

Claudio Valenzuela - Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Business Administration  
Wed 02/25/2015 11:53 AM 36 words

I like the SWTJC 20/20: A clear vision for our future as well. And am in agreement that our institution is already involved in cultivating student success initiatives/outcomes through engagement. So let's not re-invent the wheel.

[Reply](#) [Quote](#) [Mark New](#) [Mark Read](#) [E-mail](#) [Show](#) [Hide](#) [Delete](#)

#### Vision statement

Karen Baen  
Mon 03/02/2015 09:30 AM 103 words

I'm late to the table here but wanted to comment!

I like the 20/20 idea. I think it is catchy and might be easy to remember.

I also agree with Randa that a stronger collaboration between faculty and staff is very important. Tutoring is a critical piece. One thing we have seen in our library statistics is the lack of library use in core classes. Library standards speak directly to the core requirements and life long learning, as Randa's quote mentioned. It is my opinion that faculty are skipping the library and the ways it can support student success along with the SSC.



**Appendix H: Critical Thinking Rubric (LEAP)**

	<b>Demonstrates Excellence</b> 4	<b>Exceeds Standard</b> 3	<b>Clearly Meets Standard</b> 2	<b>Meets Minimum Standard</b> 1
<b>Explanation of issues</b>	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.
<b>Evidence</b> <i>Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion</i>	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.
<b>Influence of context and assumptions</b>	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.
<b>Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)</b>	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) acknowledges different sides of an issue.	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.
<b>Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)</b>	Conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.

## **Appendix I: SWTJC Curriculum Committee Agenda and Minutes for EDUC 1100**

### **AGENDA (REVISED 3/25/15)**

#### **Curriculum Committee**

**March 26, 2015 11:00AM – 12:25PM. ESPN 15 (UV), RM A105 (DR), C113 (EP)**

**Chair:** Mark Underwood, Vice President of Academic Affairs

Welcome remarks

Introduction

#### **ITEM # 1**

**ACTION**

##### **Arts and Sciences**

HUMA 1302 as part of SWTJC Core Curriculum

[Robert Ayala](#)

#### **Item #2**

**ACTION**

##### **Social and Behavioral Sciences**

PHED 1100, 1110, 2100, 2110 – Additional Activity - Golf

[Abel Ortiz](#)

#### **Item #3**

**ACTION**

##### **Dean of Liberal Arts**

Lab Instructor Job Description

[Cheryl Sanchez](#)

#### **Item #4**

**ACTION**

##### **Distance Education Committee**

Online Course Rubric

[April Ruhmann](#)

#### **Item #5**

**ACTION**

##### **VP of Academic Affairs**

Rule for CLEP Exams

[Mark Underwood](#)

#### **Item #6**

**ACTION**

##### **Dean of Liberal Arts**

**EDUC 1100 – to replace ORIE 0100**

[Cheryl Sanchez](#)

#### **ITEM # 7**

**DISCUSSION**

**WRAP-UP**

**Discussion/Wrap-Up**

**Next Meeting – April 16, 2015**

**Syllabus for new course, EDUC 1100, that will replace the current Orientation 0100 class for all new students. The course will be offered in the fall 2015 semester.**

**After discussion, the motion was approved by the committee.**



Our Vision: Create and nurture a learning-centered environment in which students, faculty, staff, and the community at-large can achieve their highest potential.

Southwest Texas Junior College  
2401 Garner Field Road  
Uvalde, Texas 78801

SWTJC Instructor  
Anderson Office #8  
830.591.7325

College Year: 201-2016  
Section: Fall 2015

## EDUC 1100

### Learning Framework

#### Course Description

A study of the: research and theory in the psychology of learning, cognition, and motivation; factors that impact learning, and application of learning strategies. Theoretical models of strategic learning, cognition, and motivation serve as the conceptual basis for the introduction of college-level student academic strategies. Students use assessment instruments (e.g., learning inventories) to help them identify their own strengths and weaknesses as strategic learners. Students are ultimately expected to integrate and apply the learning skills discussed across their own academic programs and become effective and efficient learners. Students developing these skills should be able to continually draw from the theoretical models they have learned. (Cross-listed as PSYC 1300)

(**NOTE:** While traditional study skills courses include some of the same learning strategies – e.g., note-taking, reading, test preparation etc. – as learning framework courses, the focus of study skills courses is solely or primarily on skill acquisition. Study skills courses, which are not under-girded by scholarly models of the learning process, are not considered college-level, and, therefore, are distinguishable from Learning Framework courses.)

#### Textbook and Readings

*Academic Transformations: The Road to College Success.*(2011). De Sellers, Carol Dochen, Russ Hodges, Pearson-Prentice Hall, Second Edition, 0-13-700756-1 (Adopted 1/1/2010 ISBN: 9780137007561)

#### Course Outcomes

The following course outcomes will be addressed in this course:

1. Students use assessment instruments (e.g., learning inventories) to help them identify their own strengths and weaknesses as strategic learners.
2. Learn how to learn.
3. Create a positive and motivated state of mind.
4. Develop character, integrity, and civility.
5. Develop emotional maturity and self-control.
6. Learn how to manage time and money.
7. Learn academic and basic study skills.
8. Learn how to write and speak effectively.

9. Respect and appreciate diversity in others.
10. Increase health and energy and reduce stress.
11. Develop the ability to work in cooperative teams.
12. Take responsibility for school and job success.
13. Create positive habits and commitment.
14. Develop a Career Development Portfolio.

## **Lecture Topics**

The following general lecture topics will be covered in this class:

Week

- 1–**The Essentials (Pre-Chapter Introduction)**
- 2–**The Road to Autonomous Learning (Chapter 1)**
- 3–**Thinking and Intellectual Performance (Chapter 2)**
- 4–**Learning in Class (Chapter 3)**
- 5–**Learning Outside of Class (Chapter 4)**
- 6–**Academic Learning and Neural Development (Chapter 5)**
- 7–**Preparing for Performance (Chapter 6)**
- 8–**Establishing Direction in Your Life (Chapter 7)**
- 9–**Self-Regulation, Will and Motivation (Chapter 8)**
- 10–**Strengthening Academic Self-Regulation (Chapter 9)**
- 11–**Making Behaviors Work for You (Chapter 10)**
- 13–**Patterns in Human Development (Chapter 11)**
- 14–**Exploring the Diversity of Individuality (Chapter 12)**
- 15–**Appropriate Stress Reduction Techniques (Chapter 13)**
- 16–**Overcoming Specific Academic Anxieties (Appendix)**

**Appendix J: Uvalde Leader News Article**



**Appendix K: *RISE to the Top* Acronym Survey and Email**

**From:** Randa Faseler Schell

**To:**

"swtjccabinet@swtjc.edu"

**Subject:** Quality

Enhancement Plan

Acronym

**Date:** Thursday,

February 26, 2015

1:43:00 PM

**Attachments:** QEP -

Acronyms.pdf

---

Good Afternoon –

For the next step in the SWTJC Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) process, we are seeking input from all SWTJC faculty, staff, and administrators regarding the QEP acronym. The acronym is used as a slogan that embodies the vision and mission of our plan to enhance student engagement by providing opportunities for meaningful collaboration between and among students, faculty, and staff with the goal of increased successful completions.

The QEP acronym serves as the cornerstone or theme for the plan. For example, Victoria College used the acronym SEAL – Students Engaged in Active Learning and a Navy SEAL theme. The SWTJC QEP Committee has brainstormed and discussed possible acronyms over the last few weeks.

Now we need your help!

Please review the acronyms in the attached document and click on the following link to vote for your choice.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1bVfVIdy5uohx4A7zt1U5m1VBYem-1fOM5ilJ5HunuUc/viewform?](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1bVfVIdy5uohx4A7zt1U5m1VBYem-1fOM5ilJ5HunuUc/viewform?usp=send_form)

[usp=send\\_form](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1bVfVIdy5uohx4A7zt1U5m1VBYem-1fOM5ilJ5HunuUc/viewform?usp=send_form)

Thank you for your time,

*Randa Faseler Schell*

Director, Student Engagement & Success

QEP Co-Chair

Southwest Texas Junior College

# SWTJC Quality Enhancement Plan

## Acronym Survey

\* Required

Please mark ONE acronym choice below. \*

- ☐ LEAP
- ☐ SCORE
- ☐ JUMPS
- ☐ RISE
- ☐ RODEO
- ☐ HERO
- ☐ SWTJC

<b>1. LEAP</b> Learning Engagement Action Plan	<b>4. RISE</b> Resourceful Interactive Student Engagement	<b>7. SWTJC</b> Supporting Success Skills With The Joint Community
<b>2. SCORE</b> Successful Completions (through) Opportunities Resources (and) Engagement	<b>5. RODEO</b> Reaching Out (and) Delivering Engagement Opportunities	
<b>3. JUMPS</b> Join Up (to) Motivate (and) Provide Success	<b>6. HERO</b> Highly Engaged Resource Opportunities	

## Appendix L: Logo Contest Flyer

ATTENTION STUDENTS:

# HELP us design the QEP Logo!



Your  
logo  
here!

## What is QEP?

- The **Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)** is a component of the reaffirmation process for accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools—Commission on Colleges. It is intended to enhance the quality of education in the region and focus attention on student learning.
- SWTJC's QEP is designed to provide students a clear vision and pathway for successful completion in college.
- The QEP Acronym is **RISE (Resources + Interactions = Student Engagement)**.

## How do I enter the contest?

- Create a logo that represents the QEP Acronym: RISE (Resources + Interactions = Student Engagement).
- Contest deadline is Friday, April 10.
- Submit your logo as a JPG or PDF by **12:00 noon on Friday, April 10** to [rschell@swtjc.edu](mailto:rschell@swtjc.edu).

## What do I get in return?

- You will receive a **SWTJC goody bag** just for entering the contest!
- The winner will receive a **KINDLE FIRE** and college-wide recognition!



This could be yours!



kindle fire

Learn more about the QEP and the Logo contest.

## Appendix M: Logos submitted

RISE 1



RISE 2



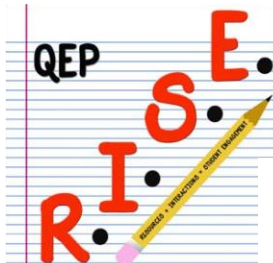
RISE 3



RISE 4



RISE 5



RISE 7



RISE 8



RISE 9



RISE 10



RISE 12



RISE 13



RISE 14



Appendix N: RISE to the Top Flyer for VP Breakfast

# RISE *to the* TOP



## SWTJC

### QEP: Quality Enhancement Plan

The purpose of the SWTJC QEP is to improve the quality of instruction by infusing high-impact educational practices throughout the college curriculum. High impact practices lead to greater student engagement which leads to higher student success rates.

#### RISE:

Improving critical thinking  
and student success through  
high-impact practices.



**Resources + Interactions = Student Engagement**



## Appendix O: QEP Song

### **QEP Song (Tune: *She'll be Comin' 'Round the Mountain When She Comes*) Performed at Annual Vice Presidents Breakfast by members of the faculty.**

Oh the QEP's acomin' in the fall. Yee Haw!  
 Oh the QEP's acomin' in the fall. Yee Haw!  
 Oh the QEP's acomin',  
 The QEP's acomin',  
 Oh the QEP's acomin' in the fall. Yee Haw!

Oh let's get on board and RISE up, when it comes. All aboard!  
 Oh let's get on board and RISE up, when it comes. All aboard!  
 Oh let's get on board and RISE up,  
 Let's get on board and RISE up,  
 Oh let's get on board and RISE up, when it comes.  
 ... All aboard! Yee Haw!

Oh, let's engage with our students, when it comes. Go Team!  
 Let's engage with our students, when it comes. Go Team!  
 Let's engage with our students,  
 Engage with our students,  
 Let's engage with our students, when it comes.  
 ... Go Team! All aboard! Yee Haw!

Oh, Critical Thinking is our focus, when it comes. Think deep!  
 Critical Thinking is our focus, when it comes. Think deep!  
 Critical Thinking is our focus,  
 Deep Thinking is our focus,  
 Critical Thinking is our focus, when it comes.  
 ... Think deep! Go Team! All aboard! Yee Haw!

Oh, it's our goal to be successful, when it comes. RISE UP!  
 It's our goal to be successful, when it comes. RISE UP!  
 It's our goal to be successful,  
 Our goal to be successful,  
 It's our goal to be successful, when it comes  
 ... RISE UP! Think deep! Go Team! All aboard! Yee Haw!

Appendix P: *RISE to the Top* Website

The address for the *RISE to the Top* Website is: <http://inet4.swtjc.net/qep/>

SWTJC  
A TOP 10 COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THE U.S.  
Southwest Texas Junior College

## Quality Enhancement Plan

**MENU**

- Vision Statement
- High Impact Practices
- SACS Resources
- QEP Flyer
- More Information
- F.A.Q.
- Advisory Committee

**Contacts**

Dr. Mitchell T. Burchfield  
Randa F. Schell

### Vision Statement

RISE to the Top provides a student success-oriented, campus culture ripe with opportunities for meaningful collaboration and engagement between and among students, faculty, and staff through the development and implementation of customized, systematic high impact practices. These high impact practices assist in cultivation of student success outcomes including grades, graduation, transfer, employment, and lifelong learning (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006).

A comprehensive system of well-developed lessons and activities is utilized by faculty and staff in order to systematically engage students with institutional resources, build relationships and partnerships that support learning, and deliver activities and experiences that provide clear pathways to success in college (Kuh et al., 2006).

### Goals

- Improve critical thinking through high-impact educational practices.
- Improve student engagement through high-impact practices.
- Enhance student learning through professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, focusing on high-impact practices.

These major goals will achieve four outcomes:

- Faculty and staff will demonstrate inclusion of high-impact practices in the learning environment.
- Students will actively engage in their course work.
- Students will demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking.
- Faculty and staff will reflect on ways to engage students through their roles at Southwest Texas Junior College.

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