

Overview of the Quality Initiative Project

1. Provide a one-page executive summary that describes the Quality Initiative, summarizes what was accomplished, and explains any changes made to the initiative over the time period.

Planning began in 2019 for Southeastern's QIP, entitled *Southeastern Oklahoma State University, a Student Ready Institution*, with the proposal submitted in August 2021; it received HLC approval in October 2021. This project refines the work of the institution to address and identify barriers to retention and completion and to enhance initiatives related to student advising, quality of online instruction, student engagement, and immersive/experiential learning. This ongoing effort will not be completed during the QIP period but is intentionally designed for continuation. The initial phase of our proposed project focused on two aspects of becoming a student ready university: 1) Quality of Online Instruction (Assessment of Existing Courses and Training in Quality Matters Teaching Online Certificate) and 2) Academic and Student Advising. Over the past 18 months, we have accomplished the following:

1) Quality of Online Instruction

a. Assessment of Existing Courses

- In Fall 2022, four instructional designers conducted one-hour reviews of 131 online courses, working with 131 volunteer faculty members.
- Online course reviews indicated that most courses were in good condition.
- Faculty were coached in specific areas that would benefit their courses, with the two most common areas addressed being clarity of stated objectives and grade center settings.
- Surveys conducted by the Center for Instructional Development and Technology (CIDT) staff following the course reviews reported that 92.2% of participants made changes to their courses based on the review and coaching they were given.
- The definition of *regular and substantive interaction* was reviewed with each participating faculty member.

b. Training in Quality Matters (QM) Teaching Online Certificate (TOC)

- From May 2022-Nov. 2022, a cohort of 17 faculty from 11 disciplines were recruited to participate in seven monthly Quality Matters Teaching Online workshops, led by the SE Director of Assessment-- a certified QM TOC facilitator. The time commitment for participants ranged from 10-15 hours per workshop.
- Cohort participants were surveyed after completion of the workshop series; results indicated that faculty were applying the information learned to make improvements to their courses. Furthermore, faculty shared the information with peers.
- 100% of the faculty participants successfully completed this pilot cohort and received the QM TOC.
- A second cohort of training has been postponed until Fall 2023 because of our LMS transition from Blackboard to Canvas during Spring and Summer 2023.

2) Academic and Student Advising

- In June 2022, an Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs (AVPAA) was hired to provide leadership to the following areas: Academic Advising and Outreach Center (AAOC), Native American Institute (NAI), Online and Distance Advising Center (ODAC), and Learning (Academic Support and Remediation) Center (LC). In Fall 2022, the AVPAA began reviewing Southeastern's academic and student advising model, as well as working with the Civitas Learning team to design and implement our predictive analytics capabilities to enhance academic advising and retention efforts.
- In Summer-Fall 2022, the AVPAA began developing a concierge model of academic and student advising.
- In Spring 2023, the AVPAA instituted an Academic Advising Council to include: the AVPAA--Undergraduate Studies, Dean of the Graduate College, AVP for Enrollment Management, AVP of Business Affairs, Directors of Financial Aid, AAOC, ODAC, Scholarships, and academic Department Chairs. The purpose of this committee is to assess and evaluate Southeastern's academic and student advising processes and procedures.

- Civitas Learning implementation is scheduled for completion in Summer 2023, and University Advisor and Faculty Advisor training will immediately follow.

Scope and Impact of the Initiative

2. Explain in more detail what was accomplished in the Quality Initiative in relation to its purposes and goals. (If applicable, explain the initiative's hypotheses and findings).

1) Quality of Online Instruction

a. Assessment of Existing Courses

Goal: Assess and address the state of online courses quickly after returning from Covid-induced remote learning.

Southeastern's rapid growth in online instruction raised the concern of ensuring that issues resulting from Covid-related emergency remote instruction did not have a lasting negative impact on academic quality and that Southeastern's faculty had the necessary resources and support to deliver distance instruction at the highest standard.

The Center for Instructional Development and Technology (CIDT) staff implemented a *Post-Covid Course Review Plan*. CIDT staff foster an atmosphere of continuous learning and innovation with respect to best strategies for use in online learning. Staff members are highly qualified based upon training and skills for learning management systems and support software through vendor conferences and online learning consortiums where best practices and innovation in course design are consistently reviewed. Combined with their proficiency and skill in a wide variety of areas such as media production software, virtual reality software, and utilization tools, staff members are trained and skilled to recognize best practices and offer support to those who are seeking continuous improvement. At Southeastern, we are fortunate to have individuals who hold state recognition for their participation in professional development and commitment to excellence in online learning technologies. Two rounds of reviews were conducted in Fall 2022, with 131 courses evaluated.

Round 1: 68 faculty, Aug. 30-Sept. 30

Round 2: 63 faculty, Nov. 2-Dec. 10

Each faculty member was invited to choose either a synchronous or asynchronous review experience. In an asynchronous review, an instructional designer would review the course and send feedback via email. In a synchronous review, the faculty member would meet with the instructional designer via Zoom and look at the course together to review the eight QM essential standards and discuss any areas that needed addressed. A survey distributed post-assessment indicated that 68.6% chose asynchronous reviews and 21.6% chose synchronous reviews. The remaining 9.8% chose guided course development as they were faculty who were either new or preparing a new course, and they had the option of personally meeting weekly with the instructional designer to discuss course design and receive training to ensure the course met the eight QM essential standards.

The course review plan enabled instructional designers to quickly ascertain the state of each course and identify needs. These reviews were also used to provide personalized training on the eight core QM standards and review the definition of regular and substantive interaction with each participating faculty member.

This approach was well received by the faculty. Each instructor received tips for things to improve in the course, but overall, the instructional designers were pleased with the state of courses and were confident in the quality of online course offerings being provided by Southeastern's faculty, of whom 92.2% said they made changes to course(s) based on the review feedback.

b. Training in Quality Matters (QM) Teaching Online Certificate (TOC)

Goals: 1. Develop a stronger culture of continuous improvement of online instruction.

2. Develop leaders and mentors on campus to champion the quality of online teaching.

The Director of Assessment sent an invitation to all faculty to participate in the pilot program. Twenty (20) participants, representing a diverse pool of faculty from eleven disciplines, were invited and asked to review the responsibilities and duties associated with this pilot. Seventeen (17) chose to dedicate their time to participate in this pilot. The Director of Assessment (a certified QM TOC facilitator) facilitated seven (7) workshops, which began in May and continued monthly through November (see schedule attached). One hundred percent (100%) of the participants completed the pilot and received the Teaching Online Certificate (TOC).

In December 2022, a reflection survey was distributed to the 17 participants regarding their workshop experience and the skills and knowledge obtained through the completion of the TOC. Results indicated that the participants were using the information to make course improvements and were sharing the information with other faculty members.

In January 2023, a schedule was established for the presentations by the newly certified Teaching Online faculty of the six online instructional skill sets (OISS) covered in the various workshops. Because of the onboarding of the Canvas LMS from Blackboard, we determined that these seminars might overwhelm the faculty and attendance would suffer. It was suggested that the seminars take place beginning in the Fall of 2023. The workshops will be presented virtually and in-person with each being recorded and distributed to the entire faculty. A 'badge' will be given to each faculty who attends either the in-person or virtual session or views the recording of the presentations. At the completion of the presentations, a survey will be distributed to the faculty asking for their perception of the effectiveness of the presentations and how they might use the information gained from the presentations.

2) Academic and Student Advising

Goal: Collaborative development and implementation of a concierge model of academic and student advising that focuses on a personalized, student-centered approach to advising by incorporating elements of developmental, prescriptive, and intrusive advising. This process will be led by the AVPAA, under the direction of the VPAA, and including the AVPAA--Undergraduate Studies, Dean of Graduate Studies, and faculty.

In Fall 2021, the VPAA, Dean of the Graduate College, Executive Director of the Student Success Center, Director of the Academic Advising and Learning Center, and Director of the Online and Distance Advising Center met with the President to begin developing a concierge model of academic and student advising.

During the 2021-2022 academic year, a combination of factors delayed an intended student survey. These factors included an increase in student advising and enrollment, the notification that the institution was transitioning its LMS from Blackboard to Canvas, and, in March 2022, Southeastern purchased and signed a contract for a subscription of the Civitas Learning student success software. Additionally, the Executive Director of the Student Success Center accepted a position outside of the institution in Summer 2022.

In June of 2022, Southeastern hired an AVPAA to manage the Student Success Center which consists of staff from the AAOC, NAI, ODAC, and LC. The Student Success Center is overseen by the AVPAA and operates using a matrix-style organizational structure, allowing cross-trained staff to meet the increased advising and holistic support needs of each department without having to hire additional staff. This leadership position has been tasked with overseeing the adaptation of the concierge model of academic and student advising.

In July 2022, Southeastern hired an additional AVPAA to provide administrative support for Undergraduate Studies, which includes advocacy for this project and others, on a par with that provided for graduate programs by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

3. Evaluate the impact of the initiative, including any changes in processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, student learning and success that are now in place as a consequence of the initiative.

1) Quality of Online Instruction

a. Assessment of Existing Courses

The Post-Covid course reviews established quality of online course design as a priority and ensured that any difficulties resulting from emergency remote instruction would not have a lasting negative impact. These reviews also better established Quality Matters as the standard by which Southeastern would evaluate courses and better familiarize faculty with the essential standards. In addition, the reviews enhanced participating faculty members' confidence in the quality of the online courses they designed and their capacity to consistently employ sound pedagogy to facilitate students' attainment of learning goals and objectives in that instructional modality. The timing of this initiative also provided an opportunity to discuss the changes to the federal definition of "regular and substantive interaction" and have individualized conversations with each faculty participant about how their courses meet those requirements, which again enhances faculty members' confidence and capacity to provide online or other distance education course work of the highest quality.

Faculty are currently in the process of an LMS transition from Blackboard to Canvas and have committed to commencing a formalized review process once that transition is complete. The Distance Education Council has been charged with developing the formal online course review process with the intent of initiating that process in spring of 2024. The proposed process will include a pattern of development, self-review, and formal review to assure consistency, clarity, and engagement of students in the course design and presentation on the LMS.

The Post-Covid reviews addressed needs before the LMS transition. Due to the implementation of the LMS transition and the re-focusing of instructional designers' time and effort to that project, a small percentage of faculty opted not to participate in this year's course reviews. However, the reviews completed informed the Distance Education Council's development of the course review plan proposal and influenced the goals established for their work. The initiative played a key role at a critical time to help Southeastern move forward through the transition and confirm the quality of online learning as a priority at Southeastern as well as for establishing a standard against which to measure the quality of the design of online courses.

b. Training in Quality Matters (QM) Teaching Online Certificate (TOC)

In the process of the QM training, the faculty involved began evaluating Southeastern's online course policies and formulating ideas to improve and update them.

2) Academic and Student Advising

Southeastern is currently outlining the framework for its Concierge Advising Model. One of the initial steps included the purchase of Civitas Learning retention and early alert software to aid in course planning and to enable well-informed collaborative advising. Civitas Learning includes task engagement software with automated behavioral cues, reminders, and positive reinforcement that help students to complete coursework and comply with administrative deadlines. Civitas Learning also contains early warning systems, designed to collect and utilize student data to alert faculty and staff of students needing assistance.

The University plans to modify the Student Success Center to house teams that will work with students from matriculation to graduation, educating and empowering students to take ownership of their degree path. The Student Success Center will act as a one-stop shop assisting new, current, transfer, and prospective students at the undergraduate and graduate levels, which will be made possible through the use of Student Success Teams (SST) consisting of four individuals: University Advisor (Professional Advising Staff, AAOC, and ODAC), Academic Success Coach (Faculty Advisor/Mentor), Financial Affairs

Specialist (Business Affairs & Financial Aid Advisor), and Career Specialist. Students will be assigned to an SST based on their major and remain with the same teams through graduation.

4. Explain any tools, data or other information that resulted from the work of the initiative.

1) Quality of Online Instruction

Two participating faculty surveys were conducted at the end of the Quality of Online Instruction components, asking them to rate the usefulness of the course reviews and online teaching workshops, the types of modifications they made to courses because of these reviews and workshops, and the most effective means of disseminating information from the workshops to a broader faculty audience.

a. Assessment of Existing Courses

In Fall 2022, the 131 faculty who participated in course reviews were surveyed after completion of their review experience. Survey results are summarized in section 2 above.

b. Training in Quality Matters (QM) Teaching Online Certificate (TOC)

In December 2022, a reflection survey was distributed to the 17 participants regarding their experience with the workshops and the skills and knowledge obtained through the completion of the TOC. Results indicated that the participants were using the information to make improvements to their courses and were already sharing the information with peers. Faculty participants are scheduled for presentations of their experiences during faculty development sessions in the 2023-2024 academic year.

2) Academic and Student Advising

Southeastern is reviewing the SST matrix to determine the most beneficial resources, tools, processes, and procedures to serve student needs. Informed by successful collaborative advising models, such as that at Georgia State University, which takes a personalized approach to student-centered advising by incorporating elements of developmental, prescriptive, and intrusive advising. Southeastern is reviewing the roles of University Advisor, Academic Success Coach, Financial Aid Specialist, and Career Specialist. However, this ongoing effort will not be completed during the QIP period. Here are the current draft responsibilities for each team member:

The University Advisor serves as the student's academic connection to the institution, working collaboratively with students on program and course selection; discussing academic requirements; supporting enrollment management initiatives; coordinating the preparation of and participation in new student orientations; supporting retention initiatives; and providing information and referring students to resources. This position provides responsive, accessible, student-centered advising by collaboratively advising students on program and course selection. This position also encourages students to become self-aware, proactive, and intentional decision-makers through mentorship prompting students to embrace personal success, failure, and growth to create a unique narrative of their past, present, and future.

The Academic Success Coach serves as a student's connection to the institution's academic departments and programs. The Academic Success Coach, in coordination with the Department Chair, is responsible for providing an unparalleled level of academic service and support at the departmental and programmatic level to promote student success. This role facilitates an interactive process that empowers students to meet academic goals and identify and overcome challenges, both inside and outside the classroom, to create a path to success at the university. They assist students with identifying and resolving barriers related to student retention, persistence, and graduation; educate students and advisors about campus policies, procedures, and program requirements; provide support and resources to students about campus resources as well as academic and administrative processes; use data and reporting to track non-registered students; use predictive analytics to determine barriers to persistence and retention, create initiatives to meet

students' needs; provide assistance with clearing holds and resolving pre-enrollment barriers; and engage in academic early intervention efforts.

The Financial Aid Specialist serves as the student's connection to the Business and Financial Aid Offices. This position works with students to assess financial needs and provide financial assistance through the awarding of financial aid packages that promote retention, persistence and completion while complying with all Title IV regulations as well as state and university policies. The Financial Aid Specialist develops initiatives to address issues identified through student needs assessments that improve student access and success. This role provides ongoing financial aid advisement for new and continuing students; helps with documentation and identification of financial resources such as FAFSA, Scholarships, Work Study, and other aid opportunities; and engages in early intervention for non-payment issues and for financial compliance issues.

The Career Specialist serves as the student's connection to the Career Management Center. This position provides career counseling and readiness programs that support student success. The Career Specialist develops initiatives to promote timely degree completion as well as increasing placement rates of graduates in a profession within their field of study. The Career Specialist coordinates with the Academic Success Coach to enhance career development related to the student's specific school of study and assists students with developing career goals, and they ensure students' career goals align with their major. They offer presentations and seminars to keep students on track with career goals. This role also develops relationships with employers to increase placement rates.

5. Describe the biggest challenges and opportunities encountered in implementing the initiative.

1) Quality of Online Instruction

a. Assessment of Existing Courses

The biggest challenge in accomplishing the reviews was the time dedicated by CIDT instructional designers, but this was addressed in the one-hour per course model and having faculty schedule their reviews, even those that were asynchronous, to ensure time was set aside for each review.

The biggest opportunity was the timing, which was perfect for reviewing the new definition of regular and substantive interaction and was just far enough ahead of the LMS transition to be useful for the current LMS. The timing also allowed for a scheduled pause of reviews while a new formal plan was developed by faculty to be initiated after the transition.

b. Training in Quality Matters (QM) Teaching Online Certificate (TOC)

The biggest challenge included the time involved. The workshops were conducted each month for seven months. We started with 20 selected participants and retained 17. The time commitment for each of the seven workshops ranged from 10 to 15 hours per workshop.

The biggest opportunity involved making resources and training available to faculty, which led to informal peer support through positive perspectives of the QM TOC. Following each workshop, the participants retained the resources from the workshops to make improvements to their online courses and to prepare presentations for other faculty members. Several other faculty have since requested the opportunity to participate in future QM TOC training.

2) Academic and Student Advising

The biggest challenges for implementing the initiative are human capital and financial resources. Rapid growth in enrollment has led to an explosion in advisee assignments. To fully develop the concierge model of academic and student advising and to meet the advisory needs of newly admitted students, Southeastern

will need to hire additional advising staff. As a result, the model will be further developed after the QI period with a timeline developed based on budget and staffing capacity.

The biggest initial opportunity includes the enhancement that the Civitas Learning software offers for course planning and advising.

Commitment to and Engagement in the Quality Initiative

6. Describe the individuals and groups involved at stages throughout the initiative and their perceptions of its worth and impact.

1) Quality of Online Instruction

a. Assessment of Existing Courses

CIDT instructional designers developed and carried out the plan with the support of academic affairs. Faculty signed up for their selected format and time. The feedback from faculty regarding the initiative was overwhelmingly positive. CIDT instructional designers felt that the initiative was very worthwhile in ensuring quality of course design and providing opportunities for individualized training and feedback.

b. Training in Quality Matters (QM) Teaching Online Certificate (TOC)

The Director of Assessment facilitated the seven workshops. The participants of the online training made significant modifications to their courses and shared, and will continue to share, with colleagues the information gained from the workshops.

2) Academic and Student Advising

The AVPAA, the AVPAA--Undergraduate Studies, Dean of the Graduate College, AVP for Enrollment Management, the Directors of Financial Aid, AAOC, ODAC, Scholarships, and academic Department Chairs all will play a strategic role in the ongoing planning and implementation process of the concierge model.

7. Describe the most important points learned by those involved in the initiative.

1) Quality of Online Instruction

a. Assessment of Existing Courses

The initiative revealed that remote emergency instruction during Covid did not have a heavy negative impact on the quality of online instruction at Southeastern and that concerns were manageable and could be addressed with faculty to make further improvements. The initiative also demonstrated that faculty were receptive to the process, particularly when they collaborated on the format and timing.

b. Training in Quality Matters (QM) Teaching Online Certificate (TOC)

The various workshops conducted provided new information about online course design and pedagogy, prompting ongoing discussions about the need to continuously update and develop University policies relative to online learning.

2) Academic and Student Advising

Since this is an ongoing initiative that is not intended to be completed until after the Quality Initiative reporting period, we anticipate that resource provision will continue to be a key challenge facing the institution due to budget constraints combined with managing rapid growth in enrollment.

Resource Provision

8. Explain the human, financial, physical, and technological resources that supported the initiative.

1) Quality of Online Instruction

a. Assessment of Existing Courses

Four CIDT instructional designers completed the reviews. Instructional designers chose times to schedule for reviews in advance and added those times (using a Jot Form) for faculty to register. This process assisted in the time management of personnel. Courses were reviewed in Blackboard. Those who chose to meet for a synchronous review met via Zoom and shared their screen to look at each standard. Because this was a check-in review and opportunity for personalized training, faculty were not compensated financially for completing the reviews. Therefore, no additional budgetary resources were allocated for this initiative.

b. Training in Quality Matters (QM) Teaching Online Certificate (TOC)

The university supported the online training financially by paying for the training (\$20,000) and offering course release time (one credit hour/summer and three credit hours/fall) for the participants selected in the first cohort.

2) Academic and Student Advising

The Civitas Learning software three-year commitment purchase investment is approximately \$280,000.

Plans for the Future (or Future Milestones of a Continuing Initiative)

9. Describe plans for ongoing work related to or as a result of the initiative.

1) Quality of Online Instruction

a. Assessment of Existing Courses

Ongoing work includes adopting a formal course review process developed by faculty through the Distance Education Council and approved by the Academic Council and Faculty Senate. The review process will include faculty development, self-reviews, and CIDT instructional designer reviews. The formal review plan is scheduled to begin in Spring of 2024, pending committee approvals.

b. Training in Quality Matters (QM) Teaching Online Certificate (TOC)

The participants will continue to improve their online courses and we are planning several formal presentations that will cover the information gained during the workshops for the benefit of the wider University community, particularly the faculty.

2) Academic and Student Advising

Going forward, the Academic Advising Council will continue to develop and implement a concierge model of academic and student advising. In addition, Civitas Learning training for University Advisors and Faculty Advisors will begin in Fall 2023.

In June of 2022, President Newsom formed a committee to develop a new strategic plan for the university. *Vision 2040 Strategic Plan for Southeastern Oklahoma State University* contains five strategic pillars. The fourth pillar, campus facilities and infrastructure, addresses the development of the Student Success Center, a one-stop shop for admissions, advising, career services, financial aid, and learning center resources. The Strategic Plan calls for the eventual construction of a dedicated space for the Center, demonstrating the University's long-term commitment to the results from our QI.

10. Describe any practices or artifacts from the initiative that other institutions might find meaningful or useful and please indicate if you would be willing to share this information.

1) Quality of Online Instruction

a. Assessment of Existing Courses

This QI was an excellent exercise to precede a more formalized plan as it quickly gave the institution baseline information about the status of online course quality. Even those faculty who resisted course review on the grounds of intellectual property concerns or academic freedom seemed more receptive to the model employed in our initiative. This is likely because they could choose the synchronous review option in which they could share their screen and address each standard to demonstrate and explain their work. This course review process has always focused on course design in the LMS, while course content remains under the purview of faculty. This model was also insightful for instructional designers, who were able to offer tips and feedback that may not have been afforded without this initiative. CIDT staff are available to share our experience with other institutions who may be interested in performing similar initiatives for quick bulk course reviews.

b. Training in Quality Matters (QM) Teaching Online Certificate (TOC)

While we may not have new data to share regarding our experience with QM TOC training, we would highly encourage other schools to consider this faculty training.

2) Academic and Student Advising

Since the concierge model of academic and student support will be fully implemented after the QI reporting period has been completed, with a timeline developed based on budget and staffing capacity, the institution has not currently completed the “discovery” phase of research related to the project. Therefore, there is no additional meaningful data currently available to share. We hope to share future success at events like the annual HLC conference.