



*Making*  
**CONNECTIONS**



CISCO COLLEGE QEP





**The mission of Cisco College is to provide quality, affordable, educational opportunities to meet the diverse academic, technical, and career needs of the students and communities we serve.**



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cisco College's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), *Making Connections*, focuses on student success, a value that is at the core of the College's Mission and strategic plan. The QEP is designed to improve the student experience in online courses by connecting students to support resources and connecting faculty to professional development.

## Identification of Key Issues

*Making Connections* emerged following a year-long process that began with a review of institutional planning and evaluation processes and involved all College constituencies – students, faculty, staff, administration, and community. A short list of topics was identified by examining enrollment and student success trends and current initiatives. The final topic was chosen based on multiple rounds of faculty and staff surveys and focus groups. The topic that emerged as presenting the most opportunity for sustainable improvement and broad impact was online courses.

## Focus of the Plan

*Making Connections* provides a plan to improve the student experience in online courses. The College has identified two goals which will be fulfilled through four actions; the actions were chosen to achieve two specific student success results. Goal 1- connect students to resources that help them succeed in their online courses - will be achieved by scaling up online tutoring and by creating videos to orient online students to the College, online courses, and support services. Goal 2 - connect faculty to professional development opportunities that help them enhance their online courses - will be achieved by implementing a professional development program that features external training resources, annual speakers and presentations, internal course design and evaluation tools, and faculty collaboration. The QEP aims to decrease the annual online course withdrawal rate by 5% by 2025, and increase the annual online course success rate to 85% by 2025.

## Institutional Capacity

*Making Connections* draws from current initiatives and is integrated within the College's existing leadership and committee structure, ensuring appropriate oversight as well as shared responsibility and involvement. The College has committed current and new financial resources necessary to implement the actions, drawing on recent progress and investments made in website redesign, an online tutoring pilot, and LMS usage. The plan is integrated into regular planning and evaluation processes. Key personnel have developed institutional effectiveness outcomes for their respective areas, faculty will report professional development goals and accomplishments within the annual evaluation plan, and the QEP committee will report annual overall assessment results in its annual report.

## Assessment and Evaluation

The four actions implemented in *Making Connections* each have specific effectiveness outcomes with defined success targets and assessment methods; where applicable, progress benchmarks are identified and incorporated into the QEP timeline. Effectiveness outcomes articulate the institutional improvements the College wishes to see, direct assessment methods will provide evidence of improvement in student success and online course quality, and indirect assessment methods will document changes in faculty and student behavior, knowledge, and perceptions.





# INTRODUCTION



# OUR HISTORY

1909

Education on the “hill” in Cisco began in 1909 when O. C. Britton, prominent early-day educator, gained the support of far-sighted Cisco citizens in opening a private school known as Britton Training Institute. The Britton Institute operated until World War I.

1940

Cisco Junior College was officially established on May 8, 1939. Cisco citizens succeeded in getting enacted into legislation a bill which created the college as a part of the Cisco Independent School District. Randolph College properties were purchased, the College was formally opened in September 1939, and the first students were admitted in 1940.

1970

Cisco Junior College began offering classes in Abilene.

2004

Cisco Junior College opened the Abilene Educational Center, a 77,000 square foot facility owned by the College. Since opening, the Abilene location has served more than 22,000 students.

2009

The College dropped the “junior” designator from its name, becoming Cisco College.

2010

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reaffirmed the accreditation of the College.

2011

A 9,000 square foot addition was added to the Abilene Educational Center as the home for the Nursing and Health Science programs.

2017

The College adopted its current Mission statement to reflect its relationship with the varied students and communities that it proudly serves.

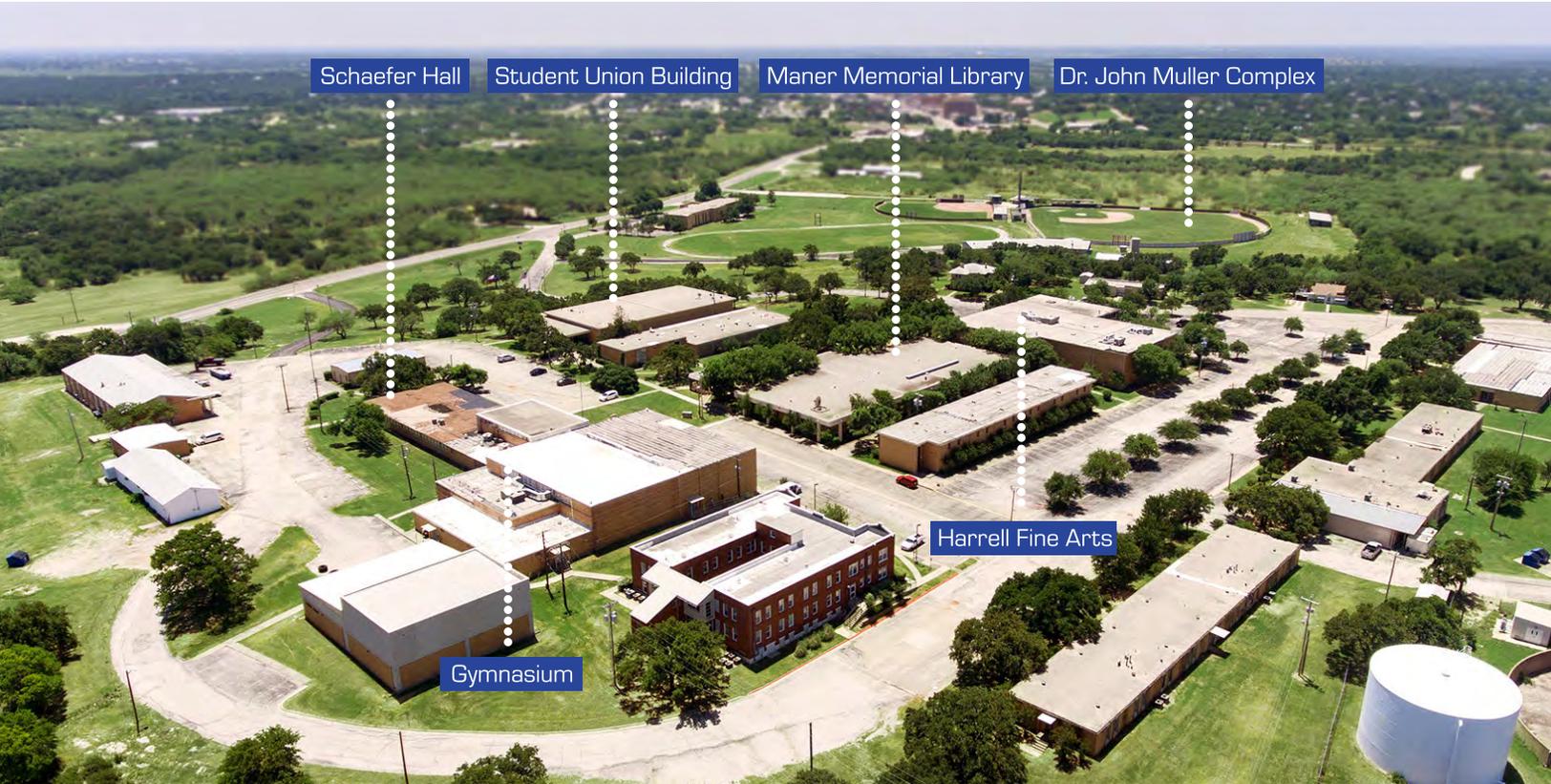
2018

Cisco’s strategic plan, *Vision 2023*, was approved by the Board of Regents.

TODAY

Cisco College annually enrolls more than 3,000 students across its two campuses in Cisco and Abilene and partners with nearly 40 high schools across seven counties to provide dual credit courses to more than 800 students each year! Proud to be Wranglers!

# CISCO CAMPUS



# ABILENE CAMPUS





## MISSION, VISION, & THE QEP

The Mission of Cisco College rests on providing quality educational opportunities to meet diverse student needs. To ensure the College fulfills its Mission, the Board of Regents approved *Vision 2023*, the College's five-year strategic plan that articulates an institutional culture of innovation, collaboration, and large-scale change to improve the student experience. *Vision 2023* identifies two college core values: "Cisco College facilitates **student success** by ensuring open-door access to diverse educational opportunities, embracing innovation and best practices, and providing effective student support. Cisco College insists on **excellence** in our programs, instruction, services, management, and learning environment." A significant portion of the student population increasingly relies on online courses to pursue educational goals and, concurrently, the College increasingly relies on online courses to fulfill its Mission. Therefore, student success and excellence are inextricably tied to online courses.

The College chose a Quality Enhancement Plan focused on improving online courses to support the core values and enact the first goal of *Vision 2023*: "create a superior student experience by encouraging and promoting student success, and embracing innovation and teaching excellence." To enact the strategic plan goal, the QEP emphasizes connections: connecting students to resources they need to succeed, and connecting faculty to tools and resources they need to innovate. Better supported students will connect more readily to their classes and get plugged into the College. Faculty involved in innovative professional development can connect to each other by sharing what they learn, and connect more readily to students through engaging, well-designed courses. Part-time faculty can get plugged into professional development, too, by creating a repository of recorded professional development opportunities.

Cisco College's Quality Enhancement Plan, *Making Connections*, has two goals that will be achieved through four actions designed to make the connections that will improve student success. The four actions aim for two results: increased online student success rates and decreased online course withdrawal rates.





## CISCO COLLEGE MISSION

THE MISSION OF CISCO COLLEGE IS TO PROVIDE QUALITY, AFFORDABLE, EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET THE DIVERSE ACADEMIC, TECHNICAL, AND CAREER NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS AND COMMUNITIES WE SERVE.



## VISION 2023 STRATEGIC GOAL

TO CREATE A SUPERIOR STUDENT EXPERIENCE BY ENCOURAGING AND PROMOTING STUDENT SUCCESS, EMBRACING INNOVATION, AND TEACHING EXCELLENCE.



## QEP PURPOSE

TO IMPROVE THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE IN ONLINE COURSES.



## QEP GOALS & ACTIONS

<p><b>QEP GOAL #1</b> CONNECT OUR STUDENTS TO RESOURCES THAT HELP THEM SUCCEED IN THEIR ONLINE COURSES.</p>	<p><b>QEP GOAL #2</b> CONNECT OUR FACULTY TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT HELP THEM ENHANCE THEIR ONLINE COURSES.</p>
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<b>ACTION 1</b>	<b>ACTION 2</b>	<b>ACTION 3</b>	<b>ACTION 4</b>
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The QEP Committee will coordinate the creation of at least 10 videos designed for online students featuring orientation and introductions to Canvas, the Canvas mobile app, online course readiness, online course design, online tutoring, and student support services available to online students.

The College will incrementally increase the number of online tutoring hours available and publicize the support service to meet defined success, retention and satisfaction goals.

The College will implement a sustainable professional development program that provides online faculty access to the Online Learning Consortium, features annual speakers or presentations for all faculty, includes faculty collaboration, and makes professional development available to part-time faculty.

Faculty will utilize an Online Course Design Checklist and an Online Course Scorecard to assess and improve the quality of their online courses and meet defined consistency and quality standards.



## DISTANCE EDUCATION BACKGROUND

2002

Cisco first offered online courses through the Virtual College of Texas (VCT), a state-wide community college course sharing cooperative agreement, in the summer. Eleven students enrolled in ten VCT courses. In the fall semester, Cisco delivered its own online courses using the WebCT Learning Management System (LMS) and SoftChalk, software for digital lesson planning and creation. Fifty-four students enrolled in Ethics in Criminal Justice, Criminal Investigation, and Webpage Development.

2005

Cisco students enrolled in 59 online course sections in the fall semester.

2007

In the spring semester, eight students enrolled in Cisco's first online dual credit course, Composition & Rhetoric II.

2010

The college switched from WebCT to Blackboard, accompanied by the plagiarism detection service, Turnitin. Cisco students enrolled in 120 online course sections in the fall semester.

2014

Cisco switched from Blackboard to Canvas because of its reliability, intuitive design, cost-effective updates. The Cisco Library migrated its online resources to Canvas, increasing access for online students.

2015

In the spring, Cisco hired its first full-time Director of Distance Education. In the fall, the College piloted digital course evaluations using SmartEvals, after a two-year lapse in disseminating paper course evaluations. Student support services, such as the Writing Center, began using Canvas to expand access for online students. Additionally, Cisco students enrolled in 158 online course sections.

2016

Cisco implemented EvaluationKIT for digital course evaluations and achieved a 74% response rate for the fall semester. The College also began using Zoom software for video conferencing and lecture recording to enhance course delivery. And, the first optional online LMS training course was created for faculty.

2017

Cisco implemented new resources for online students, including the first optional online course to introduce the LMS, an online readiness self-assessment, and a checklist for starting an online course.

2018

The College piloted 24/7 online tutoring through Upswing and the screen and lecture capture application, VidGrid. However, utilization of these resources was low. Cisco also switched from Turnitin to Unicheck for plagiarism detection because of its robust platform, reputation for quality customer service, and cost-effective approach. Additionally, a new policy was implemented that requires all new faculty and any current faculty who teach online for the first time to complete the online LMS training course. Cisco students enrolled in 222 online course sections in the fall.

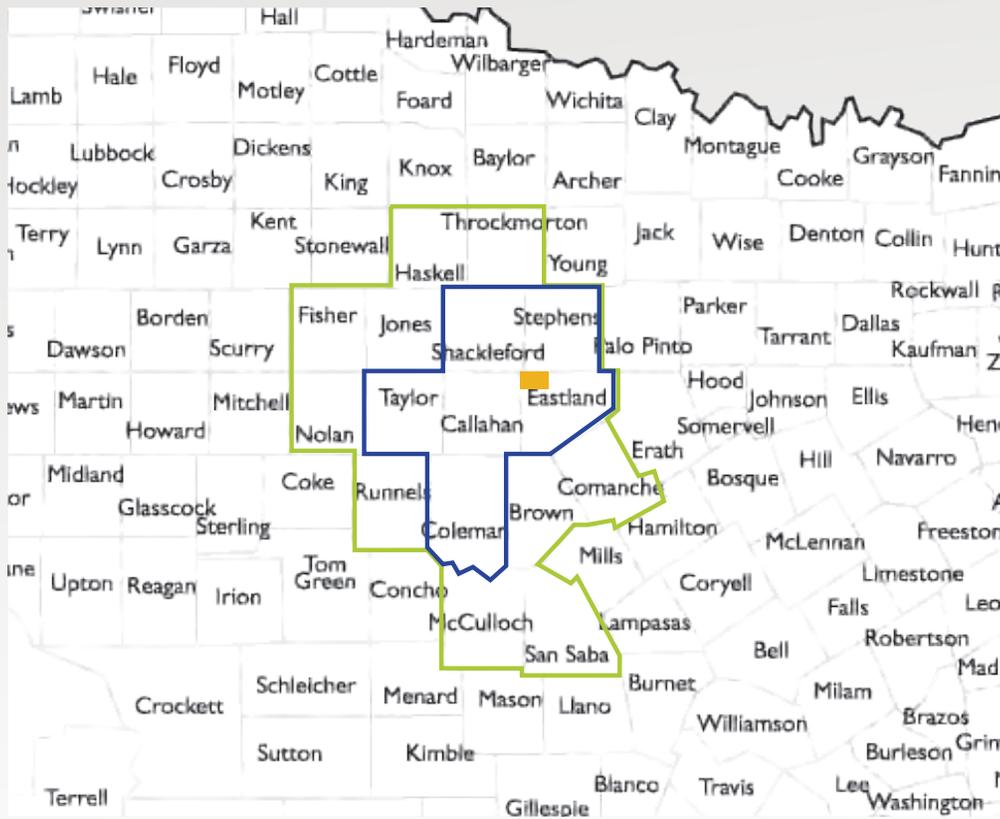
2019

In May, the first two fully online Cisco students graduated with an Associate of Arts in General Studies.

# SERVICE AREA MAP



-  **CISCO COLLEGE SERVICE AREA:**  
Defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.
-  **DUAL CREDIT SERVICE AREA:**  
Cisco College serves more than 40 high schools in and beyond its service area.
-  **CISCO COLLEGE TAX DISTRICT:**  
Cisco College's tax district is the Cisco Independent School District.





# TOPIC SELECTION PROCESS



# TOPIC SELECTION PROCESS

## Topic Identified Through Ongoing Comprehensive Planning and Evaluation Processes

The Quality Enhancement Plan topic and purpose was selected based on a review of institutional planning processes that identified potential focus areas aligned with current needs and initiatives. Feedback was gathered from College constituencies to narrow the topic and finalize the purpose. A faculty and staff steering committee defined actions to achieve the purpose.

## Reaffirmation Leadership Team

The President established the [Reaffirmation Leadership Team](#) comprised of the President, executive-level administrators, and accreditation personnel in February 2018 to manage and validate the reaffirmation process and QEP development. Strategic planning drove topic development because Reaffirmation of Accreditation planning and preparation coincided with the development of the College's new strategic plan, *Vision 2023*. The Leadership Team focused on establishing a QEP purpose linked to strategic plan goals and strategies. Through this link, the QEP is evidence of intentional planning and purposeful initiatives to enact *Vision 2023* and fulfill the Mission.

The Reaffirmation Leadership Team developed topic possibilities by identifying trends and themes related to strategic plan goals that presented opportunities for improvement. Enrollment services and institutional research data indicated significant overlapping enrollment trends in the two fastest growing population segments: online students and dual enrollment. Since 2013, students taking only online courses have made up 10% of the total enrollment. Students taking at least one online class increased from 34% of the total enrollment to 43%.

Online course enrollment was bolstered by dual credit growth. In 2015, the Texas Legislature prohibited limitations on the number of dual enrollment courses high school students could take in a semester or academic year, effectively opening dual enrollment to all high school ages. The bill requires Texas high schools to offer students the opportunity to complete at least 12 hours college-level credit. From 2014 to 2018, dual credit enrollment increased by 23% and online course offerings increased by 35% due in no small part to the needs of area high schools.

ONLINE COURSE ENROLLMENT AS % OF TOTAL ENROLLMENT					
Semester	Total Enrollment	Students Enrolled Only in Online Courses	% of Total Enrollment (Online Only)	Students Enrolled in at Least One Online Course	% of Total Enrollment (at Least One Online)
Fall 2013	3,576	357	10%	1,225	34.2%
Fall 2014	3,564	333	9.3%	1,204	33.7%
Fall 2015	3,305	343	10.3%	1,173	35.4%
Fall 2016	3,241	336	10.3%	1,302	40%
Fall 2017	3,280	388	11.8%	1,404	42.8%
Fall 2018	3,374	432	12.8%	1,863	55.2%
AVERAGE	3,390	364	11%	1,361	40%

TABLE 2 Source: Enrollment Services

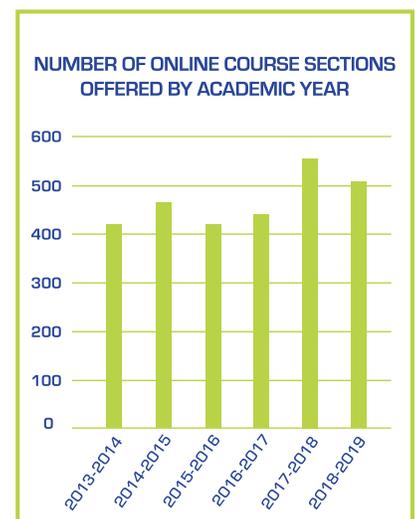


TABLE 1 Source: Enrollment Services

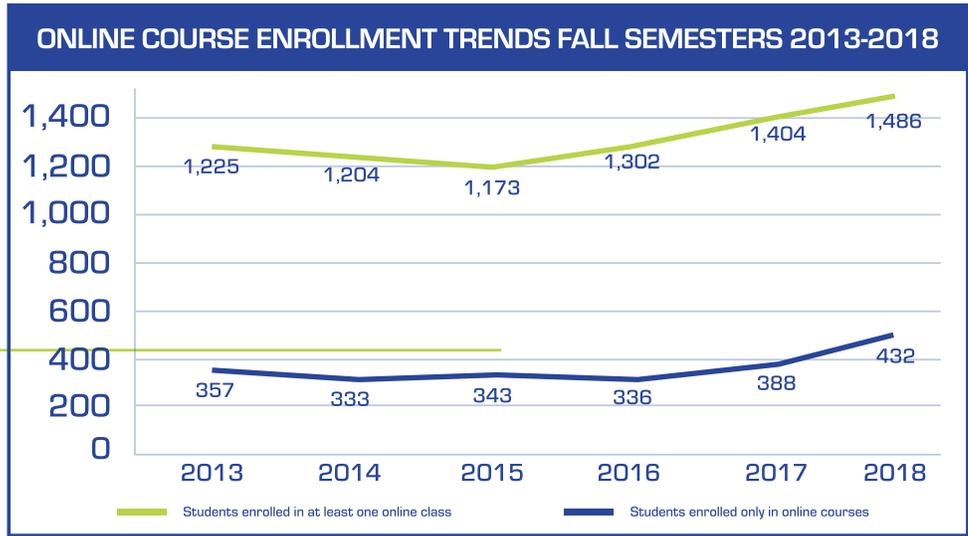


TABLE 3 Source: Enrollment Services

Amidst the enrollment growth, the College worked to disperse online instruction throughout the faculty, increasing faculty participation and buy-in to ensure that a limited number of full- or part-time faculty did not shoulder the online courses for any department or program. The percentage of online courses taught by full-time faculty increased as the number of course offerings grew. In 2013, 65% of online courses were taught by full-time faculty; by 2018, that percentage increased to 73%.

Also amidst the growth of online classes, the College placed increased emphasis on utilizing the learning management system to improve communication, record-keeping, and accountability. In 2018-2019, distance learning guidelines were added to the Faculty Handbook encouraging faculty to utilize the LMS to augment face-to-face classes and requiring LMS training for all new faculty and current faculty teaching their first online course. The guidelines encouraged faculty to utilize the LMS attendance, gradebook, and messaging features to promote consistency so that students could remain aware of their class status regardless of the class format or location.

Despite steady increases in online course enrollment, number of faculty teaching online courses, and LMS utilization across the institution, student success data points remained consistent.

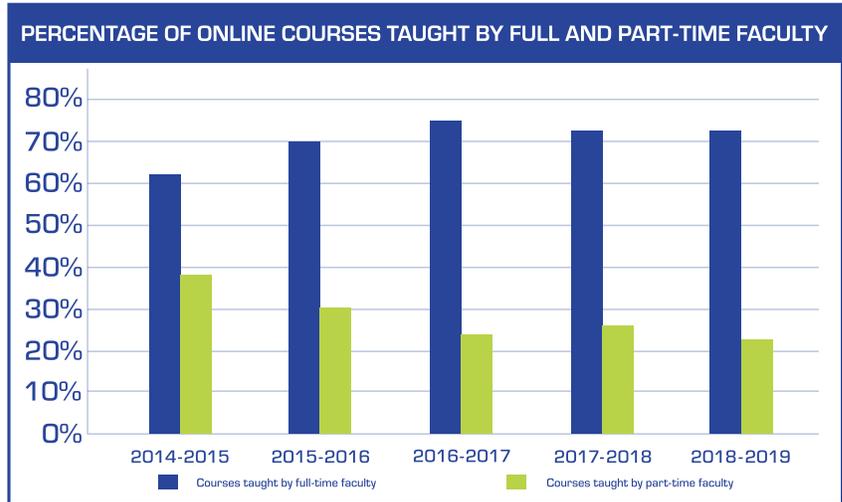


TABLE 4 Source: Institutional Research

To pursue *Vision 2023* goals to cultivate a strategic enrollment management culture and embrace organizational excellence through data-driven decision-making, the President had previously directed the Institutional Research Office to develop data dashboards. The Reaffirmation Leadership Team utilized these dashboards to determine if student success in online courses paralleled the growth and expansion trends. [Online course success rates and withdrawal rates](#) were comparable to face-to-face classes, which indicated that faculty shifted into online instruction while maintaining rigorous content. The percentage of online students successfully completing their courses hovered near 77%, fluctuating up and down by approximately 2% points each year. The percentage of students that withdrew from their online courses held steady at 7-8% each year, showing less than 1% overall improvement over the past five years. [Dual credit students](#) consistently succeeded at higher rates than non-dual credit students, and withdrew at lower rates; but, even for dual credit students, online courses had the lowest success rates of all the instructional modes.

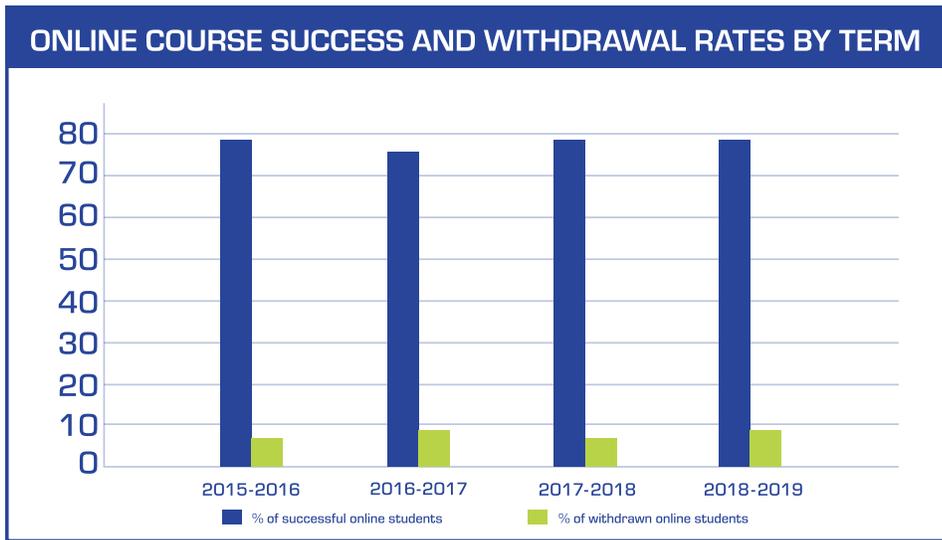


TABLE 5 Source: Institutional Research

The Reaffirmation Leadership team noted common themes related to online courses in the College’s evaluation and institutional effectiveness processes. The annual institutional effectiveness reports from academic departments and programs showed that faculty were assessing students in all courses and course formats, but academic leadership reported not having access to success data for their courses or departments disaggregated by course format, indicating little use of the data dashboards. Additionally, faculty evaluations focused primarily on face-to-face courses. The faculty evaluation plan, in fact, includes only a traditional observation form for in-person classes. The plan includes a section where faculty identify development goals, but goals rarely addressed online instruction.

The Reaffirmation Leadership Team determined that consistent and comparable online and face-to-face success and withdrawal rates among a faculty increasingly teaching online and face-to-face courses and using the LMS for both course formats meant focusing on improving online courses would naturally cause improvements in face-to-face courses, too. Improving online courses also would impact the widest possible portion of students since online enrollment growth includes dual credit and nearly half the student population takes at least one online course. Additionally, increased emphasis on using success data to demonstrate and plan for improvement was needed, and the emphasis needed to include evaluating online courses so that faculty would include online instruction in their annual development goals. The connections between the trends indicated the potential for institution-wide impact.

Based on the review of institutional strategic planning and evaluation processes, the Leadership Team identified three potential QEP focus areas aligned with strategic goals and current initiatives: online courses, dual credit, and student success. These topics were presented to stakeholders to determine which topic offered the best opportunity for sustainable, institution-wide improvement.

### Broad-based Support of Institutional Constituencies

The Reaffirmation Leadership Team developed a schedule of constituencies to consult about the three possible QEP topics, and feedback methods best suited for each group. Surveys were distributed to the Board of Regents and the Abilene Advisory Council. Meetings were scheduled with business and student services staff. Faculty input was sought via the Faculty & Staff Senate and a survey. Student feedback was gathered using focus groups and surveys. Feedback constituencies are listed in Table 6. Survey [dates and response data](#), along with a sample of [student survey results](#) are provided in the appendix. A [summary of feedback](#) reviewed by the Reaffirmation Leadership Team is also provided.

FEEDBACK CONSTITUENCIES, SCHEDULE, & METHODS			
CONSTITUENCY	CONTACT METHOD	RESPONSE RATE/ ATTENDANCE	DATE/TIME
Board of Regents	Survey	88%	Mar 26 - Apr 13
Abilene Advisory Board	Survey	50%	Mar 26 - Apr 13
Faculty Senate	Meeting	60%	March 28, 3pm
Faculty (PT, FT) & Staff	Survey	36%	March 19 - Apr13
Academic Leadership Team	Meeting	90%	March 8, 2pm, AEC 154
Student & Business Services	Meeting	85%	Apr 10, 2pm, Clsco
Dual Credit Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anson (newest, 1A)</li> <li>AIISD (primary partner, onsite, 5A)</li> <li>Clyde (50%+ site, 3A)</li> </ul>	Focus Groups & Follow-Up Survey	Anson - 19 Seniors AIISD - 17 Seniors Clyde - 20 Seniors Survey - 63 students	Anson - 3/29, 9am AIISD - 3/21, 1pm Clyde - 3/23, 9am
AEC Students	Focus Group	25 Students	GOVT 2306, 4/9, 11:10am
Cisco Students	Focus Group	20 Students	Library, 4/9, 4pm
Career & Tech. Program Students	Focus Group	64 Students	Nursing 4/24, AEC 236
Online Students	Survey	157 Students 844 Students 622 Students	#1 - April 5-20 #2 - Sept. 17-24 #2 - Oct. 17-30
Phi Theta Kappa (PTK)	Focus Group	12 Students	Mar 7, 12:30 & 3:30, AEC 154
Global Leadership Group	Focus Group	10 Students	Mar 6, 12:35pm, AEC 121

TABLE 6 Source: Reaffirmation Leadership Team

### Student Feedback

Student feedback was gathered by survey and focus groups. The survey was disseminated to all students using text message alerts, emails, QR codes, and LMS announcements seeking input on online classes. The Accreditation Liaison coordinated with faculty members to take over a class period unannounced and dedicate the time to open discussion of student experiences and suggestions. Pop-up focus groups were conducted with general education students on both campuses, career and technical students on the Abilene campus, student clubs, honor society students, on-campus dual credit students, and off-site dual credit students at both small and large schools among new and long-standing high school partners. Feedback gathered by both methods was remarkably similar, as the focus groups related experiences that lined up with survey responses.

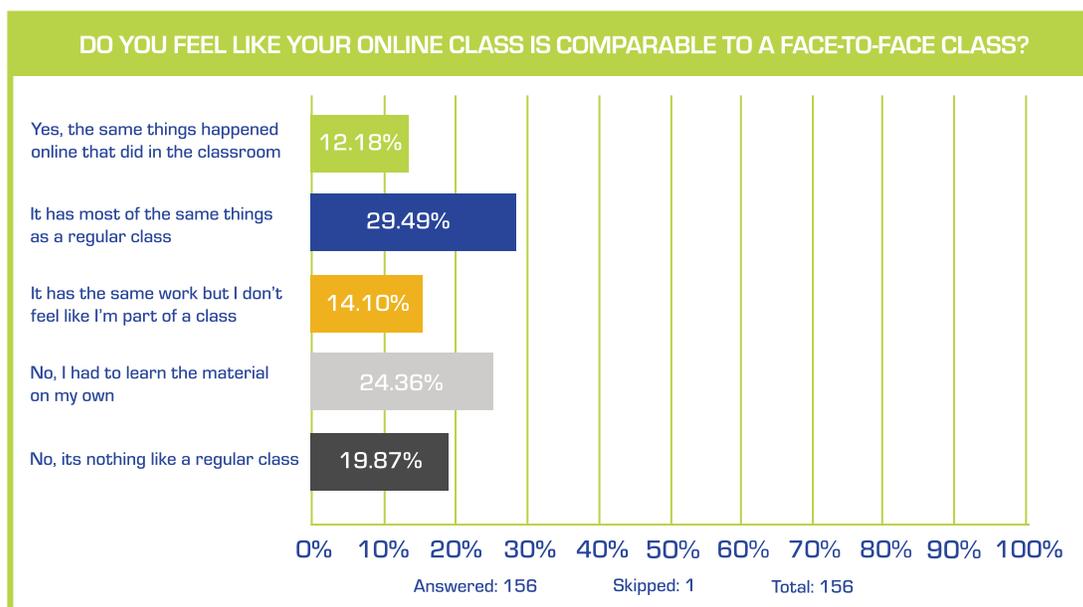


TABLE 7 Source: Online Student Survey, 2018

Surveys showed that students have less confidence in the quality of online courses as compared to in-person courses. Only 60% of students considered logical organization or relevant material a strength of online courses. The same percentage felt that class assignments were ‘good’ or ‘okay.’ Surveys also showed that students feel they are on their own in online classes. More than 20% of online students indicated that they had to learn the course material on their own. Student comments called for more communication and help with assignments from instructors, and more class resources to help them engage the course material. Discussion boards and quizzes were the most commonly used features in online courses, while tools such as chats, videos and voice feedback were rarely used.

**LESS THAN  
30%**  
OF ONLINE STUDENTS  
SURVEYED RATE ONLINE COURSES AS  
COMPARABLE TO IN PERSON COURSES

Source: Online Student Survey, 2018

Students indicated that online courses may present rigorous assignments but students saw gaps in communication between student and instructor and between the course material and summative assessments. 45% of online students surveyed said they need more help from the instructor to successfully complete the course assignments, such as instructions, explanations, rubrics, resources, and feedback. Asked what online students need the most help with, student responses included “better explanation of tough material,” “having access to an online tutor,” “understanding assignments,” and “understanding what the instructor wants without them being there in person.”

Student expectations toward online courses revealed under-informed perceptions about online courses. The time required to meet the demands of online classes, and the skills needed to manage that time effectively, topped the list of things students wish they had known ahead of time. Comments repeatedly pointed at stress from not knowing how classes were structured, how deadlines varied from course to course, how much time to schedule in a day or week, how much discipline is required to maintain a schedule, and the difficulties with staying organized.

“I wish there were assignments that actually helped me learn the information, rather than just quizzes and exams that checked to see if I knew it already.”  
*Online Student Survey, April 2018*

### Faculty & Staff Feedback

Surveys showed that faculty and staff have less confidence in the quality of distance learning courses as compared to in-person courses. While almost 90% of faculty and staff indicated that online course quality and growth was very important, more than 40% of faculty and staff indicated that online courses needed improvement or were poor in quality.

Faculty feedback identified the things students commonly need to succeed in online classes. Similar to students, faculty saw gaps in the students' LMS knowledge, understanding of online course structure, and of the support resources available to them. More than 25% of faculty and staff survey respondents cited the need for LMS training or orientation and more online support services for students such as online tutoring. Asked to identify possible improvements in distance learning, 46% of responses pointed at instructional methods: better student-instructor interaction, prompt feedback, using videos, video-conferencing, and using more LMS features and tools.

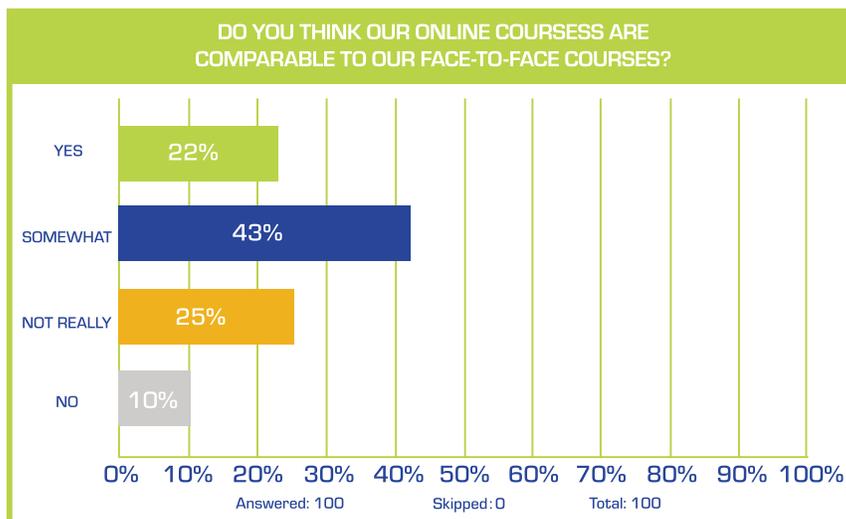


TABLE 8 Source: Faculty & Staff Survey, April 2018

Nearly a third of survey comments indicated the need for common standards for online courses to provide consistency and ensure rigor. Faculty’s perceptions of institution-wide inconsistencies in course structure and student knowledge of the LMS validate the student comments reporting where those inconsistencies appear in the online courses. Students reported major differences in course organization, use of Canvas features, course schedules, and contact methods. Faculty reported students not knowing how to submit assignments, locate a syllabus, contact the instructor, submit quizzes, use the calendar, or use the discussion board.

“I would say the biggest thing that online students probably need help with is better communication with other students and teachers.”  
*Online Student Survey, 2018*

“...have a standard operating procedure for conducting an online class. Really, it’s anybody’s game right now.”  
*Faculty & Staff Survey, April 2018*

### QEP Steering Committee

Based on constituency feedback, the Reaffirmation Leadership Team defined the QEP purpose: to improve the student experience in online courses. The President authorized and charged an ad-hoc steering committee to develop and recommend actions to fulfill the QEP purpose. The Steering Committee was comprised of online faculty, counselors, academic administration, and student services administration from both campuses.

QEP STEERING COMMITTEE 2018-2019	
Dr. Carol Dupree	Chief Academic Officer/Provost
Dr. Jerry Dodson	Vice President of Student Services
Sheron Caton	Director of Distance Learning
Dr. Kam Zinsser	Dean of Workforce and Continuing Education
Tianay Bralley	Director of Dual Credit
Shirley Dove	Registrar
Linda Sellers	Director of Financial Aid
Kaitlin Berry*	Director of Marketing
Dr. Lori Grubbs	Director of Academic Support Services
Renee Leath	Academic Support Services Coordinator
Misty Taylor	Counselor, Cisco
Link Harris	Counselor, Abilene
Kim Torres	Department Head, English
Debbie Barton	Department Head, Science
Randy Golson	Faculty, History, Cisco
Catherine Mullinax	Faculty, English, Cisco
Kathy Kennedy	Faculty Government, Abilene
Beth Jackson	Faculty, Math, Abilene
Crystal Rolison	Faculty, Speech, Abilene
James Berry	Faculty, Criminal Justice, Abilene
Heather Hicks	Accreditation Liaison

\* Has been replaced by Colton Wedeking

TABLE 9 Source: Committee List, 2018-2019

## Online Student Surveys

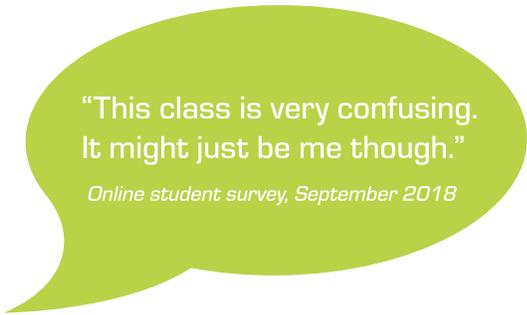
The Steering Committee disseminated [two additional online student surveys](#) to confirm earlier feedback and identify actionable items. A survey was disseminated to all online History, Government, Creative Arts, and Social Science students, including dual credit students, at week four of the semester to gauge how well online courses started and what occurs in the beginning weeks. Using only four questions and an open response option, the survey asked about start of the term communication, assignments, engagement, and feedback; all crucial course elements that affect early retention. Responses from more than 800 students indicated that first course assignments are generally understood well, however by the fourth week 26% of students had received no assignment feedback and 23% had not yet encountered an assignment that required interaction with fellow students. While 46% of students had communicated with their instructor more than twice per week up to that point, 9% of students had not communicated with the instructor at all. Many students found their course organized and straightforward, but others noted difficulty finding information or getting started. Responses indicated inconsistencies in course design as well.

A second survey was disseminated at midterm to all online, non-dual credit students not surveyed at week four. A longer survey, the questions asked about course design, comparability to face-to-face courses, and what influences the students' success, in addition to communication and engagement. Responses from more than 650 students indicated that the percentages for weekly instructor communication had declined by midterm, with only 41% of students reporting weekly communication and 8% reporting no instructor communication. Less than 70% of students

reported that their instructors provided helpful feedback and led productive discussions. Reinforcing feedback from the earlier surveys, only 41% of online students felt their class was "about the same" as their face-to-face classes, and 64% noted that course design most impacts their success in an online course. Asked what they would like to know more about, the top responses included LMS navigation, the LMS mobile app, and tutoring. Asked what advice they would give to other online students, time management again topped the list.

The Steering Committee noted that the things faculty and students were asking for, the things they each saw as lacking or inconsistent, were available, but they were not connecting with these things. For example, Distance Education provides an online course readiness assessment on its webpage, and a comprehensive online training course for students; however, not many students utilize these options. The College provides on-campus tutoring and documents increasing utilization rates annually, but hardly any online faculty on the Steering Committee knew about the relatively new online tutoring option. The faculty members reported learning most about online instruction methods or tools in conversation with peer faculty, and then seeking out assistance from their peers or the Director of Distance Education. However, and largely due to a policy in place only for the past year, only new faculty are directed to complete the comprehensive online instructor training course. Academic administrators on the committee noted that professional development for online teaching was rare because online courses are not addressed in the College's faculty evaluation plan. Further, the academic leadership members of the Steering Committee expressed hesitancy and uncertainty about evaluating online faculty and courses when they had little experience teaching online courses.

Based on the additional survey feedback, the Steering Committee developed four actions designed to get faculty and staff plugged into the information and support they need, while also expanding the support and training offerings: create videos, scale-up tutoring for online students, implement professional development, and evaluate online courses.



"This class is very confusing. It might just be me though."

*Online student survey, September 2018*



"Do not take online classes if you are not self-disciplined."

*Online student survey, October 2018*

### Online Orientation

Connect students to the information they need through orientation videos about the basics of online courses, Canvas, and support services.



### Professional Development

Connect faculty to the resources they need such as design tools, workshops, courses, and speakers.



## QEP GOALS

Connect our faculty to professional development opportunities that help them enhance their online courses.

Connect our students to resources that help them succeed in their online courses.



## QEP RESULTS

Decrease the withdrawal rate in online courses by 20% by 2025.

Increase the online course success rate to 85% by 2025.

### Online Tutoring

Connect students to online tutoring provided via UpSwing.



### Collaboration & Innovation

Connect faculty to each other by sharing information, resources, ideas, and innovations.





# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

Decades of research consistently recognizes engagement as essential for student satisfaction and course completion (Buelow, et. al., 2018; Hew, 2016; Robinson & Hullinger, 2008). However, as Dixon (2010) determined from studying NSSE findings, there is no one or particular activity that will automatically help students engage. Continued research, however, indicates that addressing three key areas improves student learning engagement: student behaviors, affective attitudes toward classes and the institution, and cognitive evaluation of courses as relevant and important.

## Online Student Enrollment & Perceived Course Quality

National enrollment in distance education courses has steadily increased since 2002. The 2018 report from the Babson Survey Research Group reveals that from Fall 2015 to Fall 2016, distance education enrollments jumped by 5.6%. Moreover, distance education accounted for 31.6% of the total enrollment or 6,359,121 students. Breaking this percentage down further, 16.7% (3,356,041) of students were enrolled in at least one distance education course and 14.9% (3,003,080) were enrolled solely in distance education courses (Seaman, et al., 2018).

State trends in distance education align with the national pattern. In 2015, students taking at least one distance education course made up 29.2% (460,396) of the total enrollment at Texas higher education institutions. Students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses represented 12% of the overall enrollment (189,686) (Seaman & Seaman, 2017). At Cisco College, the number of students enrolled in at least one online course in Fall 2015 accounted for a slightly higher percentage than the national and state trends, falling at 35.4% (1,173) of enrollment. While students enrolled solely in distance education tracked slightly lower at 10.3% (343) of enrollment, the first two fully online Cisco students graduated in May 2019.

The 2018 study on the demands and preferences of online students noted that 85% felt that their experience in the online class was either the same or better than their classroom courses (Magda & Aslanian, 2018). Fifty-seven percent of students in the study felt that peer interactions were very important or important to their success. While Cisco College's enrollment trends have largely followed the national and state trends discussed above, students' perceived value of online learning at the College does not parallel larger patterns. Less than 30% of Cisco's students surveyed felt that their online courses were comparable to their in-person courses.

Faculty also question the quality of online learning, aligning with the findings of the ECAR Study of Faculty and Information Technology (Pomerantz & Brooks, 2017) that found a "love-hate relationship with online teaching and learning." Most faculty surveyed for the study agreed that it makes learning accessible but few agreed that it "helps students learn more effectively" (Pomerantz & Brooks, 2017). Similarly, most Cisco faculty agreed that online learning is important for the College, but far fewer felt it was effective.

## Support for Online Students

Research indicates that support for students is crucial, particularly for online students and students considered "post-traditional learners" (Soares, 2013). Post-traditional learners result in a diverse student body, but also increase the variety of academic and non-cognitive skills gaps that warrant close attention to quality distance education courses and support services. More than 20% of Cisco's student body is under the age of 18 and more than 25% is 25 or older. Additionally, more than half the student body is part-time and either taking dual credit while in high school or attending college while working, and more than 10% of students require at least one developmental course.

Horn and Belnap (2019) argue that embracing student needs to become “student-ready” helps avoid the higher attrition rates associated with post-traditional learners due to skills gaps, low confidence, or low sense of connection to the institution. A national study of online learning leaders in U.S. community colleges found that while 68% of schools surveyed invest in a hosted LMS in order to provide consistent and secure access to online students, only a “modest number (21%) indicated the use of student support services” (Fredericksen, 2017) for online students. Similarly, Cisco has focused on hosting the LMS to best provide online courses, but has made only modest efforts at online student support that, while available, is primarily face-to-face. Student-ready services specifically for online students are made even more important for Cisco due to geography: dual credit courses are delivered over a nine county range extending up to 100 miles beyond the College’s service area.

Intentionally supporting online students means addressing their common questions and concerns. Taylor, Dunn, and Winn (2015) revealed that brief orientation videos can help students adapt to the online environment. Their study focused on Excelsior, a nonprofit, online college with a non-traditional student population. The college created multiple videos focusing on LMS tools and navigation, embedding them directly in selected courses. At the end of the videos, students were prompted to complete optional surveys. Students rated the videos positively, indicating that they were informative and increased their knowledge of the LMS. Moreover, courses with the videos embedded had reduced withdrawal rates and improved student grades. As Taylor, Dunn, and Winn (2015) suggest, there is a direct connection between comfort with the LMS and course tools and student success.

### Faculty Development

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Students need organization and clear instructions for a strong start in an online course (Conrad, 2002). Swan (2001) notes that design consistency increased student satisfaction, as well as students’ perception of what they learned. A well-designed course provides a framework for student success, however only 60% of Cisco students indicated that logical organization or relevant materials were a strength of their online course.

Instructors themselves impact student persistence. Legon and Garrett (2018) found that “strategic plans at two-year public institutions place considerable more emphasis” on achieving higher retention and completion rates indicating a “more mature and comprehensive grasp of online learnings’ potential contribution to institutional mission” than reflected in other sectors. However, as Buelow et. al (2018) noted, institutions and/or faculty also may mistakenly think “that the creation of effective online courses is a matter of simply transferring classroom content, assignments, and exams to a Web-based setting.” Instead, institutions and faculty must “utilize available and emerging mechanisms to enhance their own teaching techniques” (Buelow, et. al., 2018).

Young (2006) indicates that students define effective online instructors as those who are visible and active in the learning process by providing timely and substantive feedback, facilitating instructor-student and student-student interaction, and adapting to student needs. This perspective corroborates with Jaggars and Wu’s (2016) findings that instructor behavior can predict student success. When instructors are visibly engaged in the LMS, such as in discussion forums, and behind the scenes, such as timely feedback and replies to student inquiries, students are encouraged to persist and increase their academic performance.

More than just being visible, instructor engagement must include rapport centered on making connections. As Glazier (2016) indicates, rapport is not being “nice” or simply sending a welcome message to students at the start of a semester. Instead, it involves an ongoing effort to humanize the instructor and personalize interactions with students; it represents a significant classroom management variable (Howell & Buck) in the online classroom. Multiple studies have offered rapport-building suggestions, such as offering instructor video content (Draus et al., 2014; Griffiths & Graham, 2009), creating video biographies (Draus et al., 2014), and providing personalized video or audio feedback (Underdown & Martin, 2016; Ice, Curtis, Phillips, & Wells, 2007). Rapport-building strategies build relationships between instructors and students, increasing student satisfaction and their desire to succeed.

Instructors need support to understand and implement course design and rapport-building best practices in their online courses. Fredericksen (2017) found that community colleges and universities both ranked faculty development as one of their top three priorities in online learning. The CHLOE 2 survey (Legon & Garrett, 2018) found that less than half of institutions surveyed provide faculty stipends for development, but most rely on faculty to build their own courses and only 31% required the use of instructional designers. Lackey (2011) points to the importance of providing faculty with both technology and pedagogy support.

Technology training helps instructors understand the “what to click and create” information, while the focus on pedagogy aids in the creation of meaningful assignments and interactions with students. Effective faculty development involves treating instructors as adult learners and offering options, which can help faculty tailor their training and feel in control of the process (Samuel, 2016). Methods can include training courses, one-on-one assistance, mentorship, and communities of practice (Samuel, 2016; Lackey, 2011). Effective training resources will focus on instructional methods that reinforce best course practices such as organized assignment guidelines with clear evaluation criteria and sequenced activities and assignments which allow learners the opportunity to learn through multiple challenging experiences (Binit & Afip, 2014).

Faculty development must be accessible to all faculty and partnered with a “consistent method for evaluating and enhancing online courses and faculty teaching in online format” (Gaimaro & Lomellini, 2019). Tools and training that provide opportunities for faculty to reflect on their growth and collaborate with their disciplinary peers reinforces and elicits faculty drive to be efficient teachers (Gaimaro & Lomellini, 2019). Additionally, because online programs continue to “span a range of management styles” despite the indication of an initial “tilt toward centralization” (Legon & Garrett, 2018), institutions must establish a development program appropriate for their own organization, structure, and level of dedicated internal support.

## Conclusion

Sustainable change is most likely achieved when the impetus for change is rooted in evidence of need, addressed with a clear plan, supported-with a campus-wide campaign and dedicated investment (Aspen Institute, 2014). If a large portion of people are convinced that a problem exists, then actions directly related to the causes and solutions of the problem that are translated into institutional strategies and visibly valued - in word and action - by the institutional administration, then an institution can initiate deliberate cultural change. Cisco College sees enrollment and success trends as opportunities to deliberately target causes and solutions of a widely perceived weakness in course quality, student support, and student course and institutional engagement.

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MAKING CONNECTIONS:  
**GOALS, ACTIONS, & INTENDED RESULTS**



## MAKING CONNECTIONS: GOALS, ACTIONS, & INTENDED RESULTS

*Making Connections* has two goals that seek to achieve two results through four actions. The four actions are designed to make connections necessary to improve the student experience in online courses. The actions will provide students with access to information and resources, and faculty with access to professional development, course design tools, and course evaluation tools.

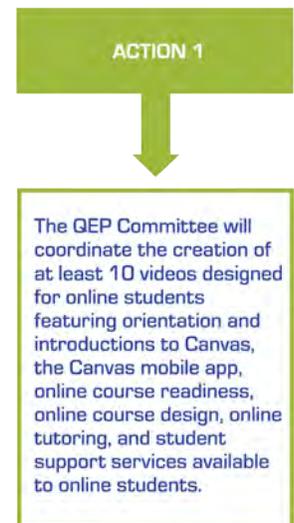


**Goal #1** Connect our students to resources that help them succeed in their online classes.

**ACTION 1: CREATE VIDEOS-** The College will create at least 10 videos designed for online students. The videos will cover topics and information that online students and faculty called for to improve online classes. The videos will feature a mix of recorded video footage, faculty and staff testimonials, campus photos, screen captures of the College website, and doodle animations. The Marketing Department purchased Doodly, a user-friendly drag and drop video creator that produces engaging video content by capitalizing on simple curiosity and mixed modalities – written, visual image, and audio – to increase viewer engagement and hold attention.

The videos will range from 1-5 minutes in length and direct students to support services; the College does not want to replace support services with videos nor treat the individual short videos as a support service. Rather, the College aims to implement the use of engaging, easily accessible video content to better inform students of the resources that can assist them. Adding videos to the College website is an initiative to better connect with students and a methodology that can be utilized across the College. Adding engaging website content will carry forward the College's recent progress; the current College website was launched only in 2017 with a design and provider capable of using videos, social media streams, and forms.

While the videos will be designed with online courses and students in mind, orientation and information videos can help all students determine if an online course is right for them, better utilize the LMS when it is paired with in-person courses, and locate support services available to help them in any class regardless of location or format. While the videos created specifically for the QEP will be on the College website, the doodle video software can also be used by faculty to add visually engaging elements to their online courses.



VIDEO TOPIC OR FEATURE	STUDENT OR FACULTY NEED ADDRESSED	COLLEGE AREAS INVOLVED
General Orientation	Basic information about getting started for new students, including online only students.	Student Services
Introduction to Canvas	Canvas login, global and course navigation, major features, and student settings.	Student Services Distance Education Faculty
Online Tutoring	Overview of the service and explanation of how to use the platform.	Student Services Distance Learning Online Students
Introduction to Canvas Mobile App	Canvas app login and best practices for student use.	Distance Education Faculty
Online Course Readiness	Best practices for success in an online course including technical capabilities.	Student Services Distance Education Faculty Online Students
Time Management in Online Courses	Best practices for time management including online faculty tips.	Student Services Faculty
Online Course Design	Review of design features & location that will be consistent across all courses including syllabi, course information section, learning outcomes, modules, and gradebooks.	Distance Education Faculty
Math & Tutoring Lab	Overview of services provided and clips from tutors.	Student Services Math Faculty Student Users
Writing Center	Overview of services provided and clips from tutors.	Student Services English Faculty Student Users
Library	Overview of services provided, tour of Library in the learning management system.	Distance Education Library Faculty

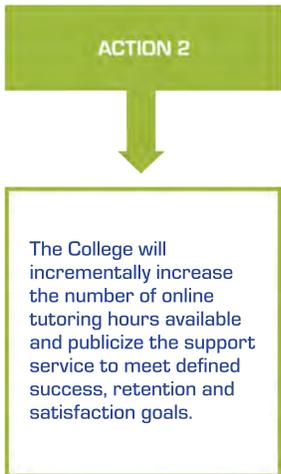
TABLE 10

**ACTION 2: SCALE UP ONLINE TUTORING-** The College will scale up online tutoring, which is provided through [Upswing](#). Upswing is a comprehensive student service platform whose mission is “to create a connected education experience for underserved students,” through digital support services that make learning more equitable, such as an academic advising platform, tutoring, student mentoring, and text messaging. Online tutoring is available 24/7 for over eighty subjects on Upswing’s platform using audio, video, screenshare, and chat. Upswing provides an assigned a Higher Education Retention Office (H.E.R.O.), which serves as the College’s account manager and product specialist for onboarding, training, marketing, and engagement.

The College began using the Upswing tutoring platform and text messaging service in February 2018. The text messaging service was positively received and is increasingly used throughout the College. However, despite expanding the pilot and marketing via text messaging, email, and Canvas announcements, use of the tutoring platform has remained low. In 2018-2019, seven students utilized Upswing for a total of twenty sessions, meaning students used far fewer than the fifty hours of online tutoring that the College purchased and made available.

The College will incrementally increase available tutoring hours to identify the appropriate number of hours to purchase annually and ensure students utilize the hours purchased; progress benchmarks for incremental increase in available hours and student usage are defined in the assessment plan. To achieve the benchmarks, marketing strategies will be expanded to increase outreach, including signage on both campuses, a social media push, and more intentional use of text messaging, email, and LMS announcements. The QEP Coordinator and the Academic Support Services Coordinator will establish a schedule of text messages to send at defined points in the semester: start of term introduction of the tutoring service, mid-term reminder, and bi-weekly reminders following mid-term. Text messages will coincide with email reminders to students and faculty, and global announcements in the LMS that all students see upon login. The Coordinators will also organize video displays in the campus common areas. Signage will be refreshed on both campuses, including classrooms, common areas, and dormitories at the start and middle of each term. At the end of each year, the Coordinators will review the marketing strategies and make adjustments to the number, sequence, and content of the messages, emails, and announcements for the next year; this regular formative assessment is included in the QEP timeline.

Additionally, Upswing will provide training for faculty and students. In spring of year one, an Upswing H.E.R.O. will present at the faculty convocation providing an overview of the tutoring service, and provide training sessions for faculty to demonstrate how to access the tutoring platform, schedule sessions, participate in a session, and adjust user settings such as reminder notifications. In the summer of year one, a Doodly video will be created to introduce the online tutoring service under Action 1. The H.E.R.O. will return in fall of year two to offer training sessions for students that demonstrate how to access on-demand tutoring or schedule a tutoring session. Training sessions and presentations can be repeated as needed as part of the College’s contract with Upswing; however, providing training and demonstrations can also be absorbed by the Director of Distance Education and experienced online faculty, institutionalizing the practice of regular outreach to students.



**Goal #2** Connect our faculty to professional development opportunities that help them enhance their online courses.

**ACTION 3: IMPLEMENT A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM-**

The College will implement a sustainable professional development program for online faculty that provides access to a trusted training resource and fosters faculty collaboration while making development available to part-time and off-site faculty, too. The College will purchase an institutional membership and workshop pass to the [Online Learning Consortium](#) so that faculty have access to a training resource that addresses varied interests, disciplines, and experience levels.



Currently, new faculty and faculty teaching their first online course are required to participate in a LMS training course. However, the College does not provide access to external resources dedicated to online instruction for faculty to continue training. The Online Learning Consortium (formerly the Sloan Consortium when it began in 1999) is a worldwide organization and leading resource devoted to helping institutions and individuals improve the quality of online education. The Consortium provides a full range of member services including an annual schedule of professional development courses, webinars, and workshops that can help institutions demonstrate and improve quality. An institutional membership will allow all faculty access to synchronous and asynchronous workshops that fit any level of experience. The workshop pass will secure the lowest rate possible for the QEP time frame. Even after the QEP, however, the institutional membership is a sustainable professional development resource that will compliment the College's internal training.

The QEP Coordinator will organize and assist two groups, each with at least ten faculty members, in selecting and completing an Online Learning Consortium training opportunity; selections will be based on faculty member experience level and self-assessment of their own online courses. The self-assessment will be used to define professional development goals which is a required part of the College's annual faculty evaluation plan and, once completed, the development will be recorded within the evaluation plan. Because the College cannot provide release time for faculty undertaking the training, faculty will be compensated with a training stipend and ample time to learn, implement, and assess. Each group will have one year to evaluate their own courses to define development goals, complete a training opportunity, and update their online courses. Faculty will then have one year to deliver their updated courses, assess and make adjustments to the course as necessary, and deliver the course a second time (as allowable in the department course schedule). Faculty will complete summative assessment of their online courses at the end of the second year.

As faculty enhance their own courses, they will also identify an opportunity at the College to share what they have learned, such as a department or faculty meeting, a Faculty Senate meeting, or a convocation break-out session; faculty may also be asked to share their experience updating an online course with the Board of Regents as part of presenting the QEP annual report to the Board. All presentations by faculty will be recorded and added to the faculty resources maintained on the LMS so that faculty in other disciplines and part-time faculty can share in the development opportunities.

In addition to implementing the Online Learning Consortium as a sustainable resource, the QEP Coordinator will organize a schedule of speakers and/or presentations related to online learning that will help sustain QEP momentum and provide additional opportunities to capture presentations that can be shared with part-time faculty. Each year of the QEP, at least one speaker will be brought to campus. As explained in Action 2, the initial QEP speaker will be the Upswing H.E.R.O. providing training for faculty to assist students with online tutoring.

**ACTION 3**

The College will implement a sustainable professional development program that provides online faculty access to the Online Learning Consortium, features annual speakers or presentations for all faculty, includes faculty collaboration, and makes professional development available to part-time faculty.

**ACTION 4: IMPLEMENT ONLINE COURSE DESIGN & EVALUATION**

**TOOLS-** The College will implement two online course evaluation tools: a course design checklist and a course scorecard. The course design checklist and the scorecard were developed by adapting the Open SUNY Course Quality Review Rubric (OSCQR) made available by the Online Learning Consortium and the Open SUNY Center for Online Teaching Excellence under creative commons license. The QEP Steering Committee provided input to finalize the checklist and scorecard items, and recommended them to the Reaffirmation Leadership Team to be included in the College's faculty evaluation plan. Prior to adding these resources, the faculty evaluation plan only had an observation form for in-person classes which resulted in little focus on development goals, observations, or evaluations of online classes.

**ACTION 4**

Faculty will utilize an Online Course Design Checklist and an Online Course Scorecard to assess and improve the quality of their online courses and meet defined consistency and quality standards.

The [Online Course Design Checklist](#) establishes minimum course requirements and common design standards for online courses. It is designed to be used at the start of a course as a self-evaluation or by an external evaluator/observer. The checklist requires best practices in design that will result in consistency across online courses, such as use of a homepage and a course information section, required course menu items, a print-friendly syllabus option, course content modules to sequence material, ADA compliance, and first week engagement and assignments to establish attendance. The checklist will ensure that online students will find common elements in all courses and encounter assignments or activities that engage them with their instructor and peer students early in their courses.

The [Online Course Scorecard](#) is a comprehensive review and evaluation tool designed to be employed at the end of an online course. The Scorecard expands on the use of all the checklist items throughout the course. For example, in addition to the print-friendly syllabus required on the checklist, the scorecard requires links to relevant campus policies in the syllabus and/or course. In addition to using content modules to sequence information, the scorecard measures well-written assignment instructions and use of engaging resources that facilitate communication. In addition to first week engagement, the scorecard looks for timely and regular feedback throughout the term.

The checklist and the scorecard are interactive tools that align with the OSCQR approach: they are flexible and approach course review as a professional development exercise. A user can click on any item in the checklist or scorecard and link to the OSCQR website that provides an explanation of the OSCQR standard that item is based on. For example, the first item on the design checklist under 'Interaction' states: "Within the first week, learners have the opportunity to get to know the instructor." Clicking on this item takes users to a webpage with an explanation and video on social presence on the online space, references for the research basis behind social presence, ideas to refresh an online course to increase social presence, links to the Teaching Online Pedagogical Repository at the University of Central Florida, and additional resources related to social presence.

Both groups of faculty members pursuing professional development through the Online Learning Consortium will be included in the membership of the QEP committee for the two-years during which they train and upgrade their courses. Committee meetings will be utilized for faculty to self-evaluate their online courses with the design checklist and scorecard and target opportunities improvement and innovation. Prior to the first faculty group beginning their self-evaluations, the QEP Coordinator will also provide training for academic leadership on the design checklist and scorecard, preparing the College's directors, division chairs, and department heads to assist online faculty and to evaluate online courses within the annual faculty evaluation plan; the training will take place September 2019.

**MORE CONNECTIONS:** Not only do the four QEP actions establish connections for faculty and students that will improve the online student experience, there are deliberate connections between the four QEP actions. The list of videos was developed to reinforce the other three QEP actions. A video introducing common online course features corresponds to the course design standards established by the Course Design Checklist, for example. The Online Course Design Checklist and Online Course Scorecard correspond to the best practices that faculty will be incentivized to study through the Online Learning Consortium. The video for online course design is slated for year three, however, so faculty have the chance to become acquainted with the course design standards before students begin looking for them. The video featuring online tutoring will be a central marketing element in the push to scale-up use of the service and is scheduled for year one to drive up usage and meet progress benchmarks.

While professional development and course evaluation may be designed to improve the online courses, training and collaboration will also improve in-person instructional methods and LMS usage for all courses. *Making Connections* aims at improving the online student experience, but will improve the general student experience as well. Individually, the four QEP actions are useful and sustainable initiatives, but the connections between them will achieve broad involvement and widespread impact.

## INTENDED RESULTS

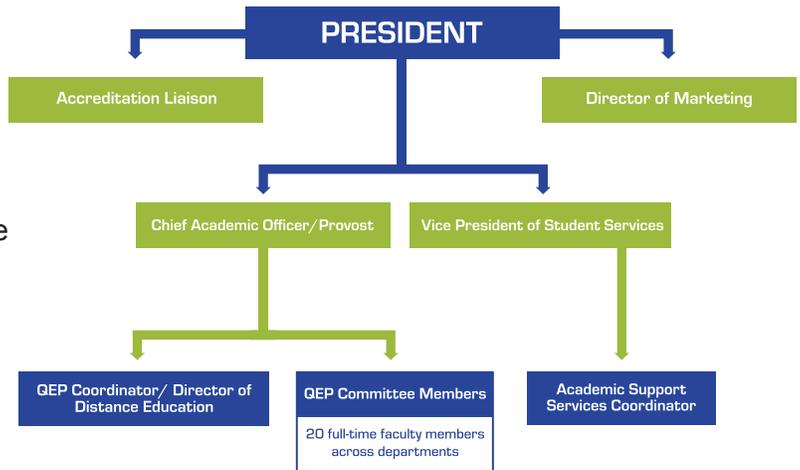
*Making Connections* aims for two specific student success results:



Better informed and supported students will remain in their online classes, and online classes with consistent course design and enhanced engagement and instruction methods will help students succeed. Faculty and students declared the need for consistency, information, engagement, support resources, and training. *Making Connections* aligns four actions to address those needs and improve the student experience in online courses. When online course success rates have increased, and withdrawal rates have decreased, the connections will have been made.

## COMMITTED RESOURCES TO INITIATE, IMPLEMENT, AND COMPLETE THE QEP

**Personnel Resources:** The President appointed and approved a job description for a Coordinator to facilitate and organize implementation and sustained progress of the QEP actions. The QEP Coordinator reports to the Chief Academic Officer/Provost. A QEP Committee has been added to the College's list of committees to which faculty and staff are assigned annually; committee service is a required duty for all faculty and most staff positions. The QEP committee will work with the QEP Coordinator over the next five years. The accompanying chart illustrates the individuals and committees involved in the implementation of the QEP; a brief description of their roles is provided.



### Chief Academic Officer/Provost

Dr. Carol Dupree, the CAO/Provost will oversee all QEP activities and work with the Coordinator to determine membership in the QEP Committee each year. The CAO will serve as liaison to the President and the Executive Council to facilitate activities that involve collaboration with student services and to maintain the QEP budget.

### QEP Coordinator

Ms. Sheron Caton, Director of Distance Education, has been appointed [QEP Coordinator](#). Ms. Caton co-chaired the QEP steering committee and will chair the QEP standing committee each year. She will work with the committee members to ensure progress toward the four QEP actions is made in accordance with the timeline, implement the QEP assessment methods, present assessment results to the committee and coordinate the committee annual report. Ms. Caton has served as Director of Distance Education since 2015.

### Accreditation Liaison

Ms. Heather Hicks oversees all accreditation activities and ensures compliance with SACS-COC requirements. As liaison, Ms. Hicks will work collaboratively with the QEP Coordinator and provide support for the Coordinator and the QEP Committee. Ms. Hicks will compile QEP documentation and reports in preparation for the QEP Impact Report. Ms. Hicks will serve as liaison to the President to ensure annual reports are presented to the Board of Regents.

### **Director of Marketing**

Mr. Colton Wedeking serves as the Director of Marketing and Public Relations. Mr. Wedeking is a member of the QEP Presentation Team and his predecessor served on the QEP Steering Committee to provide guidance on development of the QEP website. Mr. Wedeking developed and will work with the QEP Coordinator to maintain the QEP website. Mr. Wedeking coordinated in the development of the initial QEP videos and will remain as ex-officio to the QEP Committee each year to assist in producing videos and compiling viewer feedback data.

### **Academic Support Services Coordinator**

Ms. Renee Leath serves as an academic advisor in the Counseling department; prior to her current position, Ms. Leath served as a student success specialist. In both roles, Ms. Leath oversaw the early alert system, coordinated the Abilene campus Math & Tutoring Center, and provided new student orientation. She served on the 2018-2019 QEP committee and is a member of the QEP Presentation Team. Ms. Leath will remain on the QEP committee each year to provide consistency, manage the marketing and assessment related to online tutoring, act as liaison to the Vice President of Student Services branch of the College, and assist the QEP Coordinator with organizing student services personnel involved in the videos developed for the QEP.

### **Institutional Research Office**

The Institutional Research Office will support the QEP by maintaining data dashboards on the College Website and tracking retention and success data for students that complete online tutoring sessions.

### **QEP Committee, 2019-2020**

Beginning with Year 1, the QEP Committee acts as the implementation committee responsible for coordinating the start of the QEP actions. The Committee will receive training on the online course design checklist, review and provide feedback on the orientation videos and QEP website, develop the marketing plan for online tutoring. Committee membership includes the faculty that volunteered to join the first professional development training group; the group will complete OLC workshops or courses and assess the professional development resources and timeline at the end of year 1.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERSHIP	MEMBERSHIP
Dr. Carol Dupree, CAO/Provost	Dr. Kam Zinsser, Dean of Workforce & Economic Development/Online faculty
Shirley Dove, Director of Enrollment Services/Registrar	Renee Leath, Academic Support Services Coordinator/Tutoring Center/former student
Colton Wedeking, Director of Marketing	Jordan Burt, Librarian
Heather Hicks, Accreditation Liaison	<a href="#">10-12 faculty members from across disciplines</a>

### **QEP Committee, 2020-2024**

Each year the QEP committee membership will be refreshed to include new student services members and online faculty. For years three and four, membership will include the faculty that volunteers to join the second professional development group. The committee will review assessment results and provide feedback and recommendations to the QEP Coordinator annually. Assignment to the QEP committee and volunteering for professional development will fulfill the members' annual committee service required in the faculty and staff job descriptions.

### **Physical Resources**

No additional physical spaces or office equipment will be needed to implement the QEP. The QEP Coordinator will remain in her current office space. Faculty undertaking professional development through the Online Learning Consortium will continue to utilize their current offices and computer equipment; the QEP Coordinator will facilitate the distribution of computer hardware such as webcams or software such as screencast or Doodly as necessary. The Marketing department will utilize already owned video equipment to support the creation of videos as needed.

## Financial Resources

The President authorized the Chief Financial Officer to begin committing financial resources to the development of *Making Connections* in 2018-2019. Initial costs included office supplies to support the QEP committees, survey software, and marketing supplies. Over the next five years, the institution is prepared to allocate the funding necessary for implementation which includes the costs associated with the online tutoring service, Doodly video software, Online Learning Consortium membership and workshop pass fees, training stipends for faculty, release time for the QEP Coordinator, and travel costs for visiting speakers. It is estimated that the College will devote approximately \$36,000 per year to implement and sustain the *Making Connections* initiative. A [5-year budget](#) is provided in the appendix.

## Summary of Resources

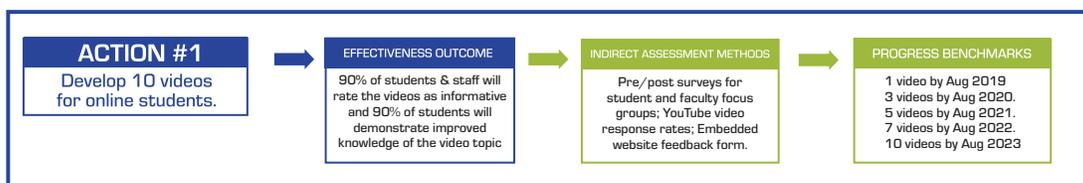
The College has committed to provide adequate resources to initiate, implement, and complete *Making Connections*. Upon completion of the QEP, the costs associated with UpSwing and the Online Learning Consortium can be absorbed by the Distance Education and Student Services budgets; costs associated with continued development of engaging website material such as Doodly software can be absorbed by the Marketing or other department budgets. The College aims to put in place initiatives that become common ways of actively presenting information to online students, consistently providing faculty access to development resources, and consistently evaluating online courses and course success.

## PLAN TO ASSESS ACHIEVEMENT

Effectiveness outcomes with success targets and assessment methods have been identified for each QEP action. Outcomes articulate the institutional improvements the College wishes to see as a result of the QEP. Direct assessment methods provide evidence of improvement in student success and online course design and quality; indirect assessment methods will document changes in faculty and student behavior and perceptions. Assessment is included in the QEP timeline to ensure ongoing formative assessment occurs annually to identify necessary adjustments and provide the basis for summative assessment of the five year plan; personnel responsible for assessment are identified as committed resources. Where applicable, benchmarks are identified to ensure measured progress toward the success targets. Where possible, an already existing constituency will be utilized for feedback, assessment, and reporting in order to integrate the QEP actions into the institutional culture; for example, the Technology & Distance Learning Committee will be utilized as a focus group to review videos, and the QEP annual report will be presented to the Faculty & Staff Senate and Board of Regents.

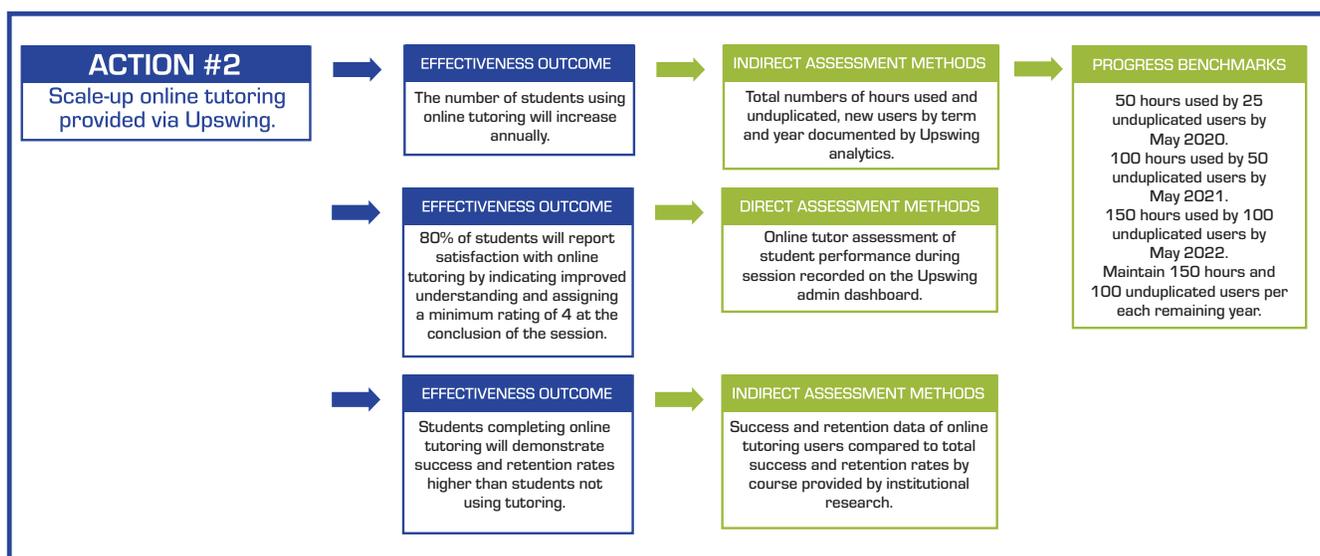
### ACTION 1: CREATE VIDEOS-

Videos will be assessed by formative, indirect assessment methods: focus groups and viewer feedback. First and second year classes, the Faculty & Staff Senate, and the Technology & Distance Learning Committee will be used as focus groups and asked to rate each video's content, length, clarity, and effectiveness. Effective videos will result in students demonstrating improved knowledge of the topic compared to prior knowledge before viewing the video, and faculty indicating that video content addresses common student questions or difficulties. Viewer feedback for videos published to the College's YouTube channel will be captured via YouTube response rates; videos published to the College website will be accompanied with an embedded feedback form asking viewers to rate the video as helpful or not helpful. The QEP Coordinator and Accreditation Liaison will organize the student and faculty focus groups and record feedback; feedback will be used to make changes to videos or adapt plans for future videos. As webmaster, the Director of Marketing will compile response data from YouTube and the College website annually.



## **ACTION 2: SCALE UP ONLINE TUTORING-**

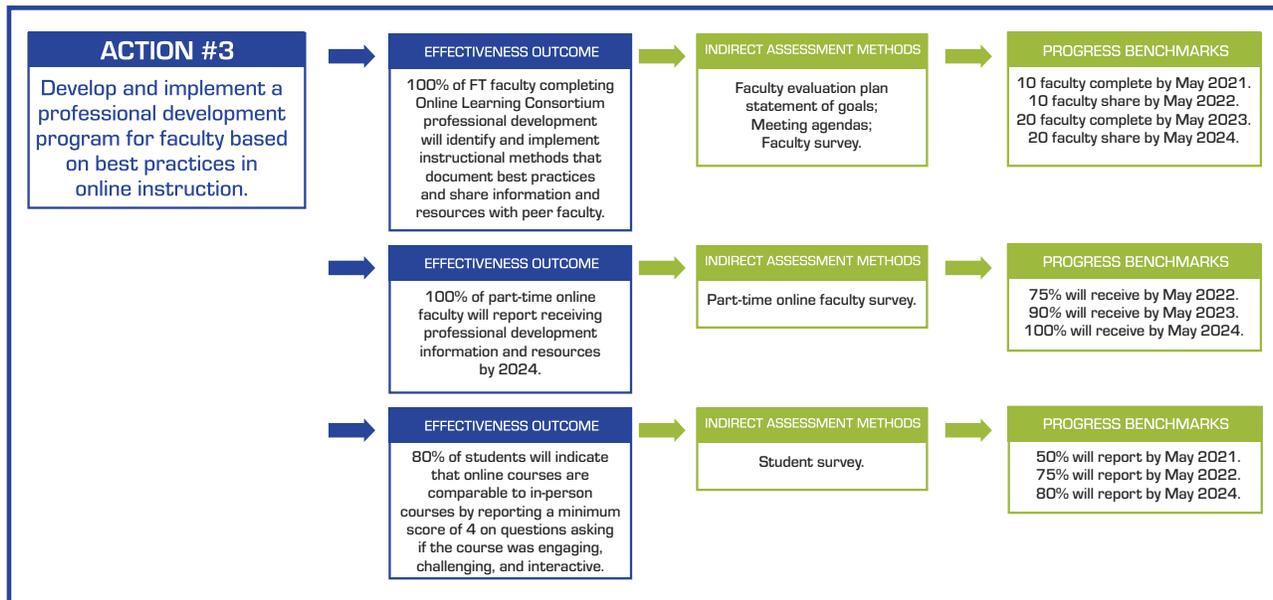
Online tutoring will be assessed for increased usage, student satisfaction, and impact on student performance. The number of unduplicated new users and hours utilized by students will be tracked each term. Student feedback will be solicited via surveys that ask students if their tutoring session improved their understanding and if they were happy with the session; tutor feedback regarding student performance will be solicited via survey, also. Usage analytics and student feedback will provide indirect assessment of student behavior and perceptions, while survey comments from tutors identifying skills demonstrated by the student during the session will provide direct assessment of student learning. Upswing automatically surveys tutors and students at the conclusion of each session; analytics, feedback, and comments are provided via the Upswing administrative dashboard. Success and retention rates of students using online tutoring will be compared to rates for non-tutored students in the same courses; success and retention data will be provided by Institutional Research. The Academic Support Services Coordinator that currently oversees the on-campus tutoring services will compile the formative assessment data at the end of each term.



## **ACTION 3: IMPLEMENT A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM-**

The professional development program will be assessed for progress and completion, as well as faculty and student satisfaction with online courses, and inclusion of part-time faculty. Twenty full-time faculty will complete professional development, update their online courses, and share what they have learned by the end of year 5. Each group will follow a two-year process. Self evaluate their current online courses using new design and evaluation tools; establish professional development goals based on the self-evaluation; and begin professional development during the first year; complete and share their professional development; update, deliver, and assess their online courses during the second year. The program will be integrated into the College's existing annual faculty evaluation plan. Faculty will identify their professional development goals and achievements in the evaluation plan during the first year, and report on completion in the second year.

All presentations where faculty share what they have learned and how they have updated their courses will be recorded and housed in the Instructor Resources area on the LMS. Part-time faculty surveys will be used to document awareness and track use of available development resources. As full-time faculty update and enhance their online courses, surveys will be used to track changes in student and faculty confidence in online courses. Ultimately, all four actions coincide to ensure that students and faculty view online courses as comparable to on-campus courses. The college defines comparability as an online course students rate as engaging, challenging, and interactive. The QEP Coordinator and Accreditation Liaison will compile data and information from the faculty evaluation plan and disseminate faculty and student surveys each Spring.



**ACTION 4: IMPLEMENT ONLINE COURSE DESIGN & EVALUATION TOOLS-**

The Online Course Design Checklist and the Online Course Scorecard will act as direct assessment methods for the professional development plan in Action 3. Successful use of the design checklist to implement minimum standards to begin an online course, and completion of professional development opportunities will result in tangible improvements in online courses, which will be documented by improved scorecard results by the end of each professional development group's two-year cycle. In each group's first year and prior to beginning professional development, faculty will receive training on the checklist and scorecard and use them to self-evaluate their current online courses, establishing baseline quality scores for each member. In the second year when faculty delivers their updated courses, the QEP Coordinator will work with the faculty to complete formative assessment by self-evaluating the courses before and after the Fall term and make changes as necessary to deliver the course again in the Spring. The QEP Coordinator will assist faculty members in completing summative assessment by self-scoring the updated online courses using the Online Course Scorecard at the end of the second year. As course schedules allow, faculty will be able to deliver their courses twice before summative assessments occurs.



The intended results of the QEP – to increase online course success rates and decrease online course withdrawal rates – will be tracked using the [Student Success Dashboard](#) created by the Institutional Research Office. QEP progress and achievements will be shared via the [QEP webpage](#) that is maintained jointly by the QEP Coordinator and Director of Marketing, along with QEP annual reports developed by the QEP Coordinator. The annual report will include the QEP committee records, assessment results for each action, and use of the results to make changes to the QEP actions, timeline, and/or budget. The formative assessment completed annually, the data dashboard, the annual report, and the QEP website will provide a sound evidence base for the QEP Impact Report in 2025.

# IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

## YEAR 1

FALL 2019

### AUGUST:

- QEP Kickoff
- Orientation videos created
- Professional development faculty group A identified, included in QEP Committee
- Purchase 50 Upswing tutoring hours for the year
- Implement online tutoring marketing strategies

### SEPTEMBER:

- Academic leadership trained on the Online Course Design Checklist
- Professional development faculty group A trained on the Online Course Design Checklist & Scorecard
- Group A self-evaluates their online courses and selects OLC workshops

SPRING 2020

### JANUARY:

- Upswing H.E.R.O. presents at Spring Convocation
- Group A begins OLC workshops

### APRIL:

- Group A identifies professional development goals in the faculty evaluation plan

SUMMER 2020

### JUNE - JULY:

- Assess online tutoring & update marketing strategies
- Assess orientation videos
- Compile survey & faculty evaluation plan data
- QEP Coordinator creates the annual report & updates QEP website
- Canvas introduction and online tutoring videos created
- Summer classes used as focus groups to assess videos

## YEAR 2

FALL 2020

### AUGUST:

- QEP speaker presents at Fall convocation
- Purchase 100 Upswing tutoring hours for the year
- Implement online tutoring marketing strategies

### SEPTEMBER:

- QEP Annual Report delivered to Board of Regents and Faculty Senate

### DECEMBER:

- Group A completes OLC workshops

SPRING 2021

### JANUARY:

- Group A begins updating online courses & schedules opportunity to share with peers

### APRIL:

- Online faculty & staff surveys disseminated
- Group A reports on professional development goals in the faculty evaluation plan

SUMMER 2021

### JUNE - JULY:

- Assess online tutoring & update marketing strategies
- Assess Canvas introduction & online tutoring videos
- Compile survey & faculty evaluation plan data
- QEP Coordinator creates the annual report & updates QEP website
- Canvas app and course readiness videos created for website
- Summer classes used as focus groups to assess videos
- Group A completes updating online courses

## YEAR 3

FALL 2021

### AUGUST:

- QEP speaker presents at Fall convocation
- Purchase 150 Upswing tutoring hours for the year
- Group A begins delivering updated online courses
- Professional development faculty Group B identified, included in QEP Committee
- Implement online tutoring marketing strategies

### SEPTEMBER:

- QEP Annual Report delivered to Board of Regents and Faculty Senate
- Group B trained on the Online Course Design Checklist & Scorecard

### NOVEMBER:

- Group A works with QEP Coordinator to review & make changes to courses as needed

**YEAR 4**

SPRING 2022

**JANUARY:**

- Group A delivers updated courses for the 2nd time (if applicable within course schedule)
- Group B begins OLC workshops

**FEBRUARY:**

- Group B self-evaluates their online courses and selects OLC workshops

**MARCH:**

- Group A courses assessed with the Online Course Scorecard & reported in faculty evaluation plan

**APRIL:**

- Group B identifies professional development goals in the faculty evaluation plan

SUMMER 2022

**JUNE - JULY:**

- Assess online tutoring & update marketing strategies
- Assess Canvas app and course readiness videos
- Compile survey faculty evaluation plan data
- QEP Coordinator creates the annual report & updates QEP website
- Time management & online course design videos created for website
- Summer classes used as focus groups to assess videos

FALL 2022

**AUGUST:**

- QEP speaker presents as Fall convocation
- Purchase 150 Upswing tutoring hours for the year

**SEPTEMBER:**

- QEP Annual Report delivered to Board of Regents and Faculty Senate

**DECEMBER:**

- Group B completes OLC workshops

SPRING 2023

**JANUARY:**

- Group B begins updating online courses & schedules opportunity to share with peers

**APRIL:**

- Online faculty & staff surveys disseminated
- Group B reports on professional development goals in the faculty evaluation plan

SPRING 2023

**JUNE - JULY:**

- Assess online tutoring & update marketing strategies
- Assess time management & online course design videos
- Compile survey & faculty evaluation plan data
- QEP Coordinator creates the annual report & updates QEP website
- Math & Writing Center videos created
- Summer classes used as focus groups to assess videos
- Group B completes updating online courses

**YEAR 5**

FALL 2023

**AUGUST:**

- QEP speaker presents as Fall convocation
- Purchase 150 Upswing tutoring hours for the year
- Group B begins delivering updating online courses & schedules opportunity to share with peers

**SEPTEMBER:**

- QEP Annual Report delivered to Board of Regents and Faculty Senate

**NOVEMBER:**

- Group B works with QEP Coordinator to review & make changes to courses as needed

SPRING 2024

**JANUARY:**

- Group B delivers updated courses for the 2nd time (if applicable within schedule)

**MARCH:**

- Group B courses assessed with the Online Course Scorecard & reported in faculty evaluation plan

**APRIL:**

- Online faculty & staff surveys disseminated

SUMMER 2024

**JUNE - JULY:**

- Assess online tutoring & update marketing strategies
- Assess Math & Writing Center videos
- Compile survey & faculty evaluation plan data
- QEP Coordinator creates the annual report & updates QEP website
- Library video created for website
- Summer classes used as focus groups to assess videos