



QEP IMPACT REPORT

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TITLE AND DESCRIPTION

Central Georgia Technical College (CGTC) is a two-year public commuter college serving a diverse student body by offering traditional on-site and distance education academic programs and services, adult education, continuing education, and customized business and industry services across an 11-county service area. In response to college data identifying a significant population of at-risk students, the College determined that improving its academic advisement processes and support services would significantly impact overall student success, retention, and program completion.

The resulting Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), entitled *Addressing the ALFAA B's Identifying Barriers and Setting Benchmarks through Purposeful Advisement: A Plan to Improve Performance of At-Risk Students* was developed and accepted by SACSCOC in 2015.



INITIAL GOALS AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

The goal of Central Georgia Technical College's QEP was to address specific barriers to student success and improve the environment surrounding student learning for at-risk students by implementing a three-pronged intervention strategy 1) a purposeful advising approach (ALFAA – The Five Step Advisement Process); 2) academic support services, and 3) student support services. Goals and related outcomes are outlined in Table 1. QEP Goals and Student Learning Outcomes.

Table 1: QEP Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

QEP Goals	Student Learning Outcomes
1. Students will be knowledgeable of purposeful advising and techniques which support student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Students will be able to devise and use an academic plan which promotes program completion.b. Students will utilize academic support resources for successful course completion.c. Students will utilize student support resources that enhance their educational goals.
2. Students will be able to access and use College resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge in using college success resources, e.g., BannerWeb, Gateway, DegreeWorks, student email, and registration and withdrawal procedures.b. Students will be able to locate appropriate reference materials utilizing learning resources.
3. Students will be successful in their academic support and program-level courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Students enrolled in the COLL 1500-College Success course will be successful in their co-requisite Learning Support course.b. Students successfully completing the COLL 1500-College Success course and Learning Support/LS 0090 courses will be successful in the program-level ENGL or MATH.

CHANGES TO THE QEP AND REASONS FOR MAKING CHANGES

Changes to Organizational Structure

After initial submission, the review team from SACSCOC suggested clarifying where the QEP fit into the College's organizational structure and concern for allocating adequate time for the QEP Chairperson to provide oversight of QEP activities while serving as lead faculty for the Electronics Technology program. College Leadership responded by submitting a QEP organizational chart, which visually depicted the roles of staff supporting the QEP oversight and implementation. The College in response to the visiting team, developed a Coordinator position to assist the appointed Chair. The QEP Chairperson maintained responsibility for coordinating the focused activities of the Plan, whereas the new QEP Coordinator position supported the QEP Chairperson and Co-Chair by leading operational activities (i.e. scheduling Committee meetings, developing professional development and information sessions, promoting QEP activities, maintaining documentation, etc.). The change in division of duties provided the time and effort split needed under the initial QEP organizational structure.

Changes to the Purposeful Advisement Approach

Implementing the QEP's purposeful advisement approach required teaching academic advisors about the ALFAA Five-Step Advisement Process. Through advisement sessions guided by the ALFAA process, student advisees gained the knowledge of purposeful advising techniques by aligning expectations with their goals, associating those goals with their satisfactory academic progress, orienting them within their program of study, and identifying when they should reach the point of completion. The ALFAA Advisement Process was structured around barriers and benchmarks identified through input from CGTC faculty, staff, and students and organized into five steps (*Academic Preparedness, Life Challenges, Financial, Advise for Classes, and Affirm*). The ALFAA Advisement Sheet was created as a web-based advisement tool used to ensure that each advisee was advised comprehensively and with a focus on credential completion. Afterward each advisee automatically received a copy of the ALFAA Advisement Sheet via email, including information about College resources discussed and direct hyperlinks to online information about academic and student support services.

The QEP Steering Committee hosted a QEP Kick-Off Celebration on each of the three campuses in early October of 2015. The event included food, themed giveaways promoting the ALFAA advisement process, and a physical walk through of the ALFAA Five-Step Advisement Process by faculty, staff, and student attendees. QEP Steering Committee members manned stations representing each of the five steps, where they explained the resources available to help students address barriers, the tools to navigate academic benchmarks, and their role in the purposeful advisement process. The QEP Steering Committee Chair and QEP Coordinator led twenty-four professional development sessions with academic advisors the first year providing detailed step-by-step training on the ALFAA advisement process. However, the ALFAA advisement rate for the first year, academic year (AY) 2016, was a disappointing 39%. The DegreeWorks/ALFAA Usage Survey for Advisors and Faculty Focus Groups revealed differences between intended and actual use. First, the ALFAA Advisement Sheet was perceived as a tool for in-person advisement sessions. Second, occupational programs with a prescribed course sequence (i.e. Nursing) were conducting academic advisement during class with the full group of students. Faculty advisors discussed each step of the ALFAA Advisement Sheet with the class; however, since individual students were not loaded into the electronic advisement sheet, they were not receiving the automatic email with resource links and the advisement session was not recorded in the advisement database. Additionally, advisors

reported gaps in personal awareness of College resources. In response, the Steering Committee implemented a range of modifications. Professional development sessions were updated to include scenarios depicting best practices using the ALFAA advisement process for in-person, online, phone, email, and group advisement sessions. The College realized the activities of the QEP should expand to all occupational students including at-risk. Emphasis was placed on the simplicity of loading each advised student by entering the student ID number into the first block of the ALFAA advisement sheet and the importance of advised students receiving the automated email providing a copy of the advisement sheet along with direct hyperlinks to College tools and resources. Information on the ALFAA Five-Step Advisement Process and College resources were integrated into New Faculty Orientations. QEP Refresher training was integrated into Professional Development Day events hosted each semester. Academic advisement refresher training was also offered annually, incorporating current advising information and best practices for the ALFAA Five-step Advisement Process. As a result, the ALFAA advisement rate increased to 67% by AY2019.

The ALFAA advisement sheet was added to the Student Portal, providing direct access for all students. (Students' self-access of the ALFAA Advisement Sheet was not considered purposeful advisement and not included in the ALFAA advisement rate.) In AY2018, the Steering Committee began directly training students about their role in ALFAA Advisement at "Empowerment Stations" offered at student events (i.e. Fall Festival). Students were provided with the contact information for their academic advisor, how to access the ALFAA advisement tool via their smartphones and the registration dates for upcoming semesters.

The ALFAA Advisement Sheet was updated over time based on feedback from advisors, students, and the QEP Steering Committee to address evolving student needs, as well as to improve access and usefulness. For example, based on feedback from faculty advisors during Focus Group sessions in Fall 2017, the Steering Committee made additions to ALFAA Step 2: Life Challenges to integrate information about Student Organizations offering mentoring services and on-campus Childcare Services. Additionally, in Spring 2018 ALFAA Step 4: Advise for Classes was updated to incorporate instructions on how to set up college email access on students' smartphones and other devices based on feedback from advisors. These adjustments were implemented to increase awareness of specific on-campus and online resources discussed by faculty during advisement in order to proactively reduce barriers to success. To improve access to advising tools in multiple systems, the Steering Committee recommended an embedded hyperlink to the ALFAA Advisement Sheet added in other advising tools and links to other advising tools to be added on the ALFAA Advisement Sheet in Fall 2017. The intent of cross-linking advisement tools and resources was to create a smooth transition between the purposeful advising framework in the ALFAA Advisement Sheet and the student-specific information. Enhancements were made to improve functionality of the ALFAA Advisement Process based on feedback from faculty and staff academic advisors, including streamlining administration of the electronic ALFAA Advisement Sheet by reducing the number of confirmation clicks, and directing the ALFAA Advisement Sheet follow-up email to both the personal and College email address for new students to ensure immediate access to resource information.

Changes to Academic Support Services

With the implementation of the QEP, the College Success course (COLL 1500) became a focus for improving student awareness of College resources such as DegreeWorks (platform where students are able to see their Grade Point Average, academic history, and progression toward completion, as well as create an academic plan for future terms). Each course section was

taught by a Success Coach who emphasized students' autonomy and efficacy in accessing academic support. The College Success course (COLL 1500) was also applied as a co-requisite to the lowest level Learning Support courses (ENGL 0090 and MATH 0090); therefore, any student who tested into a Learning Support course due to not meeting the minimum score on the placement exam would also be required to co-enroll in the College Success course. Throughout the QEP, the curriculum for the College Success course was reviewed and revised to focus on improving the skills necessary to successfully navigate College processes by revising assignments in collaboration with content experts from across the College; sharing simple videos explaining in-house resources, and hosting guest lecturers from academic and student support services presenting on targeted student success topics.

In 2018, systemwide changes integrating multiple measures into placement processes, along with a shift in student demographics, resulted in more student placements in credit-level English and Math courses; therefore, enrollment in Learning Support courses and the corequisite College Success course decreased over time. At the onset of the QEP in AY2015, 540 students enrolled in the College Success course annually, however, by the last reporting year for the QEP in AY2020, 84 students were enrolled, a decline of 85%. As enrollment in the College Success course declined, the role of the Library and Academic Success Centers in addressing the needs of at-risk students expanded. In addition to offering traditional library learning resources, library staff added technology resources (scientific calculators and laptops) for student check-out based on student need identified through the early alert system TEAMS, further described in the next section. To address the need for immediate assistance to student questions, the Library implemented an *Ask a Librarian* feature to provide immediate answers to College resource questions and academic support to students through chat and a *Frequently Asked Questions* page to address common questions and repeat chat topics. In a collaborative initiative with English faculty, the Academic Success Center introduced a Writing Center to supplement classroom instruction with targeted feedback. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the launch of a new tutoring platform with online tutoring rooms and appointment scheduling capabilities, as well group tutoring sessions. The Library is currently leading collegewide efforts to expand custom high-quality digital content on academic support topics with the goal of making access to content traditionally taught in the College Success course available to all students.

Changes to Student Support Services

Implementation of the QEP provided an opportunity for the College to improve collaboration between student support services and academic support services. In 2015, a new early alert system, TEAMS (Technical College System of Georgia Early Alert Management System), was piloted in learning support and general education classes. Led by the Student Navigator, TEAMS aims to improve student retention and graduation rates by identifying students with academic barriers and connecting them to College resources or interventions intended to help them succeed. As a member of the QEP Steering Committee, the Student Navigator participated in discussions about student needs and outcomes, as well as efforts to address gaps, which informed operational processes. For example, faculty and staff familiar with at-risk populations (i.e. Success Coaches teaching COLL 1500, Academic Success Center Coordinators, Special Populations Directors, etc.) were recruited to work with alerted students to develop a plan for getting back on track. As additional academic division staff were integrated into the TEAMS early alert process, the Student Navigator launched supporting strategies in collaboration with QEP Committee members such as providing professional development to help faculty recognize early signs of struggling students (Professional Development Director); implementing automated alerts based on students reattempting a previously failed class

(Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs); and recording short videos about College resources, best practices for College success, and navigating College processes (Division Chair for General Education-College Support).

The College's **Raising Expectations of Achievement (REACH)** student organization also adapted to assist more at-risk students and to utilize more partnerships across the College. REACH was initially designed to engage African American male students enrolled in Learning Support courses between the ages of 18 and 28 entering as a first-time college student with the intent of reducing the academic gap. The student organization offers bi-weekly workshops on topics supporting academic success and provides faculty and staff volunteer mentors who build relationships with the male students and act as a personal guide throughout their college experience. As a strategy to increase awareness of the REACH program among the targeted population of first-term African American male students enrolled in Learning Support courses, classroom visits to the co-requisite College Success course (COLL 1500) sections were implemented during Spring Semester 2018. REACH Mentors and workshop presenters (i.e. Academic Success Center Tutors, Student Navigator, CARE Center advisors, etc.) began serving as guest lecturers in the College Success course (COLL 1500) to share relevant and engaging content related to weekly lesson plans. The schedule coordinated by the Division Chair for General Education-College Support, allowed the REACH organization to align college resources and visitation efforts with the weekly focus being covered within the classrooms. Furthermore, as a QEP Steering Committee member, the REACH Coordinator integrated new bi-weekly workshop topics based on needs identified in QEP data collection efforts. For example, the Student Success Services Inventory revealed limited awareness of options to fund college expenses, so a REACH workshop session was added titled *Show Me the Money*. The Financial Aid Director and CGTC Foundation began co-presenting information about the FAFSA, Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements, and relevant grants, scholarships, and loans, along with demonstrating the CGTC scholarship application process. In AY2018, the REACH student organization adapted to changes in Learning Support placements by inviting all students, regardless of race, to attend the bi-weekly workshops and expanding mentoring opportunities to all male students of color.

QEP IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND STUDENT LEARNING

Central Georgia Technical College's Quality Enhancement Plan was devised to address specific barriers and assist students in setting purposeful benchmarks towards success. The College utilized broad-based participation and an institutional data review to discover and develop the focus and Plan. The Steering Committee meets periodically as indicated in the devised timeline presented with the initial QEP submission along with members of the QEP Data Sub-team. The QEP Data Team compiled results of student learning outcome assessments regularly, ranging from each term to annually, and presented results to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee documented progress towards meeting baseline thresholds by completing the CGTC QEP SLO Assessment Report annually. A summary of results is provided in *Table 2. QEP Goals, SLOs, and Results*. A comparison of baseline (AY2015), midway (AY2018), and final (AY2020) results are provided with analysis.

Table 2. QEP Goals, SLOs, and Results

Goals	SLOs	SLO Results			
1. Students will be knowledgeable of purposeful advising and techniques which support student learning.	a. Students will be able to devise and use an academic plan which promotes program completion.	Results indicated 5.6% of students were accessing their DegreeWorks academic plan independently by AY2020. However, 52% of students participating in the Student Success Services Inventory reported using other features in DegreeWorks such as reviewing advisor's registration notes, obtaining GPA, or viewing progress toward program completion. Students indicated a preference for consulting an advisor or program faculty for course registration guidance, rather than independently developing an academic plan.			
		Baseline (AY2015)	Midway Results (AY2018)	Final Results (AY2020)	Overall Change
		0%	2.7%	5.6%	+5.6
	b. Students will utilize academic support resources for successful course completion.	By AY2018, the College had increased the use of academic support resources by five percentage points over the baseline of 11% established in 2015, as measured by electronic sign-in logs for the Academic Success Center services. When the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional in-person tutoring in AY2020, the launch of an online tutoring platform was accelerated during Summer 2020. Amid the disruption the use of academic support resources remained higher than baseline usage.			
		Baseline (AY2015)	Midway Results (AY2018)	Final Results (AY2020)	Overall Change
		11%	16%	13%	+2
	c. Students will utilize student support resources that enhance their educational goals	The College increased use of student support resources like financial aid counseling and career counseling by eleven (11) percentage points between the baseline of 53% and final results of 64% in AY2020 according to the annual Student Success Services Inventory. Resource awareness and increased options for service amid the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in peak usage during AY2020.			
		Baseline (AY2015)	Midway Results (AY2018)	Final Results (AY2020)	Overall Change
		53%	63%	64%	+11
	2. Students will be able to access and use College resources.	A focus on teaching the skills necessary to navigate college processes resulted in a twenty-three (23) percentage point increase over baseline results in AY2015. This SLO was assessed in the College Success Course (COLL 1500), so improvements are related to course revisions targeting content to CGTC-specific processes. However, on the Student Advising and Class Registration Survey conducted in AY2019,			
	a. Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge in using college success resources, e.g., BannerWeb, Gateway, DegreeWorks,				

Goals	SLOs	SLO Results			
	student email, and registration and withdrawal procedures.	70% of students surveyed reported being able to access these resources on their own.			
		Baseline (AY2015)	Midway Results (AY2018)	Final Results (AY2020)	Overall Change
		65%	72%	88%	+23
	b. Students will be able to locate appropriate reference materials utilizing learning resources.	The College steadily improved student outcomes on the assessment measuring ability to locate appropriate reference materials by first integrating visits to the library and more time on topic. Librarian feedback to guide changes in College Success Course assignments and hosting Librarians as guest lecturers. This SLO achieved the greatest overall improvement and the highest final results.			
3. Students will be successful in their academic support and program-level courses.	a. Students enrolled in COLL 1500-College Success will be successful in their co-requisite Learning Support course.	Baseline (AY2015)	Midway Results (AY2018)	Final Results (AY2020)	Overall Change
		61%	72%	92%	+31
		Results over the AY2015 baseline of 50% increased over time to a high of 79% in AY2019. The AY2020 rate of 66% was 11 percentage points higher than the baseline of 55%. In Fall 2016, the Student Navigator noted students withdrawing from learning support classes for academic reasons who had not been alerted in the TEAMS early alert system by faculty, so activities were implemented to encourage timely submission of alerts by faculty including the TEAMS Talk email series. Beginning in AY2018 Math Anxiety workshops were conducted in Learning Support math classes by Academic Success Center staff. AY2020 results show a success rate of 60% in the MATH 0090 course as compared to 78% of students enrolled in the ENGL 0090 course.			
		Baseline (AY2015)	Midway Results (AY2018)	Final Results (AY2020)	Overall Change
	b. Students successfully completing COLL 1500-College Success and Learning Support/LS 0090 courses will be successful in the program level ENGL or MATH.	55%	71%	66%	+11
		Results indicated an increase over the AY2015 baseline of 65% to a high of 82% (AY2018) and a final rate of 70% (AY2020). Improvements in the College Success course, increased use of TEAMS early alert system, and the supplemental support provided by academic support services increased success in program level courses by seventeen (17) percentage points in three years. Nearly 200 students from the SLO 3a cohort attempted a program level course annually through AY2018. In AY2020, that number declined to 10 due to a record drop in students placed in the 0090 Learning Support courses in Fall semester. Those students were enrolled in the credit			

Goals	SLOs	SLO Results			
		level course during the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spring 2020. Even with the significant academic and life challenges faced by the AY2020 cohort, final results in AY2020 still exceeded the AY2015 baseline.			
		Baseline (AY2015)	Midway Results (AY2018)	Final Results (AY2020)	Overall Change
		65%	82%	70%	+5

Success in the QEP goals and, subsequently, each Student Learning Outcome hinged on use of the ALFAA process by College advisors and students with a focus on occupational majors, which aligns with the CGTC's workforce development mission. In 2018, the Academic Affairs Division integrated the ALFAA Advisement Tool into the New Faculty Handbook and the Student Affairs Division utilized the tool in the CARE Centers during New Student Advisement; to promote the awareness and use of the ALFAA Advisement Tool. The ALFAA Advisement Rate steadily increased between implementation year one in AY2016 (3,680, 39%) and AY2019 (5,382, 67%), as shown in *Table 3: Annual ALFAA Usage Data*. Even during the pandemic (AY2020), the ALFAA Advisement rate remained stable at 67%. During the QEP assessment period, enrollment declines and shifts in enrollment patterns resulted in a decrease in the number of students enrolled in occupational majors. In consideration of changes in enrollment patterns, the total unduplicated number of CGTC students receiving ALFAA advisement was also reviewed – nearly 18,000 unduplicated students.

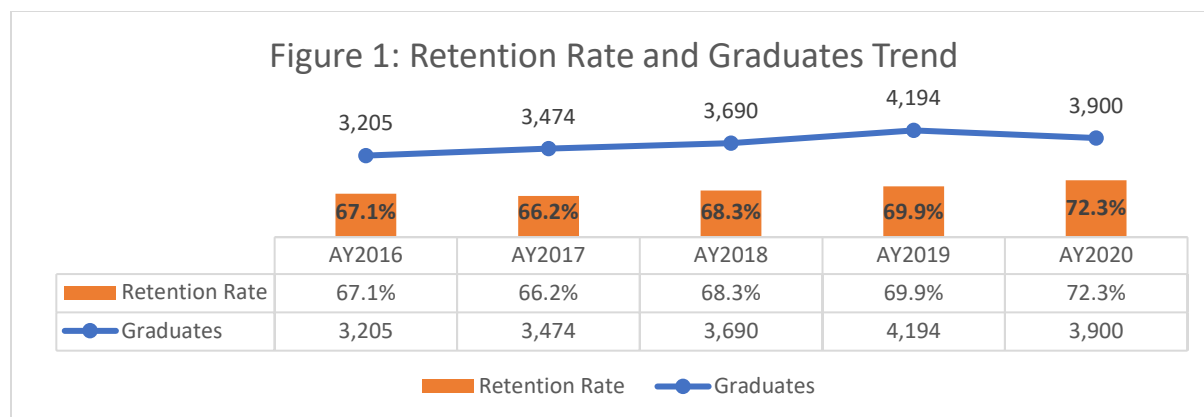
Table 3. Annual ALFAA Usage Data based on Enrollment in Occupational Majors

Academic Year (AY)	Students receiving ALFAA Advisement ¹	Students Enrolled in Occupational Majors	ALFAA Advisement Rate
AY 2016	3,680	9,543	39%
AY 2017	4,490	9,014	50%
AY 2018	5,034	8,191	61%
AY 2019	5,382	8,004	67%
AY 2020	5,117	7,673	67%

¹The number of students receiving ALFAA Advisement are unduplicated within an Academic Year, but may be duplicated across years.

In summary, improvement was observed in each student learning outcome between the baseline data in AY2015 to the final results in AY2020. External changes and internal responses resulted in fluctuations in annual results, but the commitment to student success allowed the College to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic without falling below the baseline on a single outcome. While several data points were more successful than others, the overall impact of the QEP on student learning is evident.

QEP activities and successful outcomes have led to improvements on Institutional outcomes. Throughout the QEP period, CGTC consistently led the twenty-two Technical College System of Georgia colleges in the number of graduates, arguably the most closely correlated outcome to the College's mission. In addition, the retention rate increased more than five percentage points during the period of the QEP from 67.1% in AY2016 to 72.3% in AY2020, as shown in Figure 1:



REFLECTION ON WHAT THE INSTITUTION HAS LEARNED

Central Georgia Technical College confirmed that improving academic advising processes and support services could significantly impact student success, retention and program completion. Although CGTC services an 11-county area in central Georgia with multiple campuses and instructional sites, the ALFAA Five-step Advisement process created a unifying experience of advisement for each student based on their individual needs. The ALFAA process gives advisors a consistent purposeful approach guided by a five-step advisement tool with information that should be discussed with students. The electronic ALFAA Advisement Sheet assists students with navigating the complex process of advisement, increasing awareness of benchmarks for success, and organizing resources for addressing challenges encountered along the way. However, at-risk students may not realize their barriers or are less likely to recognize when they are falling behind. Therefore, the checklist is the framework, but the advisement session helps students relate the available resources to their individual barriers and understand the benchmarks critical to academic success. This statement is verified in the review of QEP activities under Goal 1.a, where students preferred to meet with an advisor rather than create their own plans. Advisors and faculty can recommend specific academic and student support resources based on individual needs. When faculty recognize signs of at-risk students facing academic barriers or personal hardships, the TEAMS early alert system can respond to student needs with targeted, timely interventions in collaboration with faculty and a wide array of College support personnel. This supplements on-going opportunities for students to participate in activities hosted by academic and student support resources such as seeking tutoring, attending academic workshops, or participating in mentoring activities. As student needs evolve, the activities must be adapted in response.

In conclusion, Central Georgia Technical College's work under the QEP has resulted in the College embracing the ALFAA Five-step Advisement process as its instructional advisement philosophy. The College recognizes that each student has their own unique set of challenges or barriers external and internal to the College, hindering or stopping their progression towards a credential. The environment surrounding student learning for at-risk students and all others has been improved to ensure our students are successful, not only in their educational pursuits but in the real world. The use of ALFAA Advisement at Central Georgia Technical College will not end with submission of this report. Rather, purposeful advisement and supporting student success has become a permanent part of the College's culture.