Quality Enhancement Plans at Community Colleges: Caring Attitudes, Intentional Advising, and Open Communication

Anthony Strawn

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Quality Enhancement Plans at Community Colleges:
Caring Attitudes, Intentional Advising, and Open Communication

by

Anthony A. Strawn

A DISSERTATION

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Abstract

In 2004 the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) started requiring a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) as part of the decennial reaffirmation process. Since 2004, over one billion dollars have been spent by the 794 accredited SACSCOC institutions completing their QEPs. Fifth-Year Impact Reports must be completed by the institution at the end of the QEP as part of the Fifth-Year Compliance Report. Once that report is accepted by SACSCOC, no additional reporting on the QEP is required. This study looked at six Track A, Level I institutions in five states that started a QEP with academic advising as a focus between 2008 and 2012. The research question for this study looked at the reasons the 17 student learning outcomes at the six institutions in this study were continued or discontinued after the Fifth-Year Impact Report. Three themes emerged in this study from the review of the results from the electronic pre-visit surveys, in-person interviews conducted with 21 faculty, 21 administrators, 13 staff, and three QEP directors in spring 2019, and the Fifth-Year Impact Reports. The themes developed were institutions started to look at the student experience from a holistic viewpoint, the advising processes were made more intentional, and more open methods of communication were created. Findings from this study showed the 17 student learning outcomes at the six institutions became integral parts of the fabric and culture at each institution.

Keywords: advising center, advising model, first-year experience course, advising culture, SACSCOC, QEP, Fifth-Year Impact Report
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Chapter I: Introduction

Overview

The mission of higher education regional accrediting agencies in America is to ensure the quality and integrity of the education that institutions are providing students (Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior College (ACCJC, 2018); Higher Learning Commission (HLC, 2018); Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE, 2018); New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE, 2018); Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU, 2018); Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC, 2018a); and the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC, 2018). The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges mission statement published in its 2018 Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement is:

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges is the regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states. The Commission’s mission is the enhancement of educational quality throughout the region and it strives to improve the effectiveness of institutions by ensuring that institutions meet standards established by the higher education community that address the needs of society and students. It serves as the common denominator of shared values and practices among the diverse institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Latin America and other international sites approved by the Commission on Colleges that award associate, baccalaureate, master’s, or doctoral degrees. The Commission also accepts applications from other international institutions of higher education.
Accreditation by SACSCOC signifies that the institution (1) has a mission appropriate to higher education (2) has resources, programs, and services sufficient to accomplish and sustain that mission and (3) maintains clearly specified educational objectives that are consistent with its mission and appropriate to the degrees its offers, and that indicate whether it is successful in achieving its stated objectives. (SACSCOC, 2018a)

A part of the accreditation process, since 2004, has been the completion of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). This qualitative study looked at six Track A, Level I SACSCOC institutions that completed a QEP between 2008 and 2012 to see if the institutions continued or discontinued student learning outcomes from the QEP. Based on a review of the QEPs from the institutions in this study, there were common student learning outcomes. Outcomes included students taking responsibility for their educational and career choices, students developing an academic plan during the first semester, and students becoming more aware of the student services and resources available at the institution to aid in student success.

The QEPs had common institutional student learning outcomes (SLOs) addressed and assessed during the five years of the QEP. Institutional initiatives included increasing retention, increasing graduation/completion rates, improving the campus advising culture, developing and offering professional development for faculty and staff, requiring faculty to be academic advisors, and others. Since SACSCOC does not require any type of report or follow up after the QEP Fifth-Year Impact Report, institutions are not required or mandated to continue the QEP. Considering the amount of time and resources put into the QEP process, the institution could and should institutionalize the student learning outcomes from the QEP. The author of this study has served as the QEP Lead Evaluator on 10 SACSCOC on-site reaffirmation visits and served as his

**Purpose of the Study**

SACSCOC implemented the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) as part of the reaffirmation decennial report for member institutions. Since the inception of the QEP, institutions have dedicated over a billion dollars and untold hours to researching, selecting, developing, implementing, and assessing QEPs. Institutions are encouraged to research and find an area effecting student success and then develop a QEP, along with a five-year implementation plan, to improve the identified area to improve student learning and success (SACSCOC, 2018). The purpose of this study was to explore reasons why Track A, Level I institutions did or did not institutionalize the various student learning outcomes of the QEP focused on academic advising after the SACSCOC required Fifth-Year Impact Report was accepted.

The study determined there were common student learning outcomes from the advising QEPs across institutions. A study conducted by SACSCOC in 2013 used a sample of 391 institutional QEPs accepted by SACSCOC between 2007 and 2011 to capture the extent to which High-Impact Practices (HIPs) identified by Kuh (2008) were integrated into the QEPs. The results of the study found QEPs focused on advising practices integrated HIPs at a higher rate than any other QEP focus topic (Matveev, 2013).

**Theoretical/Conceptual Framework Guiding Research**

The study was a qualitative, multi-site case study with a grounded theory design. Track A, Level 1, SACSCOC accredited institutions were the cases in the study. SACSCOC defines Track A institutions as institutions with undergraduate programs only. Level I institutions offer associate degrees as the highest degree (SACSCOC, 2018b). There are 794 SACSCOC accredited institutions with 260 at Level I (SACSCOC, 2018c). Accreditation requires
institutions go through the reaffirmation process every 10 years (decennial report). SACSCOC attempts to divide the reaffirmation process evenly - meaning approximately 26 Level I institutions are completing a decennial report each year. There were 11 Level I institutions that completed a QEP with an advising focus between 2007 and 2012 (SACSCOC, 2018d).

The research for this study was completed using data obtained through QEP document reviews, pre-visit surveys, and in-person interviews from Track A, Level I institutions. Interviews were conducted with individuals who served on the various teams at the institutions who worked on the QEP. Traditionally, colleges develop a QEP selection team responsible for researching areas at the college that could be improved in order to enhance and improve student success. Once a topic is identified and selected by the institution, a development team is formed. This team is responsible for creating the steps or phases for the QEP five-year plan. Once the steps are developed, most institutions create an implementation team which guides the QEP through the five years of the required implementation and writes the QEP Fifth-Year Impact Report. All institutions will have either an individual serve as the QEP director or two or three co-directors.

Areas of the QEP process reviewed included, but were not limited to, investment of time, money, personnel, the perception of the value of the QEP process by both SACSCOC and institutions, and the student learning outcomes of the QEP on retention, completion rates, and the advising culture.

**Research Question**

This study explored reasons why SACSCOC Track A, Level I institutions did or did not institutionalize the various student learning outcomes and goals in QEPs focused on academic advising after the SACSCOC required Fifth-Year Impact Report.
Significance of Study

The QEP was initially created by SACSCOC for institutions to identify and examine a focus area that needed improvement to improve student success. The focus was not required to be directly tied to one of the core requirements, core standards, or federal standards covered in the association’s *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* that institutions must address in the decennial report. SACSCOC requires institutions to document they have both sufficient financial and personal resources necessary to develop and implement the QEP. However, SACSCOC does not perform any type of follow up review or report on the QEP after the required Fifth-Year Impact Report is accepted. This study endeavored to ascertain if some or all of the initiatives from Track A, Level I institutions that have had academic advising as their QEP focus produced significant results for institutions to continue the student learning outcomes established in the QEP. The study investigated if some or all of the student learning outcomes were dropped due to not meeting projected results, or if other factors caused the institution to discontinue some or all of the SLOs. Assessment and evaluation of QEP data collected by institutions and then how institutions use the outcomes of those assessments are at the heart of the reaffirmation process. Yet, there is no follow-up by SACSCOC to see of any aspect or all of the QEP were institutionalized after the Fifth-Year Impact Report.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited by the lack of existing research on QEPs after the required Fifth-Year Impact Report. SACSCOC is not aware of any research currently being done in this area and the association is not currently conducting any research on the topic. (A. Matveev, personal communication, September 19, 2018). A search for research on long-term effects of QEPs turned up a lack of literature. Since the QEPs studied were all completed between 2008 and
2012, some of the key personnel who worked closely with the QEPs were no longer at the institutions in the study. While all institutions studied were Track A, Level I, there were differences in the campus climates and student make-up that made each institution unique. There were some bias by both the author of the study and the individuals interviewed. The author has considerable experience with advising QEPs and needed to be aware of his preferences and bias when it came to the narratives shared by the cases in the study. The individuals at the institutions had biases when it came to reporting some of the data from their QEPs and possibly did not share all aspects of their QEPs. The validity of the study was based on how open and truthful the individuals were in the interviews and how much actual comparable QEP data each institution was willing to share with the author.

**Definitions, Symbols, Abbreviations**

This study used terms and definitions directly tied to the SACSCOC QEP process. All terms are defined and explained by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – Commission on Colleges glossary of terms in its *Principles for Accreditation: Foundations of Quality Enhancement* (SACSCOC, 2018e).

*Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* - The accreditation requirements of SACSCOC that must be met by all applicant, candidate, and member institutions (private for-profit, private not-for-profit, and public) are published in the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*. These requirements apply to all institutional programs and services, wherever located or however delivered.

*Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)* - Required of all member institutions undergoing reaffirmation, the QEP is a carefully designed course of action derived from the institution’s existing planning and evaluation processes that addresses a well-defined issue directly related to
enhancing specific student learning outcomes and/or student success. Applicant and candidate institutions do not prepare a QEP during the process for initial accreditation.

SACSCOC - One of two separately incorporated entities of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools is the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, known as SACSCOC, the regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting institutions of higher education in eleven Southern states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. SACSCOC also accredits international institutions of higher education.

Decennial Report - Required institutional self-study submitted every ten years for all accredited institutions in the SACSCOC region.

On-Site Reaffirmation Committee - Composed of a chair and evaluators for finance, institutional effectiveness, governance and administration, academic and student support services, library and learning support services, and two or more evaluators for educational programs, the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee completes the first review of the Compliance Certification developed by a member institution seeking reaffirmation of accreditation.

Fifth-Year Interim Report – Submitted five years prior to an institution’s reaffirmation review, a Fifth-Year Interim Report includes (1) a modified Compliance Certification that addresses only those federal expectations that are integrated in the various requirements and standards of the Principles of Accreditation; (2) an Impact Report on the QEP; (3) an Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews; where applicable, (4) a report on off-campus sites initiated since the institution’s last reaffirmation but not reviewed; and (5) a report on issues identified for verification of continued compliance during the last reaffirmation review.
**QEP Lead Evaluator** - Member of a SACSCOC on-site visiting team who is selected by the institution being visited. This person is responsible for leading the on-site visit and writing the report for the institution about the QEP.

**Track A Institution** - SACSCOC-accredited institution that offers undergraduate degrees only. The term is used to classify institutions during the reaffirmation process and affects the timing of the review.

**Track B Institution** - SACSCOC-accredited institution that offers undergraduate and graduate degrees or graduate degrees only. The term is used to classify institutions during the reaffirmation process and affects the timing of the review.

**Sanctions** - An institution that fails to comply with any of the Core Requirements, demonstrates significant noncompliance with other standards of the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*, fails to make significant progress toward correcting deficiencies within the time allotted, or does not comply with SACSCOC policies may be placed on one of two sanctions: warning or probation.

**Level of Institutions** – Classified by SACSCOC according to the highest degree offered, member institutions are designated as operating at one of six levels: Associate, Level II – Baccalaureate, Level III – Master, Level IV – Education Specialist, Level V – Doctorate (3 or fewer degrees offered), and Level VI – Doctorate (4 or more degrees offered).

**Core Requirement** - Basic, broad-based, foundational requirements, the Core Requirements establish a threshold of development required of all institutions seeking initial accreditation or reaffirmation. Core Requirements are designated with a “(CR)” designation following the standard in the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*.

**Core Standard** - Prior to the 2018 edition of the *Principles of Accreditation*, some
standards were identified as Comprehensive Standards. This distinction was removed in the 2018 edition.

*Federal Requirement* - Prior to the 2018 edition of the *Principles of Accreditation*, some standards were identified as Federal Requirements. This distinction was removed in the 2018 edition. However, Appendix A of this *Resource Manual* identifies standards of the *Principles* that must be reviewed on site as part of SACSCOC’s obligations as an accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

*Must Statements* – Term used prior to 2002 by SACS outlining the areas an institution must address in order to be accredited. There were over 400 must statements institutions were required to address.

**Summary**

Major projects such as a QEP should have a well-developed process by each institution. The completion and acceptance of a QEP is required by SACSCOC for an institution to retain accreditation. Therefore, institutions are doing QEPs because they have to do them. There is very little research that has been done or is being done on how the QEP has or has not impacted institutions and if the outcomes of the QEP are being continued and institutionalized after the required Fifth-Year Impact Report. The SACSCOC College Delegate Assembly approved changes to *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* at the 2017 Annual Meeting. These changes did reorganize the standard (7.2) for the QEP but left the overall purpose and evaluation of the QEP the same. Institutions are required to continue selecting and implementing a QEP during the reaffirmation process, therefore there should be studies on how effective the process is to the overall student success and learning at institutions once the Fifth-Year Report is completed.
Chapter II: Literature Review

This literature review examined aspects of QEPs focused on academic advising in the SACSCOC reaffirmation process. To supply sufficient background on the topic, the literature has been arranged by the connection with the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) to the SACSCOC reaffirmation process. Literature topics include the specific SACSCOC standards related to the QEP, the steps involved in completing a QEP by member institutions, the reasoning behind the Fifth-Year Impact Report on the QEP, the various models institutions might use in order to bring about change through the QEP, the history of community colleges, and finally a look at the variety of academic advising models being used in higher education.

Accreditation: SACSCOC and the QEP

Accreditation of colleges is not a new process. The process of accreditation in higher education has been around since the late 1700s. In 1787 the accreditation organization, University of the State of New York, reorganized its Board of Regents and started requiring a yearly visit to review the work of each college and to report the findings to the state legislature. Other states adopted similar legislation in the following years - Iowa (1846), Utah (1896), Washington (1909), Virginia (1912), and Maryland (1914) (Harcleroad, 1980). Views on accreditation have also changed since that time. Early agencies believed standardization was not the main purpose of the process. The process of accreditation tends to be confused with the process of improving the quality of the institutions subject to accrediment (sic). It is appearing that programs of accrediment (sic) have tended to produce undue standardization. One of the earliest attempts to standardize colleges on a regional basis was at the Conference of Chief State School Officers of the North Central and Western States which met in Salt Lake City, Utah, in November 1910 (Kelly, Frazier, McNeely, Ratcliffe, 1940). Originally the regional agencies
only concerned themselves with issues in secondary schools. A decade after this first meeting regional agencies began to turn their attention to college standards.

At the 1910 meeting there were five recognized regional accrediting bodies. Currently there are seven regional accrediting bodies recognized by the United States Department of Education that are responsible for the accreditation of institutions of higher education in all 50 states and some foreign countries. Those agencies are: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior College (ACCJC), Higher Learning Commission (HLC), Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE), Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC), and the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) (Council for Higher Education Accreditation CHEA, 2018).

The Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools – The Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Southern States, was established in 1895. At its annual meeting in 1897 the association established its initial conditions for colleges to be admitted to the association (Kelly, et al, 1940). SACSCOC began the decennial report process in 1957 and has continued it every year since. The institution member delegates have made changes to the reaffirmation process over the years at the association’s annual meeting in December with revisions coming in 1998, 2004, 2007, 2011, 2012, and 2017 (SACSOC, 2018f).

Each accrediting agency has its own set of standards institutions must meet in order to remain accredited. SACSCOC currently requires a full accreditation visit and report every 10 years, referred to as the decennial report and in addition requires institutions to complete a Fifth-Year Interim Report. SACSCOC created the Fifth-Year Interim Report to respond to the U.S. Department of Education’s expectation that accrediting bodies increase monitoring of their
institutions more often than every 10 years (Wheelan, 2006).

December 2008 marked the first review of Fifth-Year Interim Reports submitted by institutions to the Commission on Colleges (COC) in response to the U.S. Department of Education’s request all accrediting bodies develop measures to ensure continuous monitoring of accredited institutions that have access to federal dollars. SACSCOC was one of only a few accreditors that only conducted a comprehensive review of its institutions every 10 years; most accrediting agencies conducted such reviews every five to seven years. The SACSCOC Fifth-Year Interim Report was developed to respond to the U.S. Department of Education’s requirements (1) that accrediting bodies continuously monitor institutions to ensure compliance and (2) that accrediting bodies have a mechanism for reviewing multiple sites initiated since last reaffirmation (SACSCOC, 2018g).

In 2008 SACSCOC developed a Fifth-Year Interim Report, which consisted of several parts: (1) a signature page, (2) an abbreviated summary of institutional characteristics, (3) an abbreviated compliance report that addresses standards of the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* as identified and required by the criteria for the U.S. Department of Education, (4) an additional report requested during an institution’s previous monitoring that requires an update for ensuring continuing compliance (not applicable to all institutions), and (5) a QEP Impact Report (submitted by institutions that were reviewed under the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* during their previous decennial review). If an institution has expanded its off-campus sites since its last reaffirmation or has experienced rapid growth in its off-site offerings, it may also be required to host an off-campus fifth-year committee to conduct a review of a sample of sites (SACSCOC, 2009). The first class requested to submit the Fifth-Year Interim Report was the reaffirmation Class of 2013,
The FAQ section of the 2018 SACSCOC website defines accreditation as:

Accreditation is intended to assure constituents and the public of the quality and integrity of higher education institutions and programs, and to help those institutions and programs improve. These outcomes are achieved through rigorous internal and external review processes during which the institution is evaluated against a common set of standards.

When accreditation is awarded to an institution of higher education by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC, 2018h), a regional accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education, it means that the institution has (1) a mission appropriate to higher education, (2) resources, programs, and services sufficient to accomplish and sustain its mission, (3) clearly specified educational objectives that are consistent with its mission and appropriate to the degrees it offers, and that it is (4) successful in assessing its achievement of these objectives and demonstrating improvements. Accreditation by SACSCOC is a statement of the institution’s continuing commitment to integrity and its capacity to provide effective programs and services based on agreed-upon accreditation standards. (SACSCOC, 2018h, para. 2 & 3)

The SACSCOC Executive Council approved and implemented the Fifth-Year Interim Report at its February 2006 meeting. This new interim report mandated an institution report compliance with selected comprehensive standards, a core requirement, and a QEP Fifth-Year Impact Report between its decennial reviews. Institutions report enrollment and financial information annually. Other regional accrediting agencies do have fifth-year review processes, but SACSCOC is the only agency with a specific QEP requirement. The guidelines for the QEP
were revised and approved by the faculty delegation at the SACSCOC annual meetings in 2007 and 2017. The Fifth-Year Interim Report was revised in 2012 to include all nine federal requirements (FR), two Core Requirements (CR) and 11 core standards (CS) along with the QEP Impact Report (SACSCOC, 2018i). The most recent revision of the Fifth-Year Interim Report in 2017 requires five core requirements and 20 requirements along with the QEP Fifth-Year Impact Report. Federal requirements were no longer identified separately but the content from the federal requirements were included in the core requirements and requirements (SACSCOC, 2018i).

SACSCOC developed policies for the various standards in the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*. Core requirements must be met in order for an institution to maintain accreditation. Core standards should be met but could be unmet and an institution not lose accreditation. Federal requirements were also required to be met until the revision of the Principles in 2017 when those standards were combined into other requirements or core requirements (SACSCOC, 2018i).

The sections of the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* and wording for how the QEP is addressed have changed over the years. In 2004 the SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* simply listed the QEP as part of the decennial report and no Fifth-Year follow-up report was required. In 2006 the *Principles* were changed to include Core Requirement 2.12 and Core Standard 3.3.2 as specific standards used to address the QEP. These changes were significant. When the QEP was just part of the report in 2004, the QEP did not carry much weight in the reaffirmation process. The QEP had to be done, but there was not a specific penalty attached to it if the on-site committee did not find it acceptable. Then in 2006 part of the QEP was specifically listed in Core Requirement 2.12. If
an institution was found non-compliant with any single core requirement, the institution could lose accreditation. This change gave more credibility to the QEP. However, in 2017, the QEP was removed as a core requirement but all of the areas required to be addressed by SACSCOC in the QEP remained the same. This change in the QEP, along with other changes to the Principles, was initiated in October 2015 with the creation of the Principles Review Committee. The changes suggested by the committee were presented, voted on, and approved by the College Delegate Assembly at the December 2017 SACSCOC Annual Meeting (SACSCOC, 2018j).

The wording in the Principles for the QEP prior to the changes in 2017 was

- Core Requirement 2.12 - The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that includes an institutional process for identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment and focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution.

- Core Standard 3.3.2 - The institution has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan that (a) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP; (b) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP; and (c) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement (SACSCOC, 2012).

The Fifth-Year Interim Report also contains the QEP Fifth-Year Impact Report. In the 2017 revision of the SACSCOC Principles, Requirement 7.2 became the only standard that addresses the QEP. While 7.2 is no longer at the level of a core requirement, the same five areas listed in the requirement that must be addressed in the QEP that were listed in CR 2.12 and CS 3.3.2 have stayed the same since the QEP was implemented in 2004. The new SACSCOC requirement for the QEP (7.2) has five sections. The institution has a QEP that (a) has a topic
identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes; (b) has broad-based support of institutional constituencies; (c) focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success; (d) commits resources to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP; and (e) includes a plan to assess achievement (SACSCOC, 2018j).

**QEP Process**

![Flow chart](image)

*Figure 1. Flow chart developed from 2012-2013 SACSCOC On-Site reviewers on how to address the five sections in the QEP standard (SACSCOC, 2013)*

Each year after the reaffirmation process is completed, SACSCOC asks members of the On-Site Reaffirmation Committees to provide feedback on their experiences to help the institutions going up for reaffirmation next year. The results of this feedback can be seen in the flow chart in *Figure 1*. Members of the 2012 and 2013 SACSCOC On-Site Reaffirmation Committees offered practical pointers for institutions about to start developing QEPs. A set of factors emerged from the content analysis of the feedback provided by the peer evaluators. These factors are intended to highlight peer evaluators’ perspectives and to assist institutions in designing effective and sustainable QEPs. The purpose of the framework presented was to serve
as a guide not as a checklist. The interrelated component parts of this framework are not exhaustive or summative nor are they necessarily of equal weight. Institutions need to evaluate and weigh all relevant and appropriate issues when designing a QEP that appropriately addresses CR 2.12 and CS 3.3.2 (SACSCOC, 2013).

The QEP proposal requires institutions to explain how the focus for the QEP was selected. The majority of institutions start the process by appointing a committee to investigate areas of the college that could be improved. Some colleges do SWAT analysis, while others simply conduct open meetings with students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders. In the decennial report SACSCOC looks at all aspects of a college from integrity to business functions to physical facilities to student services to academics. All aspects of the institution are important to SACSCOC. The process to select, develop, implement, and assess the QEP is long and detailed. The document should contain these 10 steps: Selecting the Topic, Defining the Student Learning Outcomes, Researching the Topic, Identifying the Actions to be Implemented, Establishing the Timeline for Implementation, Organizing for Success, Identifying Necessary Resources, Assessing the Success of the QEP, Preparing the QEP for Submission to the COC, and Preparing the Impact Report (Brown & Pigg, 2013).

There is a lack of research on the overall cost in both money and time required for a QEP. All QEPs are required by SACSCOC to show a budget for a five-year period. Fifteen QEPs between 2007 and 2018 were randomly selected by the author of this study from a variety of Track A SACSCOC accredited institutions. These 15 QEPs had a variety of focus areas.

All 15 institutions reviewed showed in their timeline the process to select the QEP topic started at least two years prior to the first year of the actual QEP. The range for beginning the QEP process was one year to four years prior to initiating the QEP. Institutions devoted time and
energy for many faculty and staff over a six to nine-year period to the topic selection, development, implementation, and assessment of the QEP. The 2012-2013 SACSCOC survey of on-site reviewers listed comments institutions needed to consider when developing the budget for the QEP. These comments, displayed in Figure 2, show the importance of budget planning at the beginning of the QEP.

| Be realistic about the amount of time and money required to implement your plan. . . . |
| Involve your budget people early in the process so there are no surprises. |
| University financial personnel should be involved in creating the business plan because the on-site team member will probably be from the financial area. Often academic personnel put together business plans that make complete sense to them but are indecipherable to business people. |
| Limit the scope of the project to something that you are clearly able to accomplish without the addition of too many resources. |
| Just as with any aspect of a strategic plan, if the QEP draws too many resources from other essential processes, it will be resented by faculty, students, and staff. |
| Be willing to realistically commit adequate resources to the project. Don’t look at the QEP budget as something that can be cut during financially difficult times. Really commit to an adequate budget. You’ll need to develop a fairly detailed schedule regarding implementation to get a handle on budget needs. |
| Everyone underestimates the human cost. Plan for what it takes and don't try to be too cheap. |
| It is foolish to believe your people can accomplish this while doing their current job. Key people will need release time. If you overwork them, they may leave in the middle and you will have a big problem! |
| While it is important to show that an institution has taken this project seriously, it is also important not to setup a budget that is too lofty when the institution has financial difficulties. |
| Narrow the focus and ensure it relates to capabilities and resources of your institution. Ask, is this doable? |

Figure 2. Sampling of comments concerning QEP budgets from SACSCOC 2012-2013 On-Site reviewers (SACSCOC, 2013)

The QEP Fifth-Year Impact Report

SACSCOC implemented the QEP Impact Report in 2007. The report can be a maximum of 10 pages. The report can contain charts and other forms of data, but no links to materials outside the report can be included. The report assesses the results and impact on the institution during the five years of the QEP. This report is submitted with the Fifth-Year Interim Report. The Committee on Fifth-Year Interim Reports (Committee E of the standing committees of the
SACSCOC Board of Trustees) reviews the QEP Fifth-Year Impact Report. There are four Committee E teams that review QEP Fifth-Year Impact Reports and each team will review reports from approximately 10 institutions. Each of the Committee E teams has at least seven members: coordinator, IE evaluator, student services evaluator, two academic program evaluators, and two or more finance reviewers. At the annual meeting the various team members from each of the four committees will meet to discuss their findings. Confidentiality is important and the names of the institutions are not used in these meetings. The committees have two options after the review is complete (1) no referral or (2) referral to the Committee on Compliance and Reports (C & R Committee). The C & R committee then has four options following their review: (1) No additional report requested; (2) Request a monitoring report (which starts the two-year limited monitoring period); (3) Recommend placing the institution on a sanction, with a monitoring report, and with or without a Special Committee visit to the campus; or (4) Recommend removal from membership (SACSCOC, 2018k).

A structural analysis of a sample (N=50) of 2006-2008 QEPs presented at the SACSCOC Summer Institute in 2008 showed a wide range of results from the required form and content of a QEP as established by SACSCOC (Matveev, 2008). SACSCOC guidelines suggest no more than 75 pages for the actual QEP document. The range was 12 to 83 with an average of 57. QEP guidelines state the Appendix for the QEP should be no more than 25 pages. The range was five to 68 with an average of 20. SACSCOC requires the report to contain certain sections. The study also found a lack of compliance with the requirements for the QEP document. The required executive summary was included in 72%. The explanation of the QEP Process was included in 53%. The identification and selection of the QEP Topic was included in 65%. The student learning outcomes, a critical aspect of QEPs, was included in 57%. A comprehensive
literature review was included in 33%. A detailed timeline outlining the five years of the QEP was included in 56%. Resources to support the QEP were identified and listed in 74%. Assessment plans were included in 88%.

Colleges are seeing their budgets reduced almost on an annual basis, but SACSCOC is expecting these same institutions to carve out funds to support a QEP every 10 years. Finding funds to operate and support an institution’s daily activities is becoming harder for institutions to manage. During the 2017–18 school year, total state spending on public two- and four-year colleges was $7 billion less (adjusted for inflation) than it was in 2008. The average state spent $1,502, or 16%, less per student in 2018 than in 2008. Only four states—California, Hawaii, North Dakota, and Wyoming—spent more per student today than in 2008. None of these states are in the SACSCOC region. In some states, the cuts have been particularly deep—Arizona, for example, currently spends half what it did in higher education in 2008 (Mitchell, Leachman, Masterson, & Waxman, 2018). Funding for Kentucky’s public higher education fell short in 2016 by $26 million, resulting in a 6% increase in tuition and the layoffs of more than 500 faculty and staff. Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin in 2016 ordered another $18 million in cuts for the state (Pratt, 2016). Of the 49 states (all except Wisconsin) analyzed from 2008-2017, 44 spent less per student in the 2017 school year than in 2008.

The traditional funding formula, whereby community colleges received one-third of funding each from local government, state government, and students, has become obsolete, with students now bearing half the cost (Pulley, 2014). Trends during the 2003–2013 decade suggest that, five years after the onset of the recession in 2008, higher education finally began to show signs of a fiscal recovery (Desrochers, & Hurlburt, 2016).

The QEP budgets at all institutions included either release time for the QEP director or
money to hire a new person to become the QEP director. Budgets also included money for professional development of faculty and staff in new processes and procedures and also travel money for professional development. Budgets had categories in which additional software or hardware was purchased in order to support and make the QEP successful.

Between 2005 and 2007, a study was conducted on 72 QEP budgets located from all categories of SACSCOC accredited institutions. That study found the average QEP budget for 27 Track A institutions was $739,384. The average for 43 Track B institutions increased to $1,960,388. This increase can be associated with the fact Track B institutions are all four-year degree schools with many offering graduate degrees as well. The study did report these numbers were from planning data and there was no way to discover if the money was actually spent or if budget cuts impacted the budget amounts (Cragg & Peerenboom, 2008).

The amount of money in the budgets dedicated to the QEP can indicate real commitment on the part of the institutions. The largest budget for 15 Track A institutions, randomly selected by the author, was $1,646,195 with the smallest being $327,882. The 15 institutions dedicated a total of $11,990,916 to the QEP process. That is an average of $799,394 for the five years of the QEP. That is just for the five years of the QEP. Institutions reviewed also included one to three years leading up to the QEP in their budget charts. The average budget totals do not include the budgets allocated leading up to the first year of the QEP. This average of almost $800,000 is becoming difficult for Track A, Level I institutions in the SACSCOC region to sustain. Cuts in state appropriations have been increasing in the SACSCOC region. Four of the five states where a community college costs the most for the poorest students were Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Arkansas. Louisiana has cut higher-education spending by nearly 40 percent since 2008, with more cuts likely, forcing a doubling of tuition and warnings that the
very existence of Louisiana State is at risk (Pratt, 2016). Between 2010 and 2015 Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, Alabama and Virginia each decreased spending on public colleges and universities by at least 10 percent (SHEEO, 2015).

Hinds Community College, Mississippi’s largest community college, was placed on warning by SACSCOC in June 2017 citing financial problems and other issues. A warning is the lowest level of penalty. SACSCOC said Hinds Community College was sanctioned because it was violating accrediting rules related to a sound financial base and stability, as well as the effectiveness of its educational programs. Hinds President, Clyde Muse blamed the financial findings on state budget cuts. Statewide, community colleges started the current budget with $265 million in state funding, but a series of cuts will start next year in July with $237 million. Muse said Hinds will have $4.4 million less next year (a 10% cut). Combined with declining enrollment, he said that means the college has been spending its savings in the last couple of years (Community College Week, 2017). Hinds was removed from warning status at the SACSCOC 2018 June meeting (SACSCOC, 2018).

Budgets are a primary concern for accrediting agencies and harsh actions may be taken if an institution does not meet financial standards. The SACSCOC Board at its 2017 annual meeting denied reaffirmation, continued accreditation for good cause, and placed or continued the following institutions on 12-month probation. The SACSCOC Board authorized Special Committees to visit these institutions after the 12-period to evaluate the financial status (SACSCOC, 2017).

- Johnson C. Smith University Charlotte, North Carolina, for failure to comply with financial stability (Comprehensive Standard 3.10.1) and Comprehensive Standard 3.19.3 (control of finances).
• Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina for failure to comply with Core Requirement 2.11.1 (Financial resources and stability) and Comprehensive Standard 3.10.1 (Financial stability).

• St. Augustine’s University, Raleigh, North Carolina, for failure to comply with Core Requirement 2.11.1 (Financial resources and stability), Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.1 (Institutional effectiveness: educational programs), Comprehensive Standard 3.10.1 (Financial stability), and Comprehensive Standard 3.10.3 (Control of finances) of the Principles of Accreditation.

• The SACSCOC Board authorized a Special Committee to visit the institution. Belmont Abbey College, Belmont, North Carolina, for failure to comply with Comprehensive Standard 3.10.1 (Financial stability).

Concerns have been addressed about higher education trends showing fewer older and part-time students (Spence, 1980). Move forward a decade to 1992 and more research was talking about enrollment declines and how higher education administrators should handle the issue. The management of enrollment decline is a new challenge for academic leaders who are accustomed to managing during times of prosperity; academic leaders lack the experience and expertise that this new era requires (Halfond & Diffenbach, 1992). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) report, which is based on data obtained from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), two-year public institutions experienced the second largest decrease in enrollment between 2012 and 2014 (Juszkiewicz, 2016).

Between 2012 and 2016, the decline in enrollment at two-year public institutions has exceeded the overall postsecondary enrollment decline (Juszkiewicz, 2016). Data shows
between spring 2015 and spring 2017, public two-year enrollments decreased by 4.8%, 3.3% and 2.5%, respectively. Enrollments from fall 2014 to fall 2016 dipped from 4.4% to 2.9% to 2.6% (“Downward enrollment”, 2017).

Two of the outcomes for every QEP in this study include increasing retention rates and improving graduation/completion rates. Concerns over enrollment declines and graduation/completion rates are not new. It would be difficult to attribute the success or failure of the QEPs at these institutions directly to increases or declines in enrollment or increases or declines in graduation/completion rates. The rising cost of higher education is also a factor in enrollment and graduation/completion rates.

The average cost for tuition at a public, two-year college in 2012–2013 was $3,131. That is an increase of 5.8% ($2,959) from 2011-2012 (Ma & Baum, 2012). Family income has not kept pace with tuition increases. Although the median family income rose 22% between 1970 and 2010, public two-year tuition rates increased about 125%. Tuition in 1970 was $178 compared to $2,285 in 2010. That represents a jump from 2% of the median family income to 4% (Kirshstein, 2012). The total costs of attending a community college full time has increased from $7,373 in 1984-1985 to $10,432 in 2015-2016 (IPEDS, 2017).

A study was conducted to measure the impact of the Virginia Community College System’s (VCCS) tuition increases on enrollment by randomly surveying students who had enrolled in the VCCS in fall 1991, but who had not enrolled for fall 1992. A total of 76,191 of the 133,662 students who were enrolled in fall 1991 did not re-enroll in fall 1992. The Virginia system surveyed 949 of those students and 15% of those surveyed indicated the cost of attending college was a factor in not returning (VCCS, 1993). Cost was the second highest reason given behind a lack of time to attend college.
Institutional Change Theories

SACSCOC has had standards for reaffirmation since it began the self-study process in 1957. The QEP became part of that process in 2004. Historically the decennial report for SACSCOC was called a self-study. In 1980, the report included over 400 Must Statements as SACSCOC called them at the time and the institution was required to address all of them (SACSCOC, 2000). The author of this study served on his institution's 1980, 1990, and 2000 self-study teams and was the QEP director for the 2012 reaffirmation visit. The focus of the decennial self-study report has shifted to student learning. The goal of a QEP is to have an institution look at policies and practices to see what can be changed to improve student learning. The method used to bring about change at an institution and to get buy-in from all stakeholders for the new policies or process outlined in the QEP is key to the success or failure of the QEP.

Carl Rogers, an American psychologist and founder of the humanistic approach stated:

Over the years, however, the research evidence keeps piling up, and it points strongly to the conclusion that a high degree of empathy in a relationship is possibly the most potent and certainly one of the most potent factors in bringing about change and learning. (Empathy quotes, n.d.)

There are a variety of theories about how to bring about change in an organization. The best method for change will be determined by the situation at individual institutions. Change in the organizational culture at institutions must occur in order for student learning outcomes of the QEPs to be achieved. The institution must then see the benefit of continuing the student learning outcomes from the QEP after the five-year QEP process. In order to change an organization, there must be buy-in at all levels of the organization. There are those who do not like to compare the business world to higher education, but when it comes to change, the business world has
considerable experience in this area and has ideas on how to get buy-in from all the stakeholders who will be impacted by the change. “Stagnation is the enemy of business. Knowing when to change strategy is imperative to keeping company performance strong.” (Campbell, 2018, p. 1). This quote from Rochelle Campbell, chair of Recruiting Services for the National Association of Corporate Directors, references business, but can and should be applied to change in higher education as well. QEPs are about change. SACSCOC wants institutions to take an in-depth look at an area of the institution that could be improved to help with student success. Change is necessary.

A study by the director of research for SACSCOC of 391 QEPs between 2007 and 2012 deductively divided the focus on the topics into 13 categories. Those categories were critical thinking, inquiry, analysis, written and oral communication, math, science knowledge, quantitative literacy, information literacy, teamwork and problem solving, college reading, technology literacy, civic knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning and action leadership, foundations and skills for college success and lifelong learning, integrative and applied learning, and other (Matveev, 2012). The study found among 117 Track A institutions the largest percentage of QEP focus areas (23.1%) was in the foundations and skills for college success. This is the category where advising was located. Many of the QEPs had a focus of first-year learning as well, and not just advising.

An area that is included in all the QEPs in this study was to work on changing the culture of advising at the institution. Culture is a word that has many definitions. Someone can be called “cultured”. Anthropologists refer to the customs and rituals societies develop over their history as culture. Finally, in the last several years researchers have used the term to refer to the climate and practices organizations develop around the handling of people and values of an
organization (Schein, 2004). Organizational research in the 1980s illustrated the impact of culture on many aspects of organizational life (Peterson & Spencer, 1991). There are four commonly accepted organizational change models. Top Down, Bottom Up, Shared, and Integrated. There are also other models to consider when an institution is starting a QEP.

**Bottom up and top down change theory.** Bottom Up and Top Down is a change theory by Adrianna Kezar. A visual representation of this model is shown in *Figure 3*. Decisions in higher education institutions are often viewed as being made at the top level only (Kezar, 2013). There must be support at the top levels to change, but it is critical to have support or buy-in from the bottom up. This theory also uses the concept of changing culture, which is key in advising QEPs.

![Visual representation of Top Down - Bottom Up Change Model](image)

*Figure 3.* Visual representation of Top Down - Bottom Up Change Model

The three phases of this model are mobilize, implement, and institutionalize (Kezar, 2013). These phases line up almost perfectly with the way institutions select and implement
QEPs. Bolman and Deal looked at change with the concept of reframing a situation. The four frames are political, structural, human resources, and symbolic (Bolman & Deal, 2014). All institutions have a person who oversees the QEP (QEP director). However, sometimes this person is hired from the outside as a new employee and does not have any history with the institution.

This person would have little political or human resource capital to use in the development and implementation of the QEP. SACSCOC requires institutions to select a QEP Lead Evaluator to join the On-Site Reaffirmation team (SACSCOC, 2018j). The QEP Led Evaluator should have considerable experience and background in the focus area of the QEP. This person has experience and holds leadership qualities in all four leadership frames.

**Shared change theory.** “Leadership is not defined by the exercise of power but by the capacity to increase the sense of power among those led. The most essential work of the leader is to create more leaders.” (Follet, 1924, p. 68). This statement on leadership and change has been around for a long time and is still used in much of the literature on shared change and leadership. Leaders make mistakes, but effective leaders use them as opportunities for growth. “Effective leaders let you fail, but do not let you become a failure” (McChrystal, 2011).

The best way to develop responsibility in people is to give them responsibility (Blanchard, Oncken, & Burrows, 1989). Research calls this mentoring while other books refer to it as shared leadership. No matter the label it is given, it is important to develop leadership from within the organization. In order to give individuals responsibility, leaders must trust them. Trust is referred to as letting go of controlling the situation and trusting others to do their part (Cashman, 2008). Leaders must trust others in the organization to do their part and share the responsibility.
**Integrated change theory.** The integrated model for leadership change is perhaps the most closely aligned with the change used by most institutions who are selecting, developing, and implementing a QEP. The purpose of integrated change management is to achieve the desired target by integration of the organizational and individual change processes on the one hand and by the integration of project and change management on the other (Wanner, 2013).

Wanner’s (2013) model for integrated change has four primary sections: (a) preparing for the change; (b) planning for the change; (c) managing the change; (d) reinforcing and sustaining the change. Clear ties to Wanner’s integrated model for change can be mapped to the five areas SACSCOC requires in the QEP. The first section of the model, Prepare, focuses on creating a roadmap for what needs to happen as a QEP topic is selected. This section even addresses the need to assess stakeholders and the second point in SACSCOC refers to the QEP having broad-based involvement of stakeholders. SACSCOC requires institutions to show adequate resources and the integrated model in section three states the need to obtain necessary resources. Section two in the model stresses communication which is critical in the QEP process. SACSCOC requires steps to implement the QEP must be established and section three of the model stresses the need for change and the actions to bring about the change. Finally, the purpose of this study was to discover if segments of QEPs were continued after the Fifth-Year Impact Report. Section four of the model looks at how to sustain the change. SACSCOC wants institutions to institutionalize the QEP at the end of the Fifth-Year Impact Report.
Figure 4. The eight steps in Kotter’s Integrated Model for change (Kotter, 1996)

One integrated model for change that ties very closely to the QEP process was presented and developed by John Kotter in his book, *Leading Change* (1996). The eight steps, shown in Figure 4, are: 1. create a sense of urgency; 2. build a guiding coalition; 3. form a strategic vision; 4. enlist a volunteer army; 5. enable action by removing barriers; 6. generate short-term wins; 7. sustain acceleration; and 8. institute change. Institutions could use this model to bring about change through the QEP since each of the eight steps would align with the areas required by SACSCOC for the development of the QEP.

**Sensemaking.** Another theory of change is sensemaking. Sensemaking is the process people use to give meaning to their collective experiences. It is often formally defined as "the
ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 409). The concept was introduced to organizational studies by Karl E. Weick in the 1970s. The concept affected the practice of change theory by encouraging a shift away from the traditional focus of organization theorists on decision-making and towards the processes that constitute the meaning of the decisions that are enacted in behavior. One definition of sensemaking seems to tie in most closely with the advising trends in higher education today. Sensemaking is a motivated, continuous effort to understand connections (which can be among people, places, and events) in order to anticipate their trajectories and act effectively (Klein, Moon, & Hoffman, 2006). QEPs by definition look at the traditional focus of a process, department, or policy at an institution and then through solid research and decision-making, develop and enact changes to improve the process moving forward. All segments of the institution must move forward together and not with the goal of only moving one or two silos forward. Scholars who have studied sensemaking from many angles all conclude, there is no final step in sensemaking, it is an on-going process. QEPs are not intended to end after five years but are intended to be institutionalized and continue.

In most cases all segments of a campus must support a QEP for it to be successful. However, when the three steps in Lewin’s model of Unfreeze, Move and Re-Freeze are examined, it does seem to be a change model that could easily be applied to QEP development in higher educational institutions. Lewin’s change model, shown in Figure 5, can be compared to the basic persuasive speaking goal of creating cognitive dissonance in the audience. Cognitive dissonance is defined as - a situation involving conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviors. This produces a feeling of mental discomfort leading to an alteration in one of the attitudes, beliefs or
behaviors to reduce the discomfort and restore balance (McLeod, 2018).

Figure 5. Visual representation of Kurt Lewin’s 3-Step Model of change (Lewin, 1947)

Lewin believed the first step was to unfreeze the stability of human behavior based on a quasi-stationary equilibrium supported by a complex field of driving and restraining forces. He argued the equilibrium needs to be destabilized (unfrozen) before old behavior can be discarded (unlearnt) and new behavior successfully adopted (Burnes, 2004). Schein (1996) added to this idea stating those concerned with the change have to feel safe from loss and humiliation before they can accept the new information and reject old behaviors. This concept is prevalent in higher education when it comes to changing the status quo. Individuals must first have that equilibrium upset, but then also feel confident the change needed to re-establish the balance will not cause them harm.

The second step, moving, is what must happen after an existing practice is unfrozen and
the equilibrium is upset. Just unfreezing an existing practice is not enough. It can create the motivation to learn about the need for a change but does not control the direction of the change (Schein, 1996; Lewin, 1947). QEPs must have a clear direction and plan to move the institutional process being considered in the QEP. Once the imbalance is created in step one of the plan, the actual moving, or change, must show how the balance can be restored.

The final step, refreezing, is where the new equilibrium must be established and made as safe as possible from regressing to the former processes (Burnes, 2004). As mentioned earlier in this study, a major key to change becoming final is the ability of the leaders of the change to maintain the change. If the QEP director should step down for any reason such as retirement or accepting a new position, then the institution must have others to step in and continue the changes that were made in the QEP. Otherwise the refreezing of the new moves will be undone.

**Silos effect on change.** When change is needed, all segments of an organization must be involved if the change is going to be successful. Silos is a term used in education to reflect the concept of the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing in the organization. For QEPs to be successful, all parts of a campus must work together. Organizations are typically made up of various functional units. In industry these may include production, engineering, marketing, finance and human resources. In education, the units could include student affairs, academic affairs, finance, facilities, and community outreach. All units report through some administrative hierarchy or bureaucracy. Functional units allowed to operate separate from one another can become isolated. If this occurs, the units will likely develop their own hierarchy and silos will form (AME, 1988).

According to Scott (2013), silos do not have to be a bad thing. If used properly, they can provide a functional structure for the organization. They can support the development of
expertise, individuality, accountability, and responsibility. Silos can also help the organization concentrate its efforts and assure timeliness on its deliverables. As good as all this sounds, the aforementioned potential attributes could also be the very things that hinder growth of the organization.

Scott (2013) continues by stating that ideally, silos would be transparent. This transparency would allow for better understanding of what each unit is working on and that its work was in the best interest of all parties concerned. The silo would also be permeable. There would be bi-directional free flow of information which would allow leveraged expertise and better understanding of the organization’s impact on the entire enterprise.

This transparent, permeable silo would be the best of all worlds - all the benefits transparency and free flow of information offer integrated with the added value of a protective surrounding structure. These types of silos rarely exist (Scott, 2013). The American Management Association (AME) conducted a study in 2002 on Internal Collaboration and found that silos existed in 83% of the companies that responded to the survey. Ninety-seven percent of that group indicated silos had a negative organizational impact which led to turf wars, power struggles, and personality conflicts. With these types of issues plaguing an organization, poor performance is not far away (AME, 1988).

Silos are not the result of purposive planning. QEPs must be a result of purposive planning. No organization crafts its vision statement with the words, “Our vision is to have the most fragmented, dysfunctional organizational structure possible while still attempting to serve our customers’ needs.” On the contrary, silos are generally built with the bricks of complacency, mistrust and neglect and held together with the mortar of poor communication. This is especially true in the absence of real competition. Gilbert (2008) observed that the silo construction
process is facilitated by limited interaction with colleagues in other silos. The reality is they are likely dealing with some of the same challenges and situations and would benefit greatly by communicating with one another.

**Brief History of Community Colleges**

Community colleges in America, originally termed junior colleges or two-year colleges, have their roots dating back to the Morrill Act of 1862 (the Land Grant Act), which essentially expanded access into public higher education (Drury, 2003). The second Morrill Act (1890) provided for the withholding of federal funds to those colleges that withheld student admission to land grant colleges based on race unless the states provided for separate institutions for minorities. This act again allowed for the expansion of minorities being admitted into land grant colleges. However, it was not until 1901 that the first junior college in America was founded. William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago, was the major force behind its creation. Several leading university presidents, including Harper, began at this time to recognize that the first two years of college are not necessarily a part of university-level education. In fact, the president of the University of Missouri stated in 1896 that during the freshman and sophomore years of college, not only are students identical, but the character of the teaching is the same (Brint, & Karabel, 1989).

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), a national voice for two-year associate degree-granting institutions, was formed in 1920 and is located in the National Center for Higher Education in Washington, D.C. (AACC, 2018). AACC works with other higher education associations, the federal government, Congress, and other national associations that represent the public and private sectors to promote the goals of community colleges and higher education.
In 1944, Congress passed the GI Bill of Rights, which provided financial assistance for veterans of World War II. This law did much to break down the social and economic barriers to higher education in America and sparked growth in community colleges (Vaughan, 1982). In the 1960s the number of community colleges and their enrollments skyrocketed. These colleges, more commonly referred to as junior colleges during this time, increased to approximately 457. In addition, student enrollment increased from about one million in 1965 to about 2.2 million by 1970 (Kasper, 2002). The community colleges grew more rapidly than any other segment in higher education. Community colleges expanded during this time at the rate of one new college per week (Cohen, & Brawer, 1996). In 2018 there were 1,103 community colleges enrolling over twelve million students in both credit and non-credit courses (AACC, 2018).

**Mission and values.** For community college scholars, the terms open access and comprehensive are tied most closely to community colleges (Vaughan, 1991). Carl Strikwerda (2018) outlined three reasons community colleges are important. First, they provide an open door for millions of young Americans. Secondly, they reach diverse groups and finally community colleges help the nation fulfill its goals. Missions of community colleges range everywhere from workforce development (vocational education), to remediating students to get them ready for higher education, to providing a cost-effective first two years of a bachelor’s degree, to simple community enrichment. The mission statements vary from one community college to the next. Community colleges traditionally have had an open admission policy. This policy dates to the GI Bill that allowed many returning veterans to enroll in college, no matter
their ethnic background.

**Contributions to society.** Community colleges play a crucial role in American higher education. Their open admission policy, coupled with low tuition and geographic proximity to home, makes them an important pathway to postsecondary education for many students, especially first-generation college students and those who are from low-income families, as well as adults returning to school to obtain additional training or credentials (Ma & Baum, 2016).

The central role of community colleges in American higher education is reflected in the considerable attention they have received, particularly in the last 10 years, from the U.S. government and from leading foundations. These two groups have been lavishing attention and funds on community colleges in the name of increasing access to higher education, revamping developmental education for students arriving in college without college-level academic skills, and facilitating student movement through higher education and into the labor force. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced *Completion by Design*, which aimed to dramatically improve community college graduation rates by building on proven, existing practices to implement model pathways making the college experience more responsive to today’s student’s needs and education goals. The competitive grant program is a $35 million investment over five years to three-five multi-campus groups of community colleges in nine states serving the largest populations of low-income students (Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Ohio, New York, North Carolina, Texas, and Washington). *Completion by Design* supports tough-minded campus- or college-based analysis to learn where along the education journey students are being lost and to design an intentional educational pathway that employs proven and promising practices at every critical moment from enrollment to credential completion (“Building American skills”, 2010).
Dual enrollment by high school students in community colleges has grown quickly the last few years. A study tracked more than 200,000 high school students who first took a community college course in fall 2010 for six years, through summer 2016 (five years after high school). Eighty-eight percent of these students continued in college after high school, and most earned a certificate or degree or transferred from a two-year college to a four-year college within five years. Nationally, 15% of fall 2010 community college entrants were high school dual enrollment students; this proportion ranged from 1% in Georgia to 34% in Kentucky (Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017). However, this same study also expressed concerns about the gaps in completion rates between low-income and high-income students. In 13 states, there were gaps of 10 or more percentage points in completion rates between lower and higher income students who first enrolled in a community college after high school. There are other reports that show community colleges are costing taxpayers billions of dollars. For the 2008-2009 academic year nearly a billion dollars of taxpayer money was spent on first-year, full-time students who dropped out, about 35% more than five years earlier (AIR, 2011).

**Academic Advising**

The advisor is arguably the most important person in the student’s educational world (Lowenstein, 2005). Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience (Light, 2001). The overall purposes for academic advising are to help students find a career path, complete their academic program, and become an informed citizen. Kuhn (2008) explains the 1970s saw a shift in the nature of academic advising. Academic advising became an examined activity. “Academic advising has become recognized as a viable and necessary component of higher education that results in the success of college students” (Gordon, Habley, and Grites, 2008, p. 462). The Community College Survey of
Student Engagement (CCSSE, 2017) found among students who have been enrolled at their colleges for more than one semester, 78% reported meeting with an advisor. Of those students, 47% reported being very satisfied with their advising experience, 44% said they were somewhat satisfied, and 7% said they were not at all satisfied. That means 22% of the students at community colleges had not met with an advisor and over 50% of the students were less than satisfied with the advising experience.

The formation of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) in the late seventies allowed institutions to compare their advising systems. NACADA (2006) describes academic advising as a series of intentional interactions with a curriculum, a pedagogy, and a set of student learning outcomes. Academic advising synthesizes and contextualizes students’ educational experiences within the frameworks of their aspirations and abilities and lives to extend learning beyond campus boundaries and timeframes (NACADA, 2006). NACADA stresses advising in its broadest sense is teaching. QEPs in this study made a conscious effort to place advising on the academic side of institutions.

Pascarella and Terenzini have done extensive research in academic advising and they cite numerous examples of the effect of improved advising programs in their 1991 book *How College Affects Students*, which summarized 20 years of research. One study found institutions that had comprehensive orientation and advising programs had nine percent higher graduation rates than those institutions in the study that did not have comprehensive programs. There is evidence high-quality advising has a positive but indirect impact on persistence through its positive effect on grades and satisfaction with college and its negative influence on intent to withdraw (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Strong involvement of faculty in the advising process will increase student connections and encourage student persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).
For collaborative efforts to improve student success, Hunter, Henscheid, and Mouton (2007) offer a specific approach. They suggest linking academic advising with first-year seminars: “One way to achieve a comprehensive approach to student transition issues, student success strategies, academic orientation to the institution, career exploration, and decision-making strategies may well be through linking these two important initiatives” (p. 104). QEPs in Track A institutions combine an advising focus with a first-year experience component (Matveev, 2012). Kuh (2005) concluded that all institutions interested in improving the first year of college should require a first-year seminar course. Four institutions in this study included a focus in their QEP on some type of first-year experience.

Academic advising programs have become key strategies for improving first-year student retention rates (Habley, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Due to this new direction in how advising is being considered, more attention is being given to academic advising programs and processes by higher education institutions. These new programs have seen expanding advising services, advancements in advising technology software, and the creation of advising centers sometimes referred to as Start Centers (Chiteng Kot, 2014; Habley, 2004; Steingass & Sykes, 2008).

There are a variety of models for advising used in higher education today and all have positive and negative aspects. No one model works for every institution. All of the QEPs reviewed in this study had a goal of changing the advising model. Most advising processes in higher education fall into four models, centralized, decentralized, faculty driven, and advising center model.

**Advising models.** There are factors to consider when an institution selects an advising model. Those factors include, but are not limited to, enrollment size, administrative structure,
faculty, academic policies, degree programs, the institutional mission, and composition of the student body. Additional interchangeable terms used in advising today are proactive and intrusive. Colleges are starting to use the idea students do not do optional when looking at advising. Through the use of proactive advising strategies, advisors may be able to anticipate student challenges and implement plans to keep these challenges from becoming insurmountable (Varney, 2012). Proactive (intrusive) advising began with the work of Robert Glennen in the mid-1970s when he sought to blend advising and counseling into one discipline. The idea behind this then new model was to provide students with information before they requested it, while also building a relationship with the student at the same time.

Habley (1983) first presented seven models for the structure of academic advising: faculty only, shared supplementary, shared split, dual, total intake, satellite, and self-contained. Research still recognizes all seven of these models. Surveys are finding institutions are using more than one unique advising model. The data from the 2011 NACADA National Survey on Academic Advising showed 13% of respondents reported using more than one advising model at their institutions. In addition, between 10 and 205 of respondents from institutions of all sizes marked the use of multiple models, and 97 wrote comments detailing reasons the advising structures used in their campus did not fit any of the listed models (Miller, 2012).

Three models for advising are Centralized, Decentralized, and Shared (Pardee, 2004). Each of the models has a purpose and can work well in an institution. However, there are factors that play a role in determining which model works best for an institution. The three primary models for delivering advising services to institutions are

- Centralized: where professional and faculty advisors are housed in one academic or administrative unit.
- Decentralized: professional or faculty advisors are located in their respective academic departments.

- Shared: where some advisors meet with students in a central administrative unit (i.e., an advising center), while others advise students in the academic department of their major discipline.

According to the Sixth National Survey on Academic Advising conducted in 2003 by ACT (Habley, 2004), more institutions use a shared model of delivering advising services (55%) than use centralized (32%) or decentralized (14%) structures. This distribution is similar to that found in 1997 when the Fifth National Survey was conducted. Habley (1983) classified the structures even further. The only centralized model is the Self-Contained Model, which, when put into practice, is often called an advising center. Counselors and advisors, who are responsible for advising throughout the student’s academic career, are located in staff advising centers. The decentralized models include the Faculty-Only Model and the Satellite Model, which houses advising offices within academic units. Shared Models include the Supplementary, Split, Dual, and Total Intake models. There is a trend toward these ideal shared structures that would take advantage of the expertise of faculty advising in their departments (decentralized), while relying on professional advisors in a central administrative unit to meet the special needs of students (Pardee, 2004). The QEPs at the institutions reviewed in this study show a variety of advising models. Some of the institutions are going from a Faculty-Only Model to a Centralized Model while others are using a combination of models.

Kentucky State University in Frankfort, Kentucky, was experiencing below average retention and graduation rates (59.0% and 22.4% respectively). Among the ways the administration decided to transform the institution is in the process of advising (KSU, 2016). To
effectively facilitate this type of advising, KSU moved from a decentralized/shared model to a centralized delivery model. KSU believed centralized advising would allow advisors to build a relationship based on the proactive advising model that begins during the admissions process and continues through graduation. The Centralized Advising Model features an advising team approach that includes two professional advisors and a faculty mentor per student.

**Retention.** Retention is one of the hottest topics in higher education. Almost all institutions of higher education have researched, developed, scraped, and started over on retention efforts over the years. If colleges could just keep students from year to year, budget problems would fix themselves. As stated earlier in this study, increased retention is an outcome for every QEP being reviewed in this study. Institutions believe improved advising will help increase retention and the literature supports this idea.

Hunter and White (2007) showed the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) indicated the quality of academic advising is the most powerful predictor of satisfaction with the college environment. By capitalizing on the benefits of quality advising, colleges can more effectively help students select the programs and courses that will help them stay in school and on track toward achievement of their education and career goals (Closing the GAP, 2004).

"Academic advising is the only structured service on the campus in which all students have the opportunity for on-going, one-to-one contact with a concerned representative of the institution" (Habley, 1994, p. 10). Tinto (2016) had three keys to taking students from retention to graduation. Those three areas were self-efficacy, a sense of belonging, and perceived value of the curriculum. The connections and interactions students have with individuals on campus, most notably academic advisors, have a huge impact on all three areas.

St. Philip's College in San Antonio, Texas, worked to combat a 40% attrition rate by
targeting better advising and intake processes for students. Specifically, the college established an Advisors in Residence program, which placed academic advisors in large departments with retention challenges. The college leadership recognized the link between effective advising and student success. St. Philip’s implemented the First Time in College (FTIC) program to offer intensive advising and mentoring for students, career assessment, student success workshops, and specialized tutoring as strategies to increase student success rates. Only two years into implementation, the college reported a measurable increase in student retention (CCSSE, 2006).

Sinclair Community College, the second largest community college in Ohio, found its retention and graduation rates to be lower than its Ohio community college peers. To reverse this trend and encourage increased rates of student success, the college established and launched a comprehensive Student Success Plan that involves counseling and intervention support for identified high-risk students. Specifically, identified students receive assistance in designing an Individual Learning Plan, as well as assistance in developing a plan to pay for college costs. Sinclair students are also guided through Individual Counseling Action Plans to receive help in choosing appropriate majors and setting realistic, attainable career goals. The college augments this approach with the utilization of a web-based Early Alert system to direct students in developmental courses to available student support services (CCSSE, 2006b).

Sound, quality academic advising early in their academic career is a critical component to the success of first-year students and subsequent persistence to graduation (Barefoot, Gardner, Cutright, Morris, Schroeder, Schwartz, 2005; Kuh, 2005; Light, 2001; Noel, Levitz, Saluri, & Associates, 1985). “While effective academic advising is critical to all first-year students, it is especially important that underprepared, undecided, diverse, first-generation, and commuter students be advised by competent advisors with adequate training.” (King & Kerr, 2005, p. 321).
Completion rate. Completion rates for community college students have always been an issue for reasons such as community college students tend to be older, have family obligations, enroll part time, and work while in school. These factors, and others, create challenges for college success (College Board, 2016). Completion results do show family income and whether the parents graduated from college play a role in the changes of students completing a degree within the six-year frame. All QEPs in this study had an increase in graduation rates as an outcome. Results, shown in Figure 6, do show a small increase in graduation rates at two-year colleges over the last few years. For a recent cohort of first-time, full-time degree/certificate-seekers attending public two-year institutions (cohort year 2013), the official graduation rate was 25.4%, which was almost a 2% increase from the previous year and the second consecutive year in which the graduation rate was higher than the lowest graduation rate of 21.1% for the 2010 cohort (Juszkiewicz, 2017). It should be noted these rates are based on a 150%-time frame for graduation (three years).

![Graduation Rate at Public 2-Year Institutions Cohort Years 2007-2013](image)

*Figure 6. Completion trends for two-year institutions from 2007-2013 (Juszkiewicz, 2017)*
Chapter III: Methodology

Overview

This chapter details the qualitative research methodology used for this study. Academic advising at the college level is about interpersonal relationships and connections between students and academic advisors especially in the first year (Tinto, 2016; Darling, 2015; Kuh, 2005; NACADA, 2006). The effectiveness of this process cannot be evaluated using only numbers, data, and charts. Maxwell (2013) called his qualitative model of research design “interactive” since he stated the model was interconnected and flexible in structure.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore reasons why SACSCOC Track A, Level I institutions choose to or not to institutionalize the various student learning outcomes from the QEP focus on academic advising after the required Fifth-Year Impact Report. The QEP process requires the 794 institutions accredited by SACSCOC to complete a QEP every 10 years. These institutions have spent over a billion dollars and devoted untold number of hours to completing this reaffirmation requirement. Moving forward institutions will need to continue to meet this requirement for reaffirmation since the new SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation: Foundations of Quality Enhancement approved at the 2017 Annual Meeting still contains the QEP (SACSCOC, 2018b). Studies need to be conducted to examine if institutions have benefited from this costly and labor-intensive requirement. The study determined there were common student learning outcomes from the advising QEPs across cases.

Research Design

The study was a qualitative, multi-site case study with a grounded theory design. The goal of the study was to tell the story of the QEP and examine the reasons the QEP process was
considered effective or not effective by the institutions who completed them. The best way to do this was to talk with the individuals who were closely involved with the QEP at Track A, Level 1 institutions who had an advising focus for their QEP. Qualitative research focuses on social inquiry in an effort to gain clarity on how people perceive the world around them (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Each higher education institution is different. They are located in different areas, have different student populations, and have different mission statements. Academic advising is a people-oriented process and the outcomes of advising changes will be best told by the people who are working in the area (Tinto, 2016; Darling, 2015; Kuh, 2005; NACADA, 2006). Qualitative research by definition is interactive (Maxwell, 2013).

**Research and Interview Questions**

This study explored reasons why SACSCOC Track A, Level I institutions choose whether or not to institutionalize the various student learning outcomes from the QEPs focused on academic advising after the required Fifth-Year Impact Report was accepted.

RQ1 – What are the reasons for advising QEP student learning outcomes being institutionalized after the completion of the process?

RQ2 – What are the reasons for advising QEPs student learning outcomes not being institutionalized after the completion of the process?

RQ3 – What commonalities exist in the advising QEP student learning outcomes that were or were not institutionalized?

RQ4 – Do the institutions in the study find the QEP process effective?

Possible semi-structured in-person interview questions depending on the results of the pre-meeting questionnaires.

- Do you consider your advising focused QEP a success?
• What were the biggest challenges faced in the QEP process?
• What were your biggest successes from the QEP?
• What outcomes of the QEP are currently in place?
• What led to the continuation of these goals or outcomes?
• What was the primary change model used to implement the changes from the QEP?
• How did the QEP improve student success?
• How did the QEP improve advising processes?

Sample and Procedures of Study

The cases used in the study were selected using purposeful sample. The purposeful sample consisted of six institutions that completed a QEP between 2008 and 2012 with an academic advising focus. The institutions in the study are all between two and five years after the submission of their SACSCOC Fifth-Year Impact Report. Additional information on each of the institutions in the study came from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education 2017 report. Institution A was a two-year, medium size institution with a mix of part and full-time students with high vocational and technical enrollments. Institution B was a two-year, medium size institution with a higher percentage of part-time students with high vocational and technical enrollments. Institution C was a two-year, small size institution with a higher percentage of part-time students with high transfer enrollments. Institution D was a two-year, very large size institution with a higher percentage of part-time students with high transfer enrollments. Institution E was a two-year, small size institution with a higher percentage of part-time students with a mix of transfer and vocational and technical enrollments. Institution F was a two-year, medium size institution with a mix of part and full-time students with a mix of transfer and vocational technical enrollments. Each institution had similar QEP committees that
selected, developed, implemented, and then assessed the QEP. Individuals from those committees served as institutional cases in the study based on their experience and knowledge of the QEP at the institution. The author interviewed faculty, staff, and administrators who served on various QEP committees or had direct involvement with the QEP process at each institution. Faculty were individuals at the institutions who primarily taught classes. Staff were individuals who served in support roles in the various departments. Administrators were cabinet level individuals such as deans, department heads, vice-presidents, or presidents. The selection of participants using this method allowed for better comparison in results between institutions. This method helped with the generalizability of results in order to draw conclusions that can be applied to other Track A, Level 1 institutions of similar size and scope. There was an interview session with each of the three groups at each institution. In addition, individual interviews were held with the three QEP directors who were still at three of the institutions. Participation at each institution was voluntary and a representative at each campus recruited individuals for each group and set up the interview times and locations. Each individual interviewed signed a consent form and confidentiality was assured. Results from the study were aggregated to maintain anonymity. Individual institutions or individuals interviewed were not identified.

The author met in-person with individuals at each institution in order to gather data about the history of the QEP, the process of the QEP, the assessment of the QEP, and decisions to continue or discontinue the student learning outcomes at the end of the QEP process. This study compared data from a variety of sources and found the QEPs had commonalities in the student learning outcomes at each institution.

The author generated semi-structured questions for the interviews from the responses to a pre-visit survey. The pre-visit survey responses allowed the interview questions to be directed
more to the individuals at each institution. The pre-visit survey had the same eight questions for each institution but the ninth question addressed specific aspects of each institution’s unique QEP. The author requested each institution provide assessment data from the QEP and also the QEP Fifth-Year Impact Report submitted by each institution to SACSCOC.

The author of this study was the QEP director at his institution. The focus of that QEP was also advising. The questions and methods used in this study were pilot tested with the various members of the QEP committees at the author’s institution prior to being used in with the institutions for this study. The author sent out the pre-visit survey to QEP committee members at the author’s institution before he sent the pre-visit survey to the Track A, Level I institutions in this study. A list of semi-structured questions were developed to be used in in-person interview with QEP committee members at the author’s institution. This process clarified any terminology used in the questions planned for the pre-visit survey or the semi-structured questions used in the in-person interviews in an effort to make them more effective and clear. Any narrative data collected during the pilot testing was not used in the study, but rather used to refine the pre-visit survey and semi-structured questions for the in-person interviews during the institution visits.

Pilot testing is not used to test hypotheses about the effectiveness of a process, but rather, to assess the feasibility/acceptability of an approach to be used in a larger scale study. A primary goal of conducting a pilot study is to optimize delivery of the questions, with specific attention to adherence to the goals of the study. A pilot study can identify problems with adherence and use qualitative research or quality improvement techniques to understand and correct them (Kraemer, Mintz, Tinklenberg, & Yesavage, 2006).

**Procedures for Narrative Analysis**

You have just finished typing the field notes from your final observation of the study and
you proceed to file them. There, facing you, is all the material you have diligently collected. An empty felling comes over you as you ask, ‘Now what do I do?’ (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007, pp. 172-3)

This was a multi-site case study. There was a considerable amount of information to review, code, and distribute into themes. Narrative data gathered made use of pre-visit surveys, observations, semi-structured questions, individual interviews, and data from the institutional QEP assessments and reports in order to triangulate the data. Triangulation involved the careful reviewing of data collected through different methods in order to achieve a more accurate and valid estimate of qualitative results for a particular construct (Oliver-Hoyo & Allen, 2005). Triangulation reduced the risk of biases due to a specific method (Maxwell, 2013). Validation methods followed four criteria used to judge the soundness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Qualitative research methods require transparency to ensure the 'trustworthiness' of the data analysis. The detailed processes of organizing, coding, and analyzing the data are often rendered invisible in the presentation of the research findings, which requires a 'leap of faith' for the reader (Ryan, 2009). “Coding is a systematic way in which to condense extensive data sets into smaller analyzable units through the creation of categories and concepts derived from the data” (Lockyer, 2004, pp.137-38). The use of thematic analysis as a key to effective coding of qualitative research (Maxwell, 2013). Maxwell stated one of the biggest problems with qualitative studies is letting notes and transcripts pile up. The author used audio-taped, semi-structured, individual, in-person interviews in as natural an environment as possible using field notes and memos.

*The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* explains 29 possible coding processes
divided into eight subcategories. Coding may involve two cycles. First Cycle are processes that happen during the initial coding of data and Second Cycle coding are more challenging but are not required or needed in all studies. Five data coding methods were used in this study. Those five methods were Attribute, Magnitude, Holistic, Provisional, and Values. There were multiple sites in the study and a variety of individuals interviewed. Attribute Coding is the notation of basic descriptive information such as setting, institution name, age, gender, and more. Magnitude Coding consists of numbers in lieu of descriptive words indicate intensity and weight of importance. This coding assisted the author in discovering if trends in the QEP student learning outcomes were continued or discontinued and the importance of each to the institutions. Holistic Coding attempts to grasp basic themes. This type of coding was applicable since the author already had a general idea of what to investigate in the data due to the commonalities in the student learning outcomes addressed in the QEPs in the study. This type of coding saved time since this study had a large amounts of data. Provisional Coding establishes a start list of codes/categories prior to fieldwork. The provisional list was generated from literature reviews, conceptual framework, research questions, and pilot study fieldwork. All of these areas were used in this study and assisted in establishing a starter list of categories. Value Coding is the application of codes that reflect participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs (Saldana, 2009). The values individuals in the study placed on advising affected their responses to the interview questions.

“There is no ‘cookbook’ or single best way for doing qualitative analysis: your use of these strategies needs to be planned (and modified when necessary) in such a way to fit the data you have and to answer your research questions” (Maxwell, 2013, p 105).
Qualifications as the Author

The author of this study served as the QEP director for his institution from 2009-2017. Due to the timeframe of reaffirmation for his institution, this was the first and only, to date, QEP for his institution. His institution’s reaffirmation visit by SACSCOC was in 2011 and the QEP Fifth-Year Impact Report was submitted in 2017. The author of this study has served as a QEP Lead Evaluator for 10 SACSCOC Track A, Level 1 institutions over the last five years. All 10 of the institutions visited had QEPs with academic advising as a focus. The author served twice as a member of SACSCOC Committee E to review the acceptability of the QEP Fifth-Year Impact Reports at the SACSCOC annual meeting. The author has presented on QEPs at SACSCOC annual meetings in 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2017. The author was also asked by SACSCOC to be a member of panel to present a plenary session on the QEP process at the 2015 SACSCOC Summer Institute. The author of this study has taught Basic Public Speaking at the college level for 41 years. He has listened to thousands of student speeches and has developed a process where he audio records the presentation while watching the student and taking notes (memos) about the delivery of the presentation. This developed skill was a real asset to the author as he conducted audio-taped interviews while making notes about the individuals involved.
Chapter IV: Findings and Analysis

This study used data collected from nine campuses at six Track A, Level 1 institutions in five states. The purpose of this study was to explore reasons why these institutions did or did not institutionalize the student learning outcomes from their QEPs focused on academic advising after the SACSCOC required Fifth-Year Impact Report was accepted. Table 1 gives some basic information about each of the institutions in the study.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Sizea</th>
<th>Primary Degreeb</th>
<th>MSA Population</th>
<th>Student Typec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Vocational/Technical</td>
<td>42,000c</td>
<td>Full and Part Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Vocational/Technical</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>Mainly Part Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>305,000</td>
<td>Mainly Part Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Very Large</td>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>2,325,000</td>
<td>Mainly Part Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Mix Transfer and Vocational/Technical</td>
<td>146,000</td>
<td>Mainly Part Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Mix Transfer and Vocational/Technical</td>
<td>465,000</td>
<td>Full and Part Time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. aThe size designation is based on 2018 Carnegie Classification of Institution data. bThe primary degree status is based on 2018 Carnegie Classification of Institution data. cInstitution A is not included in a MSA for population purposes. This number is only for the county where the institution is located. dThe student type designation is based on 2018 Carnegie Classification of Institution data.

Pre-visit surveys were sent to all 58 interview participants and 46 individuals responded (Appendix A). The study reviewed and analyzed the responses to the pre-visit survey. A total of 58 individuals were interviewed during the visits. All participants signed a consent form prior to the interviews (Appendix B). All interviews were recorded and transcribed (Appendix C). A total of 21 faculty, 21 administrators, 13 staff, and three QEP directors were interviewed. To maintain anonymity individuals were given a code. The code was three characters. The first character denoted faculty (F), staff (S), or administrator (A). The second character was the
number assigned to the individual such as 1 or 2. The third character denoted the institution. There were six institutions in the study and each institution was assigned a letter A through F. For example, quotes from staff member 1 at Institution E would be coded as (S1E). The Fifth-Year Impact Report information was given a three-letter code as well. Those codes identify the Impact Report and the institution. Data from the Impact Report from Institution C would be coded (IRC).

The six institutions in the study developed a total of 17 student learning outcomes (SLO) in their QEP documents. Institution C developed four SLOs. Three institutions (B, E, and F) developed three SLOs. Two institutions (A and D) developed two SLOs. Each institution planned to achieve all of the outcomes through the QEP process. These 17 SLOs were all focused on improving student success. All 17 SLOs were met during the QEP process.

Data from the pre-visit surveys, on-campus interviews, and Fifth-Impact Reports submitted to SACSCOC supported the reasons why the SLOs remained part of the institution at the end of the five-year QEP process. There were commonalities in the SLOs from the six institutions. These commonalities allowed the author to combine the 17 individual SLOs into the five SLOs addressed in this study. The five SLOs combined from the QEPs were (a) changed advising processes (A, B, C, D, E, and F), (b) increased knowledge and use of student services (A, B, C, D, E, F), (c) required academic plans (A, D, E, and F), (d) improved or developed first-year experience (A, B, D, and E), and (e) improved new student orientation (B and C). Each institution used a variety of initiatives to achieve the SLOs. Those initiatives are addressed in this study. The 17 SLOs listed in the six QEP documents are shown in Table 2.
### QEP Student Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>SLO 1</th>
<th>SLO 2</th>
<th>SLO 3</th>
<th>SLO 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Develop and implement improved advising services that increase student’s ability to identify, select, and execute an academic plan.</td>
<td>Implement a first-year experience program to engage students and establish connections to learner support services throughout their college career.</td>
<td>Improve student access to personalized advising through establishment of advising center.</td>
<td>Improve both printed and online communication to enhance the advising process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Promote student success through new student orientation.</td>
<td>Improve advisor training through professional development.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Provide students with an orientation program that will develop their lifelong learning skills and enhance their college experience.</td>
<td>Move from a prescriptive advising model to a comprehensive, developmental model.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Students will clarify and educational goal and learning plan.</td>
<td>Students will identify and address a barrier to success.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Students will access and utilize the campus course management system.</td>
<td>Students will develop a semester-by-semester plan of study for degree completion.</td>
<td>Students will locate and utilize academic and learning resources.</td>
<td>Students will seek and utilize appropriate support services to address self-identified academic challenges.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pre-Visit Surveys

The pre-visit survey had eight common questions (Appendix A). The ninth question was specific to each institution and directly addressed components of that institution’s QEP. The survey was completed by 46 of the 58 individuals interviewed during the visits. The responses to this survey allowed the author to develop interview questions directly related to the QEP at that institution. Connections between the interview responses and the pre-visit survey results are compared in this section.

Question 1 looked at (a) the categories at the institution and (b) whether the participant perceived those categories made the QEP successful. Shown in Table 3, all but two of the eight areas received over 50% participant responses. Budgets and Clearly Stated Goals during the QEP process were the only two categories below 50% in responses. Support from Administration and QEP Leadership were the two categories that received the highest percentage of responses. The importance of leadership and the issue with people in leadership roles was discussed in many of the interviews. Responses from interviews with the three remaining QEP directors addressed the importance of effective leadership and are covered later in this chapter.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas Respondents Believed Made QEP Process Successful</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QEP Process Professional Development</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from administration</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>78.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy-in from faculty</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>69.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy-in from staff</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication during the QEP</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient budget</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearly stated QEP goals and outcomes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QEP Leadership</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2 asked about perceptions the advising process had changed at the
institution as a result of the QEP. Shown in Table 4, 42 of the 46 responses were either Strongly Agree or Agree the advising processes had changed at their institution. Responses in the interviews showed a majority of the respondents also agreed the advising processes had changed on campus and those changes were still in place. Those changes included the advising model, the requirement of a first-year experience, the creation or changes in an advising center, and other initiatives. These initiatives are covered in detail later in this chapter.

Table 4

| The Advising Process Changed as a Result of the QEP |
|---------------------------------|---------|------|
| Category                        | Responses | %    |
| Strongly agree                  | 21       | 45.6%|
| Agree                           | 21       | 45.6%|
| Neither agree or disagree       | 2        | 4.3% |
| Disagree                        | 2        | 4.3% |
| Strongly disagree               | 0        | 0%   |

Since most of the QEPs looked at changing the advising processes at the institution, Question 3, shown in Table 5, looked at whether the faculty and staff valued the current advising processes more as a result of the QEP. The pre-visit survey results showed a strong overall agreement with the statement with 32 of the 46 responses were either Strongly Agree or Agree.

Table 5

| Faculty and Staff Value Current Advising Process as a Result of the QEP |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------|------|
| Category                                                      | Responses | %    |
| Strongly agree                                                | 11      | 23.9%|
| Agree                                                        | 21      | 45.6%|
| Neither agree or disagree                                     | 13      | 28.2%|
| Disagree                                                     | 1       | 2.1% |
| Strongly disagree                                            | 0       | 0%   |

The SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation* states the QEP topic would have an impact on the student learning environment. The advising culture at an institution is a big part of that environment. Question 4, shown in Table 6, revealed improvement in the advising culture as a
result of the QEP with 43 of the 46 responses either Strongly Agree or Agree. The interview responses supported the positive effect the QEP had on the advising culture at all institutions. All institutions reported a more caring attitude toward the student. This caring attitude developed as first of the three overall themes from the interviews.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree or disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faculty may value the advising processes more, but what about students? All of the institutions participated in the Community College Student Survey of Engagement (CCSSE) at some point before, during, or after the QEP process. The instrument looked at student views on the importance of advising and how often students used advising. Question 5 on the pre-visit survey, shown in Table 7, revealed faculty and staff did not perceive students valued the current advising process as a result of the QEP with only 19 of 46 responses either Strongly Agree or Agree. The survey responses showed participants were not sure about the impact on students’ positive perceptions of advising. Student perceptions were not a part of this study.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree or disagree</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Institutions wanted students to become more responsible for their academic and career
goals. Four institutions (A, D, E, and F) had an academic plan as an outcome. Question 6, shown in Table 8, revealed faculty and staff believed students were taking more responsibility for their academic plan as a result of the QEP. A small majority of responses (59%) were in the Strongly Agree and Agree categories. Pre-visit survey results did not strongly support students were taking more responsibility for the academic plan. Interview responses showed the institutions still required an academic plan but were not achieving the desired student results.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree or disagree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All institutions in the study listed increasing knowledge and use of student services in the QEP. Question 7, shown in Table 9, revealed faculty and staff from all institutions believed students were more aware of campus services. The vast majority of responses (85%) were in the Strongly Agree and Agree categories. Interviews showed participants agreed the QEPs had a major impact on awareness of campus services. In addition, interview responses showed faculty, staff, and administrators had become more aware of the services to help increase student success.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree or disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, Question 8, shown in Table 10, on the pre-visit survey asked about the change
model used at the institution to help get the QEP accepted and implemented. The question was open-ended and did not direct participants to any particular accepted model for change. Just like the responses to the pre-visit survey, the interviews showed individuals at all the institutions did not really think about an actual change model when planning for the QEP. The majority of respondents (63%) could not think of an actual change model so did not answer the question.

Table 10

*Change Theory Used in QEP process*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No idea or a question mark</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewin’s Three Step Change Model</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe’s Motivated Sequence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lippett’s Change Model</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Focused Change Model</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBAM – Concern Based Adoption Model</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 9 on the pre-visit survey asked about specific initiatives or practices used in the QEP document and addressed specific SLOs and the initiatives to achieve those SLOs at the institution. The responses to this question were helpful to the author in developing specific questions for the on-campus interviews. Each of the categories in the pre-visit survey are addressed and tied into the responses in the next section of this chapter. The 17 SLOs were addressed in the campus interviews as they related to the various initiatives that came from the interviews.

**Interviews**

Only one question asked during the interviews received a unanimous response. The question was, “Do you consider your QEP a success?” The answer from all 58 respondents was “yes” and the tone of the voice in many respondents was very upbeat and positive. There were many optimistic views and memories expressed about the QEP experience from faculty, staff,
and administrators. The one-word “yes” answer was followed by phrases such as “without a doubt” (F3C), “in so many ways” (F2D), “it caused us to look at advising in whole new way” (F3F), “on every front” (A1C), “the QEP made advising much more intentional” (S2F), “the benefits to both the college and the student were extensive” (S2F), “several key changes came from the QEP” (F4F), “I cannot think of anything that did not work” (F6E), “I am so glad we did this QEP” (S2A), “for sure, and it has been institutionalized” (A3E), “it is now part of the fabric of the institution and has changed our advising culture” (A4E), “it made advising much more intentional and this was a good thing” (A4F), and “the QEP eliminated some silos on campus and got people talking” (A1D).

There were two less than positive phrases following the yes answer, and both were from staff at Institution B. “However, it was more effective during the five years in the process leading up to the impact report. Since the impact report, I believe some of the initiatives have been dropped” (S1B). “All the initiatives were great, but with some leadership changes and budget cuts, some have been reduced or dropped” (S2B). Both staff members agreed the initiatives that had been dropped were primarily due to personnel changes. It should be noted that faculty and administrators at this campus did not believe any of the initiatives had been dropped.

Initiatives used at the institutions to achieve the SLOs came out of the interviews with the 58 individuals in this study. Those initiatives were tied to the three overall themes. The three common themes discovered from the data in this study were (a) the institutions cared more about the whole student, (b) advising processes were made more intentional, and (c) more open methods of communication were created. The interview responses tied directly to one of these three themes detailing the initiatives used at the institutions that supported each theme. The five combined SLOs were connected to the themes and initiatives to illustrate how they were used to
achieve the SLOs at the institutions. The next several pages look at the interview comments about the various initiatives developed and used at the institutions to incorporate the five combined SLOs from the six institutional QEPs. The next three sections address in detail each of the three themes discovered in the interviews and the initiatives used at each institution to achieve the 17 SLOs.

**Care about the whole student.** The first theme from the data collected was the institutions cared more about the whole student. This theme addressed two of the five SLOs from the QEPs. Those SLOs were (a) changed advising processes and (b) increased knowledge and use of student services. All six institutions had these two SLOs in their QEPs and the comments from faculty, staff, and administrators supported the idea these two SLOs were well established at each institution and had become and continue to be a part of the culture at each institution.

Developing and establishing relationships with students was closely tied to the advising culture at all institutions. Comments from faculty, staff, and administrators about how the QEP helped establish and build caring relationships with the student were positive. “The advising light has gone on for many faculty. Our campus is more caring now” (S1B). “Prior to the QEP students were only seeing advisors maybe once, now they are seeing the advising center as least three times a year” (F4E).

Institutions did not just want to be more caring but wanted to instill responsibility in the student. Responsibility was also tied into the idea of caring. “The culture has changed to make the student more responsible and to work on making connections at the college” (F1D). “We are strong believers in the idea of “First Day Matters”. We also expect faculty to be ready on the first day. This is a cultural shift” (A5E). “The new advising culture works very hard to make
students aware of all aspects of their education and not just the classes they are going to take” (A3F). “I will not advise students who are not my advisee. That defeats the idea of building the bond with the student’s assigned advisor” (F1C). “Advisors are asking students what they want to do and not what they need to do” (A1C). “College is like an amusement park. What rides are you going to stand in line for? Getting students to look into the rides they are not interested in is important. Our culture now has advisors taking the time to help students look at options” (F1D). “We are showing we care, but we are also building in accountability along the way” (F6E).

The idea advising was now much more holistic was expressed in the interviews at each institution. Interview responses showed the QEP initiatives had changed the way the institutions were advising students. Institutions are not just looking at what classes the student needs to graduate but what other factors or barriers the student was facing that could limit his or her success. “The QEP made the campus must more holistic in dealing with students. Not just getting into classes but making the students successful” (F1D). “Once or twice a year a student will be on the ledge and we now work with that student to get them some help” (F2F). “Since the QEP we have been advising and dealing with the entire student” (S1D). “We are much more holistic than we used to be” (F1D). “We look for mother or father hens in our faculty. We want faculty who want to be actively involved with students. The connection they make causes them to have much better success with the students” (F2D). “The difference is we are helping or taking the student by the hand. It is a hand up not a hand-out. Perception is key” (S1E). “The QEP stressed the idea of students being more successful if they develop that bond with an advisor” (F2C). “We developed a definition of advising. Before the QEP, nobody was talking about advising” (F2B). “The QEP did help develop ways to offer more services for online students” (F1A). “We look at the entire student before selecting classes” (A2E). “Advisors find
out about the entire student and what their needs are, then get to registration” (A3F).

Staff and administrators at institutions C, E, and F saw changes in how the institutions get answers for students. “I actually got a call just his morning from an advisor who was asking questions. In the past, faculty would have just sent the student to see me and not have taken the time to get the answer for the student” (A1C). “This college cares more now” (A5E). “The campus is viewed as a more caring campus because of the QEP. The care has always been here, but it is more organized” (S1F). “Faculty have taken a much more pro-active approach to the advising process and faculty are part of the journey with the students” (F3C). “Advisors are much more likely to pick up the phone and call other people on campus to make sure the student gets the answer they need” (A1F).

The terms registration and advising did not mean the same thing at the six institutions in the study. The answer in the interviews to the question “Do you register or advise students at this institution” was almost unanimous. All but one, 57 of the 58 interviewees, said “advise”. How the term was defined further supported the idea the institutions cared more for students and were more holistic in advising processes. Each institution agreed that while the term registration had been used for enrolling students in the past, the responses from faculty, staff, and administrators showed the institutions now advise students before enrolling them.

In their reply about the concept of whether or not they registered or advised on their campus, faculty members had pride and almost defiance in many of their voices. “We advise the whole student” (F7E). “Not the same. Building the rapport with the student is advising” (F1B). “Students are advised first and then develop a schedule” (F4E). “It has changed on this campus from registration to advising” (F3C). “Advise, we show we care by the shift to advising and away from registering” (F5F). “Faculty who have been here a while would say advising, they
have seen the changes brought about by the QEP” (F3D). “Not any more, we advise and then register” (F2E). “Advising, we do not register” (F1F). “We do not register, we advise students on what classes to take based on their individual needs and then they register” (F4F).

Administrators and staff, just like the faculty, at all institutions were clear on how their institutions viewed the two terms. Both groups agreed advising was looking at the entire student more and not just getting a student registered in classes. While the terms may have meant the same thing prior to the QEP at each institution, that perspective had changed since the QEP. “These terms are not the same and QEP did help with establishing the difference” (S1A). “For sure prior to the QEP it was registration. I think if you asked faculty, or at least those who advise, they would all now say advising” (S1D). “It was viewed as registration prior to the QEP. Now the vast majority of advisors would say advising” (A1C). “Clearly after the QEP the process is advising and not registration, Students get registered during advising but so much more is done in advising” (S1E). “In the summer they get advising. If students wait until the week before classes start, they get registration” (A1B). “We had a NACADA speaker present on advising and then had a workshop and only three folks showed up. However, the QEP changed that culture. Faculty now talk about needing time to do advising and not just registering” (F1B). “Not the same. We advise, we do not register” (A1F). “We advise. Hopefully after the first or second semester students are aware of their barriers and can take the lead in registering, faculty and staff work with the student on discovering and understanding the barriers” (A2F).

The one answer of registration instead of advising came from an administrator at Institution B. “Unfortunately, I still think we have registration” (A2B). Faculty members from institutions A, D, and E and one staff member from Institution A did express some doubt about the terms being 100% clear at their institution. “They are not the same thing, although I believe
some faculty would say the terms are the same” (F1A). “There are a few faculty who would say we just need to register, it is not our job to advise” (F5E). “Advising, but I am afraid if you asked most faculty they would say registration” (F2D). “I will say there are still a few advisors who think they are the same” (S2A).

The SLO, students had increased knowledge and use of student services, tied closely with the first theme of looking at the whole student and caring about their success. Students are more successful if they are aware of the variety of student services offered at the institution. The change in the advising model and use of the advising center were credited with increasing student knowledge of student services. Responses in the interviews demonstrated how much more students were aware of student services and how much more faculty, staff, and administrators also learned about student services. QEPs had a direct impact on the awareness and usage by students, faculty, and staff on the student services offered to make students successful. In the pre-visit surveys, 84.7% of the responses agreed the QEP did improve student awareness of student services at the institutions. The comments from faculty, staff, and administrators at all institutions mirrored these results and participants were excited and happy to report the increased student knowledge of these services. “The QEP brought much more attention to student services through the advising center and FYE” (F2B). “With a huge smile on my face, I would say absolutely students are more aware of the services available to them” (F5E). “Students are required to do a scavenger hunt. We added technology into the hunt adding scanning codes. The hunt gets all students more aware of services” (F2D). “I learned a lot about student services through the QEP” (F3F). “I can point to faculty who have really stepped up their game and are all in on getting students involved” (S1B). “The health center does a great job of letting faculty and staff know about services and programs. There is more
openness about the process” (S3E). “Before there was confusion on who to send a student to for help” (S2E). “Definitely campus services and to make the campus more welcoming” (A2D). “We spend a lot of time on how students can be more successful using these services” (A4E).

At institutions A, E, and F additional student services were created or moved as a result of the QEP. Increases in the knowledge and usage of student services created new services at institutions A and E. “The food pantry and success closet are direct results of the QEP” (F7E). “The tutoring center did move to the library as part of the QEP and the usage went up. The QEP did help develop ways to offer more services for online students” (F1A). “I am very happy to say students have benefited by having a student wellness center opened due to the QEP and it is very successful” (F2E). “We also brought in screenings to the single stop center to help with health and wellness” (F4E). “The advising center was moved to the library to help increase awareness of services on campus” (A2E).

The awareness of the student services brought an increase in the usage of the services at institutions A, B, and E. “Much more aware of the services and surveys show students are using services more” (S2A). “Certainly the folks in career services are much busier” (S1A). “FYE has made students much more aware and surveys show an increase in the usage of the services and more student engagement” (S2B). “Students are more successful today due to our focus on student services. Financial literacy is embedded in our math department as well” (A5E). “Our administration is strongly involved in the scavenger hunt. All of them encourage photos and for students to stop by when possible” (F2D).

There were only two negative comments on the increase in awareness of student services and both were from faculty from Institution C. “It is a little iffy now. Actually, when we did preview day there was more of an awareness than now” (F2C). “We used to actually meet with
all students and explain where student services were located, now they do it themselves” (F1C).

**Advising is more intentional.** There is a saying in higher education, “Students do not do optional”. A second theme in the interviews was, *advising processes were made more intentional*. All institutions required students to do something as a result of the QEP. Four of the SLOs from the QEPs are tied to the second theme. Those SLOs were (a) changed advising processes, (c) required academic plan, (d) improved or developed a first-year experience course, and (e) improved new student orientation. Four institutions (A, D, E, and F) required an academic plan in the QEP. Four institutions (A, B, D, and E) required a first-year experience in the QEP and two institutions (B and C) required new student orientation in the QEP. These SLOs were achieved through a variety of initiatives. Those initiatives were (a) changed advising model, (b) required academic plan, (c) required first-year experience course, (d) required new student orientation and (e) required advisor meeting for student enrollment permission.

One new initiative used to make advising more intentional was to change the advising model. Four institutions (A, B, C, and D) changed the advising model and made advising more intentional. There are a variety of advising models used at the institutions, but all were viewed as being effective in the interviews. All institutions used an advising center in their advising model for intake or on-boarding advising, meaning all new students were advised their first semester in the advising center. Five of the six institutions (A, B, C, E, and F) transferred the student after the successful completion of 15 credit hours to an assigned faculty academic advisor. Institution D did not have assigned faculty advisors and all student advising was done through the advising center although faculty could sign up to serve as faculty mentors. Faculty, staff, and administrators at all institutions had positive comments about the advising model change. “We use a split model and we are using it more and more. The QEP started this model”
(F2B). “The openness in advising created by the QEP has created an awareness in advisors to work with students to advise them early” (F1B). “We use a split model with intake in the advising center and then transfer to faculty” (F1F). “The advising model is shared or split and is working” (S1F). “Advising is now intentional and it is an integral part of our culture. The intentional part must start at the top levels at our institution” (A6D). “On-boarding taking place in the advising center, but after that initial semester all students see assigned advisors” (F3C).

There were comments from faculty at institutions C, D, E and administrators from Institution D specifically about the role faculty had played or are now playing in advising. Those comments were both positive and negative but all of them pointed to an improvement in the process. “At one point faculty were almost removed from advising, but with the QEP the pendulum has swung back and advisors are taking a much more active role after the first 15 hours” (F1C). “I come from a college where faculty were required to advise. Frankly I miss it, but I think our advising center model is working well” (F3D). “When advising shifted to the advising center, even though I like advising, I felt students were better served because there was also an advisor for students to talk with in the center” (F4E). “Those faculty who did not like to advise, loved the move to the advising center and could frankly wash their hands of advising” (F3E). “In the past faculty had to do advising, but some did not want to do it or were frankly not very good at it. The advising center model has helped overall” (F4E). “We have gone from prescriptive to intrusive but through the use of professional advisors” (A1D). “We have never been, and probably never will be, faculty driven. We are much more intrusive with our advising and use pathways more now” (A3D).

Faculty, staff, and administrators from institutions A, C, and E did not see a change in the advising model as a positive result of the QEP. “The advising model did not change, at least for
me. In my opinion the QEP was more about the FYE course and not advising for sure” (F1A). “Some advisors did have a hard time giving up their advisees. However, those faculty are still very active and do academic advising even though it is not required” (F6E). “Faculty did not want to change the advising model, but the president did so we did it. Faculty advising has not gotten better” (S2A). “The split model was an outcome of QEP but I believe it is now changing for some cohorts (College Ready) to staying with the advising center. AAS still following split model” (S1A). There are some faculty who would like to go back to just faculty doing the advising due to some issues with the advising center” (A1C).

Part of the change in the advising model was the increase in professional development required at every institution for both new and experienced advisors. The training was viewed as a positive change and welcomed. Faculty, staff, and administrators at each institution expressed appreciation for the regularly scheduled professional development efforts. Professional development was especially appreciated when it covered changes in advising like placement scores, technology, and software upgrades. “Every semester we have in-service and there are always updates and information shared about advising” (F1C). “Good process at this campus and valued by faculty” (F3D). “With all the new software changes and technology updates, PD is critical” (A7D). “We send faculty and staff off campus when possible. We have sessions with transfer and technical individually” (S2A). “It is offered, and we usually have good participation” (A1B).

The concept of how the QEP had changed the advising culture on campus again was clear in the interview responses to professional development. “Not only is PD required, but it is a part of the culture on campus. Faculty and staff value the constant training and updating” (A4D). “Education is all about constantly learning. This has become part of the culture of learning on
this campus” (A5D). “Early on this was not the case. This had a snowball effect and it is now our culture” (F1E).

Professional development was required for all new employees at institutions C, D, and F. “New hires are partnered with a mentor the first semester without actual advising. The first set of students for new hires is actually advised the second semester” (F2C). “All new faculty must go through regular training to teach the FYE course and then each semester they are required to do an additional four hours of training” (F2D). “New faculty have a boot camp the first year” (F1F). “We do not let first year faculty actually advise, we want them to learn and be prepared” (A4F).

Institutions A and D paid employees to attend professional development sessions either at the institution or for travel to training sessions. “We provide $350 per faculty to use for training” (S2A). “PD is and continues to be a very strong part of the culture on campus. PD is paid” (F2D).

Institutions F saw enough value in the results from professional development to hire a person to serve as director of professional development. “We hired a PD director through the QEP because the training was so effective” (F4F).

The negative comments concerning the professional development were expressed by one staff and four administrators from institutions B, C, and D. “We could do more” (S1D). “The advising training modules have gone away simply because they were extremely outdated and not useful. The champion for the modules left and they were no longer a priority” (A1B). “We could use more of this, but faculty do get a little bit of software fatigue” (A1C). “Staff are also welcomed but pretty limited” (A2B). “Attending is related to availability” (A3B). “The PD door is open, but most do not go through it” (A1B).
Another initiative that made advising more intentional was requiring students to complete an academic plan. Four institutions (A, D, E, and F) required an academic plan in the QEP. Two institutions (B and C) required students to develop an academic plan prior to the QEP. Every institution developed this plan in the advising center the first semester new students were on campus. In the pre-visit survey, 58.6% of the responses agreed students on their campus developed a plan.

Faculty, staff, and administrators reflected positively on the required academic plan. Requiring an academic plan made students more aware of their degree and graduation requirements. “The QEP had a huge impact on student planning. Students are much more aware of their academic requirements” (F1A). “Students are developing the plan more and more students are aware of what they need and will say things like ‘I have the sheet’ referring to the academic plan” (F1C). “The plan is done from day one and students are expected to do it” (F1D). “I would say there are some students who slip through and do not have one, my guess is 75-80% of the students do have a plan, but we want everyone to have a plan” (F2D).

The academic plan has made students more responsible. “I do think more students are taking responsibility and I think it is because of the QEP” (F3C). “Students have taken more responsibility in their academic plan” (F5F). “I do think more students are taking responsibility and I think it is because of the QEP” (F2C). “The QEP increased the number of academic plans significantly” (A1F).

Faculty, staff, and administrators at institutions A, B, and F appreciated the academic plan requirement and commented the use of technology had also improved the benefits of the academic plan to both students and faculty. “I love to see this plan in the software when I get a new student. The information really helps me talk with the student and stay on track. I am
disappointed if a student does not have it” (F2F). “I always talk to the student to make sure plans have not changed. But it gives me an easy way to start a conversation” (F3F). “Resources generated by the advising center have really helped students and advisors know about academic plans” (A2B). “Students are using software to develop plans more. There are a lot more people looking at it now that when we just used paper” (S2A). “The newly developed academic plan electronic checklist from the QEP was a huge plus” (S3B). “Students love to see the green light now in the software when they have an academic plan to show they are on track to graduate” (A3F). “With the new software system students immediately develop the plan and have a path to graduate from the get-go” (A2F). “Prior to the QEP and the new software that came with it, some faculty had their own paper sheet, but it was hit and miss” (A3F). “It is great to be able to refer to other plans and comments from other advisors” (S3F).

While the software changes were praised at institutions A, B, and F comments from institutions C and some negative comments from institution B and D provided an opposing view to the software effectiveness. “The academic plan was certainly a goal for the QEP, but it has just not been widely accepted. Students still have an issue finding the materials on the website” (F1B). “Sadly, I am going to have to say no, not every student has a plan in the software” (F2C). “We have had some challenges on our end to make the software package a little more user friendly and interactive” (S1D).

Although the academic plan was required at all institutions and responses were mainly positive about the overall requirement, not all staff or administrators agreed the academic plan was working well. While this initiative is still a focus at each institution, based on the interviews there is room for improvement at institutions B, C, and D. “I do not think there has been a huge change in this area. Even though an academic plan is required in FYE” (F3B). “All students
should have one, but…” (F3C). “I would like to think they are, but honestly no. Just as many students are coming to me with no clue and lost on classes they need” (A1B). “The academic plan is not tied well to our registration process. Students can register without having a plan completed” (A1D). “A much stronger process in some majors than others. Some faculty drive and support this more than others” (A6D). “Course substitutions in AAS programs have caused issues in getting students to understand academic plans” (S3B).

A first-year experience course or program (FYE) was required at four institutions (A, B, D, and E) as an initiative in the QEP. Institution C already had the FYE course. Institution F did not focus on FYE. Comments from the interviews gave credit to the FYE class for areas including the development of the academic plan, increased knowledge of student services, and stronger connections with faculty and academic advisors. Each of the four institutions that required FYE had positive comments about its effectiveness. “An academic plan is required in FYE and the assignment is very helpful” (F1B). “It is a requirement in FYE and there is a checklist showing the student has completed the plan” (F2D). “There are some students who do wait – surprise and then must come to the center for help with their plan” (F2E). “Students actually have a plan now with the help of the FYE class” (S3E). “This requirement also helped with a reduction in the number of students who change majors” (A1A). “Our QEP started this and is still a major part of the FYE course and advising center goals” (A7D). “Students are required to meet with advisor in FYE to map out entire academic plan” (A2E). “The FYE course has become a part of the fabric of the college” (F4E).

Faculty, staff, and administrators at the four institutions (A, B, D, and E) who had a strong FYE course commented the successful completion of the course lead to students being more successful in both academics and careers. The recurring terms culture and responsibility
were also mentioned often in these responses. “More students took FYE and learned more. This aspect of the QEP had a huge impact on student success” (F1A). “Based on the objectives of FYE, the students are much more responsible” (F1D). Students love it and learn so much about being successful” (F3D). “The student culture has also changed to where more and more students are seeing the value in the course” (F5E). “Older students see the value early and over the course of the semester tend to win over the younger students” (F6E). “Students really enjoy the reflection they write at the end and thinking back about everything they learned in the class” (F3E). “FYE has morphed and it is more career oriented” (A1A). “This course makes the students look at barriers to their success. Many times students think it will be a straight line to graduation. Perseverance is key and we teach this in the course” (A1D). “From the get-go all the info was interesting. The course has evolved and is more meaningful” (S3E). “Students get to know the campus through the many campus departments that present the FYE course” (S2E). “The course allows critical connections to be made with the students” (F2D). “Students are not sure about the course in the beginning, but then almost all comments at the end of positive” (S1B). “Great course that really gets the student on the right track” (A3D). “Connections are made and light bulbs go off in the student” (A6D). “Those who stay in the course and put in a little effort love it. Former students are some of our best marketing for the course” (A4D).

Not all comments on FYE were positive. Staff and administrators from institutions A, B, D, and E had some concerns about FYE. However, no faculty from any institution had any negative comments. “Requiring this course is causing some issues with what we take out of the curriculum since degrees are capped at 60 hours” (A1D). “We saw a strong FYE course at first, then went down even though there was evidence students were more successful when they completed the course” (A1A). “An initial issue was we tried to put everything in the course to
fix the entire college. We saw that did not work and have narrowed the focus” (S1E). “The hard sell for the class is for students who are returning to college after several years or transferring in work” (S3E).

New student orientation was a SLO for two institutions (B and C). Three other institutions (D, E, and F) had some form of new student orientation as an initiative in their QEP. Institution A did not have an orientation program, all orientation was done in the FYE class. The five institutions that did have some form of orientation all agreed in the interviews the program had gone through multiple iterations over the years. While new student orientation was still being done at institutions B and C, the way the orientation was being conducted had changed considerably and at Institution B, it was now being done in the advising center. Interview comments were mixed on the orientation process.

Changes in staffing and personnel was the biggest reason for the changes in the orientation program at institution B. “It is a manpower issue and since it was not as effective, orientation has not been reactivated” (A2B). “Orientation is not mandatory. We have had several iterations of orientation. Depends on staff” (S2B).

Online orientation had been attempted at institutions B and F, but that process had mixed results at both institutions. “We did online and did have it be mandatory, but not any longer” (S1B). “Orientation has changed over the years from required to not required. We are starting to require it again this year. Students can do it online however if they are not an on campus student” (S2F). “Online has been taken down due to being outdated” (A1B).

Institutions C, D, and E expressed positive comments about their required new student orientation programs. The comments showed each institution continually worked on updating and finding ways to improve new student orientation as an initiative to support student success.
Orientation is delivered in many ways including summer sessions and in the FYE class.

“Students must attend a NSO. Students are supposed to do orientation and told to meet with an advisor” (A1D). “We are constantly working to make orientation better and continue to track it. We are making it better each year” (A1D). “We place a high value on NSO. We believe students must get off on the right foot to be successful” (A3D). “We try to get as many faculty involved as possible so students can make that connection early in their career. We listen to student feedback and make changes when needed” (A4D). “Orientation has eliminated the crowds at registration” (A4E). “If a student has not completed orientation when they come to register, then they are directed to the online orientation to complete it prior to registering” (S3F). “This is two or three years old but it grew out of the QEP” (F2C). “Our state system had talked about requiring it, but QEP got it going. System required something other than one-hour class” (F1C).

Part of being intentional about advising is making an institutional policy to allow students to enroll in classes with or without permission from an advisor or the advising center. There was not a consensus at the institutions about this process, but all institutions encouraged students to see an advisor before enrolling in classes for the next semester. As a result of the QEP three institutions (A, B, and C) required students to see an advisor each semester prior to enrolling, Institution E no longer required students to see an advisor to enroll, after the student’s first semester. Two institutions (D and F) kept the policy of not seeing an advisor after the first semester to register after the QEP. However, the three institutions that allowed students to self-enroll (D, E, and F) all stated they encouraged students to see an advisor prior to enrolling and all three placed a registration hold on the student where the student must see an academic advisor before enrolling if the student did not pass the FYE course the first semester. This shows while
these institutions do allow students to take responsibility for their academic schedule, they still value the relationship between student and advisor and encourage that relationship to continue while the student is at the institution. “All of our students, after the first semester, can self-enroll but we strongly suggest they see an advisor first” (F1F). “Students do not have to see an advisor before they register, but they are encouraged to do so” (S2F). “Students can enroll themselves without seeing an advisor, but we certainly encourage and try to get students to see an advisor” (A1D).

Comments from institutions D and F showed at least some programs strongly urged students to see an advisor prior to enrolling, even though the college did not mandate that policy. “In many programs while they are not required, they are strongly encouraged to see an advisor before registering” (S1F). “In some programs students are required to see advisors prior to enrolling” (A6D). “Some programs tell students they must see an advisor, but that is simply the choice of the program” (F3D).

Institutions D and E raise a ‘flag’ on a student if they had financial aid issues or had not successfully completed FYE. This flag prevents the student from registering until they meet with an advisor. These students were not allowed to register, even though they may have completed 15 hours, until they met with an advisor. “Students are not required to see an advisor after the first semester unless they have a flag” (A2E). “The student can self-enroll unless there is an academic or financial aid hold” (S1E). “Students, unless they have a financial or academic hold, can register themselves each semester” (A2D). “Students must see an advisor to enroll if they fail the FYE course. Otherwise we let students self-enroll but we encourage them to see an advisor each semester” (F2D).

Faculty, staff, and administrators at institutions A, B, and C all believe requiring students
to meet with an advisor prior to registering has had many positive outcomes. “Students cannot self-enroll as a result of the QEP. I think requiring students to see their advisor has had a positive impact on retention and completion” (A1C). “Once upon a time, yes, students could self-enroll, but not now. Too many mistakes and students were left alone” (F2C). “Students have to see an advisor. This can be done over the phone, but there must be some contact just as long as the idea the student has is not totally nuts” (A2B). “At 30 hours they used to be able to do so, but that was taken away as part of the QEP and it has been a very good step” (A3B). “We are one of the few who no longer give students the right to register themselves. Students must see an advisor in order to register” (S2B). “The process after the QEP required students to see an advisor. Students do not even enroll; advisors or faculty actual enter the courses” (F1B). “Students no longer can self-enroll” (A1A).

One administrator from Institution D did not like the policy of student self-enrollment permission. “I would like to require students to see an advisor before enrolling, but due to time and staff, this is just not practical” (A3D). One faculty member believed the QEP changed the permission process for registration. This was the only faculty, staff, or administrator at this institution to make this statement. “However, it used to be students had to get an advisor signature before the QEP” (F2F).

**Open lines of communication.** The third and final theme from the interviews was directly related to communication at the institutions. This final theme, *more open methods of communication were created*, ties directly to two of the SLOs (a) changed advising processes and (b) increased knowledge and use of student services. Multiple times the idea of silos being broken down or reduced at the institutions as a result of the QEP was mentioned in interviews
and the importance of improved communication was supported in each of the impact reports.

Printed and online communication methods changed as a result of the QEPs at institutions. Interviewees commented on the improvement of technology and software to make advising processes easier. New software purchased as a result of the QEP for students, advising center staff, or faculty academic advisors helped in the communication processes at the institutions. Software changes happened at all of the institutions during the QEP.

Faculty from institutions B, C, D, and F were pleased with the software changes and the improvements the changes made to the advising process. “Software in the advising center has radically changed the campus advising in a positive way” (F1F). “Software packages are required and are used effectively in career services. There is a strong career focus in FYE and the new software packages really help” (F2B). “The advising center developed the electronic academic plans and tied them to careers was a big help and that change was based on the QEP” (F3B). “The new advising software greatly changed the process and I dearly love it” (F1F). “Using the software allowed us to track processes more and added to the data culture and the need for support to get new initiatives going” (F3F).

Faculty at institutions C and D also praised the integration of social media and other communication methods to take the place of email in communicating with students. “Social media is a huge change in the culture of how we do advising. We decided email was outdated and we had to develop a new way to stay in touch with students” (F2D). “I sent out a registration notice last week, and I have already received eight student responses. That did not happen with email. The new registration software lets the user select a form of communication. Many advisors are using text much more” (F2C).

Administrators at institutions A, D, E, and F saw the value of new software. Since
funding for just about every aspect of an institution starts with the administrators, having administrators value a new software package provides strong budgetary support. “We have purchased a new career software to help. Also, an assignment in FYE is now requiring students to meet with their advisor” (A1A). “The FYE course has helped change the culture in software usage” (A4E). “Advisors can work with any student since the software is so easy to use” (A3F). “We have done many student friendly software changes in the advising center to help the student get in line electronically and not have to wait too long to see a department” (A2D). “The software packages are used more by students now due to the QEP. The names of the packages have changed, but the emphasis on the software has continued” (A1E).

Faculty from institutions B, C, D, E, and F were positive about the creation or changes in the advising center on campus. The changed advising model and use of the advising centers were mentioned often as keys to better communication. The term ‘silo’ was used often in the comments. Breaking down those silos on campus and helping all departments and employees understand processes across campus was perceived as a major accomplishment of the QEP. “The advising center has helped tear down silos on campus and people are more aware of other programs and services on campus” (F3B). “Students are getting a more consistent message using the advising center, it has been a positive change” (F5E). “The advising center helps decrease the number of stops for the student” (F3C). “The center has greatly reduced the number of advising mistakes on campus” (F1C). “Students can get answers any time of the day or semester they need help” (F3D). “Students would be upset if the center went away at this point” (F4E). “The advising center is still very strong and evolving every year” (F5E). “Students seem to be very clear when they transfer to me as their academic advisor and can actually tell me what the advising center did. Faculty have an excellent working relationship with the center” (F3F).
Faculty from institutions A and C did not think the advising center was operating as planned in the QEP. “We had a good advising center, but now our new QEP is trying to change this to a career center and not work with all students” (F1A). “There are staffing issues in the center however, and this has caused some mistakes” (F2C). “Faculty did see some advising issues when the staffing issues were present” (F3C). “The center is constantly understaffed” (F1C). “We are trying to insist students work with faculty advisor, it is just getting them there the first time. Once the connection is made, they are usually happy, it is just getting it made” (F3C). “We do have to break that initial connection with the center to get the student to redevelop a bond with the advisor” (F2C). “The center does have a form to complete if a student comes in but should be seeing an assigned advisor. They are trying to get students to go to the assigned advisor. An issue is knowing when advisors have office hours” (F2C).

Staff and administrators from institutions B, E, and F were supportive of the advising centers helping with open lines of communications at the institutions. “The center did help with the silos on campus in having more faculty see what other departments are doing” (S2B). “We have reduced our silos, we do still have some picket fences but silos are gone” (A5E). “All students, except transfer students, now start with the advising center, there is not a credit hour limit, if you are in the freshman cohort, you start in the advising center” (A4F). “We needed a centralized place for students to go for advising services” (A3E). “If a specific advisor is needed by the student in the summer and the faculty advisor is not on campus, the center can handle the issue. The advising center model has really helped with the student getting advising answers” (A4E). “Inconsistency in advising on our campus helped create the advising center. The center is all about resources and how to best use them” (A5E).

One Institution B staff member expressed a negative comment about the advising center.
“It is really hard to hand off advisees after the first semester. Once they start with you in the advising center, they do not want to start going to a new assigned advisor” (S1B).

**QEP Directors**

Three of the directors for the QEPs used in this study still worked at their institution. While the insight provided about the QEP process does not directly relate to the three themes developed in this study, each director did offer advice about the QEP process for both current and future QEP directors. The advice from the QEP directors align with the responses in the pre-visit survey results that showed 73.9% pointing to the QEP leadership being a reason for the QEP success. The fact all three of the directors stated they would accept the position of QEP director again illustrates their satisfaction with the QEP process and supports the importance of the leadership role in the success of the QEP. Each director was asked five questions about their experiences. The first question – What words of advice would you have for current advising focused QEP directors? “Be flexible – things change and as long as you move forward, the ideas that are in place can still be kept but changed to meet the needs as they come up” (B).

Most importantly, be a leader - You must consider and see yourself as a leader, because everyone else on campus must see you as a leader if you are going to succeed. Then since I cannot just use one word, be flexible because things are going to change. Read, learn, listen, and know there is not one answer for any question. (E)

“Staying grounded in your ultimate goals and outcomes. The QEP is a complex process. The more grounded you can be with attention to how we are making progress is a really important area of focus” (F).

All SACSCOC institutions must do a QEP in the decennial report. Every year there are institutions looking for individuals to lead the new QEP. The second question – What words of
advice do you have for those who are considering accepting the position of QEP director at their institution? “Passion. Directors are the ones who will lead the charge. Never agree to lead a process with a topic you are not passionate about completing” (B). “Be sure to be involved from the first day. You will not have enough time, not matter when you start” (E). “I think it can be a great career move. You gain experience in areas like project management, assessment, accreditation, and so many other areas. The long-term benefits of knowledge gained and people you will meet are invaluable” (F).

Any new process always faces challenges. The three directors faced a variety of challenges as QEP director. The third question – What was the biggest challenge in serving as QEP director? They offered advice on how they handled challenges at their institutions. “Changing long-held views and ideas. The online repository of advising materials will hopefully get some faculty to learn new ideas and use them for reference” (B).

There were three lessons I learned in this process. The first lesson was when I came on at the end of the process and had to play catch-up. Lesson number one for me was to know you always need more time. The second lesson was on assessment. Assessment is always a challenge and the SACSCOC off-site team questioned it and so it became an issue. Lesson number three for me was this QEP was going to create a culture change. Would the campus buy-in and support the shift? We had to show the value of the change. The shift is important for both those above and below the director. (E) The newness of the challenge of the QEP. Our college was in the second group of colleges who went through the process. There was a lot of ambiguity about the document to submit to SACSCOC. There were not many examples to look at back then. It was a new piece of the reaffirmation process. (F)
Ownership and getting the entire campus to support the changes in the QEP were viewed as challenges by the directors. The fourth question – What was the hardest part of getting ownership or buy-in from your institution for change? The pre-visit survey showed the importance of this area. Getting buy-in from faculty had 69.5% positive responses and buy-in from staff had 52.1% positive responses. The support of administration had the largest percentage of positive responses at 78.2%. Each director had a plan to get the campus behind the QEP. “Once advisors came to the advising center and saw the new system they were energized about the new process. Just getting them to try a new system was the challenge” (B). “You must look at people, not positions. Positions stay the same, but the people will change. It was harder to get buy-in from faculty because the biggest shift with this QEP was going to be with them” (E).

I was lucky we had a lot of support from the start. This is key. If you do not select a topic that has support early, it is hard to get it later. We choose a topic were people were supportive from the start. I did not really encounter situations where people were opposed to the initiative or funding. We just did not have much resistance. (F)

The fifth and final question was – Would you do the job again? All of the directors did not hesitate to enthusiastically say they would accept the position of QEP director again if it was offered. This speaks to the value each director saw in the QEP process and how the process improved student success at each institution. “Sure, it is exciting to lead change” (B). “Yes, I guess it is obvious since I am doing my second one! To be honest though, seeing the changes on campus from the first one was exciting” (E). “Without hesitation, yes. We have a collaborative culture and a process like the QEP can be energizing to a campus. I professionally enjoy working with others and that is important in the role of QEP director” (F).
Fifth-Year Impact Reports

Five institutions (B, C, D, E, and F) in the study provided copies of their Fifth-Year Impact Report. These reports, as required by SACSCOC, can be no longer than ten pages in length and must address all aspects of the QEP. The report should include both planned outcomes and unintended outcomes the college experienced from the QEP. All reports covered each of the intended outcomes of the QEP and there were multiple unintended outcomes from each of the QEPs.

The five impact reports stated all of the intended outcomes from the institutional QEPs had been met, at least to some degree, and plans were to continue those outcomes after the QEP was officially completed. Responses to the pre-visit surveys, comments in the interviews, and reflections from the Fifth-Year Impact Reports all confirm the 17 SLOs were met during the QEP process and are continued on each campus. Each impact report had specific sections detailing how the institution had selected each SLO for the QEP, measured each SLO, and then assessed each SLO. The assessment measures were a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures using surveys, focus groups, annual reports, and other methods. Common terms seen in the interview comments and throughout the original QEP and Fifth-Year Impact Report were culture changes and student success. This was a sample of the positive comments in the final reflections section from each of the institutional impact reports.

- Overall the QEP has changed the way we operate. Focusing on student success is always the goal in higher education, but what we have done in the QEP has changed the mindset of the entire college (IRC).
- Simply put, the QEP has changed the culture at our institution, resulting in a community which values the contributions of all members and places a high priority on systematic...
assessment and cross functional problem solving. (IRF).

- As familiar as the analogy of the pebble and its many ripples may seem, it is the perfect symbol for the impact and transformation our institution has experienced since the QEP implementation. As a result of the student-centered first-year focus, many programs both directly and indirectly related to the initial QEP have emerged and continue to improve student success (IRE).

- The QEP has provided valuable data to the college community that students actually pay greater attention to the quality of advising than was first thought. Now, when students apply for admissions, they receive an invitation letter within a week. The letter asks students to call and schedule an appointment to meet with an advisor who spends quality time laying the foundation for retention and success (IRB).

- At first, the QEP was highly visible and widely referenced across the college. But as the institution sought to more cohesively integrate all completion efforts, the specific QEP brand faded; absorbed into the emerging institutional culture of engagement and completion that was created in the QEP (IRD).

- Each institution in the impact reports cited data from a variety of sources to support the attainment of the SLOs. Each institution carefully tracked both retention and completion rates.

- Persistence rates increased from 43.7% to 45.2% during the QEP (IRD).

- Our graduates have increased from 552 in 2012 to 775 in 2016. The QEP has been a driving force in this increase (IRE).

- The retention rate for students who registered with our new advising center process increase 10.5% from the old process (IRB).
During the implementation period: (a) The college observed gains in IPEDS graduation rates. (b) The college observed gains in placement rates. (c) Graduates articulated the value of support services and of student/faculty interactions. (d) Non-returning students indicated they had met their goals (IRF).

The QEP projected a 2% increase in graduation rates by the end of year four. That proved true as we saw a 24% increase (IRC).

Each institution reported unintended outcomes in the impact report from the assessments conducted during the QEP. These unintended outcomes included at all institutions the third theme from this study, more open methods of communication were created. One of the most often cited unintended outcomes in the impact reports was the improvement or increase in communication on campus and how the ‘silos’ on campus had been reduced. Comments in the interviews echoed this outcome from the QEPs and the comments all stressed this outcome was still present today on the campus.

- Advising training sessions helped faculty not only become better advisors but have allowed them to learn what resources are on campus and what is taught in classes like FYE or developmental English and math. This understanding then transcends to their classroom and reduces the silos on campus (IRC).

- Successful completion of the QEP required the institution to develop new business processes, lines of communication, and forge more cohesive working relationships (IRD).

- Advisors learned the importance of working together as a team to rally around an idea and make it happen (IRB).

- The QEP has helped to break down silos of communication between programs as faculty realize every student is their responsibility, not just those enrolled in their class or
program of study (IRE).

- During the QEP development and implementation period, high levels of collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs transpired. This ongoing collaboration yielded an environment whereby the college now fully expects its employees to analyze issues from multiple perspectives. The college has embraced a model in which cross-functional teams are the norm and problem-solving occurs by using multiple lenses (IRF).
Chapter V: Conclusion and Discussions

Summary

This study explored the current status of the 17 SLOs from the institutional QEPs with an advising focus, at six Track A, Level I SACSCOC institutions and the reasons those institutions did or did not continue the SLOs after the required Fifth-Year Impact Report was accepted. The author used pre-visit surveys, in-person interviews with three groups at each institution (faculty, staff, and administrators), and data printed in both the original QEP document and the Fifth-Year Impact Report in this study. Triangulation of the data was used to validate the findings. Triangulation reduces the risk of biases due to a specific method (Maxwell, 2013).

The author used audio-taped, semi-structured, in-person interviews in a natural setting at each institution and used field notes and memos to transcribe the interviews. This was done shortly after each interview was conducted. There was considerable information gathered about the 17 SLOs to review, code, and divide into themes. One of the biggest problems with qualitative studies is letting notes and transcripts accumulate. The use of thematic analysis is a key to effective coding of qualitative research (Maxwell, 2013). Three overall themes arose from the careful review of all the data. The three themes discovered from the data in this study were that after the implementation of the QEP (a) the institutions cared more about the whole student, (b) advising processes were made more intentional, and (c) more open methods of communication were created. The conclusions in the study, based on the data gathered from multiple sources, to the four research questions were clear and supported by all data sources.

Conclusions

There were four Research Questions in the study.

RQ1 – What are the reasons for advising QEP outcomes being continued after the
completion of the process?

All of the 17 SLOS were continued at the institutions. There were a variety of reasons found on each campus for continuing the SLOs. Those reasons included improved completion and graduation rates, improved communication on campus, improved student and faculty satisfaction with advising, improved advising processes, better recognition and use of campus resources, improved the use of technology with new advising software, improved campus culture of using data to drive decisions, and the addition of a first-year experience course.

RQ2 – What are the reasons for advising QEPs SLOs not being continued after the completion of the process?

None of the SLOs from the QEPs were discontinued. Some SLOs had been revised to a degree, but none of the SLOs had been dropped completely. The primary reason for changing or revising an SLO was the personnel at the institution had changed. Software packages also changed quite often which had led to some SLOs being changed, but not dropped.

RQ3 – What commonalities exist in the QEP SLOs that were or were not institutionalized?

There were some commonalities in the 17 SLOs. These commonalities allowed the author to combine the 17 individual SLOs into the five SLOs addressed in this study. The five SLOs combined from the QEPs were (a) changed advising processes (A, B, C, D, E, and F), (b) increased knowledge and use of student services (A, B, C, D, E, F), (c) required academic plans (A, D, E, and F), (d) improved or developed first-year experience course (A, B, D, and E), and (e) improved new student orientation (B and C). Each institution used a variety of initiatives to achieve each of the SLOs.

RQ4 – Do the institutions in the study find the QEP process effective?
One simple question posed to each of the three groups on each campus answered this research question. “Do you believed the QEP was successful?” Every interviewee (58 out of 58 - 100%) responded yes to this question and most followed up with an enthusiastic reason or two why they felt the QEP was successful. Add to the results of this question, the final reflections in the Fifth-Year Impact Reports which all supported how successful and important the QEPs had been to the institution and student success, it becomes clear the QEP and its processes were effective at each institution.

**Relationship of Conclusion**

The literature review for this study pointed to student success being based on the connection between the student and campus and how that connection was developed with advising. The advisor is arguably the most important person in the student’s educational world (Lowenstein, 2005). Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience (Light, 2001). Academic advising at the college level is about interpersonal relationships and connections between students and academic advisors especially in the first year (Tinto, 2016; Darling, 2015; Kuh, 2005; NACADA, 2006). Three themes kept coming up in the QEP documents and the interviews with the faculty, staff, and administrators. These three themes were all directly related to how each institution had used its QEP to achieve each SLO. Each SLO had also become processes that were integrated at each institution. First was the concept of caring. Institution E developed its own phrase for just exactly how caring and concerned the campus was for its students. During interviews at each institution the idea of just how much more caring the institution had become as a result of the QEP was a recurring topic. The idea of dealing with the entire student (being holistic) and not just the academic side of the student experience was repeated multiple times. The overall agreement with the concept the
Institutions were advising students and not just registering them supports this caring attitude.

The second theme consistently mentioned in the interviews was academic advising had become much more intentional. The QEP had influenced the advising processes and organization at each institution. This could have been the creation of an advising center or how the existing advising center was used. It could have been the adoption of new advising software or any number of other areas. A related outcome was all institutions reported the culture for any change at the institution had become more data driven. Budgets are always a concern in higher education, but every institution reported the funding for the QEP and the related costs had never been in jeopardy primarily because each institution had a strong assessment focus and could always point to hard data that supported the benefits of the changes from the QEP.

The third common theme was open communication. Every institution confirmed the QEP had broken down silos on campus and the overall communication at each institution was much better. This theme was confirmed in the interviews and supported in the impact reports. The QEP was credited with getting different parts of the campus talking with each other in order to support student success.

Discussion

The data from this study points to advising focused QEPs being extremely successful at the six institutions in this study. Before the discussion on the data from the study, the author wants to address Value Coding in this study. Value Coding is the application of codes that reflect participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs (Saldana, 2009). A primary observation the author had was just how open and welcoming each institution was to him when he contacted them to set up a visit. Each institution supported the theme of being more caring and welcoming to students, this culture was exhibited at each institution and applied to not only students but for
other visitors as well. Individuals in the interviews quickly and eagerly responded to the author’s questions or made additional comments to other individuals in the interview. Everyone truly seemed to be happy about working at the institution and there was considerable laughing and storytelling during the visits. The author felt a true sense of community at each institution. There was a feeling of excitement at each institution about what the QEP had done for the institution and students. The comment was even made several times about how much the QEP had changed the culture at the institution but the individual had really forgotten that change was due to the QEP. The author felt welcomed and could certainly see how students would have the same reaction when they first arrived at each institution.

The results of the data from the study affirms, at least for these six institutions, the money, time, and resources devoted to the selection, development, and implementation of the QEP was well spent. The results also confirm the institutions are not just developing SLOs to meet the SACSCOC QEP standard for reaffirmation, they are developing SLOs to help their institution and more importantly increase student success. Quantitative data such as completion and graduation rates along with student satisfaction with advising and other student services at the institutions had increased as shown in the impact reports. The percentage of students who completed FYE and were retained and completed a degree had increased.

Limitations to the Study

There are three limitations to this study. First, only one level of SACSCOC accredited institutions were included in the study. The second limitation is only QEPs with an advising focus were in this study. The third limitation is this type of study required at least five years to elapse before the study could be started.

There are 794 institutions accredited by SACSCOC. This study looked at only six of
those institutions and only in the Track A, Level I category. SACSCOC has a total of six levels of institutions ranging from Level 1 to Level VI. There are vast differences in the size and scope of these institutions. Institutions from all six levels could elect to conduct a QEP with an advising focus, however the challenges different level of institutions would face are different.

This study focused just on QEPs with advising as a focus. There are many other QEP topics covered in the SACSCOC region. Just because the data from these six institutions show positive results and overall satisfaction and continuation with the QEP, that does not mean QEPs focused in other areas or at other levels of institutions have been equally successful. Validation methods followed four criteria used to judge the soundness of this qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The results from this study did follow these four criteria and the author believes the conclusions can be applied to other Track A, Level 1 institutions with advising focused QEPs, but should not necessarily be applied to the other 788 SACSCOC institutions.

The parameters of the study requires a time period to pass before the research is done, but this causes a number of the individuals with knowledge about the QEP to be unavailable due to retirement or resignation from the institution. Community colleges by their nature have considerable turnover in faculty, staff, and administrators. The author was the QEP director at his institution for its 2012 SACSCOC on-site visit. Only four of the 20 folks who served on his selection team in 2010 are still at the institution. When the six institutions for this study were contacted, the biggest issue the contact person faced was finding individuals who were still at the college who worked on the QEP between 2008 and 2012. Only three of the QEP directors were still at the institutions. Only one president was still in place. Most of the cabinet level administrators had either retired or changed institutions.
**Recommendations for Further Study**

There is very little published research on the Quality Enhancement Plan required for decennial reaffirmation by SACSCOC. There is a one-page summary of all QEPs completed by member institutions since 2007 on the SACSCOC website (SACSCOC, 2018d). This summary is completed prior to the QEP being started at each institution and the website states the summary does not reflect the quality of the QEP listed. SACSCOC is continuing to require a QEP as part of its decennial report. Over a billion dollars has been spent by the 794 SACSCOC accredited institutions on QEPs to date. These three facts point to the need for further study to be done on the completed QEP process in SACSCOC accredited institutions. This study looked at only advising focused QEPs at one level of institution. Based on a considerable amount of literature pointing to advising clearly being a high impact practice in higher education and also an area that crosses over both the academic and student services side of the institution, future studies need to be completed on a variety of topics at different SACSCOC levels so the information can be used as templates for other institutions who are considering QEPs on a variety of topics. No one outcome or initiative used to achieve any outcome will be effective at every institution, but institutions can see what has worked and been effective or not worked and been ineffective in previous QEPs at all levels of SACSCOC.

While this study did not look specifically at the selection process for the leadership of the QEP, this study did discover the importance of leadership and the effectiveness of the QEP. This study did not look at the QEP topic selection process conducted at each institution but comments in the interviews and comments from the QEP directors did touch on the need for a strong selection process. Future studies on both of these areas of the QEP would be beneficial to all institutions in the SACSCOC region to assist institutions in developing successful QEPs.
Another area that came up in the interviews, but was not part of the study, was the idea of what department at the institution was in charge of academic advising. Is academic advising under the student services or the academic affairs umbrella at an institution? There are components from both sides deeply involved in academic advising, but what department head is responsible for advising at an institution. The interviews did show a disconnect between faculty and staff on their perceptions of who was in charge of advising. Of the 21 faculty interviewed, 11 were adamant about advising being on the academic side with four stating advising is on the student services side and the remaining six stating advising had to be in both sides. Two of the faculty who stated student services, were at the institution who advise all students through the start center and faculty have an extremely limited role in advising. Staff on the other hand did not see it that way. Of the 13 staff interview, 10 strongly stated advising was under the student services side of the institution while the other three described advising as a blended process. The 21 administrators interviewed were more divided on where advising is housed. Eight selected academics, while seven selected student services, three said blended, and three stated advising reported to the finance department on their campus. It is important for everyone on campus to be clear about where the responsibility for academic advising is housed. There needs to be additional study and research on what department should supervise academic advising.

The last area that needs additional study came from the unintended outcomes from the QEP. Each institution reported improved communication across the institution as a result of the QEP. Each institution reported the number of ‘silos’ on campus had been reduced. Improved communication in any organization is a benefit. Additional study needs to be done on how a QEP, no matter what the focus might be, helped develop better communication at an institution.
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Appendix A
Pre-visit Survey

1. Please check all areas you believe helped make your QEP process successful.
   Professional Development explaining the QEP process
   Support from administration
   Buy-in from faculty
   Buy-in from staff
   Effective communication during QEP process
   Sufficient budget
   Clearly stated goals and outcomes for the QEP
   QEP Leadership
   Other (please specify)

2. The advising process at your institution changed as a result of the QEP?
   Strongly agree
   Agree
   Neither agree nor disagree
   Disagree
   Strongly disagree

3. Faculty and staff value the current advising process at your institution more as a result of the QEP?
   Strongly agree
   Agree
   Neither agree nor disagree
   Disagree
   Strongly disagree

4. The advising culture improved at your institution as a result of the QEP?
   Strongly agree
   Agree
   Neither agree nor disagree
   Disagree
   Strongly disagree

5. Students value the current advising process at your institution more as a result of the QEP?
   Strongly agree
   Agree
   Neither agree nor disagree
   Disagree
   Strongly disagree
6. Students at your institution are taking more responsibility for their academic plan as a result of the QEP?
   Strongly agree
   Agree
   Neither agree nor disagree
   Disagree
   Strongly disagree

7. Students at your institution are more aware of campus services as a result of the QEP
   Strongly agree
   Agree
   Neither agree nor disagree
   Disagree
   Strongly disagree

8. What change theory was used in your QEP process

9. Please check the initiatives from the QEP that are still in place at your institution.
   Check all that apply. These answers could not be compiled since they were institution specific.
   The answers were used to help develop questions in the focus groups.
Appendix B
Interview Consent Form

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY
Doctor of Education in P-20 and Community Leadership Program
ADM 930 – Dissertation III – Spring 2019

Research Study: Quality Enhancement Plans Have Changed Academic Advising at Community Colleges

Researcher Name: Tony Strawn

FOCUS GROUP FORM

What is the Research?
You have been asked to take part in a focus group for a multi-site, qualitative research study concerning the QEP. The study will use data from SACSCOC vice presidents and SACSCOC Track A, Level I institutions that have completed QEPs with academic advising as part of their focus. The purpose of this study is to understand why institutions continue to implement or discard components of the QEP after the Fifth-Year Impact Report was submitted.

Voluntary Participation
This discussion is voluntary – participation is not required. If you do not take part, there is no consequence. If any questions make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. You may leave the group at any time for any reason.

Costs
There are no costs to you as a participant of this focus group.

Risks
There are no risks involved in taking part in this study. This study may include risks that are unknown at this time.

Benefits
There are no benefits for taking part in this research. The researcher hopes to learn more about participant’s perceptions of the QEP process.

Privacy
Participant’s privacy will be protected. Individual names will not be used in any report that is published. The discussion will be kept strictly confidential. A digital recorder will be used. It will be used only to assist the researcher in remembering what the individuals in the focus groups said. All research data will be stored in a locked file cabinet and have a password protected electronic drive. All participants will receive a fictional name so association between the participant and institution in this study will be impossible to ascertain to any person beyond the researcher. The recordings and data will be destroyed after the dialogue has been studied.

Recording Permission
I agree to be recorded ___Yes   ___No

Questions
If participants have any additional questions, call Tony Strawn @ 270-831-9769.

Please write your name below and check yes or no. If you want to take part please print your
name below and sign your name at the bottom

________________________________________________
YOUR NAME

_____ Yes, I certify that I am 18 years of age or older and I would like to take part in this focus group.

_____ No, I do not want to participate in the focus group

_____ No, I am not 18 years of age or older.

_____ I have received a copy of this form.

______________________________________________________________________________
SIGNATURE                                      DATE
Appendix C
Complete Interview Transcription from Six Institutions in the Study

Academics vs Student Services

Faculty

Institution A
Academics without a doubt. Faculty drive advising (F1A).

Institution B
All I can do is think about my college experience and the most meaningful relationships were with my faculty members, so academics (F1B). As that topic is discussed, I cannot remember one person other than my faculty, so academics (F2B). It is important to know who is responsible when there is a problem (F1B). Who fixes an issue with advising. NACADA told us advising was academic (F1B).

Institution C
Academics (F1C). Do I have to choose? If I do, I will go with academics, but you must have student services involved (F2C). Advising is faculty driven and must be academics. That being said, faculty must work with student services (F3C).

Institution D
Student services at least on this campus. Faculty are on the outside (F1D). Faculty work well together with the advising center and we are a team in advising. But if I had to put on one side, it would be student services with faculty input (F2D). Student services (F3C).

Institution E
You are fooling yourself if it is in one place only. It will shift regularly (F2E). It has to be in both if you are going to advise the entire student (F3E). Student services, especially if you have an advising center model (F4E). If advising is driven by faculty, the academics, otherwise, student services (F6E).

Institution F
Why can’t it be under both (F3F). Academics, but now thinking about it, we do have to consider the student services side of the house. (F1F). Academics, however it is interesting now that I think about it, our director of advising reports to student services – HUH! (F3F). Academic affairs, they could have professional advisors who know all programs and not just one (F4F). Academic affairs (F5F).

Staff

Institution A
Academics (S1A). Student services both said if they had to choose, but really feel advising is a combination of both areas (S2A).

Institution B
Student services, but now that I think about it, it is blended. Both sides need to take a role in the
process if it is advising and not just registration. (S1B). Both – but faculty must be involved (S2B). It has to be both (S3B)

**Institution C**
No staff interviewed at this institution

**Institution D**
Can a say a combination? It really is both and both play a key role in the success of advising. Faculty drive the process since they know the subject or major area content, but there is so much more to advising than just the academic side (S1D).

**Institution E**
I struggle with that. It is not just one, it is blended (S1E). I do not know how you advise the whole student without knowing the whole student. Our students depend on aid but if forced – student services (S2E). I like having one place to come to for help. It reduces confusion so to me it is better to have advising under one umbrella and so blended (S3E). Prior to the QEP if was academic but now it is more in the student services supported by academics (S1E). I will say advising could not function without student services (S2E). Advising is a puzzle and all parts need to work together (S3E). It is a personnel issue at times (S2E). The FYE class is on the academic side but all student services are covered in that course (S1E).

**Institution F**
Student services (S2F). Students services, but I do know faculty must be involved (S1F). I am not sure but seems like it would be student services but why couldn’t it be both (S3F).

*Administrators*

**Institution A**
Student Services (A1A).

**Institution B**
It has to be under both and that is not just the political answer. Both sides must be involved. It needs to be blended a good advisor knows both (A1B). I could put it someplace, but do not want to do so. If unlimited budget I would make it all student services and have professional advisors. Availability and knowledge of all services would make this the best plan (A2B). Student services, but of course faculty in our system are required. The problem is student services cannot control faculty (A1B). There is no consistency throughout the state system. Now that I hear the unlimited budget idea, I really like that (A3B).

**Institution C**
Tough to separate. If you make me take a side, I am going to say student services, but of course academics are involved with faculty doing most of the advising (A1C).

**Institution D**
WOW had not really thought about this. It is both, but for us it is more student services since the QEP and advising in the center and not faculty driven (A1D). It is strongly in the student services side but there is room for faculty advising but it is just not a formal process on this campus
If I must choose, student services, but I have worked at other colleges where the answer would be academics. It depends on the advising model the college uses. Student services, at least on this campus. Student services. That is the emphasis of working with the entire student and not just registering. I am going with academics. Student services support the classes, but academics drive education. I am going to say both, I cannot pick a side.

Institution E
Currently it is in neither. I could make arguments for both sides, however, on our campus it is under finance. That is a good answer, we are under neither. Putting it in one side would tend to create silos again. We view it as a college process and all of us take responsibilities for it.

Institution F
Academics, initial contact student services but overall academics. My reason is the faculty have the biggest impact on advising. Student services do not have the investment student services get them in the door. When I hear any faculty member say he or she hates advising I am nervous. The majority part of advising is academics but we rarely say one service belongs to any one department. When student has any advising issue, faculty figure it out. I think academics, but student services do play an important role. Academics.

Advising Centers
Faculty
Institution A
We had this, but now the new QEP is trying to change this to a career center and not work with all students.

Institution B
The center has helped faculty become more focused in their advising since they just deal with students who have decided on a major. The center has helped us help students more. The resources the center produce is extremely helpful. The master advisor process did help reduce silos. However, the silos are not all bad because we know where to send students for specific information. The academic plans the center has developed have been a huge help.

Institution C
On-boarding taking place here, but after that initial semester all student see assigned advisors. Center helps decrease the number of stops for the student. Students must see their advisor after the first 15 hours are completed. This process is stressed much more now. It has reduced mistakes considerably. At one point, faculty were almost removed from advising, but with the QEP the pendulum has swung, and advisors are taking a much more active role after the first 15 hours. There are staffing issues in the center however, and this has caused some mistakes. I agree, I was hedging around that issue, but faculty did see some advising issues with the staffing issues. If I am sitting with my advisee, I can develop that continuous relationship. There is more of a comfort zone with the student. The center does have a form to complete if a student comes in but should be seeing an assigned advisor. They are trying to get students to go to the assigned advisor. An issue is knowing when advisors have office
hours (F2C). Faculty are working on developing and keeping office hours and having that list current with the center (F3C). We do have to break that initial connection with the center to get the student to redevelop with the advisor (F2C). We are trying to insist students work with faculty advisor, it is just getting them there the first time. Once the connection is made, they are usually happy, it is just getting it made (F3C).

**Institution D**
The advising center is being appreciated more by both students and faculty. The center has helped to break down some of the silos on campus. We all tend to know more about each other since the QEP. We break bread and send emails on a regular basis (F2D). It is great to have everything located in one place for both students and faculty (F3D).

**Institution E**
Center has been very helpful (F2E). Students would be upset if the center went away at this point (F1E). Awareness of advising services has gone up in our year in surveys (F4E). The advising center is still very strong and evolving every year (F5E).

**Institution F**
Software in advising center has radically changed the campus advising (F1F). We have good lines of communication between faculty and the advising center (F2F). Students seem to be very clear when they do come to me and can actually tell me what the advising center did. Faculty have an excellent working relationship with the center (F3F).

**Staff**
**Institution A**
It was a name, but not a space. The QEP did start this process, but it did not happen during the QEP (S1A). Objectives for the advising center do show up in the annual plan (S2A).

**Institution B**
Students after the first semester cannot come to the advising center to register after the first semester. The center is just for guidance and advice after the first semester. The center sends the students to their assigned adviser. This is the case during fall and spring but opens up in summer. The center did help with the silos on campus in having more faculty see what other departments are doing (S2B). Staff initially were told they would not advise at all, but that has certainly changed. This has changed since the start of the QEP. It is really hard to hand off advisees. Once they start with you in the advising center, they do not want to start going to a new assigned advisor (S3B).

**Institution C**
No staff interviewed at this institution

**Institution D**
The advising center has a good reputation on campus (S1D). Students are coming in to the center drop the FYE course. This highlights the importance of the need to improve the information students are getting as to why the course is needed (S2D).
**Institution E**  
Students identify more with an advisor. As we have said, the center made advising much more intentional and organized (S1E). The first semester we saw more students in a week than we did the entire semester (S2E). We have advising programs to target students to get them into the center (S3E).

**Institution F**  
Students will be advised in the student center to start but once in the program they are transitioned to a faculty advisor in their program area (S2F). More services are available to our students now. The center has grown each year and we keep adding services (S3F). We tried a cluster advisor process, but it just did not work. The cluster advisor was OK in areas like health sciences, but other areas are more specialized and individual (S1F).

*Administrators*  
**Institution A**  
We no longer call it the Center for Student Engagement, it is called the Advising Center (A1A).

**Institution B**  
All new students start here. Academic advisers are assigned the second semester. Faculty are paid to work in the center. Initially the idea was all faculty would rotate through, but that did not happen (A1B). Between the start of the first semester and the second semester academic advisors are assigned. However only a small group did it for the money or because of their interest in advising (A2B). The advising center has helped tear down silos on campus and people are more aware of other programs and services on campus – at least for those faculty and staff who utilize the center (A3B). The center has done a great job of creating academic plans and making others aware of them (A2B).

**Institution C**  
This has changed since the QEP (A1C).

**Institution D**  
It is great to have a central location for students to get information (A1D). The center is key to student success. We have done many student friendly software changes to help the student get in line electronically and not have to wait too long to see a department (A2D). We have even color coded the signage for the various departments to help students find the right area. We are really proud of this innovation and students have stated many times how much it has helped find the right area. Staffing is always a concern, but so far, we have been able to maintain the levels we need. Of course, we could always use more advisors and staff, but the process is working well (A3D). Students love being able to get answers to almost all questions in one place (A4D). Not sure how we did all our academic advising before we created the center. Students had to run all over campus to get answers. Should have done this a long time ago (A5D). Faculty and staff love the idea of the center as well. They know where to send students for answers and also know who to call when they have questions (A7D).

**Institution E**  
Inconsistency of advising helped create the advising center it is all about resources and how to
best use them (A5E). We need a centralized place (A3E). If a specific advisor is needed by the student, then there is an issue in the summer. The advising center model has really helped with the student getting an answer (A4E). Advising in the center in the summer is handled by our 12-month employees so we are sure students can get answers at any point (A2E). Students were not getting the service they needed with the large cattle call registration. We stopped that because the focus was registration and not advising (A3E). Students now get 30-45 minutes with a person to get all of their questions answered (A1E). We used to cancel class to register, looking back that was nuts (A2E). We have developed new checklists for every degree program and every department put ENG, MATH, and FYE in the first semester (A3E).

**Institution F**

We did get rid of, for the most part except allied health, the idea of cluster advisors (A3F). All students, except transfer students start with the advising center, there is not an hour limit, if you are the freshman cohort, you start in the advising center. The new process really helped advisors as well (A4F). I can advise any student since the software is so easy to use by any advisor (A3F). “The new system really helped to reduce silos on campus. We do get some advisors who are better than others (A1F). Advisors can work with any major now that we have the software and the advising center. It makes it so much easier for the student to get advising help. With financial aid changes, we were ahead of the issue with the new center and advising process (A4F). We recognize not all faculty are great at advising and that is OK because they are great teachers (A2F). We have tweaked the early alert system to try and make it better (A3F). We took out some of the specific comments and some of the drop-down boxes were just not appropriate. A lot of students get in trouble due to absence, but yet that was not an option on the list (A4F).

**Advising Culture**

**Faculty**

**Institution A**

Because of FYE students do understand advising more. The QEP started changes in advising. Students used to be able to self-enroll, but no longer – too many mistakes (F1A).

**Institution B**

In at least 50% of the campus, especially those who worked in the advising center (F2B). I agree, the QEP changed the culture. I hear a lot more faculty say when we do group registration is actually late registration and that needs to stop because it is not advising but registration. There is more awareness. I think we are doing something right because late registration numbers are dropping. We study data on the GPA of students compared to when they register. The data shows students who register early do better (F1B). I am going to say a little bit no on the QEP changing the culture of getting to know the student. However, that is because we seem to keep changing our advising list. It is frustrating to change just to keep advising numbers equal (F2B). I am going to say a little bit yes, but I agree we have a revolving list of advisees, but my yes is before the QEP the majority of the faculty did not see the difference in advising and registration (F1B). I agree. We had a top national speaker come and present on advising spoke to faculty and then had a workshop and only three people showed up. However, the QEP changed that culture. Faculty talk about needing time to do advising and not just registering (F1B). There is a lot more emphasis on the campus and advisors being more caring and developing relationship in advising
(F2B). If nothing else our QEP brought a major spotlight on advising and specifically quality advising (F1B). “We really dove into the NACADA website and looked at actual advising terms and processes and not just registering. We developed a definition of advising. Before the QEP, nobody was talking about advising. Advising is much more intentional now (F2B).

**Institution C**
Faculty have taken a much more pro-active process and faculty are part of the journey with the students (F3C). Faculty advisors can help much more with course selection and transfer. That is the faculty-advisor job and not the advising center (F2C). The center is constantly understaffed (F1C). All faculty are advisors and the college does still give awards based on outstanding advising but there is a small monetary award and it is recognized as an honor and is celebrated (F3C). Yes, it is a positive thing (F2C). One cool thing is at the honors award; student comments will be read (F3C). There is not a required number of visits to students. I do see students more (F2C). That is interesting because I actually am seeing fewer students (F3C). I will not advise students who are not my advisee. That defeats the idea of building the bond (F1C). I will say no all faculty are good at advising and that is an issue. Students talk and do have ideas on who is good or not. Social media has become big. We have hired a new PR person who is really stressing the area. Some faculty and departments have embraced it (F3C). I sent out a registration notice last week, and I have already received eight student responses. That did not happen with email. The new registration software lets the user select a form of communication. Many advisors are using text much more (F2C). With the new plans there is not the concern with cost to the students to use text. This is a change with the original QEP since social media was not big back then, but the idea of improving communication was brought to mind through the QEP (F2C). Students are recognizing faculty advisors have information they need (F3C).

**Institution D**
The culture has changed to make the student more responsible and to work on making connections at the college. The QEP made the campus must more holistic in dealing with students. Not just getting into classes but making the students successful. As a faculty member I think students would say they valued the advising process much more a few years after they are out. I do not think they appreciate it at the time. We have a system to alert systems with a midterm report and also a system to send names if there are issues. I tend to take more responsibility and call the student on my own. The system does not do a very good job of closing the loop. I am maybe more hands on than most faculty. College is like an amusement park. What rides are you going to stand in line for? Getting students to look into the rides they are not interested in is important (F1D). Some students are taking more responsibility in their academic and career goals, but certainly not all of them do. Social media is a huge change in the culture of how we use advising. We decided email was outdated and we had to develop a new way to stay in touch with students (F2D).

**Institution E**
Prior to the QEP students were only seeing advisors maybe once, now they are seeing the advising center as least three times a year (F4E). Surveys show students are appreciating advising services more (F5E). There has been a cultural shift in how our campus views advising (F5E). We are all preaching the same things when it comes to caring for our students (F7E). If you have been on campus for eight years or more you can remember when you never talked to
another department or division. You stayed in your silo. Silos are greatly reduced (F6E). The QEP allowed us to take a look at what others are doing. It helped with communication on campus (F3E). There are very few faculty on campus who still believe students need to know what they are doing, and academic advising is not their job. Frankly, these folks are retiring and younger faculty just see this as what we do – this new advising process is now our culture (F2E). Those who do not like the cultural shift think we are enabling students and not making them responsible and believe they are too busy to help with advising (F4E). “This cultural shift also involves building student independence but cannot start at that point. We have to work up to it (F5E). We are showing we care, but we are also building in accountability along the way (F6E).

**Institution F**

The new software greatly changed the process and I dearly love it (F1F). Great addition with the new software and is something used by just about everyone (F3F). Using the software allowed us to track processes more and added to the data culture and the need for support to get new initiatives going (F3F). We have always said we care about students, but the QEP really helped move the culture to this caring attitude (F2F). The processes the QEP initiated have helped reduce the silos on campus. We feel like we know more about what others on campus are doing.

We do talk to people and work well together. The QEP enhanced this process (F3F). I agree, the QEP increased openness on campus. We had a newsletter than kept us informed about changes, but that person left, we might need to start it up again (F1F). The early alert system still needs work (F2F). We are mandated in math to file an alert if they get below a 70. I will get feedback from tutoring if a student shows up for tutoring (F3F). The early alert system is too bulky and hard to use (F1F). We are much more aware of the need for students to take courses they need to graduate (F2F). Our students just do not take courses that are not needed for their degree. This is a change from the QEP (F1F). The issue with registration is a student might have taken 18 hours to try and graduate earlier, but if they are advised you would not advise them to take 18 hours (F4F). We are looking at the entire student much more because we have found the issue many times is not their academic ability, but if they have the time and money to do the work (F3F). Sometimes students are the other way, we have to push them to take more than just 1 or 2 classes. Students are sometimes scared and do not have support to show they can do it (F1F). Once or twice a year a student will be on the ledge and we now work with that student to get them some help. That process has increased much more (F2F). Students have other stuff that keeps them from being successful. We must advise that students cannot take too much and the combination of certain classes is not good. But students do not come to see us as often as I would like (F5F). If students start withdrawing, they will lose aid (F3F).

**Staff**

**Institution A**

Not so much. Simply because there was not buy-in (S1B).

**Institution B**

I am interested in what others think (S2B). I think the QEP put a dent in the culture. Folks who have trained and come through the advising center have had a major shift in how they viewed advising (S1B). There has been a shift we have gone from prescriptive to split and most of the campus owns this change (S2B). Staff seemed to buy in and understand the QEP and advising shift (S1B). More faculty and asking questions and making sure students get to the right person
and get the correct answer. (S2B). The advising light has gone on for many faculty. Campus is more caring (S1B). The QEP may have increased the importance of caring on campus, but I feel the campus has always had a caring attitude. Advising was also seen as a way to keep students and help with retention (S3B).

Institution C
No staff interviewed at this institution

Institution D
During the time frame of the QEP the culture has changed. We have been able to increase the number of advisors. When I started we were a one stop shop and integrated center. We were trying to move away from advisors not being connected to other services students needed. Students did not know the person they met with was an advisor. With the QEP we made the FYE class mandatory and connected students with advisors. Advisors have to meet with students now three times a semester. The academic plan is developed in the first meeting. We are still doing this with every student. It does take some time. We could not just change at all levels. The new culture has been phased in over the years, but after a rough start, it is much better today (S1D).

Institution E
It is more organized (S1E). We used to have a cattle call – stand in line and here are your classes to now we actually work with the students and take time to listen to them (S2E). Organizational changes and the advising center have made huge impact. We do not register for our students unless they have a flag. They have become more responsible with a plan (S1E). They actually have a plan now with the help of the FYE class (S3E). It used to be what courses do I need to take to now oh, these are the classes I need to graduate (S2E). Students are now asking more questions and know who to go to since the FYE class really introduces them to all the departments on campus (S3E). Staff had good buy-in to the process (S1E). I agree, we had all types of promotions and made sure to include all areas of campus. Staff were on board (S3E). Terms for how the campus deals with students used during the QEP have different versions (S2E). The difference is we are helping or taking the student by the hand. Is it a hand up or a hand out? Perception is key (S1E). I see these terms as more of the Golden Rule and not a hand up or out. We should roll out the red carpet to every student and hold their hand as long as we need. However, at some point the apron cord must be cut, you cannot hold them forever and students must take responsibility (S3E). Terms came from orientation about reaching out and touching someone, but in today’s world that could cause some issues, sadly! (S1E). The campus is more caring today than it was before the QEP. Low morale was more based on an issue with an individual and not a process. The QEP focused more on processes and not individuals (S2E). The QEP encouraged faculty to look at students as individuals and be aware of some barriers students face (S1E). Awareness of our student population was improved with the QEP (S2E).

Institution F
The culture did change when the new software came along. Prior to the QEP the academic plan was on paper only (S2F). “Students are happier and look forward to the advising process much more now that prior to the QEP (S3F). “The campus is much more focused on advising (S1F). The early alert system works and is valued much more today. Again, part of the shift to caring about the entire student and helping make the student successful (S2F). The biggest shift would
have been from the term register to advising (S3F). “The campus is viewed as a more caring
campus because of the QEP. The care has always been here, but it is more organized (S1F).
Students do appreciate this shift and have commented how much they appreciate how much the
campus cares and wants students to succeed (S2F). Students are more aware of what they need to
graduate (S1F).

Administrators
Institution A
I think it has changed, but maybe not in a positive way, but may not be attributed to QEP. I think
faculty see a whole in advising. High Impact is really advising. Faculty advisors tend to just
register/schedule. The QEP is trying to change that, but not sure the QEP was the reason, but
maybe raised the awareness (A1A).

Institution B
I do not know if it did campus wide but those faculty who did the work and volunteered in the
advising center had a major shift. However, it was not campus-wide (A1B). I think the culture of
advising has faded a little. I think we have lost some ground on the shift. I do not deal with many
faculty so I am not sure if they are more committed to advising than scheduling or not (A2B).
No, faculty do not value advising more (A3B). I think during the QEP this was true, but again we
have slid back some (A2B). It is not the flavor of the month, so it has declined (A3B). Advisors
have moved on to other things. I am in student affairs, I am not sure (A2B). Faculty are hearing
much more about advising and so yes, new faculty do sense it and the rest of the campus as well.
There is required advising training for clusters especially in AAS areas (A3B). The QEP may
have started the shift, but the financial reality today is pushing the culture shift more (A2B).

Institution C
The campus has always wanted to have a welcoming atmosphere. The QEP developed this, but I
think it has fallen off a little in the last few years. Prior to the QEP advisors did not see as much
value in advising. That changed. Faculty are much more aware of what advising is and the
importance of being available to students. The college does now give advising awards and they
are viewed positively by faculty and the recognition is appreciated. Faculty, and staff, take pride
in their advising now. I actually got a call just his morning from an advisor who was asking
questions. In the past, faculty would have just sent the student to see me and not have taken the
time to get the answer for the student. Social media has become a much larger player in the
process. This was not part of the original QEP but it is mentioned in the Impact Report. As with
many areas, we now have a new PR person this is very social media savvy. Students are not
doing email but they are texting and messaging. The QEP changed the culture on campus and
that continues today. The whole idea of advising can help the student and advising has stayed a
focus, due to the QEP (A1C).

Institution D
We have become much more intrusive. Requiring students to see advisors at various milestones
along the way. The need for students to set goals is stressed much more today. I think because we
have institutionalized FYE some faculty believe this course will take care of advising. I do have
many faculty who have gone through training to be mentors, but not the details of advising. We
are using social media much more in advising. We have really pumped it up. Marketing has been
more closely tied to social media (A1D). I think the relationship between student and advisor is much stronger today. We emphasize completion and retention much more now. Reverse transfer has become a larger priority with the four-year schools. Four-year schools are picking up on the need to make our students feel welcomed just like they are here (A2D). The campus has always been welcoming, but with the revamped New Student Orientation and advising center, it is even more so (A3D). Connections are being made and relationships developed (A4D). Advising is now intentional and it is an integral part of our culture. The intentional part must start at the top levels at our institution (A6D).

**Institution E**
The software packages are used more by students now due to the QEP. The packages have changed, but the emphasis on the software has continued (A1E). Students are more aware (A2E). Registration process changed due to QEP. Individuals are advised, not groups registered (A4E). This college cares more now and we are much more intentional about advising. Sure, students are not always successful, but they stay in the course and retake it. We are strong believers in the idea of “First Day Matters” We also expect faculty to be ready on the first day. This is a cultural shift (A5E). We have a first day focus now where in the first day we have tents and folks to help get students where they need to be. My mind is to help people and not just the nuts and bolts of the first day. We are actively looking for folks who seem lost that first day. Adjuncts were involved in the process and we again, intentionally, involved adjuncts (A3E). We have reduced our silos, we do still have some picket fences but silos are gone (A5E). We will have conversations in the advising center, but when it comes time for the student to enroll, they are doing it now. We advise, the student registers. The old saying about teaching a man to fish rather than giving them a fish relates to our QEP. Knowing how to fish for our transfer students is critical since they will not get the individual attention at most four-year campuses (A2E). The QEP started the shift to constantly looking at how we can fix the next issue. It got us looking forward and picking off the next problem. We are treating students like adults and expecting them to act like adults as a result of the QEP (A5E). Part of the first day focus is all employees wear ask me buttons (A1E). The entire campus has bought into the plan (A2E).

**Institution F**
The advising center has changed the advising process (A2F). The new culture works very hard to make students aware of all aspects of their education and not just the classes they are going to take (A3F). The campus as a whole, looks at students to help them understand barriers they may face and explain the educational process long before we get to the idea of what classes the student is going to take (A4F). Advisors are much more likely to pick up the phone and call other people on campus to make sure the student gets the answer they need (A1F). The advising center is always asking folks to come in and talk about program changes (A2F). I do not like closing the loop because that is just a circle and you are chasing your tail. I prefer to say we are using data to improve processes and initiatives (A4F).

**Advising Model**

*Faculty*

**Institution A**
The advising model did not change, at least for me. In my opinion the QEP was more about the FYE course and not advising. The FYE aspect worked. The new center is only seeing college-
ready students. This is a change from the first QEP. I guess it is still a split model, but I am really not sure (F1A).

**Institution B**  
We use a split model and we are using it more and more. The QEP started this model (F2B). We did have an issue with advising in the last couple of years with all the emphasis on enrollment and budget. This openness has created an awareness in advisors to work with students to advise them early (F1B).

**Institution C**  
The model has gone to a split model with intake in advising center but then strictly with the assigned advisor after the first 15 hours (F1C). Yes, students must see their advisor (F3C). Faculty are willing to work with a doable number of advisees. The QEP stressed the idea of students being more successful if they develop that bond with an advisor (F2C). We are very conscious of advising numbers. We try to review numbers assigned to each faculty each year, but to be honest sometimes it does creep up (F1C). We would love to limit the number of assigned advisees to no more than 50, but that does not always work especially in health sciences (F3C). We have also worked very hard to define “Active’ advisees as having earned a grade in the last three years (F2C).

**Institution D**  
Advising has become much more centralized. Faculty are simply mentors. I do think the entire process has made me more aware of working with the entire student. Faculty have the chance to be a mentor but the process is not real open. It happens more when a student is identified as needing a mentor and then faculty are asked to help. It is not so much an open invite. Faculty can limit the number of students they mentor (F1D). We look for mother or father hens in our faculty. We want faculty who want to be actively involved with students. First-time in college students do not have guidance at home since parents did not attend college. Faculty who teach FYE do also advise as their full-time job. The connection they make causes them to have much better success with the students (F2D). I come from a college where faculty were required to advise. Frankly I miss it, but I think our model is working well (F3D).

**Institution E**  
We have gone to a shared model and away from faculty centered (F1E). In the past faculty had to do it, but some did not want to do it or were frankly not very good at it. When it shifted to the center, even though I like advising, I felt students were better served because there was also an advisor for students to talk with in the center (F4E). Those faculty who did not like to advise, loved the move to the advising center and could frankly wash their hands of advising (F3E). Students are getting a more consistent message using the advising center, it has been a positive change (F5E). Some advisors did have a hard time giving up their advisees. However, those faculty are still very active and do academic advising even though it is not required (F6E).

**Institution F**  
We use a split model with intake in center and then transfer to faculty (F1F).

*Staff*
**Institution A**
Certain parts went well. FYE was effective. Faculty did not want it, but the president did so we did it. It is now required across the system. Faculty advising has not gotten better (S2A). Advising is built into the BOR policy so faculty will be a part of the process. However, students were just being put in the AA or AS with no real career or transfer path. This had a negative impact on financial aid eligibility. Split model was outcome of QEP but changing for some cohorts (College Ready) to staying with the Advising Center. AAS still following split model (S1A).

**Institution B**
We use success coaches for developmental and ADA. They are strong contacts for those folks. The rest of the students do initial registration in the advising center and then are assigned an academic advisor the second semester. We have gone to a split model. We are looking at a model that would use FYE classes as advising cohorts. However, technical faculty want to have complete control with their advisees after the first semester and are not on board with the FYE plan (S2B).

**Institution C**
No staff interviewed at this institution

**Institution D**
We moved from faculty only system to a split model where students start in the advising center and then move on to assigned advisors. The early alert system goes in with tutoring and we are trying to increase how faculty use the system. Again, this is a software limitation. We are wanting the system to become more intrusive and have the advisor take a more proactive role. We also need to improve the follow up or closing the loop with the process so the instructor knows what the outcome of the referral actually was (S1D).

**Institution E**
Did not come up in this interview

**Institution F**
The advising model is shared and is working. We use the software to really keep lines of communication open between the student and advisor (S1F). We do have a director of advising and that changed with the QEP (S2F).

**Administrators**

**Institution A**
We have gone from a decentralized to a split model where new students start in the Advising Center and then after the first semester are transferred to assigned faculty advisor. We do have a high-risk group who come from GED or who test into two or more developmental work with high-risk students. Would do more but just not enough funding (A1A).

**Institution B**
The model changed from decentralized to split (A1B). I agree, we have moved to a split model with the advising center (A2B). The model has stayed that way. Everyone says it is more
effective after the change was made in the QEP (A3B).

**Institution C**
We were prescriptive and now are very much a split model with the advising center and faculty. There are some faculty who would like to go back to just faculty due to some issues with the advising center. Advisors are asking students what they want to do and not what they need to do (A1C).

**Institution D**
We have gone from prescriptive to intrusive but through the professional advisors. Faculty view advising as part of their job but the FYE course and professional advisors, not faculty, are primary. We do not have a good early alert system and the real weakness is with the closing the loop step (A1D). We have never had faculty advisors except in workforce but we have never been faculty centered. We have professional advisors (A2D). We are a more centralized model now. We have never been, and probably never will be, faculty driven. We are much more intrusive with our advising and use pathways more now (A3D). Professional advisors and the advising center have brought all our services together and serve the students much better (A5D). Students do not do optional and our new model limits their options (A7D).

**Institution E**
Majority of advisors are happy with the new system (A1E). When we began the model was faculty centered and now has switched to the advising center. Most faculty have shifted their advising focus since they do not see the same person many times (A2E). The model has changed because of the interactions with students. Faculty are not bothered with the simple questions but are happy to have discussions about academics with students (A4E). Advisors do not see last minute disasters nearly as often under the new model. Students are more prepared and are planning more. The center always has staff available to talk to students (A1E). From another viewpoint we do not have long lines at registration. Students are taking care of the enrollment and seeking advice prior to the last minute. We are much more intentional in the advising process. Maximizing resources is a reason to go to advising center (A5E).

**Institution F**
We have the split model with the advising center and it is working well (A2F). The center gives the students a chance to talk with a knowledgeable advisor at any point (A3F).

**Advising vs Registration**

**Faculty**

**Institution A**
They are not the same thing, although I believe some faculty would say the terms are the same (F1A).

**Institution B**
Not the same. Building the rapport with the student is advising (F1B). No, but we try to incorporate the two things together (F2B).
Institution C
Advising (F1C). Without a doubt, advising (F2C). I see your question, but it has changed from registration to advising (F3C).

Institution D
Without a doubt, advising. We are much more holistic than we used to be. However, this is centered in the advising center (F1D). Advising, but I am afraid if you asked most faculty they would say registration (F2D). Faculty who have been here a while would say advising, they have seen the changes brought about by the QEP (F3D).

Institution E
It was registration when we had the large open sessions in the summer, but not any longer (F3E). Not any more, we advise and then register (F2E). Students are advised first and then develop a schedule (F4E). There are a few faculty who would say we just need to register, it is not our job to advise (F5E). We advise the whole student (F7E).

Institution F
Advising, we do not register (F1F). We advise (F2F). We do not register, we advise students on what classes to take based on their individual needs and then they register (F4F). I hope nobody on this campus says we register students. We don’t we advise (F3F). Advise, we show we care by the shift to advising and away from registering (F5F).

Staff
Institution A
These terms are not the same and QEP did help with establishing the difference (S1A). But I will say there are still a few advisors who think they are the same (S2A).

Institution B
Not the same meaning (S2B). Not the same but not everyone on campus would agree (S1B). I agree with them. There is a big difference in advising and registering. I am supposed to only have first year students on my advisee list, but it is constantly changing and causes a great deal of confusion (S3B).

Institution C
No staff interviewed at this institution

Institution D
For sure prior to the QEP it was registration. Since the QEP it has become advising and dealing with the entire student. I think if you asked faculty, or at least those who advise, they would all say advising (S1D).

Institution E
All stated clearly after the QEP the process is advising and not registration, Students get registered during advising but so much more is done in advising (S1E).
Institution F
We advise, then register (S2F). You cannot just register a student for classes, you have to look at the whole student, find out their career goals, life situation and other areas, then register them (S2F). I hope we all advise and nobody just registers (S3F).

Administrators
Institution A
Advising is not registration (A1A).

Institution B
Completely different terms registration (A1B). Vastly different terms registration (A2B). They are different registration (A3B). In the summer they get advising. If students wait until the week before classes start, they get registration (A1B). Unfortunately, I agree registration (A2B).

Institution C
This is a shift from the QEP. It was viewed as registration prior to the QEP. Now that vast majority of advisors would say advising. Treating the entire student (A1C).

Institution D
These terms have been different since the QEP (A2D). Without a doubt we have gone from registration to advising. The whole student is considered prior to registering for classes (A1D). I agree, we have seen a change and we are now advising focused (A3D).

Institution E
We used to call it advising, but it was really registration. Not any longer, we advise (A5E). It used to be a very chaotic process (A4E). We are not standing still, we are constantly looking are ways to add to the advising side of it (A5E). It is for sure advising now (A1E). Without a doubt we do advising. We look at the entire student before selecting classes (A2E).

Institution F
Not the same. We advise, we do not register (A1F). Advisors are to find out about the entire student and what their needs are, then get to registration (A3F). We try to figure out where they are and what they need to be successful (A4F). We advise. Hopefully after the first of second semester they are aware of barriers they are facing and can take the lead in actually registering for classes, faculty and staff work with the on discovering and understanding the barriers (A2F).

Annual Review Process
Faculty
Institution A
FYE is certainly still monitored in the annual report. There may be other areas, but I am just not sure (F1A).

Institution B
FYE is being heavily tracked. I know retention and completion rates are of course tracked. We
still do CCSSE and end of term surveys that cover parts of the QEP (F2B).

**Institution C**
Retention and completion were original goals in the QEP and of course we would track those anyway (F3C). QEP showed both rates were improved during the QEP. Data also showed students were not taking classes they did not need (F2C). I think/hope faculty know the difference in what is needed to graduate. This is partially driven by financial aid, but these are still tracked (F1C). This is where the buffet was reduced to just a few options. We do participate in CCSSE and participate each year, so I am not sure why we are not using that data in the report (F2C). It may have been added in 11 or 13 after the QEP and was not around for the QEP (F3C). I agree, I think it started a little later. Or wait, here it is, we did CCSSE in 2005, and just stated we used it, but did not actually show any numbers (F2C). Now that we are talking about this, seems to me like we should do some type of follow up report on the QEP (F3C). I agree, a lot of time and money went into to it and the college simply moves on to the next thing (F2C). This is interesting research and I will be interested in seeing the results (F1C).

**Institution D**
Both retention and graduation rates have been positively impacted (F1D). The system is much more aware of more than just the transfer student. We are much more focused on taking courses that lead to graduation. The connections and foundations we are building have helped with this and we are tracking how these advising changes helped. Faculty PD is tracked. This started with the QEP and its importance is still very strong (F2D).

**Institution E**
I may be the only person who must track and look at graduation and retention rates, but I can tell you in my program both of our rates have increased. The QEP has raised both of our rates significantly (F4E).

**Institution F**
We certainly track retention and graduation (F2F). We track tutoring a lot now (F3F). We are very aware of the changes made in the QEP and we continue to track those areas (F2F). We created some new task forces to help with tracking areas of the QEP (F1F).

**Staff**

**Institution A**
We do have aspects of the QEP in the annual plan. Students advising is being tracked (S1A). Yes, advising is being tracked (S2A). The transfer piece is also still being tracked. Career services and student satisfaction are tracked (S1A).

**Institution B**
FYE is being heavily tracked. I know retention and completion rates are of course tracked. We still do CCSSE and end of term surveys that cover parts of the QEP (S2B).

**Institution C**
No staff interviewed at this institution
**Institution D**
I know we track retention and completion rates and we are very pleased with the increase in both when a student completes FYE. We are also tracking tutoring and student usage of other services (S1D).

**Institution E**
Focus on advising and program of study helped graduation and we are still tracking both retention and graduation rates. Both of these rates have gone up since the QEP. We track GPAs but they have not gone up (S1E).

**Institution F**
We track graduation and retention rates and I feel the QEP has helped. We also track students who have completed an academic plan (S2F). There has been in uptick in both since the QEP (S3F). Probably due to the increased organization and students being more aware of what is needed and can plan more (S1F).

**Administrators**

**Institution A**
Many areas of the QEP are still being tracked and are important pieces in the annual plan. We have maintained many of the pieces of the QEP (A1A).

**Institution B**
No comment from this institution

**Institution C**
Retention and completion rates were strong goals in the QEP. Of course we would track those even if we never had a QEP, but links can be made to the changes in advising and increases in both of these areas. Faculty have become more aware of the importance of data and tracking initiatives. I do not think faculty are as opposed to the term ‘data driven’ since the QEP. The QEP has shown data can drive changes (A1C).

**Institution D**
Of course we track retention and completion and will whether it is in the QEP or not, but we have been able to track these. That being said, I do not think the QEP increased these areas, but I do think the QEP helped with maintaining or reducing the drop in both areas. We also track student satisfaction with advising and other campus services. This has been continued since the QEP (A1D). Our retention and completion rates are still not where we would like them to be, but the QEP has stressed the importance of both areas and has had a positive effect on these. We also track the success of students in FYE and how much better the retention and completion rates are for these folks. All agreed goals from the QEP had been distributed to other departments and were still being tracked (A2D).

**Institution E**
We track graduation and retention rates and can point to increases in both based on changes made in the QEP (A5E). We are actually cutting off students from being able to walk in graduation at noon today. Sure they can still apply and graduate, they just cannot walk in the
ceremony if they apply after today. We have that many! (A3E). The room is simply not big enough, but a good problem to have. We may graduate ourselves out of business (A5E).

**Institution F**  
The QEP really helped with retention when students could see they only needed a few classes to graduate (A2F). It also kept students from taking courses outside their major. It greatly reduced graduation times and frustration I – students graduating with unneeded classes went down. (A4F). We track the number of major changes still. That number has been reduced significantly since the QEP (A1F). We track tutoring success in many areas such as retention, GPA, graduation etc. The QEP increased the culture of assessment at the college. We assess with student satisfaction survey and do CCSSE most every other year (A2F). We also constantly do student focus groups on student services (A3F).

### Awareness of Student Services

**Faculty**

**Institution A**  
The FYE class has made any student who takes the class much more aware of services available to them and students appreciate knowing these. I am not sure the QEP had a huge impact on this awareness. The campus has always stressed this area. The tutoring center did move to the library as part of the QEP and the usage went up. The QEP did help develop ways to offer more services for online students (F1A).

**Institution B**  
Students are much more aware of student services. Sadly, I do not think they are using them much more (F1B). The QEP brought much more attention to student services through the advising center and FYE (F2B).

**Institution C**  
It is a little iffy now. Actually, when we did preview day there was more of an awareness than now (F2C). I agree, we used to actually meet with all students where now they do it themselves (F1C). New student orientation has helped this, but the NSO still has a lack of faculty involvement. We are getting students on campus to try and show them services available (F3C).

**Institution D**  
Without a doubt students are more aware of services through the QEP. This was done with the requirement of the FYE course. That class takes students through the process (F1D). Students are required to do a scavenger hunt and we have any gotten technology into the hunt adding scanning codes for certain areas. Our administration is strongly in the process. All of them encourage photos and to stop by when possible. The hunt gets all students around campus and aware of services (F2D). I hope so, but I do not have any data to support it (F3D).

**Institution E**  
I would definitely think students are more aware of these. They are a cornerstone of our FYE class and the software is much more integrated in the course (F1E). Use of the software is mandated as part of the QEP (F2E). Students were more tech savvy and expect a digital presence because it was in high school. Also, there are financial constraints to not print everything so
those factors have had an impact (F3E). We no longer do make up inclement weather days and
the software is used much more (F4E). Faculty also bought in to the new system more. Faculty
will do things when they have to (F5E). We do a little more front loading with the software
(F2E). Also, Campus Cruiser was a little more for email but also had gradebooks and other stuff
in it (F1E). Absolutely (F5E). Made students must more aware of the programs we have. The
food pantry and success closet (F7E). The computer repair lab is a top contender for usage on
campus (F2E). Students have benefited by having a student wellness center opened due to the
QEP and it is very successful (F2E). We also brought in screenings to the single stop center to
help with health and wellness (F4E).

Institution F
I think the QEP did help awareness a little. I learned a lot through the QEP (F3F). The QEP did
make students, and faculty and staff, more aware of the services available to them. We also have
seen an uptick in the usage of all of the services (F1E).

Staff
Institution A
Much more aware of the services and surveys show students are using services more (S2A).
Certainly career services are much busier (S1A).

Institution B
I certainly hope so and I can point to faculty who have really stepped up their game and are all in
on getting students involved (S1B). FYE has made students much more aware and surveys show
an increase in the usage of student engagement. It is a big part of the welcome and orientation.
The QEP did increase this and was a starting point to stress these areas (S2B).

Institution C
No staff interviewed at this institution

Institution D
The QEP has made students more aware of these services, but a lot is based on how proactive the
student is. The topics are introduced, but students need to take the next step and do more
research on their own (S1D).

Institution E
Absolutely both financial aid and swell center (health center) (S1E). They are at least more
aware, may not use it, but aware (S2E). Faculty also value and are more aware. The swell center
does a great job of letting faculty and staff know about services and program. There is more
openness about the process (S3E). Advisors who work in the advising center know a lot more
about services and can do a much better job (S1E). Before there was confusion on who to send a
student to for help (S2E).

Institution F
Students have become much more aware of services available to them (S1F). The software has
also made students more aware and they get regular information about events and activities
(S2F). Advisors also have the ability to send messages to students to alert them to new events or
activities. The culture has changed where students are looking at the software to stay in touch and up to date (S3F).

Administrators

Institution A
Yes, for sure. Students are more aware of services available to them. Not sure they are actually using the services more, they are aware of them. These services are all covered in the FYE class and many of the directors of the various services come to the FYE class to present (A1A).

Institution B
Students who go through the advising center are more aware (A2B). More successful students not only value these services, but they get it and are aware of their importance. Again, advising sessions get it, scheduling sessions do not. A lot of faculty do value clubs and are sponsors but during group registration, there is just not time to cover this area (A1B).

Institution C
I am not aware if this is the case or not (A1C).

Institution D
I hope so, but I am not sure. This is a constant struggle to get students to see the value in getting involved with campus events. Resources are here, but how do we get students to use the services. We put banners all over the campus to try to make students aware of services. Students won’t go to the services, so most FYE instructors bring in speakers to class to try and increase awareness (A1D). Definitely campus services and to make the campus more welcoming (A2D). 3 – 6 stated they were not in a position to comment. I would like to think so, but I cannot support my hope (A7D).

Institution E
A lot of things came from the QEP as a core focus (A1E). Perceptions to different ideas and services was improved (A3E). Advising center was moved to the library to help increase awareness of services on campus (A2E). The FYE class spends a lot of time outlining and detailing all the services available to students. Resources are embedded in every class (A4E). Fitness and health are also stressed not just academic services (A2E). We spend a lot of time on how students can be successful using these services (A4E). Students are more successful today due to our focus on student services. Financial literacy is embedded in our math department as well (A5E).

Institution F
This was very program dependent. If the program only had one faculty, it was more likely to be asked (A4F). Today we have switched and it think most interviews at least discuss the caring nature of the job (A1F). I think the culture on campus now explains why faculty have office hours. They are not time to grade papers, but to work with the students for outside of class work job (A3F). We do explain expectations for hours required in the job (A2F). It is also discussed in the HR part of the interview and part of the formal process that did not used to be there job (A3F).
**Change Models**

*Faculty*

**Institution A**
The QEP did not do a good job of getting the entire campus to buy-in. Seems to be a state secret on what went on for the first QEP and frankly for this one as well. They do not have buy-in at all job (F1A).

**Institution B**
I think it is more closely tied to a persuasive speech model (F2B). It was bottom up, the campus was not forced to pick a topic (F1B). Selecting it was very much bottom up. The top did support it but did not push or force it (F2B). We had some really nice graphics that showed the process was bottom up (F1B). We had a lot of focus groups (F2B).

**Institution C**
We looked at Foundations of Excellence (F2C). I have no clue what this means (F1C). I thought about Googling it but did not find anything that looked familiar (F3C). The change in the QEP was initially because SACSCOC said we had to (F1C). Picking the topic was more bottom up (31C). Certainly the impetus with top down – SACSCOC, but we did a good job of looking around and including faculty and the community. The QEP was data driven (F1C). I think we did have good buy-in from the campus as a whole (F2C).

**Institution D**
We had many, many, many meetings across all campuses to make sure everyone had a chance to participate. We looked at what other colleges did. We polled the team first, and then the colleges and had ideas from everyone on how we could better the college. Every organization has influences and we made every effort to get input from everyone. Opportunities for input were widely available (F1D). Change is driven by data. Once the QEP got started, changes could be made or at least tweaks made based on data that had been collected. One way this way evident in how we changed the delivery of FYE from completely in the classroom to a hybrid model (F2D). I googled it to start with, but yeah it was bottom up for the most part (F3D).

**Institution E**
The last one was a little top down. I do not think we took a long time to develop, but I think we have learned from this and are doing things must more organically (F3E). We did look at a lot of issues and got some good feedback on what needed to be done. Not sure we really had a model (F4E). I was pleased with the way or QEP topic bubbled up. I was advocating for another topic to be selected, but we used data and information to see what the best and most needed topic was. So while my topic was not picked, I feel it was a general consensus on campus and my opinion was considered (F5E). We did look at a ton of data and we did get some good buy-in over the course of the topic selection. We had breakout sessions and several meetings to discuss options (F2E).

**Institution F**
I think our change model was in the middle (F1F). We had a lot of focus groups from all parts of campus and did a good job of getting all involved (F3F). This was not forced on us by anyone (F2F). We had a ton of meetings and emails. Everyone had a chance to get involved (F4F).
**Staff**

**Institution A**
The first one was from the top down, it was not driven by the faculty, not that it was a bad project, but there was not a lot of faculty buy-in. We did learn our lesson and are doing a better job with the new QEP (S2A). I agree the QEP was not faculty driven (S1A). We did have open forums for staff and we basically required staff to attend. We have separate forums so neither side would be left out. These discussions did help people realize it was more than just a new space. We did realize faculty must run it (S2A). Having leadership with knowledge – and respect - is key to change (S1A).

**Institution B**
At first top down but then the top administrators left (S2B). Somewhere between top and bottom, at least once it got going. I think it depends on a person’s involvement in the QEP at the time as how a person would view the change model (S1B).

**Institution C**
No staff interviewed at this institution

**Institution D**
I was a director at the time the QEP was started. I know we had a lot of input from a variety of folks on the FYE course and orientation. The entire campus was a part of the process. Our administration does reach down to the bottom and I believe we had a good review from all levels and the entire campus had the opportunity to get involved. The QEP was data driven and we got a lot of feedback if FYE was mandatory why we only had 90% (S1D).

**Institution E**
It was not top down for sure. We gathered the data and had meetings to find out what we needed to improve. We thought the president was going to say developmental ed, but he did not. It came from bottom up (S1E). We looked at a lot of ideas (S3E). I know it was a lot of work in order to get ownership. If it was not bottom up and organic, it would not work (S2E). That is where the buy-in comes from. When you think somebody is listening, then you are more likely to support it (S3E). People from all areas of campus worked on it and the process helped to break down the silos on campus as we learned more about what others on campus are doing (S2E). I heard many times in the process ‘Oh I did not know you did that’ (S1E).

**Institution F**
Our change model was to get buy in once a topic was selected. However, the topic was driven by the entire campus. We had meetings and voting. Everyone had a voice or say in the process (S2F). I do not think we thought about a change model, but everyone on campus did have a chance to give input on the decision (S1F). I have no idea (S3F).

**Administrators**

**Institution A**
We really did not use a change model unless you count top down. Initial process really was opposed by the faculty. To be clear, the FYE requirement and not the changes in advising as a whole. We have changed and are using data much more to drive our change. It is hard to argue with data (A1A).

**Institution B**
We had several focus groups and had a good long process to select the topic (A3B). It was bottom up. Advising has been an issue for years and has always been an issue. Focus groups agreed this was an issue the process worked to get to the topics (A1B). Advising was certainly on the list and was not pushed by the top (A3B). I think it was bottom up and accepted by most of the campus (A2B). I do not think our president was actively involved in the process and therefore no pressure came from the top (A1B). Bottom up to start but the top was kept informed to make sure there were no surprises we did learn from the first QEP and were sure to involve industry in this new QEP (A3B).

**Institution C**
I actually thought about this a little and we made a solid effort for the change to be from the bottom up (A1C).

**Institution D**
The model for the FYE course was created by a former chancellor. He had a strong tie with the authors of the text and we were directed to this topic. Now, once the direction was given, we did have some pretty good input on how to attack the topic. We always wanted it to be faculty driven. At the beginning it was bottom up and started that way, but the reality was to get the money it had to be supported from the top. I do think the campus did meet in the middle (A1D).

I do not think we actually looked at a ‘change model’. It was for sure a broad-based involvement. The QEP Director may have had an idea in the beginning and sort of directed us this way. He did have a very strong passion for the topic and to a degree was top down, but with strong involvement. If there is such a thing, it was a guided model. He QEP director did a great job of getting key players from each campus in order to get buy-in on the final project (A2D). I would say top down, with some input from others, but the topic was pretty well decided for us (A3D).

Some direction yes, but broad-based input (A4D). I really am not sure (A5D). Surveys, meetings, emails, and voting (A6D). It was an open and fair process (A7D).

**Institution E**
We simply saw a need to change, we did not have a model (A5E). I agree we did not have a clear plan. It was from the bottom up, but we had the support for administrations to move forward (A4E). We were intentional about the process we made sure to get input from all parts of campus and everyone felt their opinion was valued (A3E).

**Institution F**
Bottom up (A2F). Yeah, we had a bunch of meetings (A4F). This was not my favorite, but I had input and was fine with my topic was not selected. It was data driven and when it was picked, I could get behind it (A3F). We were without a doubt bottom up, everyone had a voice and a chance to participate. However, the administrator did support it and not sure what would happen if it was a topic they would not get behind it (A1F).
FYE Course

Faculty

Institution A
More students took FYE and learned more. This aspect of the QEP had a huge impact on student success. Very happy to see the FYE is going to be required for transfer students (F1A).

Institution B
The system starting to require the course which is a wonderful thing (F2B). It is a good course and now enrollment should go up with the addition of a graduation requirement (F1B).

Institution C
This topic did not come up in this interview

Institution D
This course has greatly increased student knowledge of campus services. It is required and students must take it within the first 15 hours. I do not hear much in my discipline courses about the class. The authors of the text did come to campus and talk about the importance of the class and why students should take it. From a student and parent point of view it helps to make it required. It is a great class, but if not required, students will not take it. Based on the objectives of FYE, the students are much more responsible (F1D). The course allows critical connections to be made with the students. Most sections are hybrid. We do not want students to do this completely online because we want them to be on campus, but there are online options if that is all students can do. If students do not pass this course, then they must retake it (F2D). I have taught this course and it was one of my favorites. I wish I had more time to teach it. Students love it and learn so much about being successful (F3D).

Institution E
Faculty or staff have a clear choice in teaching the course (F3E). Faculty are not forced to teach the course (F2E). We do have the required training before some could teach the course, but otherwise it is open to anyone (F1E). We do try to get folks who really want to teach the course (F5E). All those who teach the course are full time employees. This is the rule for teachers (F4E). The good thing is on this campus, most folks who teach the course once, love it and want to continue teaching if they can fit it into their load (F6E). The student culture has also changed to where more and more students are seeing the value in the course (F5E). Four-year schools are starting to require a similar course (F7E). Older students see the value early and over the course of the semester tend to win over the younger students (F6E). Students really enjoy the reflection they write at the end and thinking back about everything they learned in the class (F3E).

Institution F
Not a factor on this campus

Staff

Institution A
It is great that it is going to be required (S1A). The curriculum is defined and constant. However,
we did not do a good job of tracking if students successfully passed FYE they were more successful (S2A). More time spent on career pathways which is good (S1A).

**Institution B**
Great course in getting information out to students. Issue is every department on campus calls and thinks an area or topic should be added (S1B). Course being required in the fall will be a major plus to enrollment (S2B). Students are not sure about the course in the beginning, but then almost all comments at the end of positive (S1B).

**Institution C**
No staff interviewed at this institution

**Institution D**
Students are required to take the class due to the QEP. This is still the case today. We cap the course at 25 in order to allow a real connection between the faculty and student. Each advisor will work with no more than 10 sections of the course. The advising center works with the online students. We have more sections in the fall than spring which is pretty typical. We have about a 75% retention in the course (S1D).

**Institution E**
The FYE course came from the QEP. Students really value FYE. An initial issue was we tried to put everything in the course to fix the entire college. We saw that did not work and have narrowed the focus. Student comments show they really value the course and state they have learned a lot (S1E). The assignments, like the academic plan and some busy work is removed, but there is a lot of reflections to get the students looking inward and thinking (S2E). From the get-go all the info was interesting. The course has evolved and is more meaningful (S3E). Students get the skills being taught in the course and how the relate to their success (S1E). Faculty and staff are doing a much better job selling the class to the student (S2E). FYE is required (S1E). You cannot flunk FYE you simply get a RT - retake grade. Flags are posted on a student and he or she cannot register until the student enrolls in FYE. Let’s face it, students can pass FYE if they simply make an effort (S2E). Students get to know the campus through the many campus departments that present the FYE course (S3E). The course helps students put names with faces and offices (S1E). The hard sell for the class is for students who are returning to college after several years or transferring in work (S3E). Anyone under 30 hours are exempt (S1E). Students do not have to take they course if they have taken a similar course from another institution (S2E).

**Institution F**
The course is not required by any major. The popularity of the course has dropped (S2F). Very few students take this course now (S1F).

**Administrators**

**Institution A**
FYE has morphed to where I am confident and comfortable. Initially was to get new students comfortable. Now it is more career oriented. Have purchased a new software – career coach to help. Also, an assignment on career search requiring to meet with advisor. Students are not now
required but will be in the fall. We saw a strong FYE course at first, then went down even though there was evidence students were more successful when they completed the course (A1A).

**Institution B**

Did not come up in this interview

**Institution C**

The course was changed from a semester long course to a five-week course. All degree and STEP course are required for all two-year programs. It is required in the first semester (A1C).

**Institution D**

I teach this course and the QEP goals have been very much institutionalized within the course, but has the goals listed in the course been adopted across the curriculum. It is required for most students but exceptions do apply for transfer students or veterans. Our system chancellor has mandated the course in every degree. This is causing some issues with what we take out of the curriculum since degrees are capped at 60 hours. This course makes the students look at barriers to their success. Many times students think it will be a straight line to graduation. Perseverance is key and we teach this in the course. This course strives to make students more aware of options. We bring in former students to speak to the class to show how the course helped them (A1D). Great course that really gets the student on the right track. Would like to see more involvement from faculty in the course, but that is just not our model (A3D). Look at the student comments. Those who stay in the course and put in a little effort love it. Former students are some of our best marketing for the course (A4D). I taught a section a couple of semesters ago and loved it. I wish I had the time to teach it more often. Connections are made and light bulbs go off in the student (A6D). Great course and advisors who teach it love it (A7D).

**Institution E**

The FYE course has helped change the culture in software usage (A4E). The standard in all courses is to use college email only. Really stresses privacy (A3E). All students have an FYE flag for registration until they complete the course. If you have not completed FYE you must see an adviser (A4E). Students are required to meet with advisor in FYE to map out entire academic plan. So in theory they are never self-enrolling since they have a plan developed with an advisor for each semester (A2E). We did switch a little when the state changed the requirement for the course (A1E). You cannot flunk FYE, you can get an RT which stands for retake (A5E). Students are required to take FYE and the course is embedded in every degree program (A1E). “We make you take this class, but we do not assign a negative grade to it (A5E). We do give RT more than once to some students, but students will have that registration hold until they pass the class (A3E). When the class went from 1 to 2 hours we did have to limit what we covered (A2E). We figured out a way to get FYE into our early college in the ninth grade year (A5E).

**Institution F**

We do have a course, but not required and some high school students (A2F). We did try to require it but did not make it. - Not really part of the QEP and is not a focus on this campus (A3F).
Professional Development

Faculty

Institution A
There is no regular training for faculty. When I first started yes, but no now. New faculty members are lost. Almost no training (F1F).

Institution B
The advising center does a great job of providing training for changes in advising (F2B). Faculty actually request training in various areas and how they can improve their skills. Training is not required, but it is certainly highly encouraged (F1B).

Institution C
New hires are partnered with a mentor the first semester without actual advising. First set is actually advised the second semester (F2C). Every semester we have in-service and there are always updates and information shared about advising (F1C). Not sure I would call it training but more information sharing (F3C). I also would not call it training but sharing of important information (F1C). There is training when new software packages are adopted (F3C). Thank goodness, since we seem to change packages every year! (F2C).

Institution D
New faculty have an orientation just like new students. Then all faculty or staff who teach FYE must do, I think it is four hours, of PD each year in order to continue to teach the course (F1D). All new faculty must go through regular training to teach the course and then each semester they are required to do an additional four hours of training. It is and continues to be a very strong part of the culture on campus. PD is paid (F2D). Good process at this campus and valued by faculty at least most faculty (F3D).

Institution E
My PD class made it very clear they had to do the training but they were never going to teach the FYE class. Many comments like a college should not be teaching this course (F3E). There initially was a lot of faculty saying we should not be teaching this. That is part of the cultural change in almost all classes that teaching the FYE course has become a part of the fabric of the college (F4E). Early on this was not the case. This had a snowball effect and it is now our culture (F1E). The naysayers were looking more at content and not the culture shift that was coming (F7E).

Institution F
We have regular PD for advisors especially when needed. New faculty have a boot camp the first year (F1F). We have PD on advising and other areas (F3F). We did hire a PD director through the QEP because the training was so effective (F4F).

Staff

Institution A
We hold regular mandatory PD. We send faculty and staff off campus when possible. We have sessions with transfer and technical individually. We a lot $350 per faculty to use for training (S2A). Our last professional development advising session was just held last week (S1A).
Institution B
The modules are out right now, but there is a lot of face-to-face training. Clusters such as nursing or business get together and look at changes in curriculum to assist with advising. We do this before fall and spring semesters (S2B). Our PD department does a good job of scheduling regular advising training (S1B). We are using some grant money to update the modules to help with this project because they are important (S3B).

Institution C
No staff interviewed at this institution

Institution D
We could do more, but there are some regular sessions and advisors are expected to attend. This is especially true when we have new software or updates to existing software (S1D).

Institution E
Training is a big part of the FYE course if you want to teach it (S1E). We have streamlined the training, but it is still required (S2E).

Institution F
We use program spotlights were faculty in the various areas come in and talk to advisors about updates in the degrees. This has really helped us know a lot more about what other folks are doing (S2F). This has helped reduce the silos on campus and we know more about what others on this campus are doing (S1F). PD is expected and tracked. It is part of all employees’ annual reviews (S3F). The campus does still send out regular newsletters with advising information and other materials that are helpful with updates (S2F).

Administrators
Institution A
We still have strong, regular PD advising training (A1A).

Institution B
The modules have gone away simply because they were extremely outdated and not useful. In their day, they were a great resource, but they were not regularly updated. Again, a staffing issue. The champion for the modules left and they were no longer a priority (A1B). We do have regular training that is still done by the director of the advising center on things like placement scores and other items (A2B). It is offered, and we usually have good participation (A1B). Sessions also focus on transfer agreements (A2B). We also have some outside folks come in and especially during the QEP process (A1B). I believe the modules are in the process of being updated now (A3B). Staff are also welcomed but pretty limited (A2B). Attending is related to availability (A3B). Door is open, but most do not (A1B).

Institution C
We could use more of this. New advising software has been implemented in stages but I am not sure faculty know enough to help students. Once the student gets permission from advisors, they will then actually enroll in classes in the software. I do not think faculty know enough to help the
students right now. The program is good, but there is a learning curve. Faculty do get a little bit of software fatigue. We tend to change software packages often, for good reasons, but it is tough to require faculty to learn new steps to perform tasks. Faculty and staff are busy and training a little sporadic. New hires do go through a process to meet with various departments on campus (A1C).

Institution D
We have extremely strong PD for folks who are new to FYE. We take this course very seriously and folks who teach it must have professional training (A1D). A key component of FYE course and taken seriously on campus - (A2D). All employees must report PD training on annual reviews and are expected to complete each year (A3D). Not only is it required, but it is a part of the culture on campus. Faculty and staff value the constant training and updating (A4D). Education is all about constantly learning. This has become part of the culture of learning on this campus (A5D). PD is viewed as a positive on campus, although sometimes it does come at bad times (A6D). With all the new software changes and technology updates, PD is critical (A7D).

Institution E
For a little while now we have not had a new crop of FYE instructors because people who teach it, love to teach it. However, this summer we do have some new folks and will do the training for them (A1E).

Institution F
We hired a PD director based on the success from the QEP training (A2F). First year faculty go through a training program we call a boot camp (A3F). We do not let first year faculty actually advise, we want them to learn and be prepared (A4F).

QEP Directors

What words of advice for current QEP Directors working with advising.

Institution B
Flexibility – things change and as long as you move forward, the ideas that are in place can still be kept but changed to meet the needs as they come up.

Institution E
Most importantly, be a leader - You must consider and see yourself as a leader, because everyone else on campus must see you as a leader if you are going to succeed. Then since I cannot just use one word, be flexible because things are going to change. Read, learn, listen and know there is not one answer for any question.

Institution F
Staying grounded in your ultimate goals and outcomes are. The QEP is a complex process. The more grounded you can be with attention to how we are making progress is a really important area of focus.

Biggest challenge in serving as the QEP Director

Institution B
Changing long-held views and ideas. The challenge of helping advisers understand the
placement scores is becoming difficult. There are so many options. The online repository of
advising materials will hopefully get some faculty to learn new ideas and use them for reference.

**Institution E**
There are two lessons for me I came on at the end of the process and had to play catch-up. Lesson number one, you always need more time. Assessment is always a challenge and the off-site questioned it and so it became an issue. This was going to be a culture change and would the campus buy-in to the shift. Had to show the value of the change. The shift is also important for both those above and below the director.

**Institution F**
The newest of the challenge of the QEP. Our college was in the second group of colleges who went through the process. There was a lot of ambiguity about the document to submit to SACSCOC. There were not many examples to look at back then. It was a new piece of the reaffirmation process.

*Hardest part of getting ownership from campus for change*

**Institution B**
Once advisors came to the advising center and saw the new system they were energized about the new process. Just getting them to try a new system.

**Institution E**
You must look at people and not positions. It was harder to get buy-in from faculty because the biggest shift was going to be with them.

**Institution F**
I was lucky we had a lot of support from the start. We choose a topic were people were supportive from the start. I did not really encounter situations where people were opposed to the initiative or funding. We just did not have much resistance.

*Would you do the job again?*

**Institution B**
Sure, it is exciting to lead change. Ten pages, not a problem!

**Institution E**
Yes, I guess it is obvious since I am doing my second one! To be honest though, the budget was the biggest concern I had before I said yes this time. My first go around I was young and foolish, not sure what my excuse for saying yes this time is.

**Institution F**
Without hesitation, yes. I had been at the college a few years and had worked in a couple of different departments. We have a collaborative culture and a process like the QEP can be energizing to a campus. It is not unusual for us to step across divisional lines to help each other and I really enjoy doing that. I professionally enjoy working with others and that is important in the role of QEP director.
What words of advice do you have for those who are thinking about being a QEP director?

**Institution B**
Passion. Directors are the ones who will lead the charge. Never agree to lead a process with a topic you are not passionate about completing.

**Institution E**
Be sure to be involved from the first day. You will not have enough time, not matter when you start.

**Institution F**
I think it can be a great career move. You gain experience in so many areas. Areas like project management, assessment, accreditation and so many other areas an ambitious professional needs to have experience with to move forward in their career. Even if a person is not sure about the compensation or benefits from accepting the position are sufficient, the long-term benefits of knowledge gained and people you will meet are invaluable.

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**Required Academic Plan**

**Faculty**

**Institution A**
The QEP had a huge impact on student planning. They are much more aware of their academic requirements. There is a smoother transition from semester one to two since the QEP (F1A).

**Institution B**
I do not think there has been a huge change in this area. Even though an academic plan is required in FYE. With the course being required in the fall, I hope many more students have this (F1B). It was certainly a goal for the QEP, just has not been widely accepted. Students still have an issue finding the materials on the website (F2B).

**Institution C**
Our advising software does have a pathways plan and it has helped to streamline the process. However there is a general education core (F1C). Yes, but we have narrowed the options on the buffet. Students are directed to a smaller list (F2C). All students should have one, but …. (F3C). Students are developing the plan more and more students are aware of what they need and will say things like ‘I have the sheet’ referring to the academic plan (F1C). I work with nursing and those students are very self-directed and motivated. However, with navigate students have a better path to follow (F3C). Our goal is for all students to have a plan in the advising software (F1C). Sadly, I am going to have to say no not every student has a plan in the software (F3C). Yep, that was the answer on my mind as well. Responsible students yes, and now that I think about it, I do think more students are taking responsibility and I think it is because of the QEP (F2C).

**Institution D**
The plan is done from day one and students are expected to do it. I use “creep” software to see if students are following their plan while they are in my classes. It is key for students to declare a major so it does not just default to a transfer degree (F1D). It is a requirement in FYE and we hit about 65 – 70 percent where we set advisors to sections of the course and then there is a checklist.
showing the student has completed the plan. I will say there are some students who slip through and do not have one, but we want everyone to have a plan (F2D). As others have stated, more of an emphasis in technical programs. It is encouraged, but certainly not required (F3D).

**Institution E**
The academic plan is a big assignment and students are motivated by the weight of the assignment (F3E). Students do work closely with the advising center and the FYE course to make sure this is done (F6E). There are some students who do wait – surprise and then must come to the center for help (F2E).

**Institution F**
Certainly all of our new students who come in through the advising center are doing this (F1F). I love to see this plan in the software when I get a new student. The information really helps me talk with the student and stay on track. I am disappointed if a student does not have it (F2F). We always talk to the student to make sure plans have not changed. But it gives and easy way to start a conversation (F3F). They sit down and go over all aspects of the student (F5F). In some departments, like mine for spring starts, we do ask them to come directly to our program rather than through the center (F2F). I am gen ed so I do not need to see students the first semester so the advising center works well with getting the plan done early (F4F). Students have taken more responsibility in their academic plan (F5F).

**Staff**

**Institution A**
Students are using software to develop plans more. There is a lot more people looking at it now that when we just used paper (S2A). With the emphasis on transfer frameworks there are more students developing their plan. I do think we would have had hardly any students with a plan. There were some, but the plans were all done on paper and really hard to keep up with. Requiring an academic plan has helped with accountability for both students and advisors. The plan was and is required in FYE (S1A). This is costing the college some since students are taking only what they need (S2A).

**Institution B**
Not sure on this one. Students do learn this in FYE. Faculty are becoming more aware of program applicability (S2B). I just do not know but I really do think students are much more aware of their academic plan and it is more relevant to students. We never use to hand them out like we do now (S1B). Course substitutions in AAS programs have caused issues in getting students to understand academic plans (S3B). Transfer degrees also are an issue for some programs. The newly developed academic plan checklist from the QEP was a huge plus (S2B). It is not being done by students as much as hoped, but with FYE required in the fall, I hope this usage goes way up (S3B).

**Institution C**
No staff interviewed at this institution

**Institution D**
The academic plan is required and is developed in the FYE course. We have had some
challenges on our end to make the software package a little more user friendly and interactive. Once the plan is developed, the student must really search for the actual classes. Yes, all students have one, but the roll over to registration is not smooth (S1D).

**Institution E**
Did not come up in this interview

**Institution F**
Yes, everyday (S1F). Big part of QEP and continued to this day (S2F). Students sit with an advisor in the advising center and develop the plan together and then get registered during their first semester. The plan is updated each semester depending on the goal of the student and program. Of course students do change their minds (S3F). The good thing with our current software is all advisors can see the student plan no matter what the major (S2F). If a student says what I need, I can always go to the academic plan in the software to see the status of the student (S1F). It is great to be able to refer to other plans and comments from other advisors (S2F). Faculty do stress in other classes the importance of the plan (S3F).

**Administrators**

**Institution A**
Yes, this is still a strong requirement for all students who take FYE. This requirement also helped with a reduction in the number of students who change majors. However, this has not helped with the number of students on probation (A1A).

**Institution B**
I would like to think they are, but honestly no. Just as many students are coming to me with no clue and lost on classes they need. Technical program students are more aware than the general education electives (A1B). Some students are more prepared (A2B). Students do all get a program plan when they come in and this was due to the QEP, but what they do with it is another matter (A1B). Resources generated by the advising center have really helped students and advisors know about academic plans (A2B).

**Institution C**
Students in the technology or health fields have these since it is a very specified curriculum. I would think 100% of those students do. I know the literature says we require it, but not sure we really do. Our guided pathways has really helped this and it has also limited the number of options even for transfer students. Guided pathways was a big part of retention. Yes, there is a budget component, but more on retention and completion. It is hard to say if students are taking more responsibility. Some students yes, but I do not think you could tie this as a result of the QEP. Some students are focused and some are not. Not sure that will ever change no matter what. I do think students are more aware of a guided approach (A1C).

**Institution D**
The academic plan is not tied well to our registration process. Students can register without have a plan. We are working on this so the plan becomes more important. Part of this plan is also to look at other career plans so there is a plan B. The plan is not just for what happens at this
college, but the next 2–4 years as well (A1D). It is required as part of the FYE class. However, if a student is exempt from FYE or does not take it, then I am not sure about how the plan is developed. Professional advisors do have checklist with milestones that need to be completed at 15 hours, 30 hours etc. (A2D). Required and holds placed for students who do not have a plan (A3D). Monitored more by faculty in programs to make sure students are on track to graduate. This is part of the completion drive (A4D). While technically required, several students, especially transfer students, do not have one (A5D). Stronger process in some majors than others. Some faculty drive and support this more than others (A6D). QEP started this and is still a major part of the FYE course and advising center goals (A7D).

**Institution E**
Students have a major assignment in FYE to meet with their advisor and complete an academic plan for their time at the institution (A4E). We do not currently track the number of students who have an academic plan. We are going to a new software that will start to allow us to track (A2E). Most students, since at least 80% take FYE, have a plan (A3E). Most students when they change a major will come to the advising center for help in changing the academic plan (A1E).

**Institution F**
The QEP increased this a lot (A1F). Prior to the QEP some faculty had their own paper sheet, but it was hit and miss (A2F). It was not required that we give the students a copy, but if we did they probably did not keep it (A3F). It was sporadic at best, big change and improvement with the QEP (A4F). Students love to see the green light now in the software to show they are on track to graduate (A3F). With the new system students immediately develop the plan and have a path to graduate from the get-go (A2F). Some programs are must easier to follow – especially some of the AAS because of the required courses (A4F). I agree the pre-reqs are limited and not many choices (A2F). If humanities is the only option, it is not too difficult to develop a plan (A3F).

**Student Enrollment Permission**

*Faculty*

**Institution A**
Students cannot self-enroll. I personally do not give any student who is not my assigned advisee permission to enroll (F1A).

**Institution B**
Not any longer. Part of that culture change was getting students to talk to advisors. This has been a great change and has really cut down on class errors (F1B). Agreed, the process after the QEP required students to see an advisor. Students do not even enroll; advisors or faculty actual enter the courses (F2B). Agreed (F3B).

**Institution C**
Once upon a time, yes, but not now. Too many mistakes and students left alone (F1C).

**Institution D**
Students can self-enroll but are encouraged to see advisors. Faculty only hear about these issues when there is a problem either academic or financial aid (F1D). No, students must see an advisor to enroll if they fail the FYE course. Otherwise we let students self-enroll but we encourage them
to see an advisor each semester (F2D). Some programs tell students they must see an advisor, but that is simply the choice of the program. In fact, students, unless they have a hold, can self-enroll. (F3D).

**Institution E**  
Yes, students can self-enroll (F1E). Yes, students can self-enroll unless they have a financial aid hold (F1E).

**Institution F**  
All of our students, after the first semester, can self-enroll (F1F). However, it used to be students had to get an advisor signature before the QEP (F1F).

**Staff**  
**Institution A**  
Was a good outcome from the QEP. We used to do this and stopped with the QEP (S1A). Agreed (S2A).

**Institution B**  
We are one of the few who no longer give students the right to register themselves. This was not an outcome of the QEP, it actually came later. Students must see an advisor in order to register. They cannot enroll themselves (S2B). They can drop a course up to a certain point on their own. (S1B).

**Institution C**  
No staff interviewed at this institution

**Institution D**  
Students must first meet with an advisor (S1D).

**Institution E**  
Yes the student can self-enroll unless there is an academic or financial aid hold. However, all said students are encouraged to see advisors first (S1E).

**Institution F**  
Students do not have to see an advisor before they register, but they are encouraged to do so (S2F). In many programs while they are not required, they are strongly encouraged to see an advisor before registering (S1F).

**Administrators**  
**Institution A**  
Students no longer can self-enroll (A1A).

**Institution B**  
Student have to see an advisor (A2B). At 30 hours they used to be able to do so, but that was taken away as part of the QEP and it has been a very good step (A3B). With new program applicability being so important, that has helped us be a little ahead of that issue. The QEP
stressed advising and that required process has stayed (A1B). This can be done over the phone, but there must be some contact just as long as the idea the student has is not totally nuts (A2B).

**Institution C**
Students cannot self-enroll as a result of the QEP. There was no concern with the administration about making students see advisors. I think requiring students to see their advisor has had a big – positive - impact on retention and completion (A1C).

**Institution D**
Students can enroll themselves without seeing an advisor, but we certainly encourage and try to get students to see an advisor, but they can self-enroll (A1D). Students, unless they have a financial or academic hold, can register themselves each semester (A2D). I would like to require students to see an advisor before enrolling, but due to time and staff, this is just not practical (A3D). Students are encouraged to see an advisor, but not required (A4D). Self-enroll as long as in good standing (A5D). In some programs students are required to see advisors prior to enrolling (A6D). Self-enroll, but hopefully will see an advisor if they are not sure. (A7D).

**Institution E**
Students are not required to see advisor after the first semester unless they have a flag (A2E). Students have flags until they pass FYE, then they can self-enroll – but we encourage them to see an advisor each time before enrolling. In fact since all students in FYE develop an academic plan, they are really never self-enrolling but using that plan as a guide (A4E).

**Institution F**
No administrators from the institution commented.

**New Student Orientation**

**Administrators**

**Institution A**
This topic did not come up in the interview.

**Institution B**
Not mandatory any longer. Originally had a hold, but just did not work. Advising center advisors do individual orientation and the new FYE does it as well. Data showed that was the case. Online has been taken down due to being outdated. Did have more success with face to face (A1B). It is a manpower issue and since it was not as effective, it has not been reactivated (A2B).

**Institution C**
Orientation changed as a result of the QEP. The preview day is gone due to the QEP. The QEP wanted to build the connection students have with campus. We tried to build a community connection. We promote student activities to connect the student with the faculty and campus (A1C).

**Institution D**
Absolutely. It is not just putting everything in the FYE course. Students must attend a NSO. Students are supposed to do orientation and told to meet with an advisor. The first semester they meet with the advising center staff and then work with professional advisors after that (A1D). We are constantly working to make orientation better and continue to track it. We are making it better each year (A1D). We place a high value on NSO. We believe students must get off on the right foot to be successful (A3D). We try to get as many faculty involved as possible so students can make that connection early in their career. We have made changes to the session just about every year, but that is how you make things better. We listen to student feedback and make changes when needed (A4D).

**Institution E**

A lot of emphasis has shifted from the QEP. We have open houses (A1E). It is very successful. We moved quickly in this change (A5E). We have some handouts we give students to allow them to visit a variety of services. We also print a new schedule and walk the students around to make sure they know where they are going on day one. We have a required summer seminar (A1E). The idea did not come directly from the QEP, but from the culture shift from the QEP the campus saw the importance of individual attention in orientation (A3E). This has eliminated the crowds at registration (A4E).

**Institution F**

We offer both on campus and online orientation (A3F). Students can register without orientation – orientation is recommended but not required (A2F).

Staff

**Institution A**

This topic did not come up in the interview.

**Institution B**

Orientation is not mandatory. We have had several iterations of orientation. Depends on staff (S2B). We did online and did have it be mandatory, but not any longer (S1B). When students meet in advising center, they are getting orientation. FYE has picked up the role of orientation. We have had several hundred at orientation and while not required, still encouraged. Students now register before orientation. This changed after first two years of QEP. Staff are primarily responsible for orientation with various people organizing it (S2B).

**Institution C**

No staff interviewed at this institution

**Institution D**

This is required and the advising center is strongly involved in this. Students must take some tests and complete some health screenings. The degree plan is presented here and students are given about six classes to choose from and then sent to the advisors to actually make the schedule. After this process and in the FYE class, advisors will do individual work with them and make a connection with follow up for long term plan (S1D).

**Institution E**
This topic did not come up in the interview.

**Institution F**
We have orientation and then at the end the student will register for classes (S1F). Orientation has changed over the years from required to not required. We are starting to require it again this year. They can do it online however if they are not an on campus student (S2F). If a student has not completed orientation when they come to register, then they are directed to the online orientation to complete it prior to registering (S3F).

**Faculty**

**Institution A**
This topic did not come up in the interview.

**Institution B**
It is not required (F2B). It is required there is a hold placed on students if they do not at least do the online version. The online is completely watered down but must do it (F1B). I guess that is right, I just forgot (F2B). FYE is going to change how orientation is done (F1B). Student services run orientation and there have been many iterations of it over the years. Staff are welcome to work orientation (F2B).

**Institution C**
Still very much front loaded and new program that says students must attend summer session (F1C). This is 2-3 years old but it grew out of the QEP (F2C). System had talked about requiring it, but QEP got it going. System required something other than one-hour class (F1C). Preview day has changed since the QEP. Faculty are no longer required to attend (F2C). STEP advising was in place for a while. Preview day was gone and faculty were lost in the process and asked it to be returned (F1C). STEP has gone away but the new advising center has taken its place – the campus connection center. Faculty are concerned about being left out of advising and are being asked to be back in the flow (F3C). Preview day (F2C).

**Institution D**
As a faculty member we do not work with this. Support staff does this. Faculty are certainly invited but I have not been involved. Orientation is required and students do need it (F1D). NSO is required for students (F2D). Required and has been a great addition (F3D).

**Institution E**
This has changed considerably since the QEP (F3E).

**Institution F**
This topic did not come up in the interview.