

Executive Summary of MTC's QEP: *The New Student Experience*

Midlands Technical College (MTC) has a long-standing commitment to fostering a learner-centered environment that supports students in identifying and preparing for academic and professional goals. The college's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), "The New Student Experience: Building Successful Connections in a Student-Centered Learning Environment," is designed to provide new students with the tools and resources necessary to persist and succeed in their college education.

The New Student Experience promotes student engagement with the college from enrollment through first-semester courses. The three goals of the QEP are to support new students' connection and engagement with the college community, to create classroom learning communities (CLCs) that foster student success, and to create inquiry-based faculty learning communities (FLCs) that prepare faculty to implement effective CLCs.

As the first step in the New Student Experience, students will be encouraged during their enrollment process to complete a Pre-Advisement Module, an online activity that prepares new students for advisement by familiarizing them in advance with college resources, expectations and policies.

New students will then be linked to CLCs, designated sections of entry-level courses that most MTC students place into. CLC activities will support student success through their focus on college resources, information and technology literacy, metacognitive awareness of learning, and appropriate classroom skills and behaviors.

CLCs will be implemented by faculty participating in an FLC, a semester-long inquiry process during which instructors will explore, identify, and develop instructional strategies and materials designed to enhance student success in CLCs. During the first year of the QEP, more than 10% of the college's new students will be directly involved in CLCs; this percentage will increase each year as additional entry-level courses are included in the program, with the goal of eventually impacting all entering students.

MTC's QEP evolved through a broad-based information-gathering process that included key college stakeholders, institutional data, current literature and best practices. The Discovery Team identified concerns in the areas of new student retention, persistence and success, and as a result proposed the New Student Experience—a means of addressing those concerns by engaging students, connecting them with critical resources and fostering academic success. The Design and Implementation Team then identified specific goals for the QEP and developed a comprehensive plan for implementation, management, assessment and sustainability.

Improving student outcomes through the QEP is an institution-wide priority that will draw on resources from every division of the college and involve participation from faculty, staff and administration. Qualified faculty and staff in key positions have been designated to insure that the New Student Experience is adequately resourced and successfully implemented. Funds for staffing, equipment, training, assessment and other key components have been earmarked.

Beyond initial implementation, the support of top-level administrators insures the sustainability of the QEP. The New Student Experience is and will continue to be closely aligned with overall institutional planning. Its impact on new student success, faculty development and institutional effectiveness will be measured by qualitative and quantitative data gathered through ongoing

formative and summative assessments to track progress, initiate program improvements and plan sustainability efforts.

Through the collaboration and creativity of all members of the MTC community, the New Student Experience has emerged as a critical part of the college's mission to prepare "a diverse student population to enter the job market, transfer to senior colleges and universities, and achieve their professional and personal goals . . ." (MTC Mission Statement). It is clear that the potential benefits of the New Student Experience for the entire college are many, and its impact is expected to extend into the community as students enter the workplace and weave their skills into the social and economic fabric of this region.