

UT MARTIN ASSESSMENT NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY–MARCH 2023

Our most important job is to help our students succeed!

SACSCOC Update – On-Site Visit Results and Next Steps

The SACSCOC On-Site Visit was a success! Thank you to everyone who contributed materials and information, met with our visiting team, and supported UT Martin in a myriad of ways!

Now that the visit has been completed, we are beginning to address the three QEP recommendations in the formal On-Site Committee Report. In short, the visiting team thought that we were overly ambitious with our five goals and multiple objectives—especially when you consider the amount of reporting we would be responsible for doing in five years as part of our Fifth Year Interim Report. We have been asked to revise our QEP document (more on that below) and submit the revised document by July 30. We need to narrow our focus, restructure the assessment methods related to the narrowed focus, and then re-establish constituent buy-in on our narrowed focus.

Once we have submitted the revised QEP, our compliance reaffirmation packet goes to a SACSCOC Committee on Compliance and Reports for review. Their recommendation is then forwarded to the SACSCOC Executive Council for review. The Executive Council's recommended action then moves to the full SACSCOC Board of Trustees, which makes the final decision on reaffirmation. This part of the review process will take place during the second half of 2023, with the final decision being announced at the SACSCOC Annual Meeting in December. We will receive our formal notification letter in January, 2024.

Revising the QEP

As described in our January Assessment Newsletter, our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is focused on increasing retention rates and progression rates of students.

The original QEP document focused on five areas, each with its own set of objectives. These areas arose out of our Foundations of Excellence process last year, and many of these areas are reflected in UT Martin's Strategic Plan and the Strategic Plan Refresh document.

We still intend to accomplish all of the objectives within all five of those areas. Research conducted by the Foundations of Excellence team shows that the most potential for improvement in retention and progression rates tends to be with students who have completed fewer than 60 credit hours. Furthermore, retention and progression data and data from our high-enrollment courses with high DFWI rates indicate that a fundamental, more narrow focus should be on the *entire first-year experience* of our students, which extends far beyond just GENS 101. Thus, our primary goal for the QEP should be to increase retention and progression for first-time, full-time students by specifically addressing challenges faced by those students.

Our working hypothesis is to adopt a two-tiered approach:

Preparing the Institution for Students, which will include:

- Creating a Center for Teaching and Learning;
- Creating a shared approach and incentives for implementation of high-impact practices, focused on

coursework identified in DFWI research; and

- Expanding resources and opportunities for learning support.

and

Preparing Students for the Institution, which will include:

- Revising GENS 101, including the development of agreed-upon curriculum and SLOs;
- Solutions for student-based funding of GENS 101; and
- Increasing the infrastructure and personnel for First Year Programming including initial student orientation.

Additional goals identified by the Foundations of Excellence, including those related to reducing administrative barriers, improving advising, and increasing students' sense of belonging, will continue to be an important part of both the Foundations of Excellence process and the Strategic Plan, and assessment and reporting related to these areas will continue as well. In terms of the QEP, these areas will contribute to the success of the QEP but will no longer be included as part of the QEP reporting structure.

The revised assessment plan for the QEP will focus on the two tiers described above. Proposed assessment methods associated with preparing the institution for students could include assessing learning support (e.g., the number of hours offered by the various support systems, the number of students served, the number of subjects addressed, and impact on GPA and on DFWI rates when comparing students who took advantage of learning support opportunities to those who didn't) and assessing the Center for Teaching and Learning (e.g., percentage of courses

engaged in high impact practices, percentage of faculty involved in pedagogical development, comparison of DFWI rates among courses taught by faculty with CTL training and those without, etc.). Proposed assessment methods associated with preparing students for the institution could include surveying students and instructors about the perceived effectiveness of GENS 101, the percentage of instructors implementing high impact practices, the percentage of instructors following GENS 101 syllabus guidelines, and the percentage of students requiring schedule changes after orientation advising due to things like improper placement or prerequisite issues.

As we revise our QEP, we will need your help! For example, we are currently preparing a GENS 101 survey to collect faculty input on course practices and priorities (coming soon!). Please complete that survey when you receive it in your email. Not only will that give us valuable input on revising GENS 101, but the survey itself will be used to demonstrate to SACSCOC that we have solicited input from you.

We will share the revised QEP document with you when we have it ready.

One Last Note of Appreciation

Many of you were here 10 years ago when we last went through the accreditation process, and you remember the issues we faced coming out of that reaffirmation. In the decade that has passed since that last reaffirmation, this institution has been transformed for the better, and it is due to the hard work of all of you. We have faced challenges that none of us dreamed would come, and we still have room to grow as we look toward the future. **Thank you for all that you have done, and all that you continue to do, for our students, for UT Martin, and for West Tennessee.**