QEP

ENHANCING STUDENT SUCCESS

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN

*Student Success
in the Middle Years*

Revised, September 2006

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

sacs.utep.edu/qep

Developed by UTEP in preparation for reaffirmation of accreditation by the Committee on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

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8 September 2006

Rudolph S. Jackson, Vice President
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097

Dear Dr. Jackson:

During the visit of the Reaffirmation Committee last April, I was pleased with the strong support shown for the UTEP QEP, Student Success in the Middle Years. In the formal report of the committee, the QEP was found to be in compliance with all assessment criteria. The Reaffirmation Committee, however, did provide additional analysis and comments to guide us in strengthening the plan.

We have carefully considered the Challenges and Opportunities listed by the Reaffirmation Committee and have revised the QEP to address each of their suggestions. As an aid to reviewers, we present below a summary of the committee's comments (Part III.C. Challenges, and Opportunities) and an overview of our modifications to the QEP.

III.C. Challenges

- **Need to better address the ability of Students to finance college.**

  UTEP is acutely aware of the extreme need of our Students, both because of the low socioeconomic levels of the community and because of the national trend to decreasing student financial aid. To counter this challenge, we have initiated several innovative scholarship programs, including programs which target low-income families. Within the QEP we have expanded our discussion on the role that advising will play in increasing awareness and use of these programs (Section 7.3.5). In addition, we list some of the more innovative programs for student support in the resources section (Section 10.3).

- **Need to better present the financial resources that are committed to sustain the Plan.**

  The UTEP QEP is intertwined throughout the structure of the university, frequently leveraging existing programs and expertise onto new directions and goals. A serious question, then, is when does a particular budget item become a QEP resource? In our initial budget we took a conservative approach, listing only those items that represented totally new university expenditures dedicated exclusively to implementation of the QEP. In the current iteration of the budget, we include a more complete analysis of existing (Section 10.1) and new (Section 10.2) resources that the QEP will draw on for implementation. We have also included proposed scholarship programs separately in Section 10.3.

- **Need to specify controls, sanctions or rewards to ensure Students seek and accept advising.**

  Convincing Students to "do what is good for them" has been surprisingly difficult. Ideally, a part of regular advising includes a close comparison of previous recommendations with student reality. To ensure that Advisors have the information they need, we will develop a secure, Web-based tool to include all prior advising recommendations and notes. This is now more clearly stated in Section 7.3.4.

III.C. Opportunities

- **Contextualizing the "middle years"**

Our focus on "Middle Years" Students is an effort to bridge the gap between our successful entering student programs and our senior-level capstone and research experiences, and its implementation will draw heavily on those efforts. This is presented more clearly in Section 7.3.2.

- **More clearly state the role of technology**

The efficiencies, communication, and analytical capabilities of technology are integral to almost every section of the QEP. This has been presented more clearly in multiple sections of the Plan, including curriculum and advising coordination with El Paso Community College (Sections 6.4.2 and 7.4.3), revisions and presentation of the university catalog (Sections 6.2.4 and 7.4.2), customized student degree plans to aid advising (Section 6.2.1), Web-based advising records (Section 7.3.4), course scheduling (Section 6.5), student tracking (Section 7.4.1), and of library information and resource spaces (Section 7.5).

- **Expand on approaches for institutionalizing "validation"**

While validation of Students is the particular goal of the QEP, attaining that goal will require a change of mindset across the entire University in addition to Faculty efforts focused on Students. To provide impetus for broader approach to validation, we must validate the validators with appropriate recognition. This is better delineated in Sections 7.3.3 and 7.3.6. In addition, creation of new student resource and information space remains a high priority (Section 7.5)

- **Delineate examples of additional measures of student learning**

Because of the inherent differences in expectations among the various Colleges, the UTEP QEP relies on a distributed model for evaluation of student attainment of learning objectives. A more complete description of this process and the distribution of results, as well as some specific examples, are included in Sections 9.3 and 9.4.

- **Expound on role of Librarians in the QEP**

The role of the library is expanding well beyond the traditional role as a repository of reference material. Within the context of the QEP, the UTEP library has taken on an important new role as a student resource and information space, a valuable home away from home for our largely commuter population. This is explained more in an expanded Section 7.5

- **Provide specific examples of Faculty and Staff development**

UTEP has well established and well used instruments for professional development of Faculty (Center for Effective Teaching and Learning) and Staff (PACE). The professional development opportunities in instruction and course development (Section 6.3.4) will be expanded, and advising best practices (Section 7.3.6) will be developed and shared.

- **Better describe the integration of career counseling with academic advising**

  The UTEP QEP recognizes that college and career should not be separate, independent decisions, but rather one prepares you for the other. This is explicit in our pattern for curriculum renewal, where each degree plan specifies the range of careers for which its graduates are prepared and the relationship between each of the courses and that preparation (Sections 6.1.2). Moreover, the QEP greatly expands the role of advising to include financial counseling, career advising, and general mentoring, and Sections 7.3.2 and 7.3.3 have been expanded to make this more clear.

- **Track and compare Students' initial degree objectives with their subsequent persistence**

  A major focus of the Assessment portion of the QEP is to make extensive use of archived information to allow us to make data-driven decisions on how best to impact student success (Section 9.3). The use of on-line records (Section 7.3.4) will also be used to support this analysis.

- **Be proactive in sharing findings**

  This item is not a specific goal of the QEP. However, UTEP has a strong tradition of innovation and experimentation in education. This includes sharing our findings through continuing dialogs with sister institutions, presentations in national and international forums, and peer reviewed publications. We are looking forward to communicating our results and experiences.

Each of these additions helps to make our plan for Student Success in the Middle Years stronger and more comprehensive, and we thank the Committee members for their thoughtful suggestions. If there are any further questions, we will be pleased to respond.

Sincerely

Diana Natalicio

Diana Natalicio
President

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Curriculum Review and Renewal Work Group

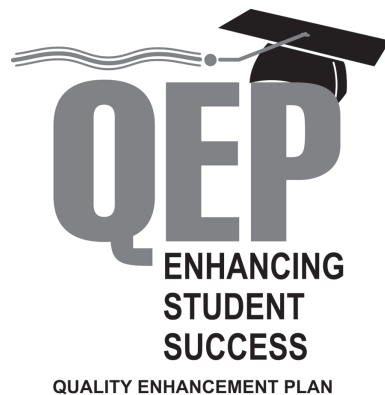*Chair:*   Stephen Aley, Associate Professor of Biological Sciences

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QEP

ENHANCING STUDENT SUCCESS

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN

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1. Executive Summary

The University of Texas at El Paso's (UTEP) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) provides a University-wide course of action for focused improvements in learning and learning outcome assessment in Students' "middle years." This QEP is focused on improving success by enhancing the middle years of Students' enrollment, which for many UTEP Students extend beyond years two and three to year six or more. The Student Success in the Middle Years QEP will improve student success through two primary strategies: (a) curriculum review and renewal in each degree program and the general education core, providing Students an efficient and purposeful pathway to demonstrate mastery of general education proficiencies and major field knowledge, skills, and dispositions; and (b) academic and career advising redesign to provide Students with personal and career guidance. Curriculum renewal and advising redesign are mutually reinforcing and critical to achieve UTEP's access and excellence mission. A graphic overview of the QEP and its development is provided on page 7.
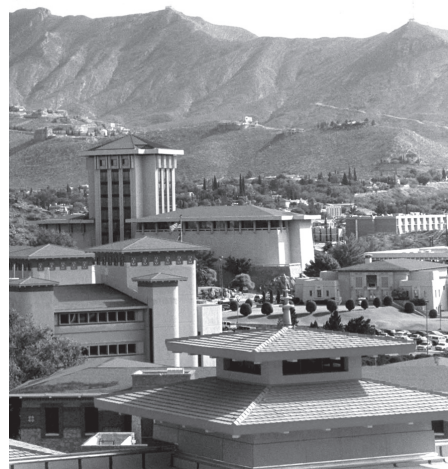
The local context and Students' background have a significant influence on their middle years' experience. The overwhelming majority of UTEP Students come from the El Paso area, and most are the first in their families to attend college. UTEP has gained national recognition for fostering student success and has been identified as a model institution by external agencies and publications. While UTEP is successful in engaging Students and retaining them until graduation, many Students take longer than six years to earn their degrees. Unlike traditional Students, UTEP Students' middle years extend beyond two years to as long as ten years. We need more than traditional curricula and advising to provide an adequate educational experience and framework for success for UTEP's economically challenged, commuter, primarily minority Students. A consistent need to continue to chart new pathways to access and excellence has been a theme in UTEP's short- and long-term planning reports and student surveys. The emergent theoretical work on validation provides an effective framework for us to enhance Students' middle years and thus improve their academic success.

Validation, shown through encouragement and affirmation, can be the factor that determines success or failure, particularly for non-traditional Students. Rendón (1994) defines *validation* as "an enabling, confirming, and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that fosters academic and interpersonal development" (pg. 44). Academic validation results when Faculty and Staff reach out to Students in ways that help individuals "trust their innate capacity to learn and to acquire confidence in being a college student" (Rendón, 1994, pg. 40). This emphasis on validation to enhance student learning is reflected in the focus and recommendations of the QEP, in relation to both curriculum review and advising redesign.

Curriculum Review and Renewal. Student learning is dependent on a relevant, efficient curriculum. Curriculum maintenance requires constant review and clear communication of the curriculum's intended learning outcomes. The QEP Curriculum Working Group recommended, and UTEP commits to, improving the current curriculum review process. This will require systematic departmental curriculum reviews designed to match the standards of design, relevance, justification, and assessment that are exemplified by current accreditation standards. Faculty responsible for each degree program will review

and rewrite student learning outcomes, prerequisites and assessments for the program and each course in it. An Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS) will be appointed to lead curriculum renewal, working with the Faculty Senate academic Deans, and Department/Program Chairs and Faculty.

Redesigning Academic and Career Advising. Academic and career advising will be redesigned to focus on student learning success and validation. This work will be led by the APSS who will organize and oversee a University-wide advising redesign. In addition, a Faculty Senate undergraduate advising committee will be created to assist the APSS in developing academic and career quality enhancement processes and assessments. Processes will focus on educative advising, a model of advising which moves beyond either prescriptive or developmental advising to help Students understand the logic of the curriculum. Reynolds (2003) observed that:

> Without the cohesion of a strong curriculum and people (including advisors and directors of advising programs) who can articulate clearly the purpose of the curriculum, students may graduate believing that they have completed a series of unconnected courses, marked by checks on an arbitrarily mandated list, without being aware that they have also acquired skills (and marketable ones at that) that can foster self-guided learning (pg. 23).

This shift in advising practice and philosophy means that Faculty and Staff Advisors may need professional development. It will also create new expectations for career advising. Our goal is that Faculty and Staff take an active role in reaching out to Students and help them believe they can be valuable members of the community of scholars (Rendón, 2002). Accomplishing this goal requires a very different skill and knowledge set than that needed to put together a semester course schedule. UTEP will further systematize and improve academic and career advising assessment with leadership from the APSS.

President Natalicio's comments to the campus during the 2005 Fall Convocation capture the guiding principles that shaped the QEP.

> The words and actions of all of us on this campus—those veteran Faculty and Staff members whose service we recognized today, and the many newcomers who have become part of the UTEP family this year—contribute to the "validation" of our Students. We thank you for all that you do to foster their success, and, most of all, we thank you for believing in them and our mission to serve them. Your willingness to join us in building a new university model to meet the needs of today's Students will have a significant impact, both here in the Paso del Norte region and elsewhere in the world. We are creating new trails, rather than walking on well-trodden paths. To be sure, such trailblazing presents some additional risks, but it is a far more interesting journey, with far greater potential benefits. Thank you for being a part of our efforts to continue reinventing UTEP and, ultimately, U.S. higher education. We have already seen strong evidence of the impact of our efforts, and working together, we will surely see that impact grow in the years ahead.

Figure 1: QEP Overview

Validation

Our Future

Establishing the Confidence to Succeed

Today

Engagement

Our Past

High Quality Competencies and Skills
Improved Graduation Rates

Curriculum Renewal and Review
Degree Programs • University Core

Advising
Academic • Career • Mentoring

Quality Enhancement Plan
Student Success in the Middle Years

Administration
Planning and Guidance

Faculty Process
Faculty Senate

University Staff

Student Body

Research

Internal Research
Centennial Commission Task Forces
Lumina Project • Compacts • BEAMS

External Research
Literature on Student Success
DEEP • NSSE

Past Successes
Circles • MIE •
Entering Student Program

2. The University of Texas at El Paso

2.1 Background

Since its founding in 1914 as the State School of Mines and Metallurgy, UTEP has played a major role in providing educational opportunities for the surrounding region. Although the school's original purpose was to prepare mining engineers, that role expanded when the Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy, as it was renamed in 1920, added liberal arts courses and admitted a number of female Students in 1927. The College became an accredited four-year institution in 1931 offering both Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts degrees.

Renamed Texas Western College in 1949, this institution changed the face of college athletics in 1966 when the Miners, starting five black payers for the first time in a NCAA championship game, defeated an all-white, and heavily favored Kentucky team.

Texas Western College was officially designated The University of Texas at El Paso by the Texas Legislature in 1967. UTEP is now a major urban research University in the heart of a thriving international metroplex of more than two million inhabitants, 1.5 million in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico and 750,000 in El Paso, Texas. For the fourth year in a row, UTEP registered a record fall enrollment in 2005 — 19,268 Students.

UTEP is the only major research University in the country whose Students are predominantly Mexican-American. With the rapid growth of the Hispanic population in the U.S., the University is winning recognition for its innovative teaching methods and programs designed to help non-traditional Students succeed. The University's student population closely mirrors the demographics of the region, from which UTEP draws more than 90 percent of its Students. More than 70 percent are Mexican-American and another 9 percent are Mexican Nationals who commute across the international boundary from Cd. Juarez.

UTEP's Faculty members not only teach; they are researchers, mentors, civic leaders and activists. The University employs approximately 1,000 full- and part-time Faculty committed to fostering the academic achievement and aspirations of their Students. UTEP has one of the highest percentages of minority Faculty among major universities in the United States – nearly 30 percent.

UTEP has 292 Administrative Staff members (executive, administrative and managerial positions) and 1,227 other non-Faculty Staff members (professional, technical, clerical, skilled Staff and service). Eighty-four percent of other non-Faculty Staff and 45 percent of the Administrative Staff are Hispanic. Fifty-four percent of other non-faculty Staff and 53 percent of Administrative Staff are women.

Students choose from 80 bachelor's programs, more than 77 master's-level programs, and 14 doctoral degrees.

2.2 Vision

The University of Texas at El Paso commits itself to providing quality higher education to a diverse student population. Classified as a Doctoral/Research-Intensive University, UTEP seeks to extend the greatest possible educational access to a region that has been geographically isolated with limited economic and educational opportunities for many of its people. The University will ensure that its graduates obtain the best education possible, one which is equal, and in some respects superior, to that of other institutions, so that UTEP's graduates will be competitive in the global marketplace. UTEP also capitalizes on its binational location to create and maintain multicultural, inter-American educational and research collaborations among Students, Faculty, Institutions, and Industries, especially in northern Mexico.

The UTEP community – Faculty, Students, Staff, and Administrators – commits itself to the two ideals of excellence and access. In addition, the University accepts a strict standard of accountability for institutional effectiveness as it educates Students who will be the leaders of the 21st century. Through the accomplishment of its mission and goals via continuous improvement, UTEP aspires to be an educational leader in a changing economic, technological, and social environment.

2.3 Mission

The University of Texas at El Paso is dedicated to teaching and to the creation, interpretation, application, and dissemination of knowledge. UTEP prepares its Students to meet lifelong intellectual, ethical, and career challenges through quality educational programs, excellence in research and in scholarly and artistic production, and innovative student programs and services, which are created by responsive Faculty, Students, Staff, and Administrators.

As an institution in The University of Texas System, UTEP accepts as its mandate the provision of higher education to the residents of El Paso and the surrounding region. Because of the international and multicultural characteristics of this region, the University provides its Students and Faculty with distinctive opportunities for learning, teaching, research, artistic endeavors, cultural experiences, and service.

2.4 Goals

- **Learning and Teaching:**
  To prepare UTEP Students to meet lifelong intellectual, ethical, and career challenges and to be the leaders of the 21st century.

- **Research, Scholarship and Artistic Production:**
  To create, interpret, evaluate, apply, and disseminate knowledge; to encourage the addition of perspectives based on UTEP's geographic and social setting, and to contribute to the formation of a broader intellectual and artistic foundation for the 21st century.

- **3. Public Service:**
  To work in partnership with public and private agencies, institutions, and organizations, including business and industry, to improve the quality of life in our region and world by providing appropriate University expertise and leadership.

- **Administration:**
  To support the achievement of UTEP's mission in learning, teaching, research, scholarship, artistic production, and public service through responsive, effective, and efficient administrative and staff services.

2.5 Context

UTEP operates in a challenging and historically underprivileged region. The 2000 census reports that the median household income in the El Paso metropolitan statistical area (MSA) is $31,051; 24.8 percent of the population falls below the poverty level. A large percentage of the population is under-educated; 34 percent of adults aged 25 or older do not hold a high school diploma. Only 17 percent of the population aged 25 or older hold a bachelor's/ college/professional degree (as a point of reference, the corresponding statistic for the entire state of Texas is 23 percent).[i] Seventy-eight percent of El Paso residents identify themselves as Hispanic. The large majority (73 percent) speak a language other than English at home.[ii]

UTEP's enrollment has steadily increased from14,677 in 1998 to 19,268 in fall 2005. UTEP serves the higher education needs of the El Paso region: 82.4 percent of UTEP Students are from El Paso County.[iii] In addition, UTEP provides access and opportunity to Students from Northern Mexico – a region that is socially and economically linked to El Paso. The University's Students reflect the multicultural mix of the geographic area: 72.4 percent of UTEP Students are Hispanic-American[iv] and an additional 8.8 percent of UTEP Students are Mexican nationals.[v]

The El Paso metropolitan area has the lowest per-capita income among the six largest metropolitan areas in Texas. Since income is strongly related to education level, providing access to first-generation college Students will have a significant economic impact on the region. Fifty-three percent of UTEP's first-time freshmen are first-generation college Students.[vi] In 2004, 33 percent of UTEP Students reported family incomes of $20,000 or less; comparable national averages are 10 percent at large public research (doctoral) universities, 12 percent at small and mid-size private colleges and universities[vii], and 29 percent at community colleges.[viii]

UTEP is the first-choice institution for the majority of Students from the region: 94 percent of freshmen Students indicated that UTEP was their first or second choice for college.[ix] UTEP is also the choice for the region's top Students who enroll in public institutions in the State: 57 percent of El Paso County's Top 10 percent high school graduates who are enrolled in public institutions in Texas (to which they have legislatively mandated automatic admission) are enrolled at UTEP.[x]

Table 2.5: Demographic Data – El Paso County and State of Texas (2000)

SUBJECT	EL PASO MSA	STATE OF TEXAS
Population		
Total	**679,622**	**20,851,820**
Hispanic	78.2%	32.0%
White, non-Hispanic	17.0%	52.4%
African American	3.1%	11.5%
Other	19.8%	15.1%
Multiple Races	3.2%	2.5%
	(14.9% change from 1990)	(22.8% change from 1990)
National Origin		
Native born	72.6%	86.1%
Foreign born	27.4%	13.9%
Language spoken at home (persons 5 years and older)		
English only	26.7%	68.8%
Spanish	71.2%	27.0%
Other	1.2%	3.5%
Education (adults 25 years and older)		
Less than High School	**21.4%**	**11.5%**
Hispanic	27.9%	
White, non-Hispanic	2.8%	
African American	3.7%	
Some High School	**12.8%**	**12.8%**
Hispanic	15.1%	
White, non-Hispanic	5.9%	
African American	8.2%	
High School Graduate	**22.6%**	**24.9%**
Hispanic	22.5%	
White, non-Hispanic	22.7%	
African American	24.0%	
Some College/Associates	**26.6%**	**27.6%**
Hispanic	23.9%	
White, non-Hispanic	33.5%	
African American	43.0%	
Bachelor's/College/Professional Degree	**16.6%**	**23.2%**
Hispanic	10.6%	
White, non-Hispanic	35.1%	
African American	21.1%	
Economic Indices		
Per capita income	$13,421	$19,617
Median household income	$31,051	$39,927
Median family income	$33,410	$45,861
Percent of population below poverty level	23.8%	15.4%
Percent of children under 18 below	31.5%	20.2%

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000, Texas State Data Center
Note: Percentages for education subgroups represent the respective ethnic group's percentages in that subgroup.
Thus, numbers for each subgroup (e.g., "Hispanic," "White, non-Hispanic," and "African-American") total to 100 percent.

3. Quality Enhancement Plan Background

As the primary four-year public university serving one of the most economically challenged and under-educated communities in the nation, UTEP is acutely conscious of its responsibility to serve our Students well. UTEP has been a leader in applying and building knowledge about non-traditional student access and success through continuous improvement processes. Our efforts have focused on engaging Students from the time they attend orientation to the successful completion of their capstone experience, and on raising expectations and improving the skills and competencies of future Students by working with K-12 schools and El Paso Community College (EPCC) in this region from which UTEP draws more than 80 percent of its Students.

The nationally known El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence has played a significant role in strengthening and sustaining UTEP's partnership with K-12 schools and EPCC by addressing shared priorities pertaining to the success of *all* Students throughout the region. Funding from the National Science Foundation and other sources for the past 15 years has contributed to strengthening partnerships focused on raising student aspirations and preparation for higher education success. UTEP has gained national recognition for fostering student success and has been identified as a model institution by external agencies and publications.

The QEP focuses on a narrower issue associated with student success. Although UTEP is successful in engaging Students and retaining them until graduation, many Students take longer than six years to earn their degrees. Unlike traditional Students, UTEP Students' middle years extend beyond two years to as long as ten years or more. These extended middle years affect our Students' educational experiences, lifetime earnings, and future educational goals (Fry, 2002). The QEP focuses on improving Student success in the middle years.

Our study of the middle years shows that we must advance the "engagement framework" (see Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & associates, 2005) to address the unique needs of our Students, who are predominantly Hispanic and the first in their family to attend college. Once Students "enroll in college, they need progressive and sustained assistance to ensure that they stay enrolled and graduate from college" (Rendón, 2002, pg. 642). Such academic support programs as first-year experiences and other bridges from high schools and community college were created at UTEP in response to that need. However, it is also clear that Students need progressive and sustained assistance well beyond the first year.

3.1 Building on Strengths

3.1.1 Legacy of Excellence through Transformation

UTEP has long been committed to achieving a balance of both access and excellence. These values are explicitly articulated in our mission and vision statements and are reflected in our plans and accomplishments. Our well-documented accomplishments that range from athletics (documented in

the 2006 film *Glory Road*) to Student success (Kuh, et al., 2005) have shown that a public institution that serves non-traditional Students in one of the poorest regions in the nation can achieve both access and excellence. We have achieved this success through a continuous improvement framework and an unfailing drive to constantly do better.[xi]

UTEP is an institution that has a strong history of self-assessment and a documented record of successfully adapting its policies and practice to meet the needs of our region and its people. UTEP has transformed itself in at least three fundamental ways:

- UTEP's student body demographics from two decades ago portray a University serving a minority of the region's population. Students were primarily traditional, mostly white, and upper-middle class. Today UTEP's student population closely mirrors the socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural make-up of the majority-minority El Paso community of which it is an integral part.

- Ten years ago, freshman retention and success rates were identified as a critical area for improvement. Initiatives such as the Entering Student Program and the University College were designed and implemented and have resulted in substantial and sustained improvements.

- Significant also within the past decade the University transformed itself from a primarily undergraduate and master's level institution into a Carnegie Research Intensive university. UTEP currently ranks fourth among all Texas public universities in federal research expenditures, and doctoral programs have increased from one to fourteen.

3.1.2 Student Success through Engagement

UTEP's efforts to improve Students' success have been shaped by "engagement" literature as articulated by Tinto (1987, 1993) and others (Kuh, et al., 2005; Kuh, 1995; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1984). The theory posits that student integration into academic life is the key factor in student success in terms of academic skills, satisfaction with educational experience, persistence and graduation. We have utilized the engagement framework to improve student learning outcomes, retention, graduation, and the educational experiences of our Students.

In addition to engagement efforts during the college years, exemplified by UTEP's Center for Civic Engagement, the University has long recognized the need to prepare Students before they arrive here. The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence is a community-wide partnership, chaired by UTEP's President, designed to raise educational standards and student learning in public schools to assure academic success for every youngster in the region. The Collaborative is a multi-faceted effort that includes a re-examination of the entire region's educational system – from kindergarten through university levels – to address policy changes, higher standards, resource leveraging, management restructuring, learning infrastructure changes, assessment that is aligned with instruction as well as state and national standards, and data utilization to inform policy discussion and school level strategies. The funders and partners include the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education and The Pew Charitable Trusts, in addition to numerous community organizations. The accomplishments of the El Paso Collaborative are

significant: more of El Paso's high school Students are staying in school; El Paso's graduating seniors are achieving higher scores on the state assessment; achievement gaps are decreasing; and Students' educational aspirations are higher. In fact, El Paso ranks first among all major metropolitan areas in Texas in Hispanic performance on high school exit exams and in high school graduation rates.

The Entering Student Program (ESP), which started in 1999, was designed to facilitate Students' transition to the University. The ESP was developed partially in response to the 1995-96 SACS reaffirmation of accreditation self-study. These efforts were followed by a launch of the First Year Seminar, a core curriculum course that introduces Students to college success strategies in a discipline-based, theme-driven academic seminar. The Circles of Learning for Entering Students (CircLES), initiated in 1997, is another more focused and intensive program for entering Science and Engineering Students that is designed to provide a strong academic foundation during the first critical year of college. Senior year experiences are designed to ensure that Students have an opportunity for a culminating senior experience (e.g., senior projects, capstone courses, and internships). Community-based teaching and learning initiatives, facilitated by the Center for Civic Engagement, have been highly successful in fostering student engagement. Many of these efforts have been researched and commended by external agencies such as the Center for Post-Secondary Research at Indiana University in their project, "Documenting Effective Education Practice" (DEEP); AAHE, Indiana University and the Lumina Foundation in the project, "Building Engagement and Attainment for Minority Students" (BEAMS); and the National Science Foundation in the "Model Institutions for Excellence" (MIE) Program.

The impact of these efforts is significant. Our first-year retention rates have increased, as have our graduation rates. Results from the 2004 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) indicate that UTEP's first-year Students are significantly engaged in learning activities as measured by NSSE's national benchmarks (which were developed to compare student engagement in learning activities across 473 participating institutions). And, our institutional surveys (Campus Experience, Graduating Senior) show that UTEP Students report high levels of satisfaction with their educational experiences. In fact, NSSE and the AAHE identified UTEP as one of the 20 colleges and universities that were unusually effective in promoting student success (Kuh, et al, 2005).

Although UTEP has emerged as a national leader in ensuring success for our Students, who would be considered non-traditional at almost any other U.S. university, we continue to advance our understanding and impact through focused research. In 2005, UTEP received a grant from the Lumina Foundation to develop empirical models that explain and predict retention and graduation rates at the College and Department level. This is a deviation from traditional models that focus on graduation and retention at the institutional level. This type of subsystem analysis will enable us to build a more robust understanding about factors that explain and predict success of our Students. As the engagement literature suggests, once we engage Students in the first years, they will stay and likely graduate. But, unlike traditional Students, UTEP Students take more than the normal five or six years to graduate – many of our Students take seven to ten years. The attenuation of the middle years has significant consequences for our Students – in terms of launching their careers, their overall lifetime earnings and continuing their post-baccalaureate education. Attenuation of the middle years is the key challenge that we address through the Quality Enhancement Plan. In many ways, we have blazed the trail in applying engagement literature to address the issue of persistence and graduation. We are now blazing a new trail to extend the theoretical framework (through validation literature) to address the unique "middle year" needs of our Students.

3.2 Selecting QEP goals

The UTEP SACS Reaffirmation Leadership Team provided oversight for Compliance Certification and QEP development. The University-wide self-study undertaken as part of preparing the Compliance Certification indicated a need for attention to the middle years and the impact they have on student learning and other outcomes. Curriculum renewal and advising redesign emerged consistently in each of the reports described in 3.4 below.

A 17-member planning committee served in 2003-2005 to explore QEP student success goals. Simultaneously each College formed a QEP committee to study issues specific to its Students.

In 2005, a QEP Work Group was established and charged with developing curriculum review and advising renewal recommendations for UTEP's QEP. The QEP Work Group was co-chaired by UTEP President Diana Natalicio and Faculty Senate President Gregory Rocha. There were three subgroups: a 10-member steering group with members of all University constituencies; a 10-member Faculty Senate Work Group focused on academic and career advising review and renewal; and an 8-member Faculty Senate Work Group focused on curriculum review and renewal. Each Work Group had Staff liaisons to support and facilitate. The Work Group members and liaisons represented a broad cross-section of the UTEP community: Faculty from every academic College, Student Affairs, Library, and other support Staff, Students, and Administrators.

The steering group and two Work Groups reviewed UTEP's "National Survey of Student Engagement" (NSSE) and "Project DEEP" (Documenting Effective Educational Practice) reports, Compact documents (compact process described in 3.4.2), "Graduating Senior Survey," "Campus Climate Survey," internal publications (e.g., undergraduate catalogs, degree plans, advising worksheets, Web pages), and the research literature on student success. The vast literature on student success, especially the work on engagement, is helpful in addressing issues for the traditional student population, but engagement theory is not sufficient to address the unique needs of non-traditional Students (Belch, 2004; Flowers, 2004, Yeh, 2004, Braxton, 2000, Cabrera et. al, 1992). The emergent research on validation (Rendón, 1994), which advances the current frameworks to address the needs of Hispanic Students, is appropriate to explore and address the middle years issue.

Once the middle years concern was identified, the major factors that caused this attenuation of the middle years began to emerge. Two compelling and closely related themes surfaced from the self-study and became the QEP goals for student learning quality improvement: (a) curriculum review and renewal in each degree program and the general education core to enable Students to demonstrate mastery of general education competencies and major field knowledge, skills, and dispositions and to enable Students to more efficiently negotiate the curriculum; and (b) academic and career advising redesign to facilitate specific personal and career guidance by helping Students understand curricular logic and relationships to graduate or professional schools and careers. Curriculum renewal and advising redesign are mutually reinforcing and together are critical to fulfilling UTEP's mission of access and excellence.

3.3 QEP Links to Institutional Planning

The QEP goals were developed in the context of ongoing institutional assessment and planning. The QEP Steering Group and Work Groups reviewed the internal and external documents and reports

summarized in Figure 2, and each is more fully described in the following sections. Figure 2 also illustrates the dynamic nature of the process with assessment informing planning and planning identifying assessment needs and research questions.

Figure 2: QEP Planning and Supporting Documents
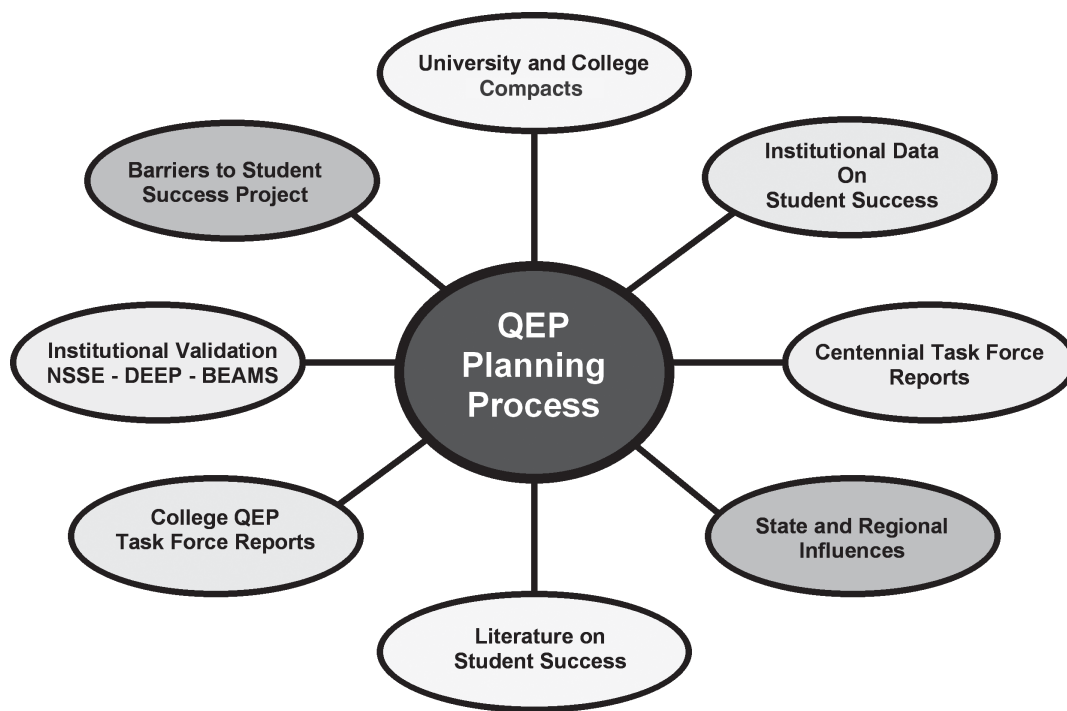
3.3.1 Centennial Commission Task Force Reports

The UTEP Centennial Commission, a group of 100 alumni and other stakeholders, was charged by President Diana Natalicio in fall 2004 to explore UTEP's strengths and opportunities. The Commission proposed a long-term vision for the campus as it approaches its Centennial celebration in 2014. Three Commission task forces, composed of UTEP Faculty, Staff, and Students explored three institutional priority areas: research, campus climate and student success. The findings and recommendations of the Campus Climate and Student Success Task Forces served as input to the University's Quality Enhancement Plan.

The Campus Climate Task Force, for example, placed an emphasis on strengthening support for Students through enhanced advising and student advocacy; improved and expanded communication with Students; strengthened customer service; expanded academic, programmatic, and service offerings; greater attention to UTEP student diversity; and improved physical environment with increased student gathering places, walkways, and expansion of the shuttle service.

The Student Success Task Force emphasized the need for strengthening academic advising, customer service, the adoption of policies outlining roles and responsibilities of Colleges and Departments in advising, improved training for campus Advisors, and enhanced use of technology. The Task Force specifically focused on barriers to degree completion and recommended careful assessment of the curriculum with a need for greater transparency concerning requirements. The Task Force also emphasized the link between financial issues and student persistence.

3.3.2 University and College Compacts

UTEP's annual planning process is anchored in the University of Texas System Compact process. Each University's Compact identifies the institution's short- and long-term priorities, strategies, performance outcome measures, and resources. At UTEP, the Compact development process (planning process) begins with each Department's or Program's preparation of a unit Compact which is then integrated into successively broader Compacts prepared by Deans, Vice Presidents, Provost, and President into the University Compact. Each spring semester, the campus Compacts are updated by reviewing progress achieved on each outcome measure and adjusting strategies for the next planning cycle. Improving undergraduate student success is both a short-term and long-term priority in the UTEP 2006-2007 Compact.

As stated above, a QEP committee representing each of the University's six colleges plus the University College and the Graduate School worked through 2003-05. Simultaneously each college formed a QEP committee to study issues and concerns specific to its Students. Four of the six colleges drafted their own Quality Enhancement Plans. Two colleges and the University Library identified enhancement areas. They are briefly described below.

3.3.2.1 College of Business Administration

The College of Business Administration QEP Committee surveyed 489 Students representing all undergraduate levels. Among the issues identified to be improved to support student learning success were financial aid advising, curricular revisions, a College orientation for business Students, and course scheduling (both scheduling and sequencing).

3.3.2.2 College of Education

The College of Education QEP Committee initiated a series of on-line dialogues to engage Faculty and Staff in conversation around questions key to student success for this College. Issues and areas identified that need to be improved to support student learning success were early advising and support for transfer Students, curricular revisions, learning communities at the freshman level for future educators, and licensure test preparation.

3.3.2.3 College of Engineering

For the past seven years, each of the six engineering programs has had a quality enhancement process for the 11 student learning outcomes identified by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). For the last two years the College has been moving to an integrative, team-based structure in an effort to remove barriers between academic disciplines and to operate more efficiently and effectively. The College has identified four Key Strategic Directions (KSD), the first of which is to enhance student success in undergraduate programs.

3.3.2.4 College of Health Sciences

The College of Health Sciences QEP Committee developed strategies to continually improve student learning and academic success. The College of Health Sciences is experiencing remarkable changes. From a traditional practice and teaching-oriented College, it is changing focus to include greater emphasis on applied, clinical, and basic research in accordance with the University's goal to become an extensive doctoral/research university. Regardless of this added emphasis, Students and the University's

administration continue to expect excellence in teaching. Accordingly, maintaining and improving student learning in this new era of transformation and changing demands on the Faculty is the focus of the College. The QEP consists of five components: a) incorporating critical thinking in all CHS courses, b) creating on-line communities of practice and learning, c) developing capstone and field experience courses, d) creating a Student Support Center, and e) teaching assistants with professional development in cooperation with the Center for Effective Teaching and Learning (CETaL).

3.3.2.5 College of Liberal Arts

The College of Liberal Arts QEP Committee's primary goal was to outline activities that will improve student learning. The QEP report outlines three clusters of strategies and interrelated activities that will improve student learning outcomes by helping Students develop their reasoning and critical thinking skills (Critical Thinking and Learning Communities Component) and improving their ability to communicate (the Cross-Lingual Language and Literacy Center), and effectively and efficiently progress through their degree plans (Advising/Mentoring coordination).

3.3.2.6 College of Science

The educational futures of many UTEP Students depend on their mathematics preparation before entering the University and on their mathematics education while at UTEP. Lack of an adequate mathematics preparation deters Students from majoring in science and engineering, or at the very least delays their progress. The number and quality of our science Students are very dependent on their mathematics background. Therefore, the College of Science QEP Committee recommends attention to the following areas: Faculty quality; curriculum (specifically determining the mathematical needs associated with the various science and engineering degree programs to make sure College curricula contain these topics and to make revisions as needed, and to improve the quality of lower division mathematics instruction.); advising and support for transfer Students.

3.3.2.7 University Library

In addition to the academic colleges, the University Library will support student success in the middle years by increasing its involvement in teaching and learning. The current research literature spotlights the Library professional Staff's role in integrating information literacy into the curriculum and supporting the curricular needs of the Colleges. The Library will begin developing a collaborative teaching-learning model which will have a direct impact on the campus learning environment and support both student achievement and teaching-learning activities. To achieve this, the Library will undertake the following initiatives: information literacy instruction based on the Association of College and Research Libraries Information Literacy Competency Standards; integration of librarians into curriculum processes across the University; and creation of a Collaborative Learning Center within the Library.

3.3.3 Center for Institutional Assessment, Research and Planning

UTEP's Center for Institutional Assessment, Research, and Planning (CIERP) provides data for routine and special projects' data collection and analysis.

- The *UTEP Factbook* is produced annually by the Center for Institutional Assessment, Research, and Planning and provides detailed information about student characteristics, student demographics, enrollment patterns, retention and graduation rates (with an on-line resource that provides disaggregated data by College), historical trends in program (College and majors) enrollment, semester hours generated (by College and majors), Faculty teaching loads and assignments, financial, and operational data. The data in these reports provided insights and information in developing the QEP focus.

- The Lumina-funded Barriers to Student Success Project will advance the current work on student engagement. This study will develop more robust models about factors that engage our Students at the College and Department levels. The Project is a resource that is supportive of QEP goals.

- Both the UTEP Graduating Senior Survey (GSS) and the UTEP Campus Experience Survey (CES) were developed with campus-wide input from Faculty, Staff, Administrators, and Students. The GSS is distributed to every senior who submits a degree application and provides an opportunity to assess how well UTEP Students believe their program has increased their knowledge and skills in critical areas (math, science, the arts and humanities) and has prepared them for lifelong learning and teaching, scholarship and artistic production, public service, and administration. The CES is administered to a cross-section of undergraduates, as well as to all master's and doctoral-level Students. Results of both of these surveys are distributed to Administrators, Deans, and Department Chairs in all six of UTEP's Colleges. The findings from these surveys were used by the QEP Committee to identify the plan's focus and strategies.

3.3.4 UT System and State Accountability Systems

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) has developed an annual *Accountability Report* that tracks specific outcomes measures related to student success. The UT System has developed an annual *Accountability and Performance Report*, which tracks over 72 measures and places these measures in the context of the UT System's mission and goals. There is a detailed section on student success, which includes graduation rates, student performance on the Collegiate Learning Assessment, student awards, student satisfaction and other measures that provided insights about the middle years.

3.4 State, Regional and National Influences

The emphasis on 4-, 5- and 6-year graduation rates is a state, UT System, and national concern. The State of Texas, through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), has identified the goal of improving graduation rates and time to degree as a major priority for public institutions in the State, and these measures are tracked by the State Accountability System. The UT System has also identified graduation and time to degree as priority issues for each institution to address. The UT System organized a major system-wide conference in fall 2005 to address this issue. At the national level, the work of the National Committee on Accountability in Higher Education reveals the public's interest in graduation rates and time to degree. In addition, private agencies like the US News and World Report, the Education Trust (Carey, 2005a; Carey 2005b), and the Pew Foundation (Fry, 2002; Fry 2004) have written extensively about improving graduation rates and time to degree.
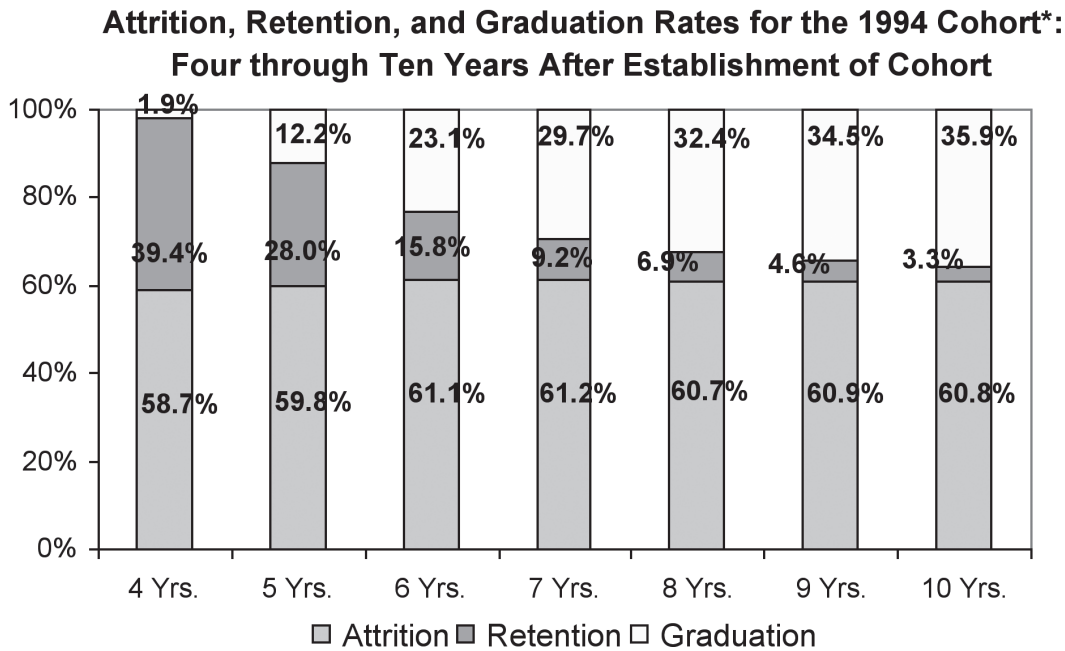
3.5 Student Success in the Middle Years

Research establishes that student success is a function of student characteristics and institutional action (Astin, 1993). These predictive models show that UTEP is doing as well or better than many institutions in terms of exceeding expected outcomes. In fact, Project DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practice) identified UTEP as one of the 20 exemplary institutions nationwide in engaging Students (Kuh, et. al, 2005). While we accept the praise we received from external agencies for our efforts, we believe we can do even more by understanding our Students better. It is in this context that the Quality Enhancement Plan was developed and will be implemented.

All of these initiatives have pointed to only one aspect of student success – graduation rates. The QEP, however, is sharply focused on validating Students and improving student learning outcomes through curriculum review and academic and career advising redesign. This will ultimately reduce the extended middle years and, thus, improve the educational experience and outcomes for Students – with improved graduation rates as a secondary benefit. Our QEP efforts have shown that we must now go beyond engagement to validation.

UTEP retains about 70 percent of first-time, full-time freshman (FTFTF) at the end of year one. Figure 3 shows that most of our Students who are retained after their third year remain with us and graduate. The middle years for UTEP Students extend well beyond years two and three – they can extend seven to ten years. But what is remarkable is that our Students stay with us after years three and four. From year four to year ten of the 1994 cohort we only lose an additional 2 percent, while almost all of those retained graduate eventually.

Figure 3: Time to Degree May Extend for Ten years or More

**Attrition, Retention, and Graduation Rates for the 1994 Cohort*:
Four through Ten Years After Establishment of Cohort**

|	4 Yrs.	5 Yrs.	6 Yrs.	7 Yrs.	8 Yrs.	9 Yrs.	10 Yrs.
Graduation	1.9%	12.2%	23.1%	29.7%	32.4%	34.5%	35.9%
Retention	39.4%	28.0%	15.8%	9.2%	6.9%	4.6%	3.3%
Attrition	58.7%	59.8%	61.1%	61.2%	60.7%	60.9%	60.8%

□ Attrition ■ Retention □ Graduation

*Fall Cohorts--first time, full-time, degree-seeking freshmen
Note: Within the cohort, graduation rates are cumulative across time. Retention and attrition rates within a cohort may shift over time, depending on students' decisions to enroll or not enroll during a particular fall semester.

Figure 4 shows that our ongoing efforts to engage Students have yielded tangible results. In particular, Figure 4 shows that our graduation and retention rates have increased over time. For example in the fall 1984 entering cohort the proportion still active or graduated after 6 years is 38.9 percent (23.1 percent graduated + 15.8 percent retained). By the fall 1998 cohort the proportion graduated or retained after 6 years has risen to 43.8 percent (27.2 percent + 16.6 percent).

Figure 4: Evidence of Extended Time to Degree
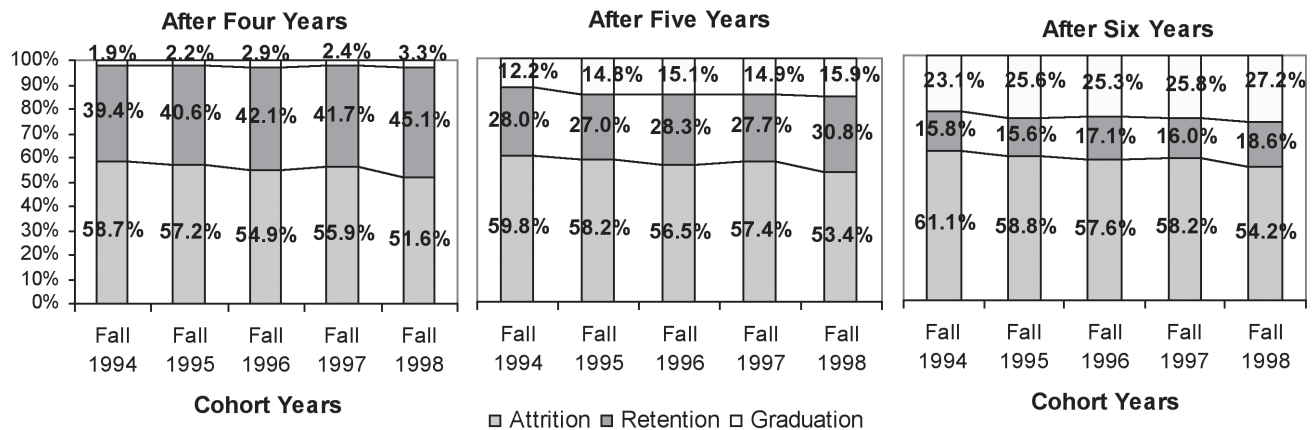
*Fall Cohorts – first time, full-time, degree-seeking freshmen
Note: Within each year's cohort, graduation rates are cumulative across time. Retention and attrition rates within a cohort may shift over time, depending on Students' decisions to enroll or not enroll during a particular fall semester.

3.5.1 Research on the Middle years

UTEP is not the only university to face issues of student success in the middle years. Research into these issues provides insight into approaches to student success that could be applied at UTEP.

The attenuation of the university experience means that some problems Students typically face by their second year will occur for a significantly longer period and continue through year three and beyond. For the U.S. as a whole, "85 percent of those Students who drop out of college will choose to do so during their first two years" (Astin, 1975). Our findings are the same; the majority of those who make it to year three are likely to finish the degree at UTEP. But the problem is that they take much longer than traditional Students. The delaying effects of curricular, structural, and advising problems appear to be amplified for non-traditional Students. Students in the middle years more often cite issues or problems pertaining to the school itself and its ability to deliver in terms of Students' initial expectations (Boivin, Beuthin, & Hauger, 1993; Boivin, Fountain, & Baylis, 2000). These factors suggest that for UTEP Students in particular the senior year is far too late to begin advising on matters like careers. Conscientious, high-quality academic and career advising is essential in the middle years as our Students spend time on self-assessment and occupational exploration.

Table 3.5.1 delineates major challenges for middle years Students and reasons to devote significant institutional focus and resources to these Students.

Table 3.5. : Students Face Different Challenges in Years and the Middle Years (Adapted from: Pattengale, 2000)

Year 1	Self-management issues posed by greater independence	Higher level academic responsibility	Distancing or loss of family and high school peer group support	Acclimate to new campus culture
Middle Years	"In between" in every respect. In academic twilight zone; not yet into major courses, many still taking core and developmental classes but no longer receiving benefits and support of the Entering Student Program.	Often not yet committed to a major; but may be painfully aware of what they are not interested in or good at doing.	Realizing they must ferret out what they want for their lives; uncertainty about future career plans. First generation minority and female students may not even consider graduate study.	Confidence they can cope with higher ed but judging whether the institution can deliver what they need

Traditional curricula and traditional approaches to academic and career advising are not likely to be optimal for UTEP's Students.

3.5.2 Validation Theory Research

The QEP's theoretical foundation comes from Validation Theory; that is, validation through encouragement and affirmation can be the factor that determines success or failure. Rendón (1994) defines *validation* as

> an enabling, confirming, and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of class agents that fosters academic and interpersonal development (pg. 44). Academic validation results when Faculty, Staff, or others reach out to Students in ways that help the individual Students "trust their innate capacity to learn and to acquire confidence in being a college Student" (pg. 44).

According to Rendón (1993), involvement and validation appear to have distinct elements. Involvement is about how much time, energy, and effort Students devote to university work and activities. Traditional Student success models suggest that the more time and effort Students devote to learning and the more intensely they engage the greater their achievement and their satisfaction with educational experiences thus leading to persistence in college (Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1984).

Validation theory pushes scholars to think beyond mere involvement and to understand the following six elements (Rendón, 2002):

1. Validation is an enabling, confirming, and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that fosters academic and interpersonal development.

2. When validation is present, Students feel capable of learning; they experience a feeling of self-worth and feel that they and everything that they bring to the college experience is accepted

and recognized as valuable. Lacking validation, Students feel crippled, silenced, subordinate and/or mistrusted.

3. Like involvement, validation is a prerequisite to student development.

4. Validation can occur both in- and out-of-class. In-class validating agents include Faculty, classmates, lab instructors and teaching assistants. Out-of-class validating agents can be: (a) significant others, such as spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend; (b) family members, such as parents, siblings, relatives and children; (c) friends, such as classmates and friends attending and not attending college; and (d) College Staff, including Faculty who meet with Students out-of-class, Counselors/Advisors, Coaches, Tutors, Teaching Assistants, and Resident Advisors.

5. Validation suggests a developmental process. It is not an end in itself. The more Students get validated, the richer the academic and interpersonal experience.

6. Validation is most effective when offered early on in the Student's college experience, during the first year of college and during the first weeks of class. **However, validation should continue throughout the college years** [emphasis added].

Expecting Students to involve themselves with the social and academic infrastructures of an institution works only for Students who have the skills and familiarity to gain access to these opportunities – few first-generation college Students have either the knowledge of those infrastructures or the skills to access them. UTEP has an outstanding success record with non-traditional Students. Most Faculty and Staff have worked hard for many years to engage and involve Students in positive learning experiences. Now, UTEP will go even further than we have before to provide active academic and interpersonal validation of these Students – a process that affirms, supports, enables, and reinforces their capacity to fully develop themselves as Students and as individuals.

4. Student Success in the Middle Years Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

4.1 Validation Theory and UTEP's Mission

Universities in the United States were originally developed by and for the privileged. In many ways this model is the current functional model in everything from curriculum to student support services (Rendón, 1994). Moreover, most of the studies on which theories of student persistence are grounded were done with traditional student populations: white, 18 – 24 years of age, residing on campus, and enrolled full-time. The UTEP student profile, 72 percent Hispanic; 24 – 28 years average age; commuter; and two-thirds enrolled part-time, clearly does not fit this traditional model.

Rendón (1994) found a different dynamic when Students were enrolled in an educational program based on validation theory: when the "non-traditional Students who came to college expecting to fail suddenly began to believe in their innate capacity to learn and to become successful college Students" (p. 38). Rendón's research posits that traditional notions of engagement are not sufficient because non-traditional Students have unique needs that extend beyond the traditional notions of engagement to validation. Validating incidents "where some individual, either in- or out-of-class, took an active interest in them—when someone took the initiative to lend a helping hand, to do something that affirmed them as being capable of doing academic work and that supported them in their academic endeavors and social adjustment" (p. 44) made the difference. "The role of the institution is not simply to offer involvement opportunities, but to take an active role in fostering validation" (Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000, p. 147). In this context, the extended middle years impact a number of areas for UTEP Students, chief among them are the following:

- Impact on learning as courses are often taken out of sequence and sometimes many semesters apart,

- Impact on lifetime earnings because they enter professions later, and

- Impact on further education because pursuing a graduate degree after investing six to ten years in a bachelor's degree is daunting.

UTEP's QEP, "Student Success in the Middle Years," will engage University personnel from academic programs through student support services, in validating Students. The solution to the middle years' challenge – the attenuation of Students' educational experience – requires us to go beyond engagement and actively validate our Students. Two validating goals emerged from the self-study planning, regular planning documents, and research with UTEP Students, review and revise: (a) curriculum and (b) academic and career advising.

Academic and career advising will be renewed on the UTEP campus to validate Students. It might be a clerk interrupting her work to encourage a Student to stay in school despite family and work pressures, the President affirming the dreams of first-generation Students by telling them her own story of how she persisted despite social pressures, a Faculty member helping Students prepare and apply to professional schools, or campus offices developing work experiences that allow Students to explore their academic interests – these are all examples of validation that address academic or career advising.

Curriculum in all degree programs will be reviewed with the goal of reframing the traditional question from: "What does an educated person (or an educated specialist of some kind) need to know?" … where inevitably more is better. And, instead ask: "What's the very best curriculum (set of learning outcomes) we can design and deliver at the minimum credit-hour (and hence cost) requirement for our Students, as determined by state law and professional accreditation standards?" Together with first-rate academic and career advising, this is critical to UTEP's access and excellence mission. Access to college and knowledge is important but access to a college degree is also an essential part of that mission.

4.2 Validation Theory in Practice

Non-traditional Students who receive no validation or who experience invalidating situations in class will have to rely on out-of-class validation to carry them through. Unfortunately, not all Students are able to get out-of-class validation. In fact, some Students may actually be invalidated outside the classroom, at home or on the job. These are among the most fragile Students who, in the absence of both in- and out-of-class validation, will likely leave college (Rendón, 1994).

Rendón's most promising finding is that Faculty and Staff can transform even the most vulnerable Students into powerful learners who are excited about learning and attending college. She (1994) suggests the following actions:

1. Orient Faculty and Staff to the needs and strengths of diverse, non-traditional populations.

    - Provide Faculty and Staff with yearly demographic student profiles.
    - Hold workshops and focused discussions on the multiple issues non-traditional Students bring to college.

2. Provide Faculty and Staff with professional development opportunities to learn to validate Students in and out-of-class.

3. Impress on Faculty and Staff the importance of validating early, during the first month of class, and continuing throughout in every interaction with Students.

4. Illustrate ways Faculty and Staff can get involved and stay connected with Students.

5. Learn to understand student cultural histories, as well as life experiences, and how to incorporate them into the teaching and learning environment.

6. Structure campus experiences so Students will find themselves capable.

7. Create a supportive, caring classroom and Student Affairs environment without lowering standards or patronizing Students.

8. Include diverse voices and perspectives in the curriculum.

9. Remove obstacles, especially in the curriculum.

10. Create therapeutic learning communities (see Palmer, 1998)

On the basis of his study, Attinasi (1989) proposed that the campus experience for many non-traditional Students represents a geography of curricular and structural obstacles that must be overcome to attain a degree. Padilla (1999) notes that what marks the difference between successful and unsuccessful Students is developing the "expertise sufficient to overcome the barriers to success. . . expertise [that]

entails possessing both theoretical and heuristic knowledge relevant to the barriers" (p. 143). At UTEP, through curriculum renewal and academic and career advising redesign, we will develop, implement, and assess strategies that help our Students develop both the content knowledge and skills necessary for their futures, whether that future is a direct move into a career or to graduate school. QEP activities will also identify curricular and advising barriers and address how to remove them.

In summary, the conceptual framework under girding the QEP is based primarily on Rendón's Validation Theory and is further informed by Attinasi's (1989) work with Mexican-American Students at a large southwestern University, a profile similar to UTEP's Student body. UTEP's Plan will focus on enabling 21st century non-traditional, commuter Students to negotiate the University environment and enhance their learning rather than attempting to fit them into an 19th century university model.

5. Student Success in the Middle years goals and Objectives

5.1 QEP goals

UTEP's QEP, "Student Success in the Middle Years," has two goals: thorough review and renewal of both (a) the University's curriculum and (b) academic and career advising. Reviewing the general education core and each degree program will enable Students to demonstrate mastery of general education and major field knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Review of academic and career advising will facilitate Students' efficient and timely progress and provide Students with specific professional and career guidance.

5.2 QEP Objectives

5.2.1 Student Learning Outcomes Objectives

Student success at UTEP means that when Students complete their bachelor's degrees, they will show mastery of the following learning objectives:

> 1) Core curriculum general education competencies
>
> 2) Major field knowledge, skills, and dispositions

Core curriculum, general education competencies are identified by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in nine component areas: communication, mathematics, natural sciences, humanities, visual and performing arts, U.S. history, political science, social and behavioral sciences, and an institutionally designated option.

The objective of the **communication component** is to enable the Student to communicate effectively in clear and correct prose or orally in a style appropriate to the subject.

The objective of the **mathematics component** is to develop a quantitatively literate college graduate. Every college graduate should be able to apply basic mathematical tools in the solution of real-world problems.

The objective of the **natural sciences component** is to enable the Student to understand, construct, and evaluate relationships in the natural sciences, and to enable the Student to understand the bases for building and testing theories.

The objective of the **humanities component** is to expand Students' knowledge of the human condition and human cultures, especially in relation to behaviors, ideas, and values expressed in works of human imagination and thought. Through study in disciplines such as literature and philosophy, Students will engage in critical analysis and develop an appreciation of the humanities as fundamental to the health and survival of any society.

The objective of the **visual and performing arts component** is to expand Students' knowledge of the human condition and human cultures, especially in human imagination. Through study in disciplines of the visual and performing arts, Students will form aesthetic judgments and develop an appreciation of the arts as fundamental to the health and survival of any society.

The objectives of the **history component** are to expand Students' knowledge of the origin and history of the U.S., their comprehension of the past and current role of the United States in the world, and their ability to critically evaluate and analyze historical evidence.

The objectives of the **political science component** are to expand Students' knowledge of the origin and evolution of the U.S. and Texas political systems, focusing on the growth of political institutions, and on the constitutions of Texas and the United States; and to enhance their understanding of federalism, states' rights, and individual civil liberties, rights, and responsibilities.

The objective of the **social and behavioral science component** is to increase Students' knowledge of how social and behavioral scientists discover, describe, and explain the behaviors and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, events, and ideas. Such knowledge will better equip Students to understand themselves and the roles they play in addressing the issues facing humanity.

The objective of the **institutionally designated option component** is to develop the critical thinking skills and academic tools required to be an effective learner. Special emphasis is placed on the use of technology in problem solving, communications, and knowledge acquisition.

The knowledge, skills, and dispositions in a major are identified by Faculty in each discipline through the curriculum development and review process.

Student self-assessments of their growth in the following core curriculum and co-curricular outcomes are surveyed annually through the Graduating Seniors Survey, and biannually in the Campus Experience Survey:

Think critically
Read with comprehension in English
Express yourself through speaking in English
Express yourself through writing in English
Express yourself in a language other than English
Understand math concepts
Use math in your major/field
Use computers
Use the current technology in your major/field
Understand science concepts
Use science concepts
Use the library
Understand behavioral/social science concepts
Use behavioral/social science concepts
Understand the arts and humanities
Appreciate the arts and humanities
Meet lifelong intellectual, ethical, and career challenges
Function independently
Function as a member of a team
Clarify your values
Clarify your ethical standards
Be a leader
Interact with people from different cultural backgrounds
Live in a binational/multicultural/bilingual region
Understand U.S./Mexico border issues
Prepare for the job market

UTEP will monitor the responses of student cohorts, as the QEP helps to reduce the length of time Students spend in their middle years of study. Renewal of the student learning outcomes required through the core curriculum and each major field is one of the QEP goals. How the attainment of those student learning outcomes is assessed and enhanced are our objectives, and we will approach them through revised curriculum review and advising processes. Evidence indicates these student learning outcomes are best attained in a validating environment.

5.2.2 QEP Process Outcomes Objectives

QEP process objectives are necessary to reach the primary student learning outcomes referred to above. Process objectives specific to student learning through curriculum review are the following:

1) Appoint an Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS), responsible for both curriculum and advising renewal.

2) Establish a Faculty Senate Curriculum Review Committee

3) Establish a student-learning outcomes focused review process

4) Review the core curriculum

5) Develop common degree plan format

6) Develop syllabi guidelines

7) Put into place a five-year rolling review of degree programs

8) Develop institutional policies on alternative and flexible scheduling

9) Develop and improve existing transfer student policies, processes, and materials

Process objectives specific to student learning through advising renewal are:

1) Appoint an Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS), responsible for both curriculum and advising renewal.

2) Establish a Faculty Senate Committee on Advising

3) Review advising practices

4) Develop and implement professional development for Advisors

5) Develop, implement, and assess family orientation services

6) Define ways to improve communication, including Web technology, and the undergraduate catalog

7) Design a campus-wide plan to create validation spaces

8) Offer mini-grants to Faculty who design and implement studies to better inform the UTEP community about our Students, advising effects on student learning, or effects of implementing validation theory

6. QEP Work Group Report: Curriculum Review and Renewal

The Faculty Senate QEP Curriculum Review and Renewal Work Group identified a number of issues and recommended initial action items to begin to address them. The entire report is available on-line at http://sacs.utep.edu/qep. The following plan incorporates its recommendations as reviewed and endorsed by the QEP Steering Group.

Through the process of creating the Quality Enhancement Plan, UTEP has developed a clearer focus on the unique challenges faced by our Students, especially in the middle years. It is during this period, when the excitement of starting college seems so long ago and yet graduation seems so far away, that Students begin to doubt their ability to complete their goal. This "sophomore slump" is frequently extended to a multi-year experience for UTEP Students trying to balance the often conflicting demands of school, family, and work.

The charge to the curriculum Work Group was to review all aspects of curricula at UTEP and to make recommendations for improved processes that would facilitate Students' success and progress, and ensure they receive a quality education that will enable them to compete successfully with graduates from other universities across the country and the world. The Work Group identified five main areas where changes in curriculum design, presentation, and communication will enhance student learning while facilitating progress toward graduation and beyond. The five areas are curriculum review, communication, barriers, transfer articulation, and the course schedule.

6.1 Curriculum Review – Degrees and Courses

The curriculum is the central mechanism through which the University prepares its Students for future success. To ensure the most appropriate preparation for Students, courses and degree plans need to be constantly realigned to incorporate changing requirements of the work world. Learning objectives need to be established for programs and each course in a program, links between courses clearly identified, and student learning continually assessed. To promote the most efficient learning by Students as well as efficient progress toward degree completion, all the details of course requirements, learning objectives, assessments, and semesters the course is offered need to be clearly and fully communicated to Students and Faculty members.

In investigating standards for design and review of both curriculum and degree plans, a number of different approaches were found across the University. As described below, we propose specific action items to ensure that all degree plans and curricula at UTEP meet the highest pedagogical standards, are well communicated to Students, and include meaningful student learning assessment.

6.1.1 Degree Plan Review

There is a distinct need for an organized, University-driven process assuring periodic substantive review of all degree plans at UTEP to ensure their relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness. For each degree program, there needs to be regular analysis of the relevance of the degree curriculum to the current and predicted educational needs of the field and the role fulfilled by each course in the curriculum. For each course or elective included in a degree plan, we will identify and communicate specific program and

course student learning outcomes, requirements for listed prerequisites, substantive learning outcomes, specific assessment, and student expectations. Initial reviews will focus on programs subject to regular professional accreditation reviews and then will be extended to all degree programs. Departmental reviews will be done using a staggered schedule with five-year intervals between full reviews. The University Core Curriculum will also be reviewed to the same standards every five years.

Especially for the first round of implementation, most Departments and Programs will need additional help and expertise to facilitate a full review and rewrite. Therefore, the Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS) will assemble several expert teams from campus to work with Departments and Programs, providing extra "people-power" as well as expertise in developing and writing degree plans, student learning objectives, and assessment strategies.

Program review will be coordinated by the APSS, working with Deans and the Faculty Senate. The current Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and Graduate Council would be appropriate bodies to engage; however, because of the volume of material, the creation of a new standing committee specifically tasked with this review will be considered.

Action item 1: The Faculty Senate will establish a committee to coordinate curriculum review. This committee will establish a schedule for curricular reviews of all degree programs. Reviews should be by Department or Program. The Faculty Senate Curriculum Review Committee will establish formatting standards (e.g., student learning outcomes, assignments, assessment) for degree plans and syllabi. The first degree plans to be reviewed will be selected from those which have undergone independent, outside accreditation based on similar standards.

The first-year reviews will also include all University Core courses, so that their revised descriptions are available for subsequent degree plans.

6.1.2 Degree and Course Relevance

As the needs and requirements of employers and graduate/professional schools change, our curricula need to reflect those changes. Because of the time and money invested in a university degree, our fiduciary and professional responsibilities require that we provide Students with a carefully designed curriculum that is both efficient and effective.

In order to assure that each course fulfills its role in the program curriculum, specific student learning outcomes must be explicitly stated. Most importantly, there needs to be explicit, consistent assessment of student progress toward those outcomes. Assessment results need to be in forms suitable for Department or Program review of the effectiveness of individual courses. If prerequisite courses are required for a particular course, the specific learning outcomes should be aligned between the course and the prerequisite. These identified requirements represent only the minimum learning outcomes supporting the degree plan. Professors would be expected to expand course content and goals as they deem appropriate.

Action item 2: Each Department or Program will author a white paper on changes in their target career paths over the past five years and will specify how their respective curricula have evolved to prepare graduates to meet current and predicted knowledge and skill levels. This report will be part of the total degree plan review.

Action item 3: Each degree plan will be subject to an audit of all courses directly related to each major and minor, explicitly outlining the roles of each course relevant to the student learning objectives outlined in Degree Relevance above (Section 6.1.2).

Action item 4: Each required and elective course in a degree plan will identify specific course learning outcomes and assessment strategies appropriate for the degree plan. Prerequisite requirements will be aligned with specific course needs.

The Curriculum Review Committee and APSS are charged with developing and implementing a process to accomplish these recommendations.

6.1.3 Syllabi – Communicating Expectations

A course syllabus should provide Students with details on expectations and requirements including clear statement of the student learning outcomes, assignments, and assessment. To foster better syllabus design and implementation, syllabus guidelines will be developed.

Further, a master syllabus for courses will be developed by full-time Faculty in the Departments. If courses are able to be transferred from El Paso Community College, EPCC full-time Faculty should also be involved in master syllabi construction. Master syllabi will include all course student learning outcomes, recommended or sample learning activities/assignments and assessments, and any required or recommended readings or other resources. Instructors would use this master syllabus as a framework, filling in details specific to her or his course. The services of CETaL (Center for Effective Teaching and Learning) are a resource to assist Faculty members in this endeavor.

Action item 5: Develop more complete guidelines for syllabi content. As part of every degree plan review, a master syllabus containing any required prerequisites, all invariant student learning outcomes, and sample learning activities/assignments, assessments, and recommended or suggested resources will be included in course reviews by departmental Faculty.

6.2 Communication

Several areas were identified where small, immediate improvements in communication of course and curricular information to Students and Advisors would likely increase student success in progress toward their degrees.

6.2.1 Degree Plan Information

All basic degree plans are available on-line, and some Departments and Colleges provide ready on-line access to current progress of the Student toward her or his degree. We need to make this information available everywhere across campus to assist Students and Advisors in assessing progress toward

graduation. Real-time degree plan updates will be made available on-line, including, at a minimum, all courses (including prerequisite requirements) required for graduation, all courses completed or currently underway, all transfer courses counting toward the degree, all exceptions and exemptions or special courses of studies, and total degree plan hours remaining.

Action item 6: The University will develop standard formats or templates for providing and updating degree plans. The current Curriculum Audit and Program Planning tool (CAPP) will be updated and upgraded to provide real-time degree plans meeting all criteria above.

6.2.2 Degree Plan Transparency and Hours Limitations

In reviewing sample degree plans, the Work Group noted that there are examples of hidden prerequisites for required courses that are not listed on degree plans. Examples of this practice include requirements for a second-semester language course, but not listing the requirement to either complete the first-semester language course successfully or test out of it on a placement test (in Liberal Arts BA and Education BIS degree plans) and the requirement for calculus, but not the prerequisite pre-calculus (in most Science and Engineering degree plans). In the interest of transparency, degree plans must include all University-level (1100 or higher) courses whether required or prerequisite courses. Each degree plan will calculate a range of total credit hours. The upper range would include all courses listed. The lower number of the range would allow course exclusions such as demonstrating that the course requirement was met (e.g., by placement test score).

Action item 7: Academic programs will immediately include all 1100 and higher courses and list the range of total credit hours on degree plans. All courses that can be satisfied by examination or appropriate High School credit will be identified as such. Courses that cannot be satisfied by examination or other credit will be reviewed as additions to degree programs.

6.2.3 Course Availability and Prerequisites

The Work Group noted that most departmental listings in the catalog did not include course sequencing or when courses are offered. Providing such information would help Students intelligently plan or modify their course of study and to see the logic in their curriculum and how one course relates to another.

Action item 8: Where possible, every course listing in the University Catalog will include course sequencing information (e.g., whether it is offered every academic semester or once per year, and in that event, which semester). Exceptions to this requirement will be reviewed regularly.

6.2.4 Catalog Availability

While the entire catalog is available as a text document on-line and on CD, many of our Students do not have access to Internet resources when they are off campus. Moreover, the catalog in effect when a Student begins at UTEP is essentially a contract specifying requirements for graduation. It is important for each Student to have a printed version of relevant portions of their original catalog.

Action item 9: Effective immediately, sufficient catalogs will be printed and available for purchase at the University Bookstore. For subsequent years, we will develop and implement a searchable, on-line catalog capable of printing out relevant material for customized degree plans.

6.3 Barriers to Success in Specific Degree Plans

Some degree programs have courses or semesters that may be particularly challenging for Students. These courses or requirements can be readily identified by tracking student progress and by surveying student learning. The Work Group identified two major types of curricular barriers: (a) secondary admission requirements to enter a degree program, and (b) individual courses that are particularly challenging. Such barriers produce bottlenecks that delay Students' progress and can prevent the important early interactions with Faculty in their major that offer important engagement and validation opportunities.

6.3.1 Requirements for Declaring Major

There are degree plans in which Students must complete up to 63 hours of course work before being able to apply for their desired major. If the Student is not admitted to a program, these courses may not be fully transferable to a new degree plan, resulting in a net loss of time, effort, and money.

Any degree program with secondary admission requirements will be tasked to review and report to the Curriculum Review Committee on the specific justifications for secondary admission. Decisions for secondary admission or admission to major should be made as early as practicable, and required course work should be broadly applicable to other degree plans. The APSS will be provided copies of the report so that Advisors have accurate and complete information for Students. It should be noted that in some Colleges (e.g., the Colleges of Science and Engineering) pre-major status is designed to increase student retention and success through early interactions with Faculty. This form of pre-major will be encouraged. Research has shown that Students persist when they interact with Faculty outside of the classroom (Rendón, 1994 & Astin, 1975). Students who are unable to declare a major do not become connected to a program of study early in their college experience.

Action item 10: Program reviews will include Faculty assessment of program admission requirements. Only those requirements that are deemed truly necessary by the program Faculty will continue, and those will be clearly communicated to Students in all publications.

Action item 11: The APSS will work with programs to develop effective communication and student success practices for pre-majors.

Action item 12: Each Department or Program will identify and publicize ways to connect with Students who have chosen a major, but who are not eligible to enroll in courses in the major. Are there courses in the plan of study that Students can take before they can declare a major? Are there departmental activities in which pre-majors could participate?

6.3.2 Required Courses with Low Success Rates

Student progress toward graduation can be slowed or even stopped by a single required course which has a low success rate. Often this is a foundation course that is critical to success in the major. Because of the potential for slowing or preventing student success, and because of the importance of the subject, these courses need to be identified and given special attention. Each degree program needs to identify such bottleneck courses, determine the reasons for lack of success, and initiate programs to ameliorate any problems.

A key example of how this problem can be approached is presented in the College of Science QEP. Essentially every area of study in this College relies on facility in mathematics to analyze and communicate; however, the degree requirement of two semesters of calculus can be an obstacle. The reasons identified include entering Students' lack of preparation, variability in the quality of pedagogy in UTEP mathematics classes, and student perception of little utility of the math topics. Redesign of both pre-calculus and calculus is underway to incorporate mastery of principles and substantial cooperative group- and team-based active learning approaches. In addition, the effectiveness with which student learning outcomes are achieved in being assessed course by course and section by section, and other mathematical options to calculus in different degree programs are being explored. Professional development opportunities to enhance the success of those critical courses will be expanded.

Action item 13: Bottleneck courses will be identified by tracking student progress in the student information system to identify courses with high failure or withdrawal rates. This information will be forwarded to Departments and Programs. Identified courses will be scrutinized by the Faculty to determine and implement best practices to enhance student learning. Specific course interventions will be reviewed at the Department, College and Office of Academic Affairs levels.

6.3.3 Prerequisites and Course Sequences

Requirements for prerequisites, course sequences, and lower-division/upper-division separation often result in scheduling problems that slow student progress. While these circumstances can be alleviated by good advising and student compliance, clear communication and anticipating difficulties will greatly facilitate student progress. Students' ability to advance may be hindered when courses are not scheduled appropriately.

Action item 14: Departments will manage course schedules to ensure that sufficient sections are offered at accessible times and will proactively provide planned course sequencing.

Action item 15: The Catalog entries for each Degree Plan will include a sample plan for course of study, illustrating how the degree may be accomplished in four years by prepared Students.

6.3.4 Improvement of Instruction Through Professional Development

UTEP recognizes that the quality of instruction can have major effects on student attitudes and success. To foster better teaching, the Center for Effective Teaching and Learning (CETaL) provides ample opportunities for professional development, including seminars, workshops, and individual consultation. These activities need to be continued and expanded, with recognition provided to successful practitioners.

Action item 16: The range of professional development opportunities through CETaL will be expanded to include curriculum development and advising. Innovative instructional methods resulting in increased student success will be identified and shared among Colleges and Departments.

6.4 Fostering Success for Transfer Students in Partnership with EPCC

In the past ten years, UTEP has made substantial progress in improving programs for entering Students, including specialized seminar courses to better prepare Students for the changes in approach and levels of thinking that University studies require. However, many of our Students begin their UTEP careers as middle-years transfer Students. Most transfer Students come from or are co-enrolled at El Paso Community College (EPCC). Courses and degree programs are well articulated between UTEP and EPCC, however, we need to continue working on the articulation of student learning outcome expectations. Central to our efforts in curriculum renewal is the enhancement of our already strong working partnership with EPCC in *all* areas of curricular overlap. The permanent UTEP-EPCC Articulation Committee is a major resource in these efforts.
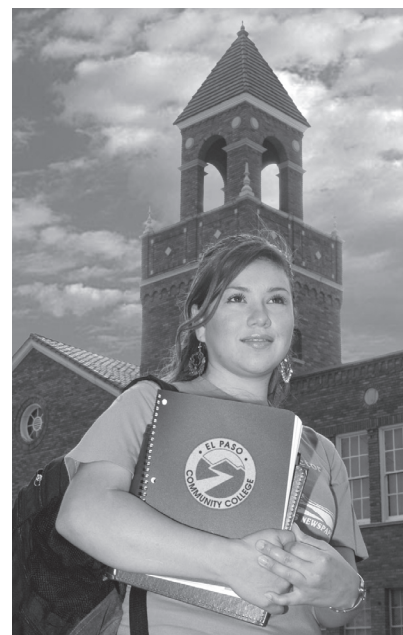
6.4.1 Shared Curriculum Coordination

Because increasing numbers of UTEP Students take some or all of their lower-division courses at EPCC, it is essential that courses at both institutions provide foundation and preparation sufficient to foster success in later classes at UTEP. To attain the needed level of compatibility, there must be open dialogue between the two institutions, with prerequisite needs of subsequent classes clearly communicated and learning outcomes of lower-division classes developed in concert by both institutions.

There are several examples of successful collaboration between EPCC and UTEP. In the College of Liberal Arts, the Art Department has started the initial stages of a collaborative Faculty project with the Art Departments of EPCC designed to create common content alignment for the Art Appreciation courses (ART 1300) that fulfills the Visual and Performing Arts component of the state-mandated 42 hour core. Within the College of Engineering, arrangements have been made to take advantage of EPCC's excellent machining laboratory, allowing the EPCC course MCHN 2171 to be transferred as UTEP's upper-division IE 3126. EPCC's education fields of study mesh with UTEP's education degree, creating a clearly articulated plan of study with two years at EPCC plus two years at UTEP.

The *EPCC-UTEP Course Equivalency Guide* is updated each year and indicates how the academic courses offered at EPCC transfer to UTEP. This information is available on the Web and as brochures distributed on all campuses. *EPCC-UTEP Transfer Guides* are also available for each UTEP degree program and indicate which core and field of study courses can be taken at EPCC to meet UTEP degree requirements.

Action item 17: The APSS will work with the Articulation Committee to establish UTEP and EPCC Faculty work groups to oversee the development of shared courses and to ensure course transferability and comparable student learning outcomes. Moreover, as UTEP curriculum reviews and enhancements

are undertaken, EPCC Faculty teaching shared courses should be included in the process as equal partners to develop shared goals, student learning outcomes, and key content components.

Action item 18: Processes for Faculty members from both UTEP and EPCC to engage in regular exchange and to share pedagogical materials will be enhanced. Further, full-time UTEP and EPCC Faculty will make Student learning outcomes and teaching resources available to part-time Faculty on both campuses.

6.4.2 Integrated Access to General and Academic Information

To facilitate transfer of Students from EPCC to UTEP and to support Students taking courses at both institutions simultaneously, there needs to be integrated student access to all key information. This includes electronic access to UTEP and EPCC degree plans, access to the degree audit function (CAPP) for both institutions, and the ability to use academic history data from both institutions to prepare degree plans and "what if" queries for Students who are undecided about their field of study. A joint UTEP-EPCC Title V grant has made electronic sharing between the institutions possible, and we will continue pushing beyond present capabilities.

Action item 19: Provide access to degree tools developed in Section 6.2 above to EPCC pre-transfer and transfer Students, and automatically incorporate EPCC course history into UTEP on-line degree plans.

6.4.3 Transfer Seminars

To foster success for transfer Students from EPCC, both institutions should provide seminar courses specific for transfer Students. For instance, these courses could be delivered as special sections of EDUC 1300 (EPCC) or UNIV 1301 (UTEP). For Students transferring more than 30 hours and not having taken the transfer specific section of EDUC 1300, a transfer student specific component of UNIV 2350 could be implemented.

Action item 20: Establish the appropriate sections and seminars listed above.

6.5 Optimizing Class Schedule and Presentation for Student Success

Middle-years Students frequently face challenges in coordinating work, family, and academic schedules that interfere with their learning and academic success. Some programs, such as those targeting full-time teachers or business managers in graduate programs in the Colleges of Education and Business, have identified specific course offering times that satisfy essentially all of their Students. Most Departments and Colleges are still faced with trying to provide course scheduling options to a significant minority of undergraduate Students.

Action item 21: Obtain and implement University-wide course scheduling software, including optimization of classroom usage and student accessibility.

Action item 22: Use past degree plan predictions as well as past registration data to minimize conflicting scheduling of courses optimally taken simultaneously.

6.5.1 Reorganize Standard Class Schedule Time Slots

Scheduling standard course time slots needs to balance both the efficient use of University facilities and foster quality instruction. For any instructor using active learning activities, direct class responses, or other group activities, the 50-minute time slots offered on three days of the week are difficult. If the instructor has in excess of 100 Students in class, these time slots are simply inadequate. The time-on-task research literature supports a reasonable hypothesis that student learning will increase if pedagogically sound scheduling complements best practices in teaching. We must consider options revising the standard schedule to maximize the more pedagogically sound 80-minute, twice-a-week time slots, and to extend the typical instructional week from Monday through Friday to Monday through Saturday.

Action item 23: Using the scheduling software specified above, the University will complete a cost analysis and space utilization study to determine fiscal implications of changing time slots and extending the instructional week for all or part of the University course schedule.

Action item 24: The APSS, Colleges and Departments will assess student learning in the new format compared to historical data to determine the extent of influence of scheduling changes on student learning and degree progress.

7. Work Group Report: Academic and Career Advising

The Faculty Senate QEP Academic and Career Advising Work Group's report with recommendations which support student learning is available on-line at http://sacs.utep.edu/qep. Not surprisingly, there is overlap in recommendations from the Work Groups because curriculum and advising are so closely related. Action items identified by the Work Groups, as reviewed and endorsed by the QEP Steering Group, are incorporated in the QEP Implementation Plan.

7.1 UTEP Family/Familia

Los hijos y el hogar, son la única verdad
Children and home are the only truth

This dicho or proverb captures the importance of family and home for UTEP Students. Family is one of the most important forces in our Students' lives. Indeed it is a key element of the UTEP culture, with extended families attending events like student performances, pre-commencement, and honors ceremonies. UTEP Commencement ceremonies are truly a family affair with everyone, from tiny babies to family elders in attendance. This is especially true for Students who are the first in their families to attend college and for those with major responsibility for children, parents, or other family members. UTEP must build stronger bridges between family, Students, and the University through programs designed to validate the family within the academic context. Families can be a primary source of off-campus validation. For Students to be successful, their families need to understand what it means to be a university Student, the demands on a Student's time, and how family members can contribute to and be a part of their Student's success. The academic and student services programs will implement more outreach programs to families and do so early in their Students' UTEP days. We typically meet the family members of our Students at graduation, but we should know them much sooner.

Action item 25: The University will develop a Family Orientation Program for families of new and transfer Students, where University culture is illustrated, including the many different Programs and Majors available, the prospects for careers in different fields, ways that family can best support their Student, and how Student success can benefit both the Students and their families.

Action item 26: To support the Family Orientation Program, UTEP will develop a family resource manual, printed in Spanish and English, that covers questions UTEP families may have, including the challenges and advantages of a university education, the importance of family validation of Students and their efforts, and resource names and contact information for further assistance.

7.2 Understanding Our Students

UTEP must continue to build upon its extensive body of research already conducted on our Students, their needs, their values, and ways to best enhance student learning through high quality advising. Educative advising focused on the middle years is an area that will be a particular focus as a result of this QEP process. To identify best practices in educative academic and career advising, to understand how to best help Students understand curricular logic (i.e., how one class fits with others and how the degree plan as a whole prepares the Student as an educated citizen and professional) are issues deserving

thoughtful, intentional scholarship. Through the QEP, we will provide opportunities for significant research in this area. In addition to the continuing institutional studies, such as those being undertaken in the "Barriers to Student Success at UTEP" project funded by the Lumina Foundation, we will provide funds for small studies targeting specific aspects of our Students' lives and work

Action item 27: The University will provide funds for Faculty mini-grants to design studies to collect and analyze data for better informed decision-making about advising and curriculum policies and procedures and how advising relates to student learning.

7.3 Renewing Academic and Career Advising

As part of the development process for the QEP, the Advising Work Group reviewed UTEP advising practices and policies and interviewed Faculty and Staff academic and career Advisors. In addition, a literature and Web review of UTEP-comparable universities' advising practices and resources was done. Based on these studies, we believe that proactive academic and career advising attuned with middle year-Students and their needs are certain to have a positive impact on student learning and graduation rates at UTEP. Their findings indicated that improvement of academic and career advising is a fundamental activity necessary to develop a culture that focuses on the validation and success of the Student.

7.3.1 University-wide Direction of Advising

While we recognize that different aspects of advising are important to Students at different stages of their university experience and on different career paths, there needs to be common oversight and consistent principles applied to all aspects across the University. These principles need to originate in the best practices of the Faculty and Advising Staff, reflect the University Mission and Vision statements, and support student validation.

Action item 28: UTEP will appoint an Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS) to organize and oversee a University-wide advising renewal.

Action item 29: The Faculty Senate will create an Advising Committee charged with working with the APSS to ensure that all academic and student services programs develop policies that promote advising as a shared mission

Action item 30: Working together, the APSS and the Advising Committee will write an advising mission statement, and develop principles of advising best practices to be implemented across the University. They will also be responsible for oversight and assessment of advising practices at all levels of the University.

7.3.2 Connections to Existing Entering Student Programs and Career Advising

UTEP has already implemented strong, entering student advising programs that focus on transitioning Students into a university environment. These programs include:

- Texas Success Initiative Students (addressing college readiness)

- START Students (provisionally admitted Students)

- All General Studies Students (those who have not declared a major or an intent to major in a particular field)

- Pre-nursing and pre-physical therapy Students

- The UT Cooperative Admission Program Students (those Students who were not eligible for first-time enrollment to UT Austin and who after 30 successful SCH plan to transfer to UT Austin)

- Two programs for international Students (the Arbitur Program and the *Programa Interamericana Estudientil*)

- The Miner Athlete Academic Center, which advises all of UTEP's athletes and functions broadly as a one-stop shop for all of their enrollment needs

- Federal Trio Programs (Student Support Services Program—SSSP, College Assistance for Migrants Program—CAMP, and Upward Bound), which handles academic and career advising for Students entering UTEP or preparing to enter the University

- CircLES (Circles of Learning for Entering Students), which advises all pre-majors for the Colleges of Science and Engineering

- A new Student advising program for entering pre-business Students, part of the College of Business Administration's Student Development Center

- SmartStart, UTEP's summer bridge program during which Students participate in both academic and career advising

- Enhanced New Student Orientation (ENSO), which provides Students with advising as a component of math review workshops

- UNIV 1301—Seminar in Critical Inquiry

These entering Student advising programs are all administered through the Academic Advising Center. The Center also hosts informational Staff meetings for all on-campus Advisors as well as for cross-campus Advisors (UTEP and EPCC) once a semester.

As we focus on developing advising in the "Middle Years", we need to build on these excellent beginnings, concentrating on Students as they transition from "entering Student" to a full-fledged member of their College and major Department. An important part of this transition is to increase College and Department input and participation in entering Student programs and early career advising, providing the validation of belonging to a Department and College as soon as possible. Moreover, we must incorporate the expertise and experience of the Entering Student and Career programs into departmental advising efforts through the middle years and beyond.

Action item 31: The APSS and Advising Committee will facilitate the collaboration of existing Entering Student and Career Programs with departmental advising, encouraging the validation of Students by early transition into appropriate career paths and departmental support.

7.3.3 Broadening of the Focus of Advising

To fully develop and validate Students in the "Middle Years", we need to develop orientation and advising programs that validate Students and their families, going well beyond assistance with course scheduling. Advising should encompass all areas necessary for student success, including reiteration of the tenets of the Family Orientation Program (7.1), career and financial counseling, and encouragement and general validation. In addition, all Departments and other advising units should undertake a concerted effort to provide clear and up-to-date information on degrees, tuition and fees, advising and services, points of contact, course offerings with clear course sequencing (including prerequisites and sequencing of courses offered only in particular semesters), scholarship, financial aid, and internship opportunities. Materials targeting families will be provided in Spanish and English.

Validation of Students needs to be encouraged on an institutional basis, including Faculty and all Staff with student contact. To encourage a validating attitude among UTEP Staff members, exceptional validation efforts by Staff need to be recognized and rewarded.

Action item 32: The APSS and Advising Committee will develop recommendations and assessments of the scope and quality of advising at all levels.

Action item 33: Each College will develop social events for pre-majors and their families, providing an informal opportunity to socialize and ask questions of Faculty and Students in the College.

Action item 34: Every unit in the University will identify its interactions with Students and devise recognition for Staff members and Faculty best representing the principle of validation toward Students.

7.3.4 Advising Records and Follow up

Complete records of previous student advising sessions are essential for appropriate, current advising. These records should include all academic progress as well as advising notes and career plans, and they should be readily accessible by Advisors at all levels. This information will enable Advisors to follow up on completion of course recommendations.

Action item 35: UTEP will develop and implement a secure advising-record database allowing for a complete record of previous advising sessions and for academic records to be available for current advising sessions.

7.3.5 Financial Support and Counseling

The cost of a university education continues to increase, making education less attainable for many of our potential Students. To ensure that talented Students from all economic levels have the opportunity to reach their full potential, UTEP must both increase scholarship opportunities and provide financial counseling on the advantages and proper use of student loans.

Action item 36: UTEP will increase scholarship opportunities and programs to help families meet the rising cost of education. These will include the immediate implementation of three new programs: the UTEP Success Plan, providing a personalized financial aid package to all Students; the Guaranteed Tuition Program, setting fixed tuition costs for four years for Students remaining in good standing and taking at least 30 hrs per year; and the UTEP Promise Plan, providing grants to Students from families earning less than $25,000 annually and who enroll full-time and maintain good standing. These programs will be evaluated on an annual basis and continued as warranted.

Action item 37: Advisors will be trained to include scholarship and loan opportunities as part of normal advising sessions, emphasizing the advantages of rapid completion of degrees and of earlier entry into chosen careers.

7.3.6 Quality of Advising and Recognition of Service

Student Advising is a critical component of all academic and student service programs, and all Advisors should have the support (e.g., information, professional development opportunities) they need to accomplish the task. While some Colleges have implemented regular advising feedback student surveys, this practice needs to be extended to cover all advising programs at all levels. Most important, for purposes of annual assessments and merit increases, the time and effort dedicated to productive advising-related activities should be given significant weight. There are many Programs, Staff, and Faculty who are committed to and do outstanding advising. These efforts will be strengthened and propagated by a University-wide structure to connect and support Advisors. In addition, the APSS and Advising Committee will develop and implement a quality enhancement process for academic and career advising procedures, policies, support structures, responsibility, and Advisors' ongoing professional development.

Action item 38: The APSS and Advising Committee will develop an on-line survey instrument for universal and comprehensive evaluation of student perception of the quality of advising, based on recommended best practices. Survey results and analyses will be shared at the Department, College and Administration level.

Action item 39: The APSS will work with Deans and Chairs to recognize quality advising efforts by Faculty and Staff and to develop suitable reward systems.

Action item 40: The University will provide more professional development opportunities for Faculty and Staff Advisors.

7.4 Technology and Outreach

Our goal should always be to do a better job of coordinating and marketing services to potential Students, to transfer Students, to the Students who are already enrolled, and especially to their families. There are many excellent resources for Students already in place to help them have successful academic careers, but Students do not always know what those services are and thus cannot take full advantage of them. Validation theory suggests UTEP needs to take a more proactive approach, an interventionist approach, to linking Students with the resources available to them. We will also take advantage of technology, especially the use of on-line delivery of customized and real-time information for Students. We must emphasize the use of technology in our everyday business/academic transactions, and there

has to be a more concerted effort by the University to get current Students meaningfully engaged with learning technology. Some of our Students lag in technology usage, in large part because of the digital divide that exists in resource-poor areas like ours. We need to reach out to Students and draw them into the Information Age, because it is in their best interest to develop the skills to navigate Web-sites and be informed consumers of the available information.

Sharing electronic resources, including registration, student records, course scheduling, the catalog, and degree plans, between UTEP and the El Paso Community College is an essential part of our Plan for improving the University path for transfer Students (Section 7.6). Finally, the assessment strategies for determining the success of Students are heavily dependent on the analysis of electronic records (Section 9)

7.4.1 Seamless Student Tracking

Incorporating technology can help improve almost every aspect of advising. Organizing and tracking Students from the recruitment stages through enrollment, orientation and advising would be facilitated by appropriate software packages, similar to those that companies use to track sales leads. Such software could provide alerts to relevant Departments and Programs and trigger welcome letters and initial advising contacts.

Action item 41: UTEP will obtain and install Web-based software to connect and integrate all aspects of student recruitment, application, enrollment, orientation, and incorporation into a university community, to ensure that no Students are lost through these processes.

7.4.2 Undergraduate Catalog

In addition to the recommended modifications to content and clarity of the UTEP catalog (Sections 6.2.3 and 6.2.4), there needs to be improvement in the delivery of the catalog to Students. We recognize that, while the entire catalog is essential to the University as a whole, any Student requires only a fraction of the pages of information. Production of customized "mini-catalogs" focused on specific degree plans would be as valuable and substantially more readable for Students. This could be accomplished by maintaining a complete, searchable, Web-based catalog that will automatically format a custom "mini-catalog" tailored to any UTEP degree plan. This custom catalog could be either stored electronically or printed out. Common components of the catalog, including policies and procedures as well as the University Core courses would still be printed and bound and available for sale through the Bookstore.

Action item 42: Develop and implement a searchable, on-line catalog that can generate specific, printable mini-catalogs containing only the courses and options relevant to a specific degree plan.

Action item 43: Rewrite the Policies and Procedures section of the UTEP catalog, combined with the requirements for University Core Curriculum, and provide on-line and printed copies of these sections through the bookstore.

7.4.3 Sharing Electronic Resources with EPCC

The advantages and extent of collaboration between UTEP and El Paso Community College (EPCC)

is covered below (Section 7.6). What is key for this section is that to best support our co-enrolled, swirling, or transfer Students, there must be a full integration of all electronic records and enrollments systems and databases. We have already made great strides in achieving this integration, including linked Student identification numbers and common records software. As more student resources come on-line, we will continue this pattern of integration so that Students have full access to all their University and College records and opportunities.

Action item 44: The EPCC Transfer Articulation Committee will oversee the integration of student information systems on all UTEP and EPCC campuses.

7.5 Validation Spaces and the Library

Because UTEP is largely a commuting school with few Students residing on campus, our Students have fewer opportunities to develop a sense of community. To compensate for this, many Colleges have provided validation spaces, which are comfortable areas in College buildings for Students to gather, study, and socialize together. These areas have proven to be successful in providing a home away from home for our Students, particularly those in fields requiring long hours on campus for labs and studios, and in providing spaces for use between classes and before performance events. We will extend these validation spaces to include areas across the entire campus.

Validation spaces do not have to be Department-oriented. With the move to more on-line resources and journals, our library is evolving to include a campus-centered validation space. Here Students from all areas of the University can meet and mingle, provided with everything from high tech internet access to cappuccino. The potential for similar validation spaces extends across the campus and beyond.

As Students feel more at home on campus and are present for longer than just classroom hours, food and snack service need to be available throughout the day and in various convenient locations. To meet the needs of commuter Students, food services must be available in the evening, summer, and during finals week.

Action item 45: More validation spaces will be developed for the entire campus. Specifically, Colleges will be encouraged to develop specialized meeting and social areas, and campus-wide validation spaces such as the one proposed for the Library will be completed and expanded to other campus locations.

Action item 46: Student Affairs will explore ways to increase the availability of food and snacks on campus at all times.

7.6 Transitional and Transfer Students

We recognize that may Students at UTEP maintain a dynamic balance among different cultures, languages, at least two higher education institutions, jobs, and family responsibilities while in college.

We need to ensure that transfer and swirling Students are able to take full advantage of the support system provided by the Entering Student Program, and that they move quickly and surely into College advising and support programs in their chosen major.

We can better address the concurrent enrollment, pre-transfer, transfer, and post-transfer stages of all transfer Students, if we continue to study and better understand this group, their needs, and the unique challenges in transferring to UTEP or attending two institutions simultaneously. As the population of El Paso grows, particularly in regard to increases at Fort Bliss, we are likely to see more Students transferring credits from universities across the country.

Current transfer orientation hours are from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 pm. More open advising hours for transfer Students would be helpful. In regard to EPCC transfer Students, UTEP will continue the expansion of its physical presence within EPCC's walls.

Faculty and professional Advisors will have ongoing professional development opportunities specific to transfer Students' evolving needs. Transfer-specific social activities will be scheduled at the beginning of each semester to welcome them to the University.

Action item 47: The UTEP Transfer Center at EPCC will be supplied with programmatic materials from all UTEP degree programs, and degree plan options. These centers will also provide referrals to UTEP Staff and Faculty for questions about financial aid, admissions, majors, and career opportunities.

Action item 48: UTEP academic and student affairs departments will consider ways in which they can reach out to their respective EPCC Departments, to create bridges from EPCC to UTEP that will fully articulate courses with common student learning outcomes in courses, ease transfer, and provide immediate inclusion into majors and Departments.

Action item 49: Additional studies will be conducted through the mini-grant program to help us better understand Students in transition, the unique challenges they face, and best practices to support them.

8. QEP Implementation Plan with Time line and Persons Responsible

Objective	Process Objectives	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Person(s) Responsible
Student Learning Outcome Objectives	1) Review courses currently in the core curriculum and identify other available courses that address the general education competencies specified by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Make recommendations for revisions to the core curriculum to improve student learning	√	√				Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS)/faculty
	2) Develop/identify major field knowledge, skills and dispositions as part of comprehensive curriculum review		√	√	√	√	Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS) and Curriculum Review Committee
QEP Process Objectives Addressing Student Learning Outcome Through Curriculum Review Objectives	1) Appoint an Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS)	√					Provost
	2) Establish a Faculty Senate Curriculum Review Committee	√					Faculty Senate President
	3) Establish a student-learning outcomes focused review process	√					Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS) and Curriculum Review Committee
	4) Develop a common degree format	√					Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS) and Curriculum Review Committee
	5) Develop syllabi guidelines	√					Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS) and Curriculum Review Committee
	6) Review the core curriculum		√				Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS) and Curriculum Review Committee
	7) Five-year rolling review of degree programs implemented		√	√	√	√	Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS) and Curriculum Review Committee
	8) Develop institutional policies on alternative and flexible scheduling	√					Provost and Deans
	9) Develop and improve existing transfer student policies, procedures, and materials		√				Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS) and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies
QEP Process Objectives Addressing Student Learning Outcome Through Academic and Career Advising Objectives	1) Appoint an Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS)	√					Provost
	2) Establish an Advising Committee	√					Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS), Faculty Senate President, VPs Undergraduate Studies and Student Affairs
	3) Review advising practices	√	√				Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS) and Advising Committee
	4) Develop academic and career professional development opportunities	√	√	√	√	√	Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS)
	5) Offer faculty mini-grants for research on academic or career advising						Provost
	6) Develop, implement, and assess family orientation services		√	√	√	√	Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS)
	7) Develop recommendations for improving communication	√	√	√	√	√	Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS) and Advising Committee
	8) Develop modifications to campus facilities master plans that establish new or enhance existing "validation spaces"		√	√	√	√	Provost and Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS)

9. QEP Assessment Plan

We are proposing an innovative and comprehensive Plan which we believe will have positive, long-term impact on the quality and numbers of Students graduating and on the time and cost of their education. Our ultimate validation would be to see substantial improvements of those numbers over historical norms. There is, however, a need for surrogate assessments to provide rapid feedback as to the success of specific segments of the Plan. We therefore will implement a continuous monitoring of key quantitative data as well as regular collection of qualitative data on student success. Together, these assessments will enable us to make data-driven decisions as to whether and which parts of the Plan should be modified.

9.1 Assessment of Plan Implementation

We will track initiation, progress, and completion of each Action Item in this plan, comparing actual progress with the estimated schedule of implementation found in Section 8. These assessments are especially important in the early years of this Plan.

Assessment Item 1: The Associate Provost for Student Success (APSS) will track the progress of implementation of each action item within their respective domains and report current status to the President, Provost and Deans on a semester basis.

9.2 Identification Assessments within the Plan

Specific areas of the UTEP QEP require that target areas and personnel be identified in a systematic fashion. Barrier courses and requirements responsible for impeding student progress must be systematically identified (Section 6.3.2) and brought to the attention of the relevant Dean for targeted intervention. They must then be continually monitored to determine if the intervention is having a beneficial effect. Uniform student evaluations of Advisors will be implemented to enable identification of effective Advisors and advising practices for recognition and reward (Section 7.3.6)

Assessment Item 2: The APSS will develop and systematically apply data analysis tools for identification of admission plans and courses that act as a barrier to student success, communicating results to the relevant Deans. The APSS will also be responsible for continuous monitoring of the effect of targeted intervention on identified barriers.

Assessment Item 3: The APSS will develop and implement an on-line advising survey targeting Students after each advising interaction. Results will be shared with all relevant Chairs, Deans, and Administrators.

9.3 Measures of Student Progress

Careful analysis of data from student records can provide insight on which of the proposals of the UTEP QEP are having their intended effect. For instance, we would predict that better advising coupled with better course scheduling will increase hours completed per semester and increase the ratio of degree plan hours to total hours attempted. Taken together, these two numbers should be early predictors of changes in graduation rates. In contrast, frequent changing of majors would likely correlate with increased time to graduation.

Many such analyses are already being run in different areas of the University. In particular, the Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research, and Planning (CIERP), working under a grant from Lumina foundation, has established measures of student progress and success that have proven useful in characterizing student risk groups and suggesting possible interventions. We will use these and other measures from existing electronic records to develop reports of student progress and will share these reports with Colleges, Departments, and advising units across the campus.

Assessment Item 4: The APSS, working with CIERP, will have responsibility for the development and assembly of student progress data reports and their distribution to all relevant Colleges and Programs.

9.4 Measures of Student Learning Outcomes

Because specific student learning objectives are intimately entwined with specific degree plans and career paths, they are best assessed within the context of a specific Department or College. We will measure student learning outcomes using a distributed assessment procedure, but under centralized reporting and oversight.

By the time of the initial curriculum review for a degree plan, Departments and Colleges must clearly indicate learning objectives and specific assessment tools for each course or elective in the degree plan. In successive years, Department Chairs and Deans will be responsible for the compilation of student learning outcome data both for their own internal analyses and to forward to the APSS for integration into University-wide analyses.

As stated at the start of this section, the ultimate measure of learning success lies in determining if our Students are prepared for the next steps in their lives. To help measure this, we will implement better tracking of Students graduating from UTEP to determine their progress in career development.

Assessment Item 5: The APSS will work with responsible Faculty to develop appropriate and consistent measures of student learning objectives for each course in a degree plan.

Assessment Item 6: The Chairs and Deans will implement procedures for the collection of student learning outcomes for their courses and Students.

Assessment Item 7: The APSS will collect data and analyses from each of the Colleges and will develop normalized measures of student learning progress for both the Colleges and for the University as a whole.

Assessment Item 8: The APSS and the Deans will develop and implement more uniform post-graduation tracking of Students' career progress.

9.5 Five Year Expectations

This QEP started as a simple question to Students, Faculty, and Staff: What should we do to help Students be more successful? The result is a comprehensive overhaul of almost every corner of the University associated with student learning. Complete data on the success of these interventions for specific student cohorts will take four to six years, and some of the implementations will just be beginning in year five. What can we realistically expect to accomplish within the first five years?

Within Curriculum, we will just be completing the first pass at full curriculum overhaul and be preparing to make revisions and fix mistakes in the next round of updating. For those programs targeted in the first two years, we will have two to three years of student learning data and experience in normalizing data across various Colleges. We will have data on the effectiveness of coordinating course syllabi, objectives, and assessments between UTEP and EPCC. We will have identified barriers in each degree plan, and devised and initiated interventions for some.

Within Advising, we will have uniform advising satisfaction data as well as quantitative measures of changes in student registration practices. We will have established, and likely modified based on collected data, best advising practices, and we will be optimizing connections between entering or transfer student advising and departmental advising. We will be comparing the effectiveness of different modes of communication in reaching and involving families. We will have increased the size and number of validation spaces and at least begun changing the university experience to one of validation.

Based on data from the Lumina-funded Barriers to Student Success Project and on results from the initial rounds of mini-grants, we will have data on the effectiveness of specific interventions targeting key, at-risk Students. Most importantly, we will have learned which interventions work and which do not, and we will be continuing with the evolving Plan.

10. QEP Budget

The UTEP QEP is a comprehensive renewal of all aspects of curriculum and advising affecting student learning. A major portion of this Plan involves the re-focusing of existing University activities and functions to data-driven accountability for curriculum and advising. This means that the fiscal resources for implementation of the QEP come both from the re-direction and reallocation of existing programs and funding and from new funding specifically earmarked for implementing the Plan. Moreover, several of the features of the Plan were considered sufficiently important that new or reallocated resources have already been allocated or even expended to begin their implementation.

10.1 Existing Projects and Resources Supporting the QEP

The three components of the QEP, Curriculum, Advising, and Validation, are intimately entwined with the existing infrastructure of the University. While we will be adding significant new resources in support of the QEP, we will also be leveraging existing resources by redirecting and refocusing existing programs and personnel to support the Plan.

Curriculum renewal will be a Faculty-driven process. While the Provost's Office provides additional administrative, consulting and Staff support, the primary contribution will come from the Departments, the Colleges, and the Faculty Senate. In particular, the Faculty Senate is already moving to develop the committees and subcommittees that will drive this process as well as advising renewal. Existing Department, College, and Provost's Office Staff will provide administrative support, supplementing the new personnel listed in Section 10.2.

Over the past six years, UTEP has made substantial improvements and investments in admitting and advising entering Students. Early Student Orientation and Student Success programs, and College advising programs have been upgraded for Students in declared majors. Both early and late advising, as well as the existing Career Advising Center, will be leveraged with the new personnel provided in Section 10.2 to provide for seamless transition of Students from entering to major, with substantially more Faculty and College involvement in the early and middle years.

The EPCC-UTEP Articulation Committee has been making steady progress in inter-system collaboration in specific areas. They are enthusiastic about their broadening mandate to help coordinate Faculty in curriculum renewal as well as improved communication and collaboration on Students migrating between the two systems.

Student validation spaces are already well established in the Colleges of Science and Engineering and in the Student Union, with similar spaces being added or designed in every College in the University. In addition, the Library is taking a lead role both in increasing on-line information resources and in embracing the student validation-space concept (see Section 10.2).

UTEP has demonstrated strong support for Faculty professional development through continuing workshops and seminars through the Center for Effective Teaching and Learning (CETaL). CETaL's efforts will continue, but with a stronger focus on improving curriculum and advising and with an overall emphasis on validation.

Similarly, the use of technology to support QEP goals will be provided through existing units of Information Technology Services, for software and Web tools development, and the Faculty Instructional Technology Laboratory, for the training of Faculty and Staff in efficient use of software tools.

Finally, the collection and analysis of data for evaluation and for driving decisions will be strongly leveraged with the existing Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research and Planning (CIERP) and the Project Lumina funded Barriers to Student Success Project teams.

10.2 Specific Commitments for QEP Implementation and Management

In addition to the above resources, the following positions and resources are committed for QEP implementation and management. These resources include new personnel for administrative, staff, and consulting support, new advising Staff, and an increase in peer leader support. Funds are allocated for training and travel support for the new personnel. In Years Two and Four, funds are proposed to support mini-grants opportunities for Faculty and Staff to explore ways of improving student learning and success. Funds are proposed for full catalog distribution, with the larger costs occurring in alternate years with the initial printing of the two-year catalog. Substantial funds are allocated for construction or remodeling to increase student validation spaces and provide new advising spaces, including operating expenses for the new library. Budget and total costs are summarized for the initial five-year period.

Table 10.2 Budget Summary

Budget Item	Year 1 2006-07	Year 2 2007-08	Year 3 2008-09	Year 4 2009-10	Year 5 2010-11	Total
New and Reassigned Provost's Office Staff	120,000	123,600	127,308	131,127	135,061	637,096
Seven New Staff Advisors	245,000	252,350	259,920	267,718	275,750	1,300,738
Student Peer Advisors	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	100,000
Consultants	10,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	70,000
M&O (meeting costs, etc)	5000	5000	5000	5000	5000	25,000
Travel/Training	10,000	15,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	85,000
Mini-grants		100,000		100,000		200,000
Scheduling Software	245,000	28,500	28,500	28,500	28,500	359,000
Catalog and schedules	94,000	27,000	94,000	27,000	94,000	336,000
Creation of Library Validation Space	400,000	265,000	265,000	265,000	265,000	1,460,000
Renovation of Academic Advising Center	1,192,800					1,192,800
Total	2,314,800	851,450	834,729	879,345	858,311	5,765,635

10.3 New Scholarship programs

To help reduce the impact of increasing costs for education, funding is proposed for three new scholarship programs: UTEP Promise, UTEP Guaranteed Tuition, and UTEP Success Plans. The programs represent a four year commitment to the initial cohort and could be extended to subsequent cohorts, depending on the success of the program. The potential cost to UTEP is predicted to total between two and eight million dollars over the next four years.

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End Notes

i   U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000; Texas State Data Center, Texas A & M

ii   UTEP Factbook 2004. Hispanics can also identify themselves as black or white, so percentages may not sum to 100 percent.

iii   UTEP Factbook 2004

iv   UTEP Factbook 2004

v   New Students Survey, Fall 2004

vi   Council of Independent Colleges: http://www.cic.edu/makingthecase/data/access/income/index.asp

vii   Lumina Foundation Focus, Fall 2005, P. 5

viii   UTEP Factbook 2004

ix   Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Fall 2005

x   Lumina Foundation Focus, Fall 2005, P. 5

xi   A detailed description of our planning system is described in the *Institutional Effectiveness Report* available on-line at:

    http://irp.utep.edu/Portals/1108/UTEPplanning%20v15%20struggle.pdf

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