



# QEP

**Compass: Navigating Excellence  
through Effective Communication**

## **QEP Impact Report Year Three FY21**

**Prepared and Submitted by the QEP Executive Committee:  
Jeanne Qvarnstrom, April Aultman Becker, Dan Foley**

# **O** **verview**

Each year, the QEP Executive Committee will provide the President's Executive Cabinet with an impact report, leading up to the required Fifth-Year Interim Report.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges is one of only a few accrediting commissions that conducts a comprehensive review of its institutions every ten years. Most accrediting agencies conduct such reviews every 5 to 7 years. The U.S. Department of Education requires accrediting agencies to monitor institutions more often to ensure that institutions having access to federal funds continue to meet accreditation standards. To that end, the Commission has developed a Fifth-Year Interim Report.

This yearly report includes elements that will be addressed in the Fifth-Year Interim Report:

- **Executive Summary**
- **List of the initial goals and intended outcomes**
- **Discussion of changes made to the QEP and the reasons**
- **QEP's impact on student learning**
- **Reflection on what the institution has learned**
- **Budget summary**
- **Projection: Year Four**

# Executive Summary

**E** Sul Ross State University (SRSU) initiated the broad-based institutional process of identifying possible QEP topics in the Fall of 2015, which involved solicited input from all stakeholders and a review of institutional data and best practices. From this process, the need for students to understand how to communicate effectively through written, oral, and visual communication emerged as our focus.

SRSU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) addresses the student communication need across all academic programs, academic colleges, and campuses. Based on the input from the Reaffirmation Committee, the objective of SRSU's QEP, ***Compass: Navigating Excellence through Effective Communication***, is achieved in one student learning outcome aligned with two program goals.

Successfully implementing Compass increases opportunities for SRSU students to demonstrate competency in written, oral, and visual communication, and will enhance the capacity of SRSU educators to teach communication skills through increased professional development opportunities. Accordingly, our goals with Compass include: enhancing student communication skills, and expanding our faculty's skills to teach oral, written, and visual communication. We believe these two goals combined will improve our students' ability to contribute to a learned society.

Our QEP is directed at junior and senior-level courses, because the Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde campuses enroll only upper-level students. The following QEP-level student learning outcome (SLO) will be assessed in all SRSU's communication-infused courses:

*The student will create works that exhibit skill in prepared and purposeful communication (written, oral or visual).* SRSU will implement and monitor the QEP with the aid of Faculty Guides and Faculty Navigators teaching communication-infused Mapped Courses.

Students, faculty, staff, and community members should be encouraged by this QEP, as it aims to develop students in ways that can enhance their potential to contribute to a civil society as well as making them more marketable to potential employers. In this way, the name Compass is apt. We see this QEP as equipping students with the skills necessary to navigate toward a life of excellence.

# **I**nitial Goals and Outcomes of Compass

The following QEP-level student learning outcome (SLO) will be assessed in all SRSU's communication-infused courses: The student will create works that exhibit skill in prepared and purposeful communication (written, oral or visual).

SRSU will implement and monitor the QEP with the aid of Faculty Guides and Faculty Navigators teaching communication-infused Mapped Courses.

- Faculty Guides serve as mentors to faculty engaged in the development and instruction of Mapped Courses.
- Faculty Navigators are professors who redesign an existing course into a Mapped Course incorporating the QEP SLO.
- Mapped Courses follow a syllabus template that clearly spells out expectations of the QEP and the use of the Cardinal Rubric to assess student work.

Compass provides students with communication skills across campuses through the communication-infused courses. The Compass Student Learning Outcome (SLO) is designed to enhance the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and values among the student population. The student learning outcome is infused into all four university colleges through identified communication-infused courses.

For students to learn how to communicate effectively, it is imperative that SRSU faculty have the resources and opportunities to improve their classroom instruction, particularly improving their teaching of oral, written, and visual communication. Through the development of a QEP library, communication teaching guides, developmental faculty workshops, and contact with mentors in communication instruction, Compass will provide faculty with the required tools and methods to help them enhance their skills in teaching and assessing written, oral, and visual communication.

The QEP continues to implement an annual Assessment Day in May. All reviewers are drawn from the SRSU faculty body. Student artifacts are evaluated by a team of faculty and student learning outcomes are reported.

# Changes Made to Compass

All changes made to Compass were made as our QEP progressed through FY21, making it obvious that there were more efficient ways to accomplish our goals and effectively manage data and personnel. All changes were based on suggestions made by Navigators, Guides, or QEP Executive Committee members.

Changes in the third year of implementation include:

- Job duties of Faculty Guides adjusted.
- Reporting of Guides was adjusted to allow Guides who are also Navigators to guide themselves, rather than being assigned to other Guides.
- Turnover in the role of Data Coordinator; currently using a contractor.
- Assessment Day reconfigured to a virtual event, due to COVID-19. Assessment Day for the scoring cohort will be held once a year in May.
- The Executive Committee recognized that communication among Navigators and Faculty Guides is critical and has developed a checklist to be sure benchmarks are hit.
- The QEP Executive Committee contracted with ASCD for the third year to provide professional development with the focus on enhancing students' use of academic language. Because of COVID-19, these sessions were held remotely, which actually allowed for more interaction time with the presenter and with Navigators.
- In light of SRSU budget issues, the QEP Executive Committee developed a reduced budget for 2021-2022 to implement, if necessary.

# Compass' Impact on Student Learning

We continue to be excited by the variety of faculty and courses which are embracing our communication initiative. QEP Mapped Courses are now represented within every department of Sul Ross State University. During FY21, Compass saw the completion of its third full year of implementation. And, as hoped, the University demonstrated a marked increase: 1) the number of faculty which embraced the QEP's primary communication objectives, 2) the number of course offerings embedding QEP's SLO's, 3) the number of students enrolled in those QEP mapped courses. More specifically, during its third iteration, a total of 444 students were enrolled among 20 different Mapped Courses. This represents a 30% increase in the number of QEP course offerings and 10% increase in the number of students enrolled in those courses over the previous fiscal year.

**Table 1 – Compass Mapped Course Enrollment**

| <b>SRSU QEP Enrollments Year Three (Fall 2020)</b>   |                                 |                       |
|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Faculty</b>                                       | <b>QEP Designated Course ID</b> | <b>Student Counts</b> |
| Boyd   | ANSC_4306_11387                 | 12                    |
| Miller   | ED_3314_11363                   | 6                     |
| Miller   | ED_3314_11364                   | 3                     |
| Rodriguez  | ED_4314_11041                   | 14                    |
| Stein  | ENG_3312_11666                  | 10                    |
| Stein  | ENG_3312_12003                  | 18                    |
| Roche  | ENGL_3312_11335                 | 28                    |
| Roche  | ENGL_3312_12192                 | 34                    |
| Steele   | GBA_3351_11715                  | 12                    |
| Williamson   | HIST_3314_11726                 | 14                    |
| Ray  | KES_4360_11240                  | 11                    |
| Ray  | KES_4360_12208                  | 3                     |
| Matula   | MGMT_4322_11143                 | 26                    |
| Matula   | MGMT_4322_12226                 | 25                    |
| Trotman  | PSY_4310_11901                  | 7                     |
| <b>Total Fall Enrollment</b>                         |                                 | <b>223</b>            |
| <b>SRSU QEP Enrollments Year Three (Spring 2021)</b> |                                 |                       |
| <b>Faculty</b>                                       | <b>QEP Designated Course ID</b> | <b>Student Counts</b> |
| Boyd   | ANSC_3410_001                   | 24                    |
| Young  | BIO_3300_W01                    | 27                    |
| Rodriguez  | ED_4314_Z01                     | 14                    |
| Stein  | ENG_3311_001                    | 14                    |
| Roche  | ENGL_3312_Z01                   | 32                    |
| Ray  | KES_4360_001                    | 6                     |

|                                |               |            |
|--------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| Ray                            | KES_4360_Z01  | 1          |
| Matula                         | MGMT_4322_W01 | 23         |
| Matula                         | MGMT_4322_W02 | 21         |
| Ortiz                          | MTH_4327_Z01  | 8          |
| Luna                           | NRM_4305_001  | 7          |
| Gutierrez                      | PSY_4310_W02  | 10         |
| Barrientes                     | THEA_3309_Z01 | 3          |
| Scott                          | THEA_4304_Z01 | 9          |
| <b>Total Spring Enrollment</b> |               | <b>199</b> |

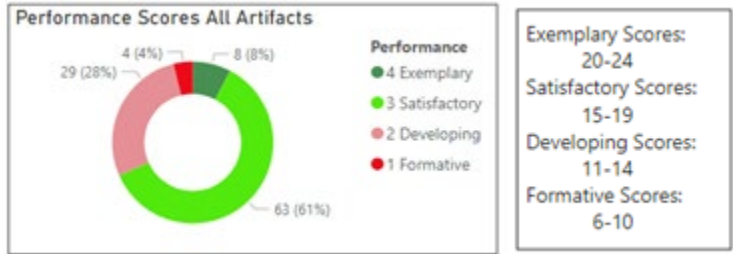
**Assessment Day**

A total of eleven reviewers scored 104 student artifacts. Following a training, each reviewer was paired with another reviewer to provide two separate reviews of the same artifact. Each pair of reviewers was assigned ten to twelve artifacts. This arrangement allowed for each artifact to be reviewed by two reviewers to ensure consistency in scoring and allow for comparison between reviewers for each artifact.

The Cardinal Rubric was used to score student artifacts in all three communication modes (written, oral and visual). The Cardinal Rubric measures six criterion of effective communication: Organization, Content, Development, Purpose, Academic Language, Supporting Materials and Technique. Each criterion was scored using the performance levels of Exemplary, Satisfactory, Developing and Formative. Once scored, performance levels were changed to numerical values: Exemplary = 4; Satisfactory = 3; Developing = 2; Formative = 1.

Based on total rubric scores, we categorized overall communication scores into performance levels of: Formative (6-10), Developing (11-14), Satisfactory (15-19), and Exemplary (20-24). The QEP’s target is to have 70% students achieve Satisfactory or greater ratings. Among all artifacts, 69% of students scored at the Satisfactory or Exemplary skill levels, minimally missing our goal.

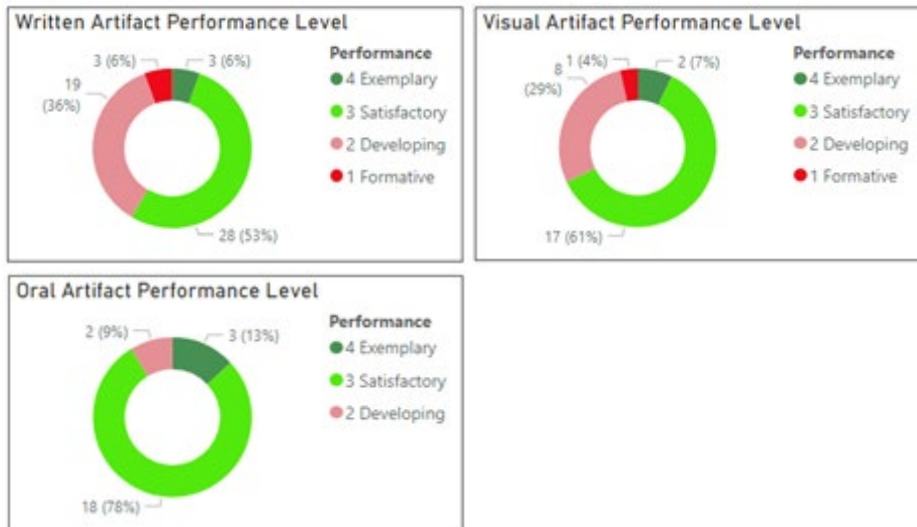
**Figure 1 – Overall performance among an aggregate of all artifacts and all communication types**



When reviewing each communication type independently, 59% of Written artifacts reached the Satisfactory or Exemplary skill levels, 91% of Oral artifacts reached the Satisfactory or Exemplary skill levels, and 68% of Visual artifacts reached the Satisfactory or Exemplary skill levels. Furthermore, while both Written and Visual artifact performance levels were consistent

with the overall skill level, Oral skills were significantly higher and included no artifacts at the formative stage.

**Figure 2 – Overall performance of artifacts parsed among each communication type**



While the overall skill performance yields an inclusive measure of student achievement in communication, separating the measure into its component parts provides more specific details that can be used for continuous improvement of student learning. Collectively, among the three communication types, students scored highest (satisfactory or exemplary) in Organization (64%) and Purpose (66%). Specific areas for attention and needed improvement (Formative and Developing) include Supporting Material (66%) and Technique (65%).



**Figure 3 – Overall performance of each communication component among all communication types**



Reviewing just the written artifacts, both Organization (53%) and Purpose (66%) represent the two criteria with the highest Exemplary or Satisfactory skill levels while for both Supporting Material (70%) and Technique (66%), along with Content Development (62%), had the highest Formative and Developing percentages.

**Figure 4 – Performance of written communication components**



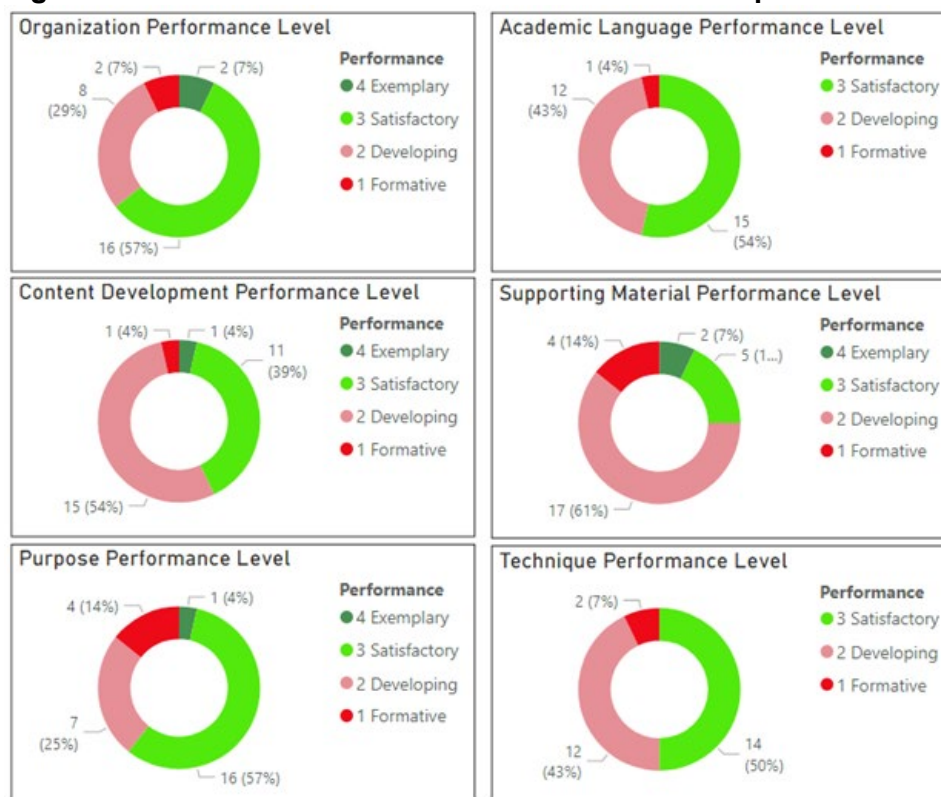
Reviewing just the Oral artifacts revealed Organization (87%), Content Development (74%) and Purpose (69%) are components with Exemplary or Satisfactory skill levels. Whereas Technique continued to be a low scoring area with 78% at the Formative or Developing level, yet the next lowest level for Oral Artifacts was in Academic Language (57%), not Supporting Material (43%).

**Figure 5 – Performance of oral communication components**



Consistent with the other Written and Oral artifacts, the Visual artifacts scored well in Organization (64%) and Purpose (61%). However, the lowest scoring criteria were Supporting Material (75%) and Content Development (58%).

**Figure 6 – Performance of Visual communication components**



In summary overall, the highest (Exemplary or Satisfactory) and lowest (Developing or Formative) score levels are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2 – Summary of highest and lowest score levels among the three communication types**

| Artifact Type | Highest Score Criterion                         | Lowest Score Criterion                                 |
|---------------|---|--|
| All           | Purpose (66%)<br>Organization (64%)             | Technique (36%)<br>Supporting Material (35%)           |
| Written       | Purpose (66%)<br>Organization (53%)             | Technique (34%)<br>Supporting Material (30%)           |
| Oral          | Organization (87%)<br>Content Development (74%) | Technique (22%)<br>Academic Language (43%)             |
| Visual        | Purpose (61%)<br>Organization (64%)             | Supporting Material (25%)<br>Content Development (43%) |

One of the primary objectives of this QEP, or any QEP for that matter, is to highlight areas of deficiency and inform corrective actions. Programs which consistently demonstrate exemplary levels of achievement often are rightfully judged as not encouraging students to stretch their intellectual abilities. Therefore, we are neither embarrassed nor dismayed by the shortcomings highlighted by our current QEP. On the contrary, we incorporate this newfound knowledge into a decisive corrective plan. As an example, data from FY20 indicated a deficiency in academic

language among all communication types. After multiple professional development seminars and workshops, student performance in this metric increased nearly 1,200% from 4% to 47% proficiency. Additional work still needs to be done but clearly, we are making significant strides with this metric.

# What SRSU Learned as a Result of Compass

- Participation among the number of faculty involved in QEP is increasing
- The number of courses with embedded QEP Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) is also increasing
- Both the number of reviewers (10 to 11) and number of artifacts reviewed (50 to 104) increased
- Overall student communication performance fell just below the target (69% vs 70%).
- By artifact type, oral skill performance exceeded the target at 91%, visual skill performance nearly met the target at 68%, and written skill performance fell below the target level at 59%.
- Reviewer training prior to artifact reviews, and paired reviewer meetings after completing the reviews, both helped to ensure that variations in individual criteria were minimized
- Student self-reflection responses appear to show that students are finding courses with QEP embedded curriculum helpful
- Changing from using Qualtrics to One Drive appeared to be an improvement in the administrative process.
- Reviewers agreed that training session and practice scoring were helpful

We are seeing improvement. More faculty and students are engaging with the QEP each year. And while some communication criteria still need improvement, we have demonstrated that focused targeting of specific skills can drastically improve student proficiencies. Additionally, continuing reviewer training and pairing reviewers with specific artifacts continues to improve scorer reliability and reduce score variations.

# Budget Summary

The QEP was allocated \$125,000 to implement in Year Three.

**Table 3 – Budget Summary**

| <b>Year Three (FY21) Budget by Category</b>   |                            |                 |                          |                    |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
|   | <b>Year Three Proposed</b> |                 | <b>Year Three Actual</b> |                    |
| Campus  | <i>Alpine</i>              | <i>RGC</i>      | <i>Alpine</i>            | <i>RGC</i>         |
| <b>Personnel</b>                              |                            |                 |                          |                    |
| QEP Coordinators                              | \$15,360                   | \$15,360        | \$15,360                 | \$15,360           |
| Secretary                                     | \$2,560                    | \$2,560         | \$2,560                  | \$2,560            |
| Data Coordinator                              | \$2,560                    |                 | \$0                      |                    |
| Faculty Guide<br>Number of Guides             | \$2,560<br>2               | \$1,280<br>1    | \$2,560<br>2             | \$1,280<br>1       |
| Faculty Navigator<br>Number of New Navigators | \$6780<br>6                | \$2,560<br>2    | \$6,400<br>5             | \$1,280<br>1       |
| <b>FY21 Personnel Sum</b>                     | <b>\$28,540</b>            | <b>\$21,760</b> | <b>\$26,780</b>          | <b>\$20,480</b>    |
| <b>Maintenance and Operation (M&amp;O)</b>    |                            |                 |                          |                    |
| Professional development                      | \$20,000                   | \$5,240         | \$14,128.45              | \$0                |
| Assessment                                    | \$2,300                    | \$1,450         | \$0                      | \$0                |
| Marketing                                     | \$9,530                    | \$3,000         | \$115.00                 | \$0                |
| Operations                                    | \$9,000                    | \$2,000         | \$8,465.35               | \$963.54           |
| Student incentives                            | \$4,000                    | \$2,000         | \$1,687.76               | \$0                |
| <b>Travel</b>                                 |                            |                 |                          |                    |
| Intercampus travel                            | \$2,000                    | \$2,000         | \$0                      | \$1,206            |
| Annual conference                             | \$5,000                    | \$4,000         | \$3,000                  | \$925              |
| <b>FY21 M&amp;O and Travel Sum</b>            | <b>\$51,830</b>            | <b>\$19,690</b> | <b>\$27,396.56</b>       | <b>\$3,094.54</b>  |
| <b>QEP TOTAL COST</b>                         | <b>\$80,370</b>            | <b>\$41,450</b> | <b>\$54,176.56</b>       | <b>\$23,574.54</b> |

In FY21, the QEP spent \$77,751.10, well under our approved \$125,000 budget, because COVID-19 meant that we were unable to attend conferences and in-person professional development.

In FY22, to maximize our budget to affect student learning, we plan the following:

- Purchasing books for more book studies
- Additional professional development (including a fourth contract with ASCD)
- Partnering with others, such as the Access and Excellence Committee, to develop a series of speakers for all campuses on diversity to promote a greater understanding and appreciation of peers and to encourage effective communication among students.
- Mini-grants for faculty to implement communication strategies
- Additional marketing materials
- Offering student incentives or rewards for excellent assessments
- Ongoing salary expenses for the QEP Coordinators, Navigators, Faculty Guides and two part-time administrative assistants.



# Projection: Year Four

In addition to the changes above that have already been implemented, or are in process of implementation, we are looking forward to the following modifications that will help us grow and manage Compass.

For Year Four, we have added 5 new Navigators (4 in Alpine, 1 in Del Rio) to teach Mapped Classes, and again we have representation from each college. This means 21 courses (16 in Alpine, 5 at RGC campuses) will be taught with a special focus on written, oral, and visual communication in FY22. In total, with a few losses due to retirements and resignations, we have 23 Navigators. In our QEP report, we outlined a ratio of five Navigators to one Faculty Guide. Because of the growing number of Navigators on the Alpine campus, we have added an additional Faculty Guide, Dr. Billy Jack Ray.

For FY22, increased instructional focus will be placed on the Supporting Evidence component of the QEP Cardinal Rubric, as well as how to give effective feedback, or how to best support students as they work on supporting evidence. Only 35% of students scored at the level of 3 or better (Table 2) for this metric. Accordingly, several professional development opportunities will be provided for faculty to enhance their techniques for teaching Supporting Evidence.

Our QEP was recognized as an exemplary plan and included in the Resource Room at the 2019 SACSCOC Annual Meeting; a presentation was included with more than 50 attendees. We were invited back in 2020 to present again, but COVID-19 made that impossible. However, members of our executive team and a Guide have submitted a proposal to present our QEP at the 2021 SACSCOC Annual Conference in Dallas.

In Year Four, we plan to continue our QEP New Year’s Party, the major QEP event of the year, hopefully held in-person on both the Alpine and RGC campuses. This year, due to COVID-19, we held our New Year Party virtually and welcomed Dr. Tisha Paredes, Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment at Old Dominion University and member of the SACSCOC SRSU On-Site Review Team, as our guest speaker. Communication-themed prized and giveaways were awarded to students and attendees. In FY22, we will invite another esteemed speaker to our campuses to celebrate with us and to further the conversation about effective communication.

The QEP schedule of events is included here. Highlights for the next year include the QEP New Year’s Party, ASCD Professional Development, and opportunities for Navigators and Faculty Guides to interact more, especially in-person.

**Table 4 – QEP Schedule of Events**

| QEP CALENDAR YEAR THREE |                |  |
|-------------------------|----------------|--|
| DATE                    | LOCATION       | EVENT  |
| August 5, 2021          | Teams meeting  | Orientation for Navigators   |
| August 31, 2021         | HB2504 site    | Fall QEP Syllabi upload  |
| October 1, 2021         | Sent via email | QEP Fall Newsletter published  |
| October 14,15, 2021     | Teams          | ASCD Professional Development: supporting details and effective feedback |

|                      |                     |   |
|----------------------|---------------------|---|
| October, 2021        | QEP BlackBoard site | Navigator discussion questions due  |
| October 29, 2021     | Teams               | ASCD Individual Navigator Consults  |
| November 11,12, 2021 | Teams               | ASCD Professional Development:<br>supporting details and effective feedback |
| November, 2021       | Library Classroom   | ETS testing   |
| December, 2021       | Dallas, TX          | SACSCOC Annual Meeting  |
| December, 2021       | Blackboard          | Posting of Student Artifacts  |
| January 31, 2022     | HB2504 site         | Spring QEP Syllabi upload   |
| January, 2022        | Alpine UC, RGC      | QEP Networking Luncheon   |
| January, 2022        | Alpine UC, RGC      | QEP New Year's Party  |
| February, 2022       | Blackboard          | Navigators Post Discussion Questions  |
| February 1, 2022     | Sent via email      | QEP Spring Newsletter published   |
| February, 2022       | QEP BlackBoard site | Navigator discussion question due   |
| April, 2022          | Library Classroom   | ETS testing   |
| May, 2022            | Blackboard          | Posting of Student Artifacts  |
| May, 2022            | Teams, individually | Assessment Faculty Cohort Scoring   |
| May, 2022            | Alpine Country Club | Annual Navigator and Guide Banquet  |
| July, 2022           | TBA                 | SACSCOC Institute on Quality<br>Enhancement and Accreditation<br>Conference |