QEP

Compass: Navigating Excellence through Effective Communication

QEP Impact Report
Year Two
FY20

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Overview

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 Three**

Executive Summary

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 Classes.

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.

Initial Goals and Outcomes of Compass

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.

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 Classes.

- Faculty Guides serve as mentors to faculty engaged in the development and instruction of Mapped Classes.
- Faculty Navigators are professors who redesign an existing course into a Mapped Class incorporating the QEP SLO.
- Mapped Classes will 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 has evolved from an Assessment Day at the end of each semester, to an annual Assessment Day in May in which a cohort of the SRSU faculty body assess Mapped Course assignments as a cohort. All evaluators use the Cardinal Rubric to score the various student artifacts assigned by Navigators. There is an initial evaluator calibration session to provide interrater reliability , and then multiple evaluators are assigned to score the anonymous written, oral, and visual (via video) assignments to provide interrater reliability, to serve as validation of the instrument, and to ensure appropriate and consistent use of the Cardinal Rubric.

Changes Made to Compass

All changes made to Compass were made as our QEP progressed through year two, 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 second year of implementation include:

- Job duties of Faculty Guides adjusted.
- Budget adjusted.
- Data collection: Navigator applications.
- Navigator surveys will be replaced by focus groups.
- New person in the role of Data Coordinator and job description updated.
- New people in each role as the QEP Secretary for Alpine and RGC.
- Assessment Day reconfigured. The Executive Committee made the decision to create a faculty scoring cohort who will use the Cardinal Rubric to evaluate the student products each semester. By developing a dedicated scoring cohort, the Executive Committee believes that scorer reliability will be enhanced. Assessment Day for the scoring cohort will be held once a year in May.
- The QEP Executive Committee planned to hold an annual dinner banquet for all Navigators to reflect on the successes and areas for growth. Due to COVID-19 the May 2020 dinner banquet was cancelled.
- The Executive Committee recognized that communication among Navigators and Faculty Guides is critical, and will update the Blackboard QEP organization to promote communication.
- The QEP Executive Committee contracted with ASCD for the second year to provide two full days of professional development with the focus on enhancing the quality of assessments that Navigators use in their courses.
- A more appropriate assessment method and reporting was designed by the new QEP Data Analyst. Frequency tables for each of the artifact responses were created instead of calculating statistics for the results of the reviews.

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 course are now represented within every department of Sul Ross State University. During FY 2019-2020, Compass saw the completion of its second 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 second iteration, a total of 387 students were enrolled among 14 different QEP mapped courses. This represents a 40% increase in the number of QEP course offerings and 320% increase in the number of students enrolled in those courses over the previous fiscal year.

Table 1

QEP IMPACT YEAR TWO			
Faculty Navigator	Subject	Course	Enrollment
Carolyn Barrientes	Theatre	THEA 3313	7
Jamie Boyd	Animal Science	ANSC 4306	26
Bibi Gutierrez	Psychology	PSY 4310-001	25
Ryan Luna	Natural Resource Sciences	NRM 4305	30
Thomas Matula	Management	MGMT 4322	82
Jennifer Miller	Education	ED 3314	25
Michael Ortiz	Mathematics	MTH 4327	5
Billy Jack Ray	Kinesiology	KES 4360	34
Francine Ritcher	English	COMP 3312	20
Diana Rodriguez	Education	ED 4314	31
Audrey Taylor	English	ENG 3309	14
Alicia Trotman	Psychology	PSY 4310	13
Joey Velasco	Communication	COMM 4302-001	14
Kevin Young	Biology	BIO 3300	61
Total students impacted by the QEP in FY20			**387**

From the 387 students enrolled in QEP mapped courses during FY 2019-2020, 89 individual artifacts were submitted for review. It is important to note that due to COVID-19 course disruptions during the Spring 2020 semester, faculty were given the option to alter their QEP assignments and forego artifact submissions. Consequently, the number of received artifacts was less than expected. From the 89 artifacts received, 50 were randomly chosen representing each course and communication mode. The 50 artifacts randomly chosen had the following sample size and communication mode: written artifacts (24), oral artifacts (14) and visual artifacts (12). Each artifact was reviewed by two independent judges for each of the six categories specified by the QEP SLO Cardinal Rubric. The frequencies and percentages of numerical choices for each of the six categories of the Rubric were calculated among the 100 scored artifacts (50 artifacts scored by 2 reviewers each = 100 total artifacts scored). The percentages of choices greater than or equal to two and the percentages of choices greater than or equal to three were then calculated. The coordinators of the QEP, in consultations with the scoring committee, decided that our target outcome would be for 80% of the scores in each

Rubric category of reviewed artifacts would be greater than or equal to three (1=Formative, 2=Developing, 3=Satisfactory, 4=Exemplary).

When reviewing the data of the three communication modes in aggregate, it was observed that students scored lowest in areas of Technique, Supporting Materials, and Academic Language. In fact, for Academic Language, 94% of reviewers scored the artifacts with a numerical value of two (developing). While students performed better in Organization (75%), Content (60%) and Purpose (73%), none reached the goal of 80%.

In an effort to discover if the scores were similar among three communication modes independently, calculations of frequencies and percentages in each category of the Cardinal Rubric were done using disaggregated data in each of the three communication modes; written, oral, and visual. Among just the 24 written artifacts, a similar trend revealed the areas of Technique, Supporting Material, and Academic Language were distinctly lower than the percentages for Content, Organization, and Purpose. Similarly, for Academic Language 88% of reviewers scored the artifacts with a numerical value of two (developing). However, among written artifacts the area of Purpose met the goal of 80% of students scoring three or better. For the 14 artifacts representing an oral mode of communication, again it was noticed that the areas of Technique, Supporting Material, and Academic Language were distinctly lower than the percentages for Content, Organization, and Purpose. In the area of Academic Language, 100% of reviewers gave a score of two. The goal of achieving 80% of artifacts with a score of three or better was met for the categories of Organization (96%) and Purpose (86%) and nearly so for Content (79%). Final in reviewing just the 12 Visual communication artifacts, the areas of Technique, Supporting Material, and Academic Language were not as markedly distinct from the percentages for Content, Organization, and Purpose. Students performed equally poorly among all six Rubric categories. However, similarly to the other communication modes, students performed worst in the area of Academic Language. In fact, all of reviewers scored the 12 visual artifacts with a score of two for Academic Language. It may be argued that inter-reviewer scoring differences may account for significant variance in student scores. Because each artifact was scored by two randomly assigned reviewers, inter-reviewer variance can be compared. Analysis revealed that 86% of the scores given by two reviewers of the same artifact were within one numerical point or less. Consequently, we feel confident in the inter-reviewer reliability in the scoring of these artifacts based on the similarity in the paired scores.

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 achievements 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 indicated earlier, the assessment system was revised during the 2019-2020 academic year, and student artifacts from Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 were collectively evaluated in May by the faculty scoring cohort. The frequencies for each numerical choice were calculated for each of the six categories of the Cardinal Rubric. The percentages of the numerical choices were also calculated. At this point, the data were used to calculate a student performance target for the SLO. The percentages of the choices which were greater than or equal to two and the percentages of the choices which were greater than or equal to three were calculated. The percentages which were greater than or equal to two ranged from 84% to 99%, depending on

the category, while the percentages which were greater than or equal to three ranged from 4% to 75%. It was decided that our target would be that "80% of the scores in each category of the reviewed artifacts would be greater than or equal to three."

Upon a more detailed inspection of the percentages of scores greater than or equal to three, it was noticed that the areas of Technique, Supporting Material, and Academic Language were distinctly lower than the percentages for Content, Organization, and Purpose. In fact, in the area of Academic Language, reviewers rated 94 out of the 100 artifact scores with a numerical value of two (developing).

Table 2

2020 QEP ARTIFACT REVIEW RESULTS (N=100)
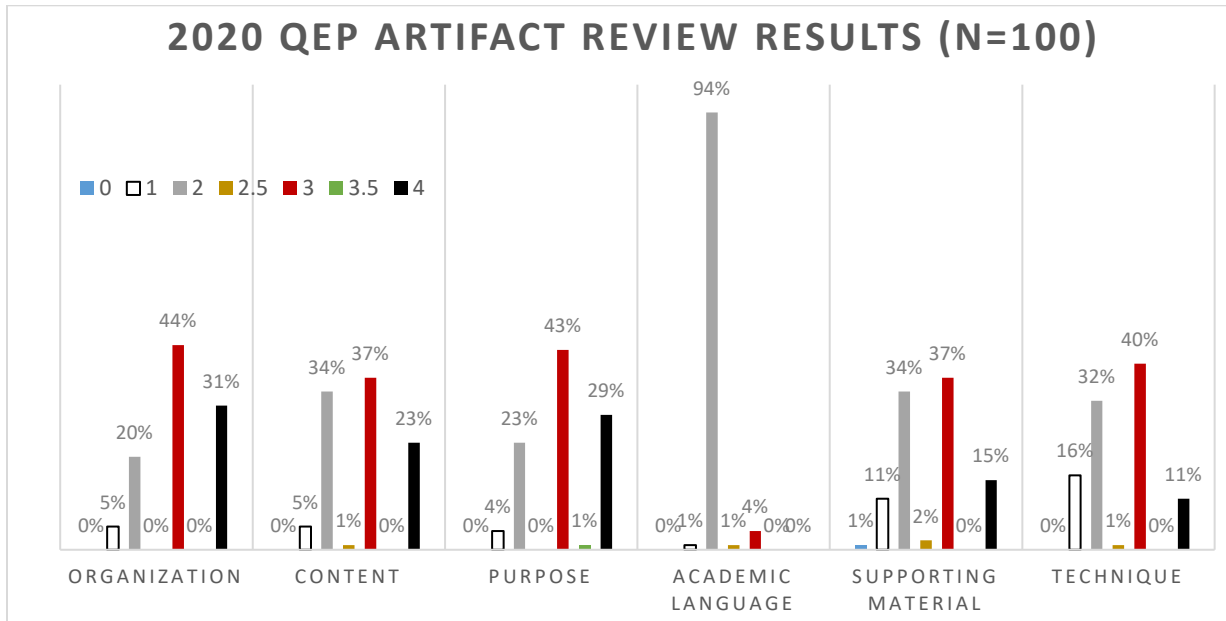
	Organization	Content	Purpose	Academic Language	Supporting Material	Technique
0	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
1	5%	5%	4%	1%	11%	16%
2	20%	34%	23%	94%	34%	32%
2.5	0%	1%	0%	1%	2%	1%
3	44%	37%	43%	4%	37%	40%
3.5	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
4	31%	23%	29%	0%	15%	11%

	Organization	Content	Purpose	Academic Language	Supporting Material	Technique
%>=2	95%	95%	96%	99%	88%	84%
%>=3	75%	60%	73%	4%	52%	51%

(Note: The scores of 2.5 and 3.5 were given due one reviewer's misunderstanding that has been corrected.)

What SRSU Learned as a Result of Compass

The process of accreditation and implementing Compass has taught us much.

- Collecting data and storing it is not easy to manage, especially across offices and campuses; our solution was to develop the Blackboard Navigators' Organizational site.
- QEP and assessment don't end with the approval of accreditation from SACSCOC; it just begins.
- Overall, scores for the visual communication artifacts were qualitatively lower than scores for either the oral or written communication artifacts. Moreover, between all three modes of communication, among the six categories measured on the QEP Cardinal Rubric, student performance was rated the lowest for Academic Language. Consequently, we recommend future professional development opportunities focus on demonstrating effective teaching of visual communication techniques and improving academic language at the collegiate level would be beneficial.
- Faculty consistently report that the opportunity to engage in a variety of Professional Development events has improved their ability to teach communication skills
- Replace the numerical scale (1, 2, 3, and 4) with the designations, Formative, Developing, Satisfactory, and Exemplary. Thus, making the categorical nature of the evaluation clearer.
- Create instructions for submitting digital artifacts for the next review session in the Spring to promote ease of access.
- Communicating among QEP Executive Committee, Faculty Guides, and Navigators is important.

In short, it appears as though our faculty must be fully versed in why and how best to implement effective communication skills into their courses. During this academic year, the QEP continued to sponsor multiple Faculty Development events. This included formal events such as inviting an external expert from ASCD as well as hosting our own internal "Book Talk" series. Additionally, QEP hosted several informal gatherings including a Navigator lunch and New Year's party. Faculty consistently report these Professional Development events have had a positive impact on how they communicate and instruct QEP objectives to their students. We attribute that to the faculty development workshops on communication that Institutional Effectiveness and the QEP Executive Committee sponsored and the leadership of our Faculty Guides.

Budget Summary

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

Table 3

Year Two (FY20) Budget by Category				
	Year Two Proposed		Year Two Actual	
Campus	*Alpine*	*RGC*	Alpine	RGC
Personnel				
QEP Coordinators	*$15,360*	*$15,360*	$15,360	$15,360
Secretary	*$2,560*		$2560	$2560
Data Coordinator	*$2,560*		$2,560	
Faculty Guide Number of Guides	*$2,560* *2*	*$1,280* *1*	$2,560 2	$1,280 1
Faculty Navigator Number of Navigators=15360=	*$15,360* *12*	*$10,240* *8*	$12,800 10	$5,120 4
FY20 Personnel Sum	*$38,400*	*$26,880*	$35,840	$24,320
Maintenance and Operation (M&O)				
Professional development	*$20,000*	*$5,240*	$13,783.03	$1263.81
Assessment	*$2,300*	*$1,450*	$0	$0
Marketing	*$9,530*	*$3,000*	$2,163.80	$1007.07
Operations	*$9,000*	*$2,000*	$8,465.35	$963.54
Student incentives	*$4,000*	*$2,000*	$1,284.28	$500.06
Travel				
Intercampus travel	*$2,000*	*$2,000*	$1,419.04	$1,941.47
Annual conference	*$5,000*	*$4,000*	$3,609.00	$0
FY20 M&O and Travel Sum	*$52,830*	*$19,690*	$30,724.50	$5,675.95
QEP TOTAL COST	**$83,550**	**$41,450**	**$66,564.50**	**$29,995.95**

In FY20, the QEP did not spend the entire $125,000 budget because the onset of COVID-19 meant that we were unable to attend conferences and in-person professional development. Because of budget cuts from the state legislature and because of the savings due to COVID,

the QEP contributed approximately $30,000 to the university to help address the state-mandated budget cuts. We have plans to expend the full, allocated QEP budget for FY21.

In FY21, to maximize our budget to affect student learning, we plan the following:
- Purchasing books for more book studies
- Additional professional development (including a third 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, Data Analyst, Navigators, Faculty Guides and two part-time administrative assistants.

Projection: Year Three

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 Three, we have added 6 new Navigators (5 in Alpine, 1 in Del Rio) to teach Mapped Classes. 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 FY21. 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. Ryan Luna. Dr. Thomas Matula, at Uvalde, stepped into the role of Faculty Guide when Dr. Tiffany Culver left the university this summer.

For the 2020-2021 academic year, increased instructional focus will be placed on the Academic Language component of the QEP Cardinal Rubric. Since 94% of students scored at the level of 2 (see the table on page 8), several professional development opportunities will be provided for faculty to enhance their techniques for teaching Academic Language.

The biggest sign of success for a QEP is sustainability. The QEP Cardinal Rubric has been embraced outside of Mapped Courses this year. It has been integrated in the teacher preparation Science of Teaching Reading program and by the program coordinators in the Education Master of Education degree programs. Educators in Alpine ISD have requested to use it in their courses beginning Fall 2020. Our experienced QEP Navigators and QEP Faculty Guide have provided guidance to these groups to effectively apply the QEP Cardinal Rubric.

Our QEP was recognized as an exemplary plan and included in the Resource Room at the 2019 SACSCOC Annual Meeting. In addition, Co-Coordinator April Aultman Becker presented our QEP and took questions from an audience of more than 50 attendees. We have been asked to present our plan again at the 2020 Annual Meeting.

We plan to continue our QEP New Year's Party, the major QEP event of the year, held on both the Alpine and RGC campuses. On January 23 and 24, 2019, we welcomed Dr. Mariko Izumi, communication scholar 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 FY21, we have invited Dr. Tisha Paredes, another communication scholar and SACSCOC SRSU On-Site Reviewer, to be our guest speaker.

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.

Table 4

QEP CALENDAR YEAR TWO		
DATE	LOCATION	EVENT
August 6, 2020	Zoom meeting	Orientation for Navigators
August 30, 2020	HB2504 site	Fall QEP Syllabi upload

September 1, 2020	Email blast	QEP student contest on all campuses
October 1, 2020	Sent via email	QEP Fall Newsletter published
October 8, 9, 2020	Alpine UC, RGC	ASCD Professional Development: Disciplinary Literacy
October, 2020	QEP BlackBoard site	Navigator discussion questions due
October, 2020	Zoom/F2F	QEP Book Talk discussion #1
October, 2020	Zoom/F2F	QEP Book Talk discussion #2
November, 2020	Zoom/F2F	QEP Book Talk discussion #3
November, 2020	Library Classroom	ETS testing
December, 2020	Nashville, TN	SACSCOC Annual Meeting
December, 2020	Blackboard	Posting of Student Artifacts
January 17, 2021	HB2504 site	Spring QEP Syllabi upload
January, 2021	Alpine UC, RGC	QEP Networking Luncheon
January, 2021	Alpine UC, RGC	QEP New Year's Party
February, 2021	Blackboard	Navigators Post Discussion Questions
February 1, 2021	Sent via email	QEP Spring Newsletter published
February, 2021	QEP BlackBoard site	Navigator discussion question due
April, 2021	Library Classroom	ETS testing
May, 2021	Blackboard	Posting of Student Artifacts
May, 2021	Zoom	Assessment Faculty Cohort Scoring
May, 2021	Alpine Country Club	Annual Navigator and Guide Banquet
July, 2021	TBA	SACSCOC Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation Conference