connect
start **smart.** finish **strong.**

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) of Texarkana College (TC), **Connect: Start Smart. Finish Strong**. is designed to enhance student success, retention, and completion rates through three principal strategies: 1. Faculty academic advisors, 2. Learning Frameworks course, and 3. Early Alert System (EAS).

TC utilized institutional, state, and national data to identify areas likely to yield the greatest impact to student success for its students. The process to identify and to develop the QEP began in fall 2013 with a data review by TC faculty and staff. Subsequent focus groups and surveys in fall 2013 and spring 2014 provided additional data to determine the focus of the QEP. After a careful consideration of all available data, including student input, the TC QEP Committee announced enhanced advising as the focus of the QEP.

Specific features of TC's plan to enhance advising were developed after a thorough review of current literature and best practices associated with advising. This research relied heavily on data associated with the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) and the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE). In particular, the high impact practices identified in the three report series produced in the CCCSE special initiative "Identifying and Promoting High-Impact Educational Practices in Community Colleges" were a primary consideration in the development of Texarkana College's QEP.

Outcomes identified in the QEP clearly reflect the mission of Texarkana College which is guided by core beliefs, including the belief that "Our highest priority is increasing the number of people with higher education credentials in our region." Accordingly, TC's QEP will measure improvements in student success as measured by a GPA > 2.0, and improvements in retention, persistence and completion compared to benchmarks established prior to implementation of the plan. TC began piloting the plan in fall 2015.

The three primary strategies of *Connect: Start Smart. Finish Strong.* are designed to enhance the learning environment of Texarkana College by facilitating an institutional culture characterized by collaborative and proactive advising relationships to promote student learning and success. Throughout the development of the QEP, QEP Committee members consistently sought broad-based involvement from all sectors of the College to verify the institutional commitment and capacity in terms of personnel, financial, physical, and academic resources. The result is a dynamic plan that is poised to deliver measurable results both now and long into the future.

Texarkana College SACSCOC Liaison/QEP Director: Dr. Dixon Boyles, Dean of Business & Social Sciences
johndixon.boyles@texarkanacollege.edu

TEXARKANA COLLEGE

QEP IMPACT REPORT

Initial Goals and Intended Outcomes

Texarkana College's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Connect: Start Smart, Finish Strong was designed to improve student academic success, retention, persistence, and completion. Accordingly, Connect: Start Smart; Finish Strong included four primary goals and outcomes:

- Increase the percentage of students experiencing academic success as defined by a GPA greater than 2.0 as compared to a 2013-2014 benchmark;
- Increase the retention of students as compared to 2013-2014 benchmark;
- Increase the persistence of students as compared to benchmark of 2013-2014; and
- Increase the percentage of students who complete within three years as compared to 2013-2014 benchmark.

The plan incorporated three strategies for accomplishing the outcomes: 1. A redesign of academic advising to include the use of faculty academic advisors; 2. The adoption of EDUC/PSYC 1300 (Learning Frameworks) into the core curriculum; and 3. The development and implementation of an Early Alert System. The plan also included secondary outcomes associated with each of the three strategies included in the QEP.
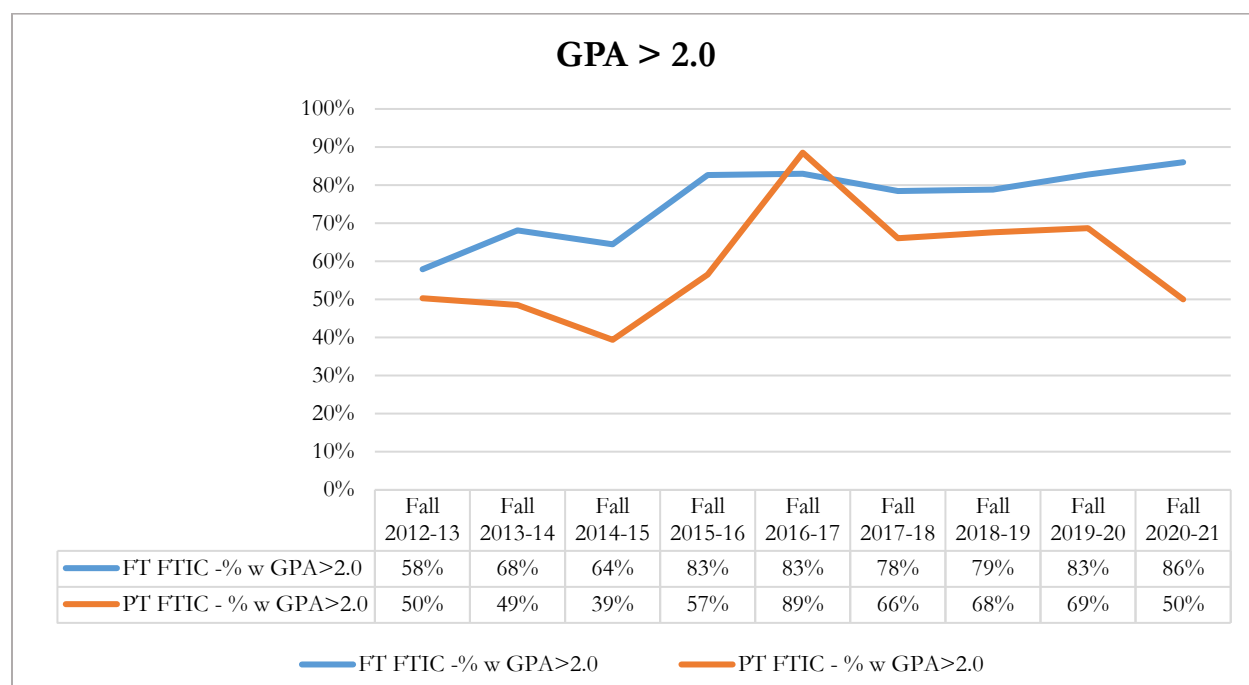
Changes Made to the QEP

Texarkana College has been substantially consistent in its adherence to two of the three primary strategies of its QEP as originally designed. Following full adoption of the plan in fall 2016, students at Texarkana College are required to complete PSYC 1300 (Learning Frameworks) during which time they are also assigned a faculty member as their academic advisor.

However, substantial changes have occurred in the development and implementation of the Early Alert System (EAS) originally projected for year two of the plan. The QEP indicated that the EAS would rely on predictive analytic components integrating Civitas Illume with data supplied by Jenzabar to identify at-risk populations, momentum points, and other factors associated with student success, retention, persistence, and completion to facilitate timely outreach and intervention. We had anticipated that the technology used would allow for real time analysis based on demographic and other characteristics as identified by the College or suggested by external sources. However, the College ultimately determined the full implementation of Civitas to be cost prohibitive, and current EAS methods rely on Jenzabar exclusively for data and software.

To date, EAS efforts have focused primarily on attendance although research and discussions continue on how best to proceed in this area. There have been several delays with the collaborative development of our retention model with Jenzabar. Further, research reported by the Community College Research Center (CCRC) and other researchers at IPASS convenings and other professional conferences have caused concerns that the best use of predictive analytical data has not yet been determined with regard to actual practice.
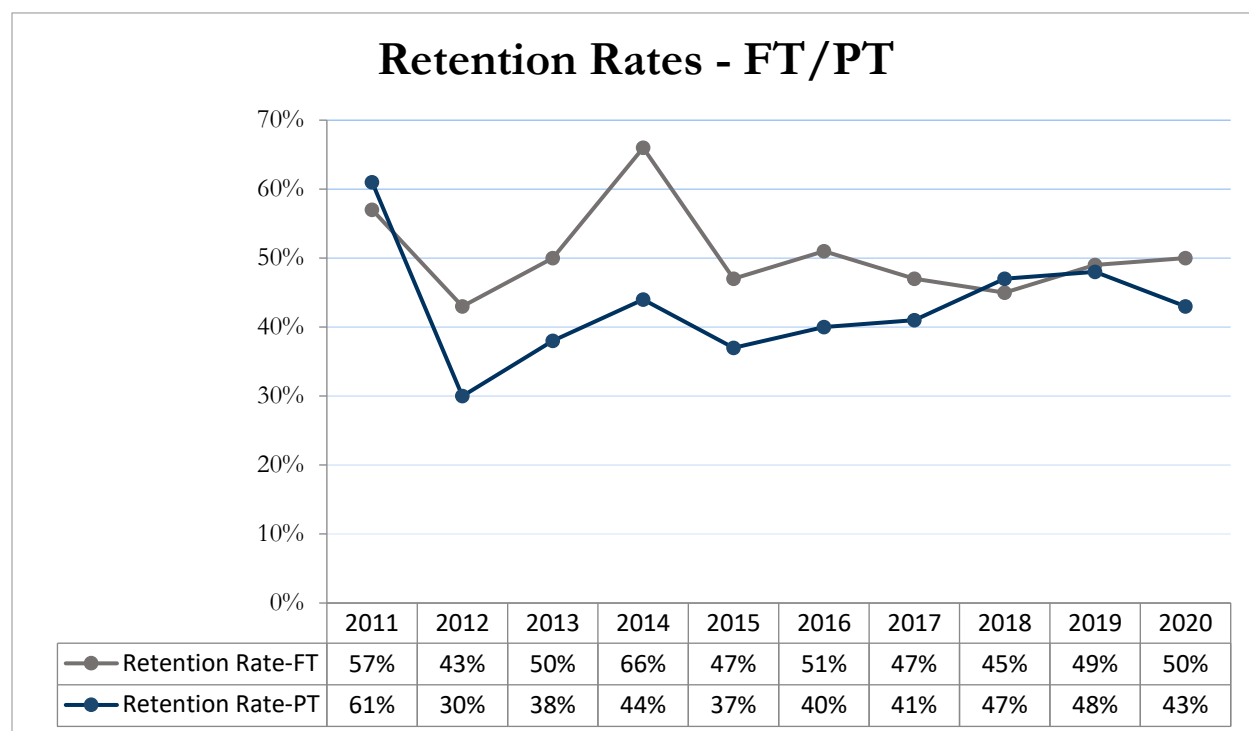
Impact on Learning and/or Environment
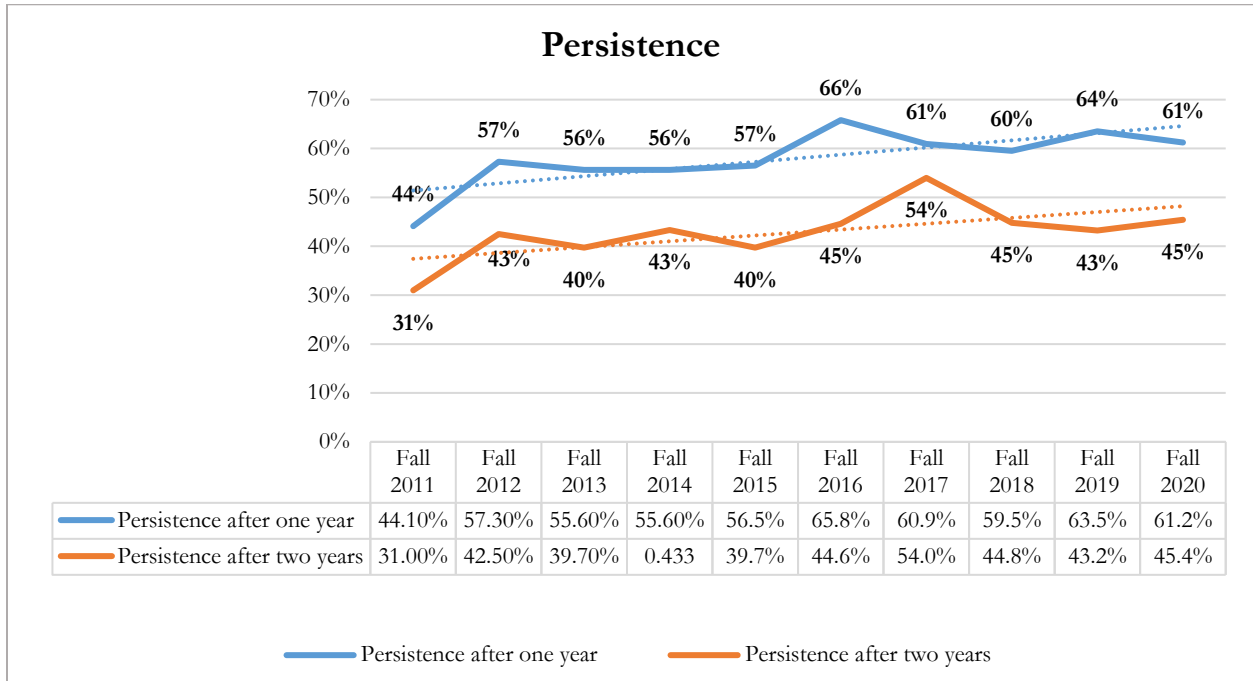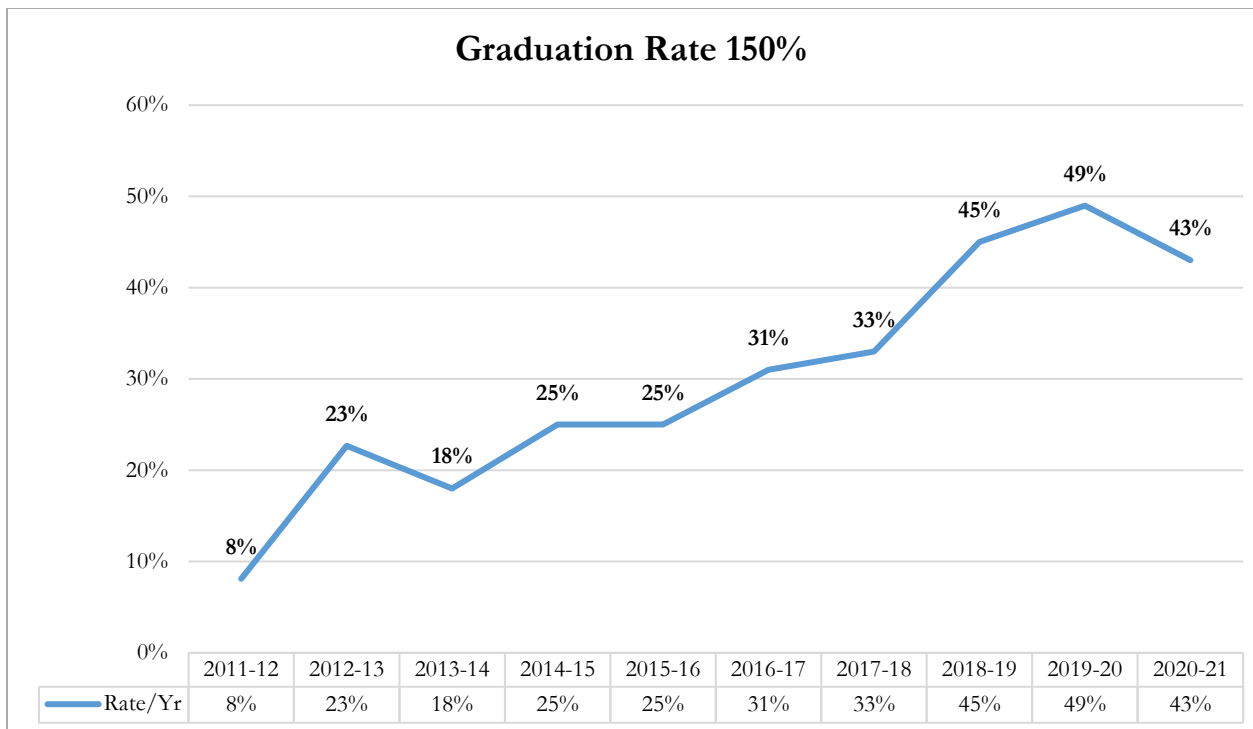
GPA greater than 2.0

GPA > 2.0

	Fall 2012-13	Fall 2013-14	Fall 2014-15	Fall 2015-16	Fall 2016-17	Fall 2017-18	Fall 2018-19	Fall 2019-20	Fall 2020-21
FT FTIC -% w GPA>2.0	58%	68%	64%	83%	83%	78%	79%	83%	86%
PT FTIC - % w GPA>2.0	50%	49%	39%	57%	89%	66%	68%	69%	50%

— FT FTIC -% w GPA>2.0   — PT FTIC - % w GPA>2.0

Data source: Jenzabar

Retention

Retention Rates - FT/PT

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Retention Rate-FT	57%	43%	50%	66%	47%	51%	47%	45%	49%	50%
Retention Rate-PT	61%	30%	38%	44%	37%	40%	41%	47%	48%	43%

Data Source: IPEDS

Persistence

Persistence

	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
Persistence after one year	44.10%	57.30%	55.60%	55.60%	56.5%	65.8%	60.9%	59.5%	63.5%	61.2%
Persistence after two years	31.00%	42.50%	39.70%	0.433	39.7%	44.6%	54.0%	44.8%	43.2%	45.4%

—— Persistence after one year   —— Persistence after two years

Data Source: THECB Accountability

Completion within 3 years

Graduation Rate 150%

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Rate/Yr	8%	23%	18%	25%	25%	31%	33%	45%	49%	43%

Data Source: IPEDS

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) of Texarkana College (TC), *Connect: Start Smart; Finish Strong*, was designed to enhance student success, retention, persistence, and completion rates through three principal strategies: 1. Faculty academic advisors, 2. Learning Frameworks course, and 3. Early Alert System (EAS). TC utilized institutional, state, and national data to identify areas likely to yield the greatest impact to student success for its students.

The College began piloting the plan in fall 2015 with a full rollout in fall 2016, and results reported by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) demonstrate its success. Data provided by the Texas Higher Education Almanac verify that the three-year graduation rate for students at Texarkana College has increased throughout implementation of the plan, rising from 18.7% in 2014 to 32% in 2015, 32.1% in 2016, 34.7% in 2017, and eventually to 45.8% in 2018, the highest three-year graduation rate of any Texas community college and more than double the state average (22.8%). TC's 3-Year Graduation Rate peaked in 2019 at 49.7%.

2018

	TC		STATE
2015 Cohort 3-Year Graduation Rate (2018)	45.8%		22.8%
2014 Cohort 4-Year Graduation Rate (2018)	39.2%		30.3%
2012 Cohort 6-Year Graduation Rate (2018)	46.3%		36.9%

2019

	TC		STATE
2016 Cohort 3-Year Graduation Rate (2019)	49.7%		24.2%
2015 Cohort 4-Year Graduation Rate (2019)	52.7%		31.6%
2013 Cohort 6-Year Graduation Rate (2019)	40.7%		39.1%

2020

	TC		STATE
2017 Cohort 3-Year Graduation Rate (2020)	43.2%		25.2%
2016 Cohort 4-Year Graduation Rate (2020)	54.5%		33.2%
2014 Cohort 6-Year Graduation Rate (2020)	42.7%		42.3%

Data Source: THECB Accountability

Improvement and Excellence
Texarkana College's QEP vision remains the transformation of its institutional culture to lead to improvements in student academic success, retention, persistence, and completion. These are ambitious goals, but with the plan, the people, and the technological infrastructure in place to accomplish them, we are well on our way to accomplishing a student-centered institution in which student success is of primary importance. Furthermore, we have the evidence to support our claim.

Completion Rates

In 2017, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) data reported Texarkana College's 3-year graduation rate at 31.2%, up 21 points from its 2008 cohort, and more than twice as high as the average for state community colleges (15%). We are also proud to report that the THECB verified that out our 4-year completion rate for the 2013 cohort was the highest of all Texas community colleges at 39.2% compared to a state average of 24.6%. Impressively, during that same period, Texarkana College also achieved a completion rate for African American males of 32.9%, marking a huge increase from the 2009 cohort of 3.7%. While there are real stories behind these significant improvements in completion numbers, much work remains to be done to ensure that all students achieve the success that is so important to their future and that of their families. IPEDs data confirm the increased completion rate of African American males following implementation of the plan.

3. Completion – IPEDS - 150%	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
All	**12%**	**23%**	**18%**	**25%**	**31%**	**33%**	**45%**	**49%**	**43%**
Men	**7%**	**17%**	**20%**	**33%**	**38%**	**31%**	**50%**	**54%**	**44%**
AA Men	4%	18%	21%	23%	33%	34%	50%	52%	39%
Hispanic Men	40%	0%	30%	53%	40%	37%	73%	61%	37%
White Men	6%	19%	19%	34%	43%	29%	51%	53%	50%
Other Men	0%	4%	20%	38%	11%	29%	20%	63%	33%
Women	**16%**	**30%**	**15%**	**19%**	**26%**	**35%**	**45%**	**43%**	**41%**
AA Women	8%	17%	7%	11%	14%	20%	32%	30%	23%
Hispanic Women	47%	44%	13%	41%	32%	19%	67%	44%	50%
White Women	18%	32%	20%	23%	33%	44%	42%	47%	47%
Other Women	17%	50%	14%	0%	22%	33%	36%	50%	31%

Data Source: IPEDS

Moreover, the data demonstrate increased completion rates for all groups reported.

QEP Strategy 1: Academic Advising

The student experience of advising and planning looks much different than it did in fall 2015 when our QEP efforts began. First, the College implemented the use of faculty advisors beginning in fall 2015 to foster active and collaborative relationships between faculty advisors and their student advisees in which students learn to create, develop, define, and achieve academic and career goals. Through this process, students also learn to take responsibility for their decisions, especially those related to their educational and career goals. The advisor/advisee relationship is based on clear expectations and responsibilities regarding the roles of advisors and advisees. Faculty advisors complete mandatory advisor training and are provided with a binder filled with a comprehensive set of advising materials. Advisor training includes an introduction to the Appreciative Advising model, a strengths-based approach which serves as the conceptual framework for academic advising at the College. Advisors are also provided with copies of degree plans, information regarding developmental placement, and lists of important dates as well as an advising checklist. Faculty advisors receive information on what to expect at initial and subsequent meetings with advisees as well as FAQs they can expect to encounter. Because advisors also have access to student records through Jenzabar, they are

well informed to direct students to institutional and other support services as appropriate. Before Texarkana College began its QEP initiative, the student: advisor ratio was 450:1. By fall 2016, that ratio had been reduced to 50:1. It is now 23:1, and an original staff of only six professional advisors has now grown to over ninety professional and faculty advisors. Leadership is from the highest level, and the Vice President of Instruction and all academic deans also serve as faculty advisors.

Texarkana College also redesigned its enrollment services (including physical space) to provide a more personal approach to recruitment, enrollment, advising, and financial aid services; implemented a new ERP system to provide seamless technology to facilitate enrollment, advising, financial aid, communication, and academic and student support services; implemented block and compressed scheduling; implemented the Connect plan; and launched a TRIO program.

QEP Strategy 2: Learning Frameworks
The second major QEP strategy adopted by the College was the implementation of a Learning Frameworks class into its core curriculum in fall 2016. Learning Frameworks was added to all academic degree plans and is now required for all First Time In College (FTIC) students. Initial cohorts began in 2015-2016 with full implementation for all FTIC students in 2016-2017. Student learning outcomes for this class include student identification of programs and career opportunities that are consistent with their educational goals, student completion of an educational plan, and student understanding of advisor/advisee expectations and responsibilities. Curriculum materials for the class include *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective College Students* and other texts provided by the University of Texas Dana Center. Additionally, the class includes course content related to cognitive and student development theory. The class also helps to facilitate the initial meetings between students and their faculty advisors. Learning Frameworks is cross listed with psychology and education prefixes (PSYC/EDUC 1300), and the Vice President of Instruction and several of the academic deans regularly teach sections of the class. All faculty teaching the class meet regularly to evaluate curriculum strategies and class activities.

QEP Strategy 3: Early Alert System

Third, the College implemented an Early Alert System (EAS) in 2016-2017. The EAS relies on predictive analytic components with data supplied by Jenzabar to identify at-risk populations, momentum points, and other factors associated with student success, retention, persistence, and completion to facilitate timely outreach and intervention. The technology used allows for real time analysis based on demographic and other characteristics as identified by the College or suggested by external sources. To date, EAS efforts have focused primarily on attendance although research and discussions continue on how best to proceed in this area.

Effect on Developmental Education

Aggregated data demonstrate the effectiveness of *Connect: Start Smart. Finish Strong.* for students of all levels of college preparedness when they enter. Policy changes to streamline placement practices reduced the time required to be fully college ready. Students who enter requiring developmental classes are becoming TSI met in all areas more quickly and completing

college level courses in math, reading, and writing at rates that have more than tripled in all three areas since implementation of the plan.

Underprepared Students who Satisfy TSI in 2 years	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**
Met Math	19%	31%	52%	58%	46%
Met Reading	34%	51%	51%	75%	72%
Met Writing	34%	45%	54%	73%	71%
Underprepared Students who complete College Level Course	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**
Math	11%	25%	37%	32%	30%
Reading	16%	43%	54%	69%	68%
Writing	20%	37%	55%	60%	63%

Students entering Texarkana College who are already TSI met have also seen significant increases in completion of college level courses of all types.

Prepared Students who complete College Level Course	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**
Math	49%	47%	66%	64%	77%
Reading	66%	68%	88%	86%	89%
Writing	68%	64%	79%	80%	79%

Data Source: THECB Accountability

Acceleration toward a Degree
Students are now required to declare a major and can only enroll in coursework that applies to the major, thus improving allocation of financial aid resources to last until completion and simultaneously reducing time to completion. These changes have reduced excess hours taken and have accelerated process toward a degree.

Some unintended impacts of the QEP include a reduction in the average semester credit hours to a degree from 82 SCH in 2015 to 69 SCH in 2020, a reduction in the average time to a degree in years from 4.1 to 3.6, a reduction in excess SCH attempted toward a degree from 22 to 9, and an increase in Associate degree graduates with no more than 3 excess SCH from 19.6% to 45.2%. All of these measures of success are better than the State averages for each measurement.

Excess Semester Credit Hours attempted	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Total	22	17	16	12	10	9

2020 State Average is 22 SCH

Associate Degree Graduates with no more than 3 excess hours	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
	19.6%	33.0%	33.3%	42.6%	42.3%	45.2%

Data Source THECB Accountability   *2020 State Average is 24.37%*

Since implementation of *Connect: Start Smart. Finish Strong.* students at the College have also enjoyed a consistent reduction in time to a degree and semester credit hours.

Average Time to Degree in Years	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
	4.1	4	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.6

*2020 State Average is 3.9 years

Average SCH to Degree	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
	82	77	76	72	70	69

Data Source THECB Accountability   *2020 State Average is 82 SCH*

Student Engagement
Research demonstrates a clear association between student engagement and completion. One innovation to our QEP designed to increase student engagement that has been conceived since the implementation of the plan was the development and implementation of the "Connect: Start Smart. Finish Strong," interactive pathway. This interactive tool provides students with a visualized simulation of their progress toward academic and career goals. The pathway includes links to a wide range of resources designed to increase student engagement with campus life at the College, including access to academic pathways and metamajors, student support services, financial aid, academic advising, and career planning among other subjects. Features highlighted along the pathway are incorporated into the curriculum of the Learning Frameworks classes required of all FTIC students and also reinforced in advisor training activities and duties. The pathway is both desktop and mobile friendly and may be customized to each individual student's experience and progress at the College. Future plans call for students to be rewarded for their progress toward a degree through notices similar to those used in computer games and fitness trackers to acknowledge achievement of milestones and to nudge them further along the pathway to completion. While unique to Texarkana College, the "Connect: Start Smart. Finish Strong." interactive pathway provides a model for other institutions who wish to design similar instruments specific to their own campuses and missions and has been presented at national as well as state conferences.

Moreover, the 2017 Community College Survey of Student Engagement indicates that Texarkana College is outperforming its peer group on several indicators of student engagement related to academic advising. For example, 65.6% of TC students reported receiving "academic advising/planning" 2-4 times or 5 or more times compared to 59.2% for the 2017 CCSSE Cohort. Additionally, 84.9% of TC students reported meeting with their academic advisors at least once during the current academic term at the time of survey compared to 74.1% for the 2017 CCSSE Cohort. Furthermore, 56.6% of TC students reported two or more meetings with advisors during the term compared to 45.3% of the 2017 cohort.

Assessment
We have developed a robust assessment plan to measure the effectiveness of our QEP. Our review of literature and best practices indicated that assessment methods should ideally employ the "ABC" strategy of <u>affective</u> outcomes, e.g. student perceptions of advisor effectiveness; <u>behavioral</u> outcomes, e.g. student use of campus resources; and <u>cognitive</u> outcomes, e.g. student self-knowledge and curricular knowledge; and our QEP addresses all of these areas.

Assessment instruments are designed to include specific advisor characteristics and behaviors deemed indicative of high quality advising by the institution. Students are also asked to provide data related to their own behavior as advisees. Student evaluations of advisors include open-ended questions to allow for comments about advisors' relative strengths and suggestions for improvement. Assessment results are used to plan professional development of advisors and also to identify specific performance improvement strategies. Finally, advisors are encouraged to share effective practices with other advisors, and all advisors are asked for input regarding overall program effectiveness.

Reflection

Change occurs on our campus *purposefully.* We have been forced to face several challenges, especially financial ones, in recent years that required us to be brutally honest about problems within our institution. Fortunately, our administration is led by a forward-thinking president who is supported by a dynamic, broad-based leadership team who are committed to using data to inform decisions and who are also not afraid to pursue changes in order to improve. In other words, we seek change with a purpose in mind. We do our research, make our plans, and set about accomplishing them. The three strategies of our plan to improve student outcomes have been designed to accomplish a specific, realistic purpose, incorporating as many current best practices as possible. Our institutional mission includes the belief that increasing the number of students in our service area who receive a higher educational credential is our highest priority, and institutional decisions are made with that purpose in mind. We have a strategic plan that supports the mission of the College as well as unit plans that identify measurable departmental and learning outcomes that reflect that mission. Outcomes are assessed, and improvements are planned based on those findings. At the same time, we support and pursue professional development activities and resources to ensure that we are continuously seeking the most effective methods as identified by current research and practice. Our decision to focus on advising to improve student academic success, retention, persistence, and completion required several changes on our campus, and we have approached those changes purposefully. Texarkana College has reached the "critical mass" required to accomplish sustainable, systemic change in its QEP efforts, and that mass is composed of a broad range of faculty and staff. Faculty and staff hiring practices have been revised to reflect an emphasis on academic advising. Further, instruments for the evaluation of full-time faculty have also been revised to include items specifically related to their effectiveness as academic advisors.

While we have accomplished much of what we intended in our initial QEP plans in 2016, other challenges and issues have emerged that will be a consideration in all future plans. Perhaps the most significant of these is the development of academic pathways. All Texarkana College certificate and degree programs have been incorporated into one of eight metamajors. Course requirements for each program have also been organized into clear semester-by-semester pathways leading to graduation. The metamajors themselves are designed to inspire academic and career exploration by students at any level. A substantial portion of college enrollment is through dual enrollment students who are simultaneously pursuing high school and college credits. Texas state law now allows for high school students to enroll in college classes as early as the ninth grade. Correspondingly, the College has begun the expansion of Learning Frameworks classes and academic advising into our dual credit classes in collaboration with our partner public schools. Such collaboration presents challenges in technology and training for faculty and staff at multiple locations as well as consideration of developmental factors

associated with the age groups involved. We will continue to seek additional support for professional development and innovative technology to assist us in our ongoing and future efforts regarding our traditional, non-traditional, and dual credit student populations.

 Our efforts to improve student outcomes including completion are being accomplished through the integration of planning and advising services. The three functionalities emphasized in the QEP initiative—educational planning, counseling and coaching, and risk targeting and intervention--- are consistent with best practices supported by research throughout community colleges and have been implemented within our plan. As suggested earlier, the Texarkana College plan involves the extensive collaboration of TC faculty with IT, IR, enrollment services, and other professional staff. Such collaboration is only possible in a student-centered culture that values teamwork and communication. Fortunately, students come first at Texarkana College.