



ADVISING:
PATHWAYS FOR
SUCCESS

Quality Enhancement Plan

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler

Quality Enhancement Plan

2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler (UTHSCT) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is titled *Advising: Pathways for Success*. The QEP name reflects the university's overarching commitment to student success as the foundation for developing the next generation of professionals in public health, health administration, and biomedical research. Further, it emphasizes the critical role that faculty and staff play in the preparation of students for meaningful careers with the knowledge and skills to make a positive impact. Because academic planning is a critical component of student success, academic advising will improve outcomes and add value to the student experience in preparation for careers and advanced study in a variety of related fields. Thus, enhanced academic advising is a catalyst for student success (Twaina et al., 2018).

The QEP outlines a plan for the implementation of a more comprehensive advising system that will guide students through the necessary coursework, engage them with faculty, and make them aware of important resources that may aid them in pursuit of a graduate degree and subsequently a career. Illuminating the importance of planning, the QEP will raise awareness of student success and create an environment more conducive to academic support and life-long learning. Faculty and staff members will engage in workshops and join professional associations around the topic of health profession advising to build a more robust team of professionals who will guide students in the planning and preparation process.

Advising: Pathways for Success is forward-thinking in a variety of ways because it is derived from data provided by students, coupled with feedback from faculty, and seeks to deliver on the needs identified by industry leaders in health sciences and biomedical research. The Office of Academic Affairs already engages students during their registration, but a focus on advising provides the human, physical, and capital resources and commitment to deliver a more comprehensive service based on identified gaps that are part of the growth of a young institution. This plan integrates the faculty and staff component through a technological platform to enhance communication, organize information, and connect students with resources.

Leveraging the current growth trajectory and priorities identified in the UTHSCT strategic plan, the QEP aligns with the institutional plan for student success. The QEP development process commenced with a campus-wide planning retreat in the Spring of 2018. UTHSCT has developed a QEP that underpins the institution's mission to "serve Northeast Texas and beyond through excellent patient care and community health, comprehensive education, and innovative research." The QEP will promote and enhance student success with a focus on academic advising. This effort will encourage collaboration between students, faculty, and staff to improve student access to support services and empower students to take ownership of their learning and preparation for their careers with mentorship and guidance from key stakeholders. In addition, UTHSCT faculty and

staff will take a proactive approach to advising by reaching out to students with specific resources relating to concerns about academic process, scholarly performance, and campus involvement (Noaman & Ahmed, 2015).

Following the campus-wide solicitation of Requests for Proposal (RFP), the Office of the Provost appointed a QEP Steering Committee to solicit further ideas and provide information about the process for selection, implementation, and assessment. The QEP Development Steering Committee consists of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community stakeholders, including industry partners.

INTRODUCTION

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler (UTHSCT) offers three degree-granting programs in two health-related schools: the UTHSCT School of Medical Biological Sciences and the UTHSCT School of Community and Rural Health. Benefiting from renowned faculty and affiliation with a large university-based health system, students can hone research skills, build meaningful relationships, and prepare for impactful careers in public health, research, and administration. The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) focusing on student success through enhanced academic advising aligns with the mission, vision, and values of the institution and will support and empower faculty and staff to improve the academic advising process to include professional and career guidance.

The faculty is comprised of over 250 individuals who train health profession students and researchers. Conducting life-saving research and health interventions, UTHSCT faculty garner significant support from federal agencies, including the National Institutes of Health, along with private and state organizations.

University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler Mission and Values

- UTHSCT's *mission* is to serve Northeast Texas and beyond through excellent patient care and community health, comprehensive education, and innovative research.
- UTHSCT's *vision* states that we will be a great institution, unified in common purpose, to benefit human health and to improve quality of life.

University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler's *core values*:

- EXCELLENCE
We will work every day to improve UTHSCT and our job performance.
- SERVANT LEADERSHIP
We will put the needs of our patients and co-workers first.

- **DIVERSITY**
We will respect and appreciate diversity in ideas, people, and cultures.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY**
We will use the resources of UTHSCT wisely.

Accomplishing the mission of UTHSCT requires ongoing assessment, evaluation, and improvement. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) reaffirmation process requires member institutions to develop a QEP to identify a topic vital to student success.

Following extensive deliberation, the QEP Development Planning Committee selected Academic Advising as the focus for the university's QEP topic. Although UTHSCT provides academic support for students, this selection will allow a focus on student outcomes relating to degree planning, career development, and networking. This topic provides a stronger focus on student success and aligns with the UTHSCT Strategic Plan for 2019-2026: *2.4 Develop educational infrastructure and online capabilities to meet the needs of students better*. Further, data from student surveys strongly support the selection of this topic.

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler's QEP (a) has a topic identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation process; (b) has broad-based support of institutional constituencies; (c) focuses on improving student success; (d) commits resources to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP; and (e) includes a plan to assess achievement.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE TOPIC

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler identified the QEP topic with the utilization of data derived from its ongoing, comprehensive process for planning and evaluation. Affirming the institution's commitment to quality and effectiveness, the plan centers on a topic critical to the students' success. This plan reflects overarching strategic goals identified by the institution and is supported by data from key constituencies.

Following extensive deliberation, the QEP Development Planning Committee selected Academic Advising as the focus for the university's QEP topic. Although UTHSCT provides academic support for students, this selection will allow a focus on specific aims relating to degree planning, career development, and networking in the form of advising. This topic aligns with the UTHSCT Strategic Plan for 2019-2026: *2.4 Develop educational infrastructure and online capabilities to meet the needs of students better*. Further, data from student surveys strongly support the selection of this topic. The selection of academic advising as the topic for the UTHSCT QEP aligns with the strategic plan and supports the institution's mission. Undergirded by multiple data sources, this

project will enhance student success and is measurable through the development of an overarching goal supported by specific aims. Data sources include (1) surveys administered by the Institutional Effectiveness office, (2) information obtained during the QEP planning retreat, (3) and focus groups with key stakeholders.

STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY DATA

As part of the ongoing planning and evaluation process, students at UTHSCT participate annually in a student satisfaction survey that evaluates a variety of key services and functions relevant to student success. Faculty, staff, and administrators access data from the annual survey to inform the decision-making process. The areas of data analysis include:

- General Academics
- Interprofessional Education
- Technology
- Physical Environment
- Library, General
- Library, Physical
- Student Health Services
- Student Services
- Financial Aid
- Registrar
- Student Life
- Open-Ended Question

During the initial phases of the QEP, development steering committee members reviewed results from the most recent Student Satisfaction Survey and identified critical areas for improvement. The topic of academic advising emerged from student data and is supported by the institutional strategic plan as well as faculty feedback elicited in a focus group research project to vet the topic. The Student Satisfaction Survey summary, methodology, and demographics are presented below.

STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

SUMMARY

- The *2018-2019 Student Satisfaction Survey* represents a complete revision from the survey administered in previous years. Therefore, a direct comparison to previous results cannot be made.
- The following are the most important factors in a student's decision to attend UTHSCT: (1) affordable tuition, (2) programs offered, and (3) interprofessional educational opportunities.

- As expected, open-ended comments reflect diverse topics that offer specific opportunities for continuous improvement. Readers should exercise caution in evaluating isolated comments, as they may not reflect the opinion of the whole but may offer important insights for consideration.

METHODOLOGY

The 2018-2019 Student Satisfaction Survey was administered in Spring 2019. The data collection period lasted one week (April 22-28, 2019). Targeted participants included all students enrolled at UTHSCT as of January 29, 2019. The initial invitation to complete the online survey was sent via email through Scantron by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. A subsequent reminder was sent via email to non-respondents daily before data collection ended. Information about the survey was posted in electronic announcements, via email, and the learning management system.

DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 18 of 39 students responded to the survey, resulting in a response rate of 46%. Respondents represented the School of Community and Rural Health (SCRH) (61.1%) and the School of Medical Biological Sciences (SMBS) (38.9%).

Figure 1. The response rate for each school. Responses are calculated by dividing the number of respondents in each school by the total number of targeted students in that school. With the highest student enrollment at UTHSCT, SCRH also had the highest number of survey respondents (28) but the lowest response rate (39.3%) across schools. With the lowest student enrollment at UTHSCT, SMBS also had the lowest number of survey respondents (7) but the highest response rate (63.6%) across all schools as evidenced in charts below.

Figure 1. Response Rate by School

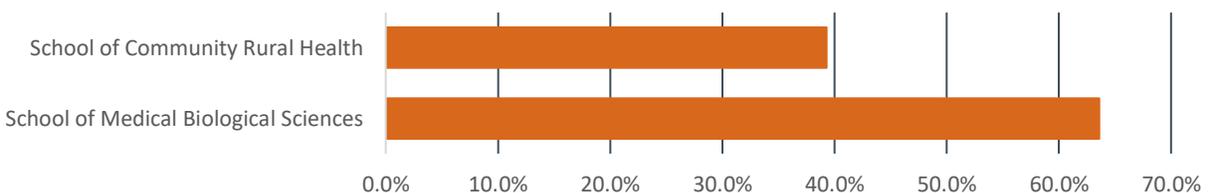


Figure 2. Respondents by Gender

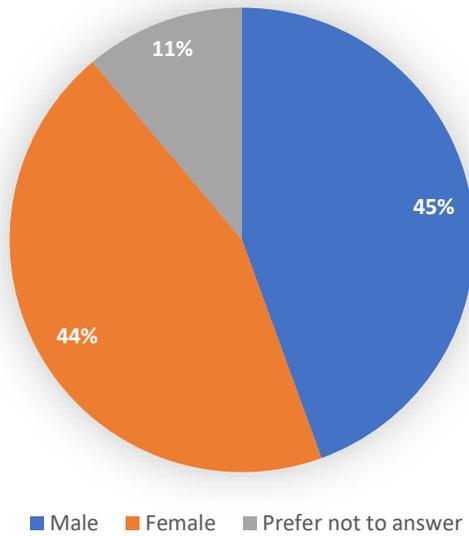
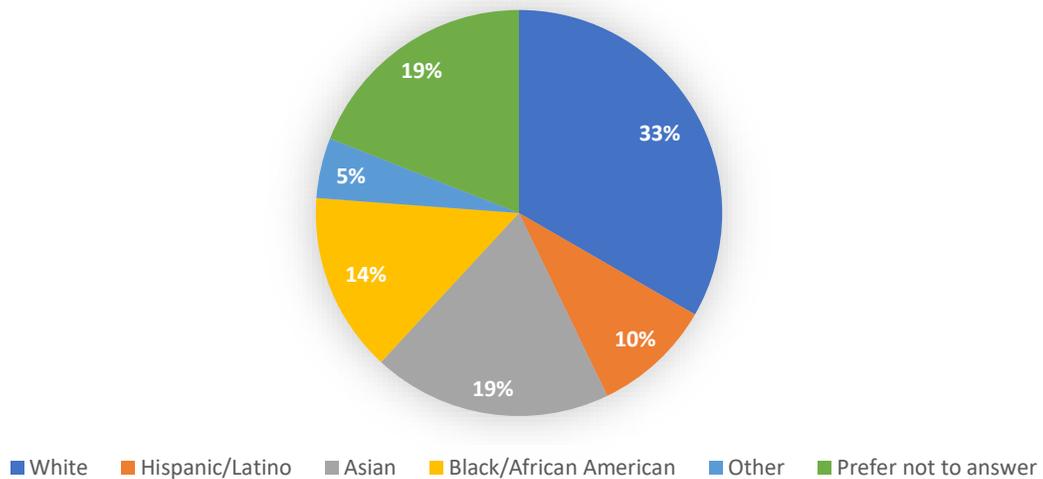


Figure 3. Respondents by Race/Ethnicity



In addition to school and program, respondents provided their gender and race/ethnicity. Figures 2 and 3 provide the corresponding breakdowns. An equal number of respondents indicated their gender was male or female (= 44.4%). For race/ethnicity, White students constituted the largest subgroup, and Asian students constituted the next largest sub-group.

RESULTS

Quantitative Data. Respondents were asked to rank the most important factors in their decision to attend UTHSCT using a five-point scale (5 = *extremely important*, 4 = *very important*, 3 =

moderately important, 2 = slightly important, 1 = not at all important).

Students were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction for a variety of services and processes using the same five-point scale (5 = *extremely important*, 4 = *very important*, 3 = *moderately important*, 2 = *slightly important*, 1 = *not at all important*). In the Student Life section, students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with several statements using a five-point scale (5 = *strongly agree*, 4 = *agree*, 3 = *neutral*, 2 = *disagree*, and 1 = *strongly disagree*).

For all items, the possible range of means is 1.00 to 5.00. All means are color-coded to highlight areas of strength and potential improvement (Red: ≤ 1.99 , Orange: 2.00-2.99, Yellow: 3.00-4.49, Green: ≥ 4.50).

Institutional Results (pp. 6-18): Appendix A presents survey results for the institution as a whole. For each item, the following data are provided:

- Mean level of satisfaction/agreement
- Standard deviation
- Total number of respondents for the scaled responses
- Color-coded graph illustrating the distribution of responses

Results by School (pp. 19-27): Appendix B presents survey results according to school. For each item, the following data are provided:

- Mean level of satisfaction/agreement
- Standard deviation
- Total number of respondents for the scaled responses

Qualitative Data. As part of the survey, students were given an opportunity to provide open-ended comments in response to the following prompts:

1. What do you like most about UTHSCT?
2. How can we improve your experiences at UTHSCT?

Respondents provided 13 comments to the first prompt and 13 comments to the second prompt. Any responses indicating the student did not have a comment (e.g., N/A, none) or were otherwise not useful (e.g., all, nothing) were not considered. Due to the sensitive nature of some comments, precautions were taken to protect the anonymity of respondents.

Table 1. Data from 2018-2019 Student Satisfaction Survey

Student Quotes Relating to Academic Advising
“There needs to be more organization when it comes to academic advising and availability of classes.”
“The enrollment/registration process was painfully confusing and inefficient.”
“During the entire length of the program I met with my advisor, maybe twice. More advising would have been helpful since the communication from professors and other school related staff was poor.”
“Most of the time the students came to me (student respondent) and one other student for help completing their degree plans”
“The advisors have multiple jobs and that results in lack of attention to students”
“There is really not a process in place for academic advising”

CONCLUSION

Often, it is difficult to determine how to use the information collected from general surveys, like the Student Satisfaction Survey, to promote continuous improvement. The first step in this process is to put the current data into context. Consider the following questions:

- Do these results support other existing data?
- Does additional information (e.g., follow-up surveys, focus groups, interviews) need to be gathered?

Once you have gained an appropriate perspective, identify an area of potential improvement or strength upon which to build. Consider what your desired outcome will be. Then, identify and implement a potential strategy for improvement. After a reasonable timeframe, evaluate whether the strategy has been successful to determine whether the desired outcome was achieved.

Continuous improvement is a process. Sometimes, strategies for improvement are successful; sometimes, they are not. Although the ultimate outcome is important, the documentation of efforts to make those improvements is equally critical.

Table 2. Data from 2018-2019 Student Satisfaction Survey

General Academics	Mean _a	SD n	Distribution
Clarity of student expectations in my courses	3.4	1.1	
		18	
Effectiveness of teaching strategies used by my professor	3.6	1	
		18	
Quality of instructional materials used to enhance my learning	3.9	0.9	
		18	
Academic advisor's knowledge of program requirements	3.9	1.3	
		18	
Faculty/staff knowledge of career opportunities in my field of study	3.8	1.1	
		18	

ALUMNI EXIT SURVEY

SUMMARY

- The *2018-2019 Alumni Exit Survey* reveals important information and areas for improvement based on feedback from former students.
- A prominent area of concern emerging from the *2018-2019 Alumni Exit Survey* relates to the access and availability for personnel to provide academic advising and career coaching.
- Like other surveys, open-ended comments offer a variety of perspectives providing opportunities for ongoing improvement. This information is helpful in the determination of data to support the QEP.

Upon graduation, former students are invited to participate in the exit survey. This forum provides alumni with the opportunity to constructively evaluate their experiences at UTHSCT. Respondents are prompted to rate a variety of areas relating to program evaluation. Submissions are anonymous to protect participants' identities. As a critical resource for quality improvement, results are analyzed, coded, and provided to senior leaders to inform the decision-making process.

RESULTS

Quantitative Data. Respondents were asked to rank the most important factors in their decision to

attend UTHSCT using a five-point scale (5 = *extremely important*, 4 = *very important*, 3 = *moderately important*, 2 = *slightly important*, 1 = *not at all important*).

Students were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with their relationship with the program using the same 5-point scale (5=*Extremely important*, 4=*Very important*, 3=*Moderately important*, 2=*Slightly important*, 1=*Not at all important*) as shown in the table below. In the Student Life section, students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with several statements using a 5-point scale (5=*Strongly agree*, 4=*Agree*, 3=*Neutral*, 2=*Disagree*, and 1=*Strongly Disagree*). For all items, the possible range of means is 1.00-5.00. All means are color-coded to highlight areas of strength and potential improvement (Red: ≤ 1.99 , Orange: 2.00-2.99, Yellow: 3.00-4.49, Green: ≥ 4.50).

Table 3. Data from 2018-2019 Alumni Exit Survey

Relationship with Program	Mean ^a	SD n	Distribution
Spent the time necessary to advise me on academic matters.	4.1	1.1	
		10	
Was available for informal consultation.	4.3	1.1	
		10	
Gave ongoing, constructive feedback on my progress.	4.5	1.0	
		10	
Was willing to talk about career options.	4.1	1.0	
		10	
Assisted with job placement.	2.6	1.5	
		8	
Degree and program requirement were explained and made available to me.	4.2	1.0	
		9	
Academic advising was generally received before registering for classes.	3.1	1.2	
		10	
Provided opportunities for career development (e. g. grant writing, public speaking, career opportunities).	3.1	1.2	
		10	
Information and assistance was readily available.	3.5	1.0	
		10	

CONCLUSION

As mention with the Student Satisfaction Survey, the purpose of collecting the data is to promote continuous improvement. The data is consistent with existing data, like the Student Satisfaction Report. Additional data should be collected to gain an appropriate perspective and develop

interventions.

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QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN (QEP) RETREAT

SWOT ANALYSIS RESULTS

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis identified by participants in the QEP Planning Retreat held on Monday, February 22, 2018, reveals critical areas requiring attention. A group of faculty, staff, and administrators met for a day-long brainstorming session, which included review of the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation, requirements of the QEP, and workgroup discussion and analysis of current issues relating to student learning and the environment for success at UTHSCT. Information derived from the planning retreat was provided in the initial QEP Development Committee meetings for further discussion about how each of the elements relate to the environment for student success. Further, these areas underpin the dialogue and development of a topic that would have a positive impact on students.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants for the QEP retreat were a cross-section of stakeholders representing key institutional areas, including faculty from the School of Community and Rural Health and the School of Medical Biological Sciences and administrators and staff from Academic Affairs, the Office of the Provost, and the Office of Public Affairs.

Table 4. Planning Retreat Participant Demographics

Category	#
Faculty	8
Staff	3
Administration	5

METHODOLOGY

The SWOT analysis activity is a qualitative data collection method. The information from retreat participants could be useful in the development of the QEP and the strategic planning process. Pahl and Richter (2007) explain that the SWOT analysis is a useful process for matching resources with capabilities in the endeavor to move organizations toward sustainability. One component of the process is looking inward to assess potential internal impacts, both positive and negative, which emerge in the strengths and weaknesses section. Next, the potential positive and negative external

impacts are outlined in the opportunities and threats section.

RESULTS

Table 5. QEP SWOT Analysis Results

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UT Health East Texas brand • Capacity for growth • Faculty Experience • Opportunity to capitalize from multiple levels of health/medical training 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website, marketing, promotion (how we are perceived). • Location and presumed distance. • Shared services (Houston, Tyler) impart competition and impersonal image. • History as a purely/solely medical or clinical enterprise.
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth and expansion integrated with the new health system. • Opportunity and investment in academic initiatives. • Ability to focus and provide personalized education 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidation versus maintaining autonomy (vis-à-vis UT Tyler). • Lack of recognition from system level and other components as an educational mission. • Staking our claim as “the healthcare educators of East Texas”

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler

ACADEMIC ADVISING FOCUS GROUPS

Focus group interviews occurred with three different categories of stakeholders which included student/alumni, faculty/staff, and community/industry. Each session was conducted by a moderator not affiliated with the institution in the effort to collect reliable information and protect the anonymity of participants. Emerging themes from each group are presented below.

Table 6. Student/Alumni Focus Group Themes

Student/Alumni Focus Group	
Emerging Theme 1	Students value interaction with advisors and see them as someone who can guide them through the process.
Emerging Theme 2	Engagement with faculty can help open eyes to career choices.
Emerging Theme 3	A need for career-oriented components of advising is essential.

Table 7. Faculty/Staff Focus Group Themes

Faculty/Staff Focus Group	
Emerging Theme 1	A more defined process should be in place for advising students.
Emerging Theme 2	Advising can help build rapport with students.
Emerging Theme 3	Students need training focusing on elements of professional development.

Table 8. Community/Industry Focus Group Themes

Community/Industry Focus Group	
Emerging Theme 1	Ideal candidates for employment exhibit specific soft skills.
Emerging Theme 2	Communication and collaboration are important assets that students should develop in graduate school.
Emerging Theme 3	Experiential components of preparation are important for workforce readiness.

Research briefs supporting the aforementioned themes derived from the three focus group sessions are provided in the appendices. (Appendix F)

BROAD-BASED SUPPORT OF CONSTITUENCIES

Faculty, staff, students, administrators and community stakeholders are engaged in the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) process. Providing valuable feedback through committee participation, focus group involvement, the completion of surveys, and ultimate consideration of proposals and affirmation of the topic served as the basis for broad-based support of constituents.

QEP DEVELOPMENT STEERING COMMITTEE:

Individual	Position	Administrative Title
Jeffrey Levin, M.D., DrPH	Professor	Provost & Sr. Vice President for Academic Affairs
Pierre Neuenschwander, Ph.D.	Associate Professor	Sr. Associate Provost
Kent L. Willis, Ph.D.	Assistant Professor	Associate Provost
Vanessa Casanova, Ph.D.	Associate Professor	Director, Southwest Center for Agricultural Health, Injury Prevention, and Education
Michael Kennedy, Ph.D.	Associate Professor	Chair, Department of Health Policy, Economics and Management
Harrison Ndetan, Ph.D.	Associate Professor	

Rachel Roberts		Director of Public Relations
Torry Tucker, Ph.D.	Associate Professor	Associate Dean, School of Medical Biological Sciences
Francisco Parra	Alumni Representative	
Christina Tuell	Program Manager, Student Services	Program Manager, Student Services
Noah Burwell	Academic Outreach Coordinator	Academic Outreach Coordinator
Carol Henson		Program Manager, School of Community and Rural Health
Sandra Perez	Graduate Student	
Edward Caldwell	Alumni Representative	

In Spring 2018, campus-wide solicitation was used to gather ideas for the QEP, which is a core element of the SACSCOC Reaffirmation process. Following a planning retreat and an analysis of proposals, UTHSCT engaged in a strategic partnership that significantly expanded the clinical enterprise and enhanced our brand throughout the region. Next, a new strategic plan guiding the future of the academic enterprise provided a framework for the advancement of teaching, research, and public service to improve health and well-being. Each of these events impacted the QEP selection process and compelled the committee to revisit the topic selection.

The next step involved close examination of previous proposals, data from student surveys, and input from UTHSCT faculty and staff to continue development of the QEP. The committee reviewed the strategic plan in an effort to ensure it aligned with university priorities. Suggested topics from the initial solicitation included interprofessional education, information literacy, and data mining. The committee was tasked with deriving any elements from the initial proposals that would align with the new strategic plan and were related to the student feedback. Subsequently, academic advising was proposed because it was identified by students, faculty, and staff as an area for improvement.

The criteria and relevant factors leading to the final selection of the QEP topic at UTHSCT as academic advising were as follows:

- Measurable based on clear learning objectives
- Supported by data from student surveys
- Achievable positive outcomes within five years
- Aligned with the UTHSCT Strategic Plan
- Applicable to students across all three graduate degree programs

- Able to generate information that will inform best practices for advising in health-related and research-focused institutions.

FOCUS ON IMPROVING STUDENT SUCCESS

The QEP focuses on improving student success by enhancing the academic advising process through a comprehensive approach. A succinct review of literature was conducted to better understand the nuances associated with advising students at the graduate level. Further, the overarching goal for this project is supported by research-based strategies and approaches to the process. The nature of advising at the graduate level is more career and professional development oriented than that of the undergraduate method.

The following literature review includes an analysis of best practices in advising for graduate students. The review discusses the scholarship about the role of advising for graduate students. A subsection includes a discussion of the many benefits of advising for graduate students, followed by a section concerning the best practices in advising graduate students. The review concludes with a summary. Google Scholar and EbscoHost databases were used to locate relevant literature for this review. The following key terms were used to locate relevant research: *advising for graduate students, advising in higher education, best practices of advising for graduate students, benefits of advising for graduate students, strategies for student advising, and connection between student advising and the student's future success.*

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Student learning, particularly for higher education students, is not confined to the classroom and homework assignments. Considerable information is learned outside the classroom. Regularly meeting with an academic advisor is a great learning opportunity that students often overlook. Academic advisors are professionals appointed by the school who can provide students with access to greater support, introduce students to other professionals, and improve the students' overall opinion of learning (Williamson, Goosen, and Gonzalez, 2014). Khali and Williamson (2014) describe the academic advisor's role as one that assists students with making decisions about their future careers or their majors, and in doing so, advisors are able to build relationships with students, which allows them to feel more engaged in their academic environment (Khali & Williamson, 2014). This relationship can help students feel more comfortable and aware of their status and, in the long-term, may lead to increased retention (Khali & Williamson, 2014). The terms "advising" and "mentoring" are also frequently and interchangeably used to refer to academic advisors in research, though there are differences between the two (Schlosser, Lyons, Talleyrand, Kim, & Johnson, 2011). The main difference is that advising is rooted in academia, while mentors can be obtained in any area of life (Schlosser et al., 2011). According to Coates (2011), mentors can

provide guidance in both professional and personal situations, including talents or hobbies.

Advising is a positive process by nature, in that students are required to take an active approach to their own learning and career because advisory meetings are based on achieving the goals discussed (Williamson et al., 2014). Advisors are also directly involved with a student's education, while mentors can be appointed in or out of the realm of education (Schlosser et al., 2011). Another benefit of advising is that advisors can provide new technologies to make it easier to maintain and update student data and academic planning and acknowledge concerns, as well as overseeing development throughout the students' academic career (Pasquinin & Steele, 2016). As outlined by Hemwall and Trachte (2005), there are ten fundamental standards associated with academic advising:

1. Academic advisors should provide students with information about the mission and vision of the college they are attending.
2. Academic advisors should promote student learning, specifically critical thinking.
3. Academic advisors should encourage students to learn about ways to attain the objectives associated with the school's mission statement.
4. Academic advisors should perceive students devotedly form their own interpretation of the school's mission, which includes ideas about developing into critically thinking professional adults accountable for their actions.
5. Academic advisors should apply insights about the student's learning, which involves knowledge about the students' social involvement in the school, extracurricular activities, and family life.
6. Academic advisors should think about how the social environment influences a students' comprehension of their educational experience.
7. Academic advisors must understand that learning potential is encouraged by the students' intelligence.
8. Academic advisors must engage in conversations with the students, who then have the ability to express themselves, provide explanations, and share personal conceptions and objectives.
9. Academic advisors must engage in conversations in which they guide the student.
10. Academic advisors must lead students, so they understand and gain value from irregularities, challenges, blunders, and illogicalities.

When academic advising first emerged as a recognized position, it was seen as merely assisting in the selection of classes, rather than for its real purpose as an essential role in students' academic planning (Williams et al., 2014). During its emergence, advising did not focus on the student's plans for their career or other concerns, such as financial aid and support systems (Williams et al., 2014). Williams et al. (2014) specifically noted one unique institution, San Jacinto College in Houston, Texas, that shifted from an advisory style, which focused on selecting classes, to a more educational planning focus. This modification represented a major change for the college, in that the majority of students were first-generation college students and came from disadvantaged backgrounds, which allowed them to benefit greatly from career planning support (Williams et al.,

2014). Academic advisors must, however, maintain skills from both the traditional style and the more modern style of advising, assisting students in navigating both the course booklet and planning for their futures (Schlosser et al., 2011).

Academic advisors may use a variety of approaches to help guide their students. According to Twaina (2018), prescriptive and developmental approaches are mainly used in academic advising. Prescriptive advising is limited to academic-related issues, specifically class selection, registration, and degree options (Twaina, 2018). Although it is the most simplified approach used in advising, prescriptive advising may also be the one most used (Twaina et al., 2018). Prescriptive advising was the first form created when advising became a position (Twaina et al., 2018). These professionals were not responsible for providing services outside of class selection, degree options, and registration (Twaina et al., 2018). At the time, the position did not call for mentorship, which is, essentially, what the position developed into. Developmental advising evolved from prescriptive advising when professionals started listening to their students' wants, needs, and opinions and began using this information as a catalyst for change (Twaina et al., 2018). Academic advisors then became involved with objective setting, critical decision-making, self-awareness, and future planning (Twaina et al., 2018). Through the developmental approach, academic advisors then also started assisting their students with decisions about the future and their goals (Twaina et al., 2018).

Noaman and Ahmed (2015) provide information about another advising approach: intrusive advising. In this approach, the academic advisor reaches out to the student, instead of the other way around. This approach is demonstrated more often during a student's first year of higher education, with reminders for upcoming class selection and registration and other critical information. Delinquency may also cause academic advisors to contact the student to discuss matters such as probation and suspension (Noaman & Ahmed, 2015). Contrastingly, academic advisors may also directly communicate with students for high achievements (Noaman & Ahmed, 2015).

Moreover, Baker and Griffin (2010) explore a similar, but different, role that faculty/staff take to assist students in their growth and education. Baker and Griffin (2010) explain the role of faculty as "developers" in the success of students as they navigate through the education system and focus on their long-term plans. As mentioned, the role of an academic advisor emerged to assist students in choosing classes and learning academic rules and regulations (Williams et al., 2014). In contrast, in the role of a developer, the faculty/staff takes an active approach in gaining new knowledge, sharing information, and providing support as the student and faculty, together, set goals and work toward achieving them with the student's best interests in mind. Through the creation of student-faculty interpersonal relationships, students are able to sharpen their collaborative skills and learn new information together. The relationship does not end upon undergraduate completion but

continues into the search for post-graduate programs if included in the long-term goals. In this case, the advisor and student meet regularly to discuss progress and continue to set new goals for the future (Baker & Griffin, 2010).

ADVISORS IN RESEARCH

Other advisors work to advance students' academic experience and performance. These advisors help with researcher oversight, which predominately pertains to graduate students. While fluctuating more toward the mentorship side of advising, advisors are assigned to students, typically those entering the field of science (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2008). These faculty mentors are required to meet with the student as often as possible to establish a genuine, working relationship built heavily on trust. These mentors must show interest and be truly willing to help the students advance in various areas of their lives (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2008). To effectively perform their role, research advisors must commit to responsibilities, such as being the graduate student's mentor through the student's lifetime, status as a "graduate student," or completion of the graduate student's research project and helping the student find employment after graduation (Association of American Medical College, 2008).

HOW ACADEMIC ADVISORS HELP STUDENTS

Benefits to academic advising include those centered on increasing retention for schools. According to White (2015), today, colleges face the problem of keeping their students through graduation while helping students lessen the time it takes to reach graduation. Academic advisors can assist with this process by helping increase the quality of the students who attend college by connecting them with greater resources and strategies to ensure success (White, 2015). According to Teasley and Buchanan (2013), academic advisors bridge the metaphorical gap between the student body and facility/institutional employees by allowing professional relationships to emerge in this space. This relationship results in guidance, as well as the exchange of personal and professional wisdom between advisor and student for the benefit of the advisor (Teasley & Buchanan, 2013). The emerging relationship has allowed for the exchange of information about students' experiences in school, both academically and socially. These advisors allow feedback and insight into critical situations to be collected and shared with upper-level executives responsible for making important decisions that directly affect students (Teasley & Buchanan, 2013). Research has demonstrated that advisors help increase retention in school and persistence on behalf of the student's efforts, while poorly skilled academic advisors, or a lack of advisors, may be associated with the opposite, resulting in dropout and high attrition (Teasley & Buchanan, 2013). Further, Khali and Williamson (2014) mention that without retention, there is no growth for the school. Thus, academic advisors are partly responsible for ensuring the overall success and longevity of their respective schools, as well as for ensuring students navigate the process and

efficiently and effectively plan for the future.

According to Bloom, Propst Cuevas, Hall, and Evans (2007), academic advisors are major contributors to graduate students' success. Researchers conducted a grounded theory study with a constructivist design. The study involved an analysis of the literature of Outstanding Graduate Advisor of the Year award nominations from students pursuing their medical or doctorate degrees in the Medical Scholars Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The study's results found five themes that graduate students identified as being most important: an authentic and palpable concern for students, accessibility, individuals who maintain standards as role models both in their professional and personal lives, use of various guidance strategies depending on the students' needs, and actively working to involve and educate students in their prospective career fields (Bloom, Propst Cuevas, Hall, & Evans, 2007).

Academic advisors responsible for the guidance of graduate students have different concerns than advisors of earlier students. These advisors differ from other graduate-level advisors, depending on whether the degree sought is a master's, doctorate, or Juris doctorate (Barnes & Austin, 2009). Bloom et al. (2007) described students as adults who manage school while juggling other responsibilities, such as work and family. These students need high-quality advising that provides clarification in the midst of distraction (Bloom et al., 2007). They do not need as much help with understanding academic details since they have already selected their track of study and are preparing to enter the professional world (Bloom et al., 2007).

Information was sent to a total of 179,672 students attending 297 colleges nationwide using the CCSSE 2017 methodology. The questionnaire was completed and received by 113,315 students, and 93,815 of those were returning students. The methodology was also distributed to 9,577 faculty members nationwide. Results indicate that of a pool of 92,342 students collected from student data in the 2017 CCSEE, 78% of students who returned to a college met with an academic advisor; of 37,316 students, 62% reported meeting with an advisor when entering school. When asked about the importance of academic advising and planning, 68% of the 86,349 student responses from returning students answered "very important" (Community College Research Center, Teachers College of Columbia University, 2013). When the same question was asked to 9,184 faculty, 90% answered "very important" (Community College Research Center, Teachers College of Columbia University, 2013). The results include responses to a questionnaire where students were asked to agree or disagree with specific statements. These statements are as follows: "an advisor explained which classes I need to take in order to reach my academic goals" (86% agreed); "an advisor provided me with information about support services" (76% agreed); "an advisor helped me develop an academic plan" (65% agreed); "an advisor talked about me with my commitments outside of school (work, children, etc.) to help me figure out how many courses to take" (53% agreed); and "an advisor discussed when my next session should be" (35% agreed) (Community

College Research Center, Teachers College of Columbia University, 2013). Furthermore, the results showed that after the students' first meeting with an academic advisor, later meetings might consider more details of the students' lives, which can lead to a more comfortable and engaging experience, a more developmental relationship, and a more tailored academic and future plan (Community College Research Center, Teachers College of Columbia University, 2013). Academic advisors working in these roles can, therefore, provide advice similar that of a prescription written by a doctor (Drake, 2011). Each student requires a unique diagnosis, and each advisor must purposely craft his or her approach to appeal to the student's needs.

BEST PRACTICES IN ADVISING FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

A qualified academic advisor alone is not enough to improve students' success; the right approach is also critical. Drake (2011) stated that students are happier when having a relationship with their academic advisor, or an academic-based individual in a similar position, such as a faculty member, and, consequently, achieve the highest in academics. Khali and Williamson (2014) identified the benefit and need for academic advisors in their study at the School of Engineering at Southern Polytechnic State University in Marietta, Georgia. At this institution, more than 1,200 engineering students report to a single academic advisor working on a back-to-back schedule. An interview was conducted with this advisor to learn more about the role, and a survey was administered to the 1,200 students to learn about their experience. In this study, the academic advisor was referred to as “a person who helps students obtain what they are seeking regarding their degree requirements” (p. 75). The results revealed the advisor suggested a prescriptive approach, even using a non-developmental approach, enriched through conversation. The study revealed that students asked the most questions about the courses needed for the coming semester and the order of the classes in future semesters (Khali & Williamson, 2014). The academic advisor reported, however, that students frequently express uncertainty as to what to do with their lives, though his solution was to refer the student to a school counselor (Khali & Williamson, 2014). In this role, the advisor was mostly responsible for pointing students in the desired direction, rather than helping students find and understand what this direction was. The advisor also shared that students were hesitant to share personal information with the faculty because they felt their grades could be affected (Khali & Williamson, 2014).

In the student survey, 360 students mentioned that they were interested in the survey. The majority of the students answered that they meet with their academic advisor once per semester (about 32%), followed by about 17% of students that responded that they “never” met with their academic advisor. Khali and Williamson (2014) explained that about half of all students meet with the advisor once or more per semester, which equates to seven students per day for each day of the semester. This rigorous schedule leaves the academic advisor with little to no time to do much else, such as consistently checking email or researching (Khali & Williamson, 2014). Also,

throughout the study, literature was referenced about positive qualities of academic advisors and information about what makes an advisor good. When compared to survey results and the information in the literature, Khali and Williamson (2014) noted characteristics of a good academic advisor included the ability to listen, provide students with all available options, and give valuable advice, which encourages students to return for advice in the future, thereby improving engagement and rates of enrollment and graduation. A recommendation provided at the study's completion was the critical need to appoint more advisors (Khali & Williamson, 2014).

According to the Community College Research Center of the Teachers College of Columbia University, the optimal approach for advisors is the developmental approach. The developmental approach, as discussed, is more connected to teaching than to advising (Community College Research Center, Teachers College of Columbia University, 2013). As students' progress through college, they become more aware of their assets, areas of focus, and suitable careers (Community College Research Center, Teachers College of Columbia University, 2013). Throughout their education, students start developing goals that are more aligned with those of their futures. For advising to be valuable, one-on-one communication needs to occur consistently and be maintained between student and advisor (Community College Research Center, Teachers College of Columbia University, 2013). The advisor must provide oversight and guidance to students seeking resources that will assist them in achieving their goals (Community College Research Center, Teachers College of Columbia University, 2013).

Jaeger, Sandmann, and Kim (2011) performed a case study of four pairs of doctoral graduate students and their faculty advisors. The faculty advisors participated in an 18-month training program designed to provide quality advising. The researchers conducted interviews with the advisors and the students, and the interviews were transcribed verbatim to collect themes using the constant comparative method. The illuminated themes were the following: career experience in the subject matter is helpful, faculty advisors and the students served are considered co-learners, the relationship between the advisor and the student can become synergistic, faculty advisors most often fulfill the role of clarifying and overriding, and dissertation studies focused on the community often do not have a sound foundation (Jaegar et al., 2011). The last theme pertains to academic advisors for graduate students who are also responsible for helping with dissertation completion.

Interested in finding more information on what students seek from their advisors, Monrag, Campo, Weissman, Walmsley, and Snell (2012) conducted a study that explored the relationship between the status of the Millennial generation and select academic majors and experience with academic advising. The researchers used focus groups with senior-level students attending a private, midwestern college. The results indicated that four characteristics were associated with the Millennial generation and pointed to their needs in the advisor-student relationship: the sense that

each student is special, behaviors and verbiage associated with being motivational, confidence, and the ability to help the student feel safe (Morag et al., 2012). According to these results, Monrag et al. (2012) recommended a split-model advising system to meet Millennial students' needs. This system describes an approach that provides one-on-one attention and focus from faculty in the student's chosen major, with the ability to receive direct information, such as course selection and degree mandates, from a professional in a general advisor position (Monrag et al., 2012). Ultimately, this insight can provide academic advisors serving the Millennial generation with valuable data, which also expresses the importance of conducting independent research to continually update strategies, advice, and approaches to best meet students' needs.

SUMMARY

The presence of a qualified advisor could be a critical component for higher education students, as well as for the schools they attend (Jaeger, et al., 2011). Academic advisors can help raise the retention rates in colleges while serving to bridge the gap between higher education and the students they serve. The three approaches to advising discussed in this study are prescriptive, developmental, and intrusive (Noaman & Ahmed, 2015; Twaina et al., 2018). Furthermore, faculty as developers provide a similar, but different, perspective to guiding students through their educational careers and beyond. The most effective approach to mentorship was the developmental approach, which took a broader tactic toward guiding and teaching students. Mentors who are characterized as being developmental in their approach help to assess the student in his or her unique position in life and consider the student as he or she progresses in his or her role of a student (Twaina et al., 2018). Additional insights into characteristics possessed by quality advisors were provided (Khali & Williamson, 2014).

This section included a summary of scholarship as it pertains to academic advisors. Topics of discussion included earlier scholarship about academics and their role in the higher education institutions. Literature provided information about the benefits of academic advisors and the need for greater levels of involvement for academic advisors who serve the graduate-level students. An extended discussion was provided about the best practices of academic advisors and the characteristics that correlate with these best practices.

RESOURCES TO INITIATE, IMPLEMENT, AND COMPLETE THE QEP

UTHSCT will commit the necessary human, physical, and capital resources to successfully implement and complete the QEP. Identification of realistic resources includes the utilization of physical space dedicated to student services, apportionment of personnel time and effort and new full-time employees (FTEs), and purchase of software necessary to improve communication between offices and track essential workflow functions and scheduling.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Director of QEP

The QEP Director will be accountable for the planning and oversight of the QEP. This effort will be funded with 0.25 FTE support. Implementation should be seamlessly integrated into current processes to enhance student services and academic support through the further development of the advising component to improve communication and coordination that allow faculty, staff, and students to engage meaningfully.

QEP Assessment Consulting

The QEP Assessment Consultant will provide additional support for evaluation and be funded at \$10,000 per year over the five-year period. The consultant will perform technical support functions for the evaluation and analysis of focus group interviews and other research activities relating to the QEP. This approach, together with data from institutional surveys or other qualitative techniques, can be used to derive information about the feasibility and progress of the project.

Director of Academic and Career Advising

One new FTE at 100% time and effort will be hired as Director of Academic and Career Advising. This director will be responsible for directing, coordinating, planning, implementing, and assessing campus-wide academic advising and career advising services for students and alumni. The academic advising functions include coordinating faculty and advisor support for student advising needs, supporting retention functions and initiatives, such as academic advising, advisor training, and student academic support services, including remedial services support. The role of career advising involves delivering comprehensive programming to provide high-quality career services to students, alumni, and off-campus constituents. The Director of Academic and Career Advising will collaborate with other departments to coordinate and evaluate programs, support services, and activities that underpin student success, developing strategies and programs to meet students' needs. This position will report to the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, Engagement, and Academic Support who will also serve a dual role as QEP Director.

Administrative Support to Director of Academic and Career Advising

One new FTE at 100% time and effort will be hired as administrative support for the Director of Academic and Career Advising. The administrative assistant will be responsible for providing technical assistance and will work collaboratively with students, faculty, and staff to perform key functions assigned by the Director of Academic and Career Advising.

PHYSICAL RESOURCES

Team-Based Learning Facility

Dedicated physical space in SCRH building is designated for student services, which will be utilized in part for the QEP. Specifically, the workspace and kiosk area will provide physical support for the students and staff. The building was erected in 2018 to meet the needs of highly collaborative and technology-based instruction and services. The SCRH building features state-of-the-art technology in a modern-style learning environment and includes project suites, collaboration rooms, and a variety of modalities for group and individual meetings. Advisors will utilize the collaborative spaces to work with students. The SCRH building is optimal for housing the physical resources of the QEP at UTHSCT.

Other Information Resources and Services

The QEP project will be supported by dedicated information technology (IT) resources and services. Quality and responsive solutions for students, faculty, and staff in support of the QEP will be designated to support this project. This will be accomplished through a variety of services, including campus-wide IT support services, computer hardware and software support and training, telecommunications, programming and development, clinical applications, network and wireless support, information security, and enterprise data services. Specific to the QEP, IT support will help with the implementation of software for scheduling and case management.

BUDGET AND JUSTIFICATION

Capital resources for the QEP entail a financial commitment to support additional physical and human resources. The funds allocated for this project will be included in the annual budget process and distributed to advance the project goal. The budget reflects costs incurred and re-appropriated funds that demonstrate integration of the project into institutional priorities.

The following proposed budget is under review by the QEP Development Planning Committee pending the approval of appropriate software to meet the needs of faculty, staff, and students. The budget outline is in Appendix A.

PLAN FOR ASSESSING ACHIEVEMENT

The QEP was developed through broad-based support from multiple stakeholders under the guidance of the QEP Development Steering Committee. Guidance and technical comments were provided by consultants outside the institution. Input from the administration regarding the strategic direction of the institution based on the strategic plan provided a broad framework.

The QEP assessment plan will seek to measure the institutions progress toward the following aims

identified to enhance student success through comprehensive academic advising:

1. Develop faculty knowledge and skill in advising through ongoing training and support.
2. Increase student and faculty collaboration in the development of academic and career planning through the utilization of scheduling and case management software.
3. Enhance institutional capacity to support students from different programs and professions through academic, career, and professional advising.

Identification of the plan's topic emerged from data obtained from the institution's ongoing assessment processes. Specifically, data gathered from the annual Student Satisfaction Survey and the Student Exit Survey (upon graduation) served as baseline measures of key issues from the student perspective.

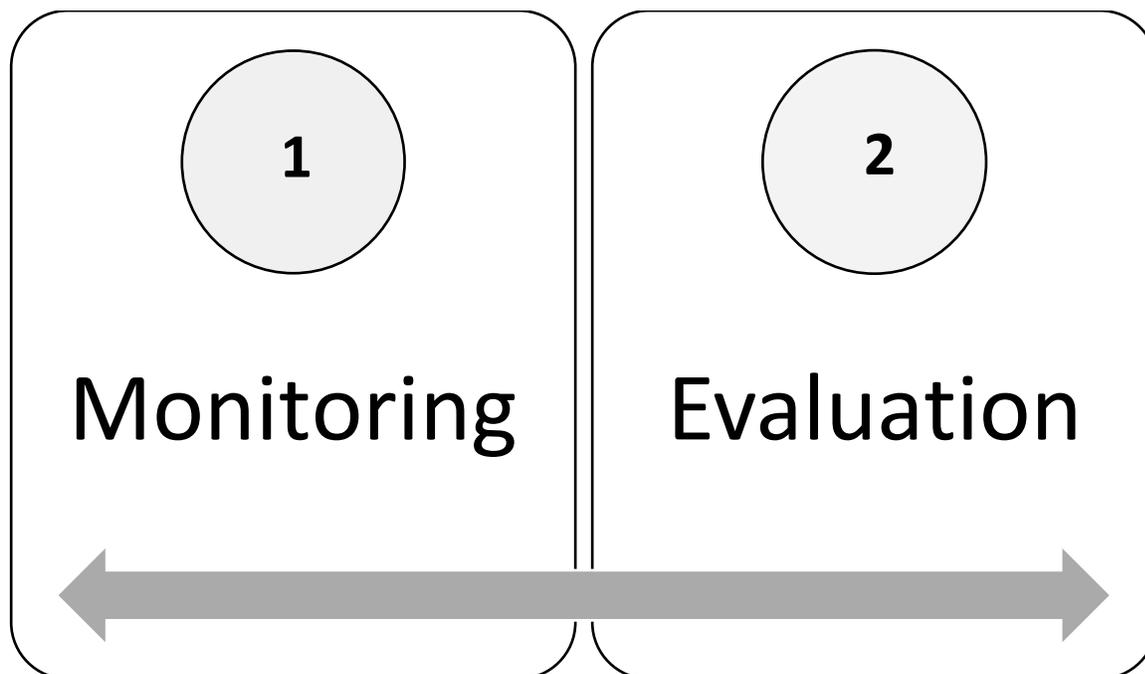
Following the synthesis and presentation of emerging themes from institutional data, the steering committee identified academic advising as a priority for consideration as the plan's topic and initiated further exploration and confirmation of this selection by conducting a faculty focus group. Verifying gaps in the process of advising students, the faculty focus group confirmed a need for close examination of services intended to guide students through course registration, career exploration, and planning for the near and far future. To validate use of the data collected as justification for the QEP topic, the focus group facilitator and analyst applied triangulation methods to identify common themes emerging from multiple data sources, including the aforementioned surveys, focus group, and document analysis (Creswell, 2014). The above 3 steps of the plan will impact degree planning, career development, and networking.

Annual student surveys and periodic alumni surveys will help to identify satisfaction with degree planning and career development respectively, and how enhanced advising impacted student success in decisions to pursue further education, placement in the job market in their discipline, and the building/establishment of professional networks.

COMPONENTS OF ASSESSMENT

The QEP assessment plan includes two overarching components thought to represent key target indicators of improvement in the academic advising process.

Figure 4. QEP Assessment Components



MONITORING OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES TO TRAIN FACULTY

Prior systematic review of the topic suggests that faculty development and training can contribute significantly to enhancement of academic advising. Specific project activities are necessary to complete the QEP on academic advising. The first activity is the faculty and staff workshop series to enhance knowledge of and skill in advising. The QEP Director will maintain records of attendance for faculty and staff members at the necessary training. Participants will complete a pre-test and post-test for assessment purposes to determine the effectiveness of the training. Marsden and Torgerson (2012) explain the methodological concerns associated with a pre-test/post-test design and suggest the approach is a meaningful measure for finding useful pedagogical implications in educational research.

Semi-annual reports will be integrated into the Institutional Effectiveness process to provide decision-makers with data about faculty engagement in professional development relating to academic advising and student support.

EVALUATING PROJECT IMPACT ON STUDENT SUCCESS OUTCOMES

Evaluation of the QEP relating to impact on student success outcomes will provide direction for faculty and staff for ongoing improvement. Students will complete a supplemental survey at the end of each semester along with the end of course evaluations with specific questions relating to

frequency, quality, and access to academic advising, including the infrastructure for scheduling and monitoring progress.

Gathering feedback about all aspects of the academic advising process from multiple stakeholders will affirm the institutional strategic plan priority to improve educational infrastructure. Exit survey data from alumni will add context to determine the effectiveness of advising over the five-year project period. Additionally, invitations to alumni to complete an annual survey will guide evaluation of former students' career outcomes. Degree planning, career development and networking will enhance the academic advising process and improve student success.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION RESPONSIBILITIES

Stakeholder	Monitoring and Evaluation Activity
Institutional Effectiveness office	Deploy supplemental survey on academic advising at the end of each semester
Institutional Effectiveness office	Pre-test and post-test to assess faculty and staff knowledge and skills at academic annual advising workshops
Academic Deans	Track faculty and staff attendance at annual advising workshops
Director of Academic and Career Advising	Perform daily operations of academic and career advising function to provide capacity for scheduling and group professional development activities and software maintenance
QEP Director	Collect and analyze longitudinal data on QEP project, including budget and allocation of resources, timeline, and key performance indicators

MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF THE QEP

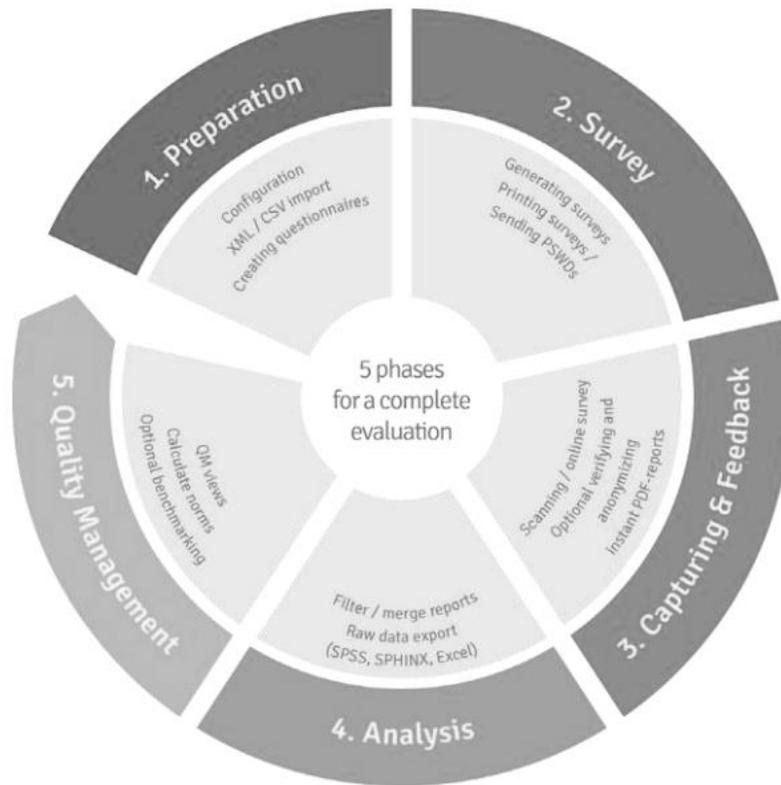
Aims identified for the QEP will be measured at the end of each semester through the Institutional Effectiveness office. Measuring critical aspects of student satisfaction and growth, the results of this survey will inform the decision-making process for the QEP Director and associated staff with responsibility for the implementation and evaluation of the plan. Benchmarking to track improvement will allow the plan to develop and improve over the five-year period. The five-phase model for a complete evaluation will guide the development of a survey instrument that will capture respondents' perspectives on a number of important indicators about the academic advising process like degree planning, career development, and networking. Offering candid insights, responses will be examined on a semesterly basis to identify gaps. Assessment benchmarks for each specific aim associated with the overarching goal to enhance student success through comprehensive academic advising are identified in the charts below for each of the three aims.

Aim 1: Develop faculty knowledge of and skill in advising through ongoing training and support.		
Assessment	Collection of Data	Benchmark
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of faculty members participating in workshops and training for advising Percentage of Academic Affairs staff participating in academic advising Pre-test and post-test comparison to assess participant awareness of advising process and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional Effectiveness will collect and analyze data through the following techniques: (1) survey, (2) document analysis, and (3) attendance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty cohorts will be compared by academic program with a goal of 85% participation in workshops and training.

Aim 2: Increase student and faculty collaboration in the development of academic and career planning through the utilization of scheduling and case management software.		
Assessment	Collection of Data	Benchmark
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workflow analytics that track scheduling and referrals to additional student and academic support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional Effectiveness will collect and analyze data through the administrative functions of the scheduling and case management software. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will meet with advisor (faculty or staff) a minimum of three times each semester: before the semester, during the semester, and end of semester.

Aim 3: Enhance institutional capacity to support students from different programs and professions through academic, career, and professional advising.		
Assessment	Collection of Data	Benchmark
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget will reflect necessary allocations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional Effectiveness with Budget and Finance will collect data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retrospective study and report will reflect commitment.

Figure 5. Five-Phase Evaluation Model



The five-phase evaluation model represents a framework for ongoing assessment and monitoring of the QEP. The steps include (1) preparation, (2) survey, (3) capturing feedback, (4) analysis, and (5) quality management. Each step of the process is critical in the assessment and evaluation of the project. Periodic collection of feedback from stakeholders provides the mechanism for the collection of longitudinal data that will inform the decision-making process. The integration of assessment and evaluation of academic advising into the institutional effectiveness process will embed the QEP into the ongoing institutional efforts for quality improvement. The evaluation process will seek to elicit information from key stakeholders relating to the three aims that underpin the overarching project goal. A sample survey, in Appendix G, shows the intended areas of inquiry.

COMMUNICATION AND REPORTING PLAN

The Institutional Effectiveness office will coordinate the communication and reporting of the QEP. A series of reports relating to evaluation, budget, and progress will provide institutional leadership and committee members with important information on benchmarks for tracking the progress of QEP implementation and impact.

The following tables describe the QEP communication and reporting timeline that will be monitored by Institutional Effectiveness.

Table 9. Communication and Reporting Timeline

Audience 1: <i>QEP Development Steering Committee</i>			
Purpose of Communication	Possible Formats	Timing	Notes
Include in decision-making about evaluation design/activities	Electronic/ Print	Monthly	QEP Progress Report provided to committee each month.
Inform about specific upcoming evaluation activities	Email	Quarterly	
Keep informed about progress of the evaluation	Email	Quarterly	
Present initial/interim findings	In Person	Monthly	Academic Advising Committee meetings
Present budget update	In Person	Quarterly	
Document the evaluation and its findings	Electronic/ Print	Annually	

Table 10. Timeline for QEP Development

When	Who	What
Spring 2018	Members of the UTHSCT campus community, including faculty, staff, administrators, and students.	Initiation of conversation for the development of the QEP
Summer 2018	UTHSCT faculty and staff	Request for proposals announced
Summer 2018	Selected member of QEP Development Steering Committee	SACSCOC Summer Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation (Atlanta, GA)
August 2018	QEP Development Steering Committee	The initial group of faculty and student representatives met to discuss next steps following the QEP Planning Retreat.
September 2018	UTHSCT faculty and staff	Deadline to submit Request for Proposals announced
September 2018	QEP Development Steering Committee	Compilation of proposals and review by the QEP Development Steering Committee.

September-October 2018	UTHSCT Academic Affairs	Hired 0.5 FTE to provide administrative support to the QEP Development Steering Committee in the role of Academic Outreach Coordinator
November 2018	QEP Development Steering Committee	Committee meeting to discuss required elements of QEP.
December 2018	QEP Development Steering Committee	Committee to discuss the marketing and promotion aspect of the QEP
February 2019	QEP Development Steering Committee	Committee meeting to discuss resources necessary for the QEP.
March 2019	QEP Development Steering Committee	Committee meeting to discuss the new strategic planning process and integration of the QEP.
April 2019	QEP Development Steering Committee	Committee meeting to discuss Student Learning Outcomes.
May 2019	QEP Development Steering Committee	Tentative approval from committee for top proposals
Summer 2019	QEP Development Steering Committee	Tentative approval of academic advising as broad topic for the QEP
Summer 2019	Selected member of QEP Development Steering Committee	SACSCOC Summer Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation (Dallas, TX)
August 2019	QEP Director	Focus of literature review on academic advising
September 2019	QEP Development Steering Committee	
October 2019	QEP Development Steering Committee/Provost	Announcement of QEP Topic Selection
November 2019	QEP Development Steering Committee	Campus-wide news about QEP Topic Selection
December 2019	Advisory Visit with SACSCOC Vice President Dr. Mary Kirk	Meeting to review and critique rough draft of QEP manuscript
January 2020	QEP Director	Pilot Implementation Begins

The assessment plan for the QEP on academic advising will rely on data sources from student surveys for evaluation and monitoring of faculty professional development activities. Analysis of data to identify emerging themes and areas for improvement will be integrated into the institution's ongoing assessment processes within the Institutional Effectiveness office. Further, the broad goal of this project is to achieve the overarching student success goal. The long-term goal of this QEP is to promote student and faculty collaboration across institutional boundaries through teamwork and learner-centered advising. Specifically, students will be equipped with the skills to develop

detailed goals pertaining to academic pursuits and career aspirations, which will contribute to long-term success.

SUMMARY

The QEP for UTHSCT is one component of the reaffirmation process. This five-year project will focus on improving student success through comprehensive academic advising. The overarching goal of this project is underpinned by aims used to develop measurable goals that represent each critical component of the project. Baker and Griffin (2010) explain that the faculty role includes that of a “developer” to help students navigate both short-term priorities and long-term goals. This process includes ongoing engagement to continue setting new goals for the future as opposed to a stagnant or fixed process with a single end goal. This project was developed with broad-based support from institutional constituencies and is derived from the ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation process. To that end, UTHSCT will commit the necessary resources to initiate and implement the QEP and will assess and evaluate progress to meet the overarching goal of improving student success through comprehensive academic advising.

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APPENDIX A. QEP BUDGET

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Budget

Budget Category	Year 1 2019-2020	Year 2 2020-2021	Year 3 2021-2022	Year 4 2022-2023	Year 5 2023-2024	Total
Personnel						
QEP Director Salary (2% annual increase)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Director of Advising Salary (2% annual increase)	\$ 55,000.00	\$ 56,100.00	\$ 57,200.00	\$ 58,300.00	\$ 59,400.00	\$ 286,000.00
Asst. to the Director of Advising	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 125,000.00
Faculty Advisor Stipends (15)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Research/Evaluation Consulting	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 50,000.00
<i>Total Personnel Costs</i>	<i>\$ 90,000.00</i>	<i>\$ 91,100.00</i>	<i>\$ 92,200.00</i>	<i>\$ 93,300.00</i>	<i>\$ 94,400.00</i>	<i>\$ 461,000.00</i>
Professional Development						
Advisor Training	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 25,000.00
Advising Workshop	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Supplies	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 2,500.00
Membership	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
<i>Total Professional Development</i>	<i>\$ 7,500.00</i>	<i>\$ 37,500.00</i>				
Marketing and Promotion						
Promotional Material (Print)	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
QEP Document	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 500.00
Novelty Items	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 12,500.00
<i>Total Marketing and Promotion</i>	<i>\$ 5,000.00</i>	<i>\$ 4,500.00</i>	<i>\$ 4,500.00</i>	<i>\$ 4,500.00</i>	<i>\$ 4,500.00</i>	<i>\$ 23,000.00</i>
Technology						
New Software (Elucian Degree Works)/Salesforce	\$50,000	50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$250,000
Compter for Director of Advising	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
<i>Total Technology</i>	<i>\$51,000</i>	<i>50,000</i>	<i>\$50,000</i>	<i>\$50,000</i>	<i>\$50,000</i>	<i>\$251,000</i>
Travel						
NAAHP Conference	\$4,500	\$4,500	\$4,500	\$4,500	\$4,500	\$22,500
Other Professional Travel	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$5,000
<i>Total Travel</i>	<i>\$5,500</i>	<i>\$5,500</i>	<i>\$5,500</i>	<i>\$5,500</i>	<i>\$5,500</i>	<i>\$27,500</i>
QEP Budget Total	\$159,000	\$158,600	\$159,700	\$160,800	\$161,900	\$800,000

APPENDIX B. QEP FRAMEWORK

UTHSCT Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

“Advising: Pathways for Success”

Overarching Student Success Goal

To enhance student success through comprehensive academic advising

Supporting Aims

Aim 1: Develop faculty knowledge of and skill in advising through ongoing training and support.

Aim 2: Increase student and faculty collaboration in the development of academic and career planning through the utilization of scheduling and case management software.

Aim 3: Enhance institutional capacity to support students from different programs and professions through academic, career, and professional advising.

Key Indicators

Develop Relationships

- Student-Faculty
- Student-Staff
- Student-Student (Peer)
- Faculty-Staff

Increase Collaboration

- Tracking of engagement
- Events designed to promote academic advising
- Workshops to improve faculty knowledge and skills

Raise Awareness

- Increase Communication
- Utilize Automation
- Employ Technology
- Engage community partners to develop opportunities

Key Activities and Goals

Workshops | Symposiums | Outreach
Case Management

Outcomes:

Student Satisfaction | Service Area
Outcomes | Achievement Outcomes

Student Success Measures

Competencies | Benchmarks
Peer Comparison

Outcomes:

Achievement | Satisfaction | Belonging
Perception | Engagement

Assessment & Evaluation

Student Satisfaction Survey | Engagement Tracking | Pre-Test/Post-Test | Advising Survey

APPENDIX C. QEP PLANNING RETREAT AGENDA

Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Planning Retreat

Tuesday, February 20, 2018

Draft Agenda

The retreat activities and presentations take approximately 6 hours which includes 30 minutes for lunch and 15 minutes for a morning break.

Session 1 (9:00-9:30) Overview of QEP Planning Retreat 30 minutes

Purpose: to discuss the purpose of the event and lay out goals and expectations.

- a. Welcome and overview of the day
- b. Participant self-introductions: focused on what they value about UT Health Northeast.
- c. Envisioning the “best” academic medical center for East Texas (individual exercise; each participant writes statements about what they hope UT Health Northeast will be 3 to 5 years from now; will be shared later.)

Session 2 (9:30-10:00) Review of SACS COC Principles of Accreditation 30 minutes

Purpose: to provide a concise overview of the 2018 SACS COC Standards

- a. Brief reports on SACS COC Principles of Accreditation
- b. Brief synopsis of SWOT Analysis activity
- c. Discussion of comparative data across UT System HRI’s (history, enrollment, programs)
- d. Linking assessment and strategy to QEP and Overarching IE Processes

Session 3 (10:00-11:00) UT Tyler QEP: “GATE: Global Awareness Through Education” 60 minutes

Purpose: This session examines the most recent QEP produced at The University of Texas at Tyler

1. Dr. Lou Ann Berman who serves as the Asst. Vice President for Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness at UT Tyler will present an overview of the Quality Enhancement Plan titled “GATE: Global Awareness Through Education”

LUNCH (11:00-12:00) 60 minutes

Session 4 (12:00-12:30) Experience from a QEP Program Director 30 minutes

Purpose: This session provides personal testimony from a former QEP Leader who will share insight on the process, lessons learned and general advice for initiating the process.

1. Dr. Amanda Ratcliff who serves as Associate Professor of Communication at Tyler Junior College will present on her experience serving in a leadership role for a QEP.

Session 5 (12:30-1:30) Initiating the QEP Process: SWOT Analysis Activity **60 minutes**

Purpose: to discuss goals and collect data for use in writing objectives and action steps in proposals for the new QEP. We will use the data from the SWOT analysis exercise and Focus Group Interviews to identify emerging issues that may be appropriate for consideration in the QEP RFP Announcement. Most QEP's identify specific outcomes and must include methodology for assessment.

- a. Understand the overarching purpose of the QEP
- b. Review previous QEP's from Health-Related Institutions
- c. Definitions of goal/objective/action steps given to guide SWOT Analysis
- d. Small groups develop short presentation of their SWOT Analysis findings
- e. Objectives are shared with whole group (last 10 minutes)

Session 6 (1:30-2:00) Focus Group Interviews **30 minutes**

Purpose: to uncover useful information relating to the experience, understanding and objectives of the QEP Planning process. Participants will discuss their initial thoughts about the process and how it may be useful for improving the experience of students and the environment for achievement at UT Health Northeast. Data will be analyzed, coded and presented at follow-up meeting.

Session 7 (2:00-2:30) Development of Workgroups **30 minutes**

Purpose: to discuss the important elements for developing the QEP and determine appropriate workgroups and interim charges for completion before next meeting.

15 Minute Break

Session 8 (2:45-3:15) RFP's, Timeline and Budget for QEP **30 minutes**

Purpose: to discuss the Request for Proposals (RFP) process, budget and timeline for the Quality Enhancement Plan and answer any questions relating to the initiation.

Session 9 (3:15-3:45) Closing Remarks **30 minutes**

Purpose: to layout the steps moving forward and discuss the next meeting and interim charges for each small workgroup.

APPENDIX D. QEP RETREAT SWOT ANALYSIS

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Retreat SWOT Analysis Results

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT Analysis) identified by participants in the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Planning Retreat held on Monday, February 22, 2018, reveals critical areas requiring attention. A group of faculty, staff and administrators met for a day-long brainstorming session that included a review of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Commission on Colleges (COC) Principles of Accreditation, requirements of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The workgroup discussion and analysis of current issues relating to student learning and the environment for success at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler (UT Health Northeast).

Participants

Participants for the QEP retreat included a cross-section of stakeholders representing key institutional areas including faculty from the School of Community and Rural Health, the School of Medical Biological Sciences, administrators and staff from the Office of Academic Administration, the Office of the Provost, and the Office of Public Affairs.

Participant Classification

Category	#
Faculty	8
Staff	3
Administration	5

Methodology

The SWOT Analysis activity provided a method for the collection of data. The information from participants at the retreat may be useful in the development of the Quality Enhancement

Plan and the strategic planning process. Pahl and Richter (2007) explain that the SWOT analysis is a useful process for matching resources with capabilities in the endeavor to move organizations toward sustainability. One component of the process is looking inward to assess potential internal impacts both positive and negative which emerge from the strengths and weaknesses section. Next, review of potential external impacts both positive and negative emerge from the opportunities and threats section of the SWOT analysis process.

**SWOT Analysis Results
(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)**

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UT Health East Texas brand • Capacity for growth • Faculty Experience • Opportunity to capitalize from multiple levels of health/medical training. 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website, marketing, promotion (how we are perceived). • Location and presumed distance. • Shared services (Houston, Tyler) impart competition and impersonal image. • History as a purely/solely medical or clinical enterprise.
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth and expansion integrated with the new health system. • Opportunity and investment in academic initiatives. • Ability to focus and provide personalized education 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidation versus maintaining autonomy (vis-à-vis UT Tyler). • Lack of recognition from system level and other components as an educational mission. • Staking our claim as “the healthcare educators of East Texas”

Reference

Pahl, N., & Richter, A. (2007). SWOT Analysis. Idea, Methodology And A Practical Approach.

APPENDIX E. QEP TOPIC SELECTION FOR SACSCOC MEMORANDUM



MEMORANDUM

TO: UTHSCT Campus Community

FROM: Dr. Jeffrey Levin 
Provost & Sr. Vice President for Academic Affairs

DATE: October 28, 2019

RE: **QEP Topic Selection for SACSCOC**

Dear UTHSCT Faculty, Staff, and Students,

In spring 2018, we asked for your help in identifying a focus for our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), which is a core element of our SACSCOC Reaffirmation. Following a planning retreat and solicitation for proposals, our institution engaged in a strategic partnership that significantly expanded the clinical enterprise and enhanced our brand throughout the region. Next, a new strategic plan for our academic enterprise provided a framework for the advancement of teaching, research, and public service to improve health and well-being. Each of these events impacted the QEP selection process and compelled the committee to revisit the topic.

After extensive deliberation, the QEP Planning Committee selected **Academic Advising** for the university's QEP topic. While UTHSCT already provides academic support for students, this selection will allow a focus on student outcomes relating to degree planning, career development, and networking. This topic provides a stronger focus on student success and aligns with the UTHSCT Strategic Plan for 2019-2026, *2.4 Develop educational infrastructure and online capabilities to meet the needs of students better*. Further, data from student surveys strongly support the selection of this topic.

The long-term goal of this QEP is to promote student and faculty collaboration across institutional boundaries through teamwork and learner-centered advising. Specifically, students will be equipped with the skills to develop detailed goals pertaining to academic pursuits and career aspirations, which will contribute to long term success. Proposed aims developed for the QEP project will seek to:

1. Develop meaningful student-faculty mentorships with student success as the primary goal.
2. Increase student and faculty collaboration in the development of a career plan and professional/career portfolio for students.
3. Enhance institutional capacity to support students from different programs and professions through academic, career, and professional advising.

In the coming weeks, faculty and staff members will be invited to participate in a focus group that will garner feedback about academic advising at UTHSCT. We welcome your questions, comments, and concerns as we move forward. Please email QEP@uthct.edu or call Academic Affairs at (903) 877-7959.

APPENDIX F. QEP AFFIRMATION OF TOPIC FROM STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

RES001/2019-2020

**The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler
Student Government Association**

Student Government Association Resolution 001/2019-2020
Date: December 2, 2019

For more information about
SGA and general inquiries
please email
sga@uthct.edu

Joshua Kleam
SGA President
Joshua.kleam@go.uthct.edu

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Faculty Advisor
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**A RESOLUTION ADDRESSING THE QUALITY
ENHANCEMENT PLAN**

INTRODUCED BY: Sandra Perez, Historian

WE, THE STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT TYLER, HEREBY
RESOLVE:

PURPOSE: For the Student Government Association of The
University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler to support
Pathways to Success: Academic Advising the Quality
Enhancement Plan.

WHEREAS: The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) of an
institution is developed with a topic that is vital to student success,

WHEREAS: Students have consistently identified academic
advising as a need,

WHEREAS: SGA recognizes the need to support student
achievement through academic advising,

THEREFORE: Be it resolved that the Student Government
Association of The University of Texas Health Science Center at
Tyler affirms the topic of the QEP and believes it will
significantly contribute to the quality of the student experience.

*Proviso: a copy of this resolution shall be sent to the President
and Provost of UTHSCT, as well as the QEP Director.*



Student Government Association President, Joshua Kleam

12/2/19

Passed: (Y) (N)

Vote: Y ___ N ___ A ___

Unanimous

APPENDIX G. SAMPLE STUDENT ADVISING SURVEY

Class Climate

Academic Advising Survey Questionnaire

SCANTRON.

DRAFT



Mark as shown: Please use a ball-point pen or a thin felt tip. This form will be processed automatically.

Correction: Please follow the examples shown on the left hand side to help optimize the reading results.

1. Section 1

- 1.1 Please identify your program. MPH MHA Biotechnology
- 1.2 How often do you have contact with your advisor? Only for registration/Once a semester 2-3 times a semester 4+ times a semester
 Never
- 1.3 What are your preferred methods of communication with your academic advisor?
 Face to Face Appointment Email Phone Call
 Text Message Other
- 1.4 How quickly does your academic advisor respond to emails/phone calls? Within 24 hours Within 2-3 days Within a week
 Never

2. Section 2

- | | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2.1 My advisor provides accurate assistance in selecting appropriate courses. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.2 My advisor is knowledgeable about academic and graduation requirements. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.3 If my advisor does not know the answer to one of my questions, they make the effort to connect me to someone who does. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.4 The availability of my academic advisor is currently meeting my needs. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.5 My academic advisor listens and respects me as an individual. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.6 I am given the time I need during my academic advising appointment(s) and do not feel rushed. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.7 I am able to identify available resources at UTHSCT for meeting my personal, academic and career goals. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.8 Overall, I am satisfied with my academic advising experience at UTHSCT. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2.9 What has been most beneficial about your advising experience?

2.10 What are your suggestions for improving academic advising at UTHSCT?

DRAFT

APPENDIX H. CONSULTANT PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

To: Dr. Kent Willis

From: José Luis Cano, Consultant

Date: November 21, 2019

Subject: Qualitative Study for QEP: Preliminary Findings

Preliminary Findings

The information collected from participants requires more analysis, but preliminary findings, which may permutate as the analysis ensues, will be discussed.

On Monday, November 18th, the researcher conducted a focus group with seven participants familiar with academic advising processes in Public Health, Health Administration, and Medical Biological Sciences. Participants voiced diverging circumstances—processes, skills developed, and degree goals—in their respective departments. Therefore, academic advising as a process and practice fluctuated from entity to entity. However, a participant stated, “I really find it advantageous that the person that brings them into the program handles that first round of the early advising,” a sentiment that resonated with most participants. “As we look at advising,” a participant began, “What are we looking at? Are we looking at just advising on course selections through the degree, or are we looking at advising in terms of professional development? Or are we looking at both?” In other words, the function and scope of advising requires demarcations. As preliminary analysis, these findings may still converge or diverge into different themes; however, Figure 1 functions as a visual depiction of an emerging theme.

“As we look at advising, what are we looking at? Are we looking at just advising on course selections through the degree, or are we looking at advising in terms of professional development? Or are we looking at both?”

-Participant

What is the scope of advising? (Figure 1)



Qualitative Study on Academic Advising: Students

Context

To understand perspectives and processes of academic advising, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler requested an external qualitative study. This qualitative study shaped into three focus groups: faculty/staff, industry members in the community, and students. This report details the findings from the students.

Research Questions

The research questions asked: 1) How do students perceive the academic advising process? 2) What impact do students believe advising has on their success? 3) What do students perceive as areas of improvement for academic advising?

Research Method

On January 24, 2020, the researcher conducted an audio-recorded focus group with six students with previous or current enrollment at the institution. The researcher transcribed the audio and analyzed the data. The first cycle of analysis consisted of process coding in which the researcher identified the advising processes as described by the participants. The second cycle of analysis comprised evaluative coding in which the researcher associated advising processes to perceived effectiveness.

Analysis

Interacting with Advisors

The interactions with advisors offered mixed responses from participants. A participant defined the role of the advisor by explaining, “somebody who guides you through the process, helps you enroll in classes, lets you know expectations of the program, and somebody who’s there for you to

bounce ideas about your current and future plans.” A couple of participants appreciated the dissemination of information, structured method in coursework, and the clarity in their processes from the advisor: “We really like the organization, our advice, and how we can easily contact her when we need help.” However, several participants voiced concerns with the interactions between advisors and themselves. For instance, one participant didn’t know who or how to contact for questions. Furthermore, students felt that “a lot of times, they [advisors] don’t know who to contact,” if a question arises. In addition, participants characterized the institution as understaffed. This situation, at times, created scenarios where people

“We really like the organization, our advice, and how we can easily contact her when we need help.”

- Participant

had “multiple jobs,” which participants identified as a conflict of interest on occasion. Also, participants pursuing specific concentrations displayed resistance toward multiple advisors for different tracks, especially because they fell under the same degree. Consequently, participants articulated the benefit of one “go-to” person who is “knowledgeable in all areas.” The

small student population prompted participants to identify it as an opportunity to engage more “face-to-face time” between advisors and students.

Engaging with Faculty

Participants expressed mixed responses in relation to their professors. One participant conveyed a meaningful conversation with a professor: “So, it kind of opened my eyes to the field and made me actually realize that maybe that was something for me.” However, participants self-positioned themselves as secondary or tertiary priorities

because of their perception of faculty schedules. Participants acknowledged the research demands, faculty-to-student ratio, and other demands for professors as preventing them from taking full advantage of their professors' expertise and time. Pretending to be a professor, a participant stated a lighthearted yet insightful comment, "Let me just tell you, if I'm a faculty member, I'm doing what pays the bills." "Paying the bills," in this regard, did not entail focusing on students.

Nevertheless, participants viewed professors as people who could connect them with internal and external opportunities in their fields of interest.

Seeking Career Services

Participants articulated the need for a career services or a person devoted to career and professional development. The partnership with UT Tyler's Career Services surfaced, yet participants noted difficulties in accessing these services. A participant envisioned a person focused on career development to say, "We can put you in connection with somebody who's an expert," as it pertained to internships and jobs. Moreover, the participants desired services, such as networking events on campus and external presenters. They also craved for information on current job opportunities, industry internships, expectations, and preparation methods. In addition, participants expressed interest in a website that offered resources revolving around professionalization and career opportunities. Lastly, participants felt they needed training and insights on "how to sell yourself to these companies" through their different skills and degrees. This entailed conducting mock interviews, producing cover letters, revising résumés, and receiving

"You went through our program. Now, go find your job."

- Participant

"I went to a mentor, somebody who I felt comfortable with, and told them my plan."

- Participant

general feedback about their approach to acquiring a job and career.

Navigating the Institution

Through their differing paths, participants articulated mechanisms they employed to navigate their programs. One participant explained the general sentiment by stating, "It's survival of the fittest." Another student corroborated by denoting the stance perceived from the program—"You went through our program. Now, go find your

job." In essence, participants needed to stay proactive because of their situations. For that reason, one participant explained, "I went to a mentor, somebody who I felt comfortable with, and told them my plan." In this instance, the participant expressed more comfort in finding an individual outside of the structured process to find information. Participants engaged the possibility of finding mentors from external institutions. Participants who enrolled in a degree program with different tracks still had difficulties angling their degrees because they didn't showcase their own areas of concentrations.

Participants attributed their close relationships with institutional personnel and proximity to campus as mechanisms that helped them navigate their programs, yet they worried about individuals in the programs who didn't have these affordances.

Concluding Remarks

Participants expressed the need for a single point of contact for advising, voiced benefits (and hesitations) of interacting with professors, and expressed a lack of a dedicated career services to prepare them for the job market. Consequently, participants attributed their proactive nature toward completing steps in the process.

Qualitative Study on Academic Advising: Community Members

Context

To understand perspectives and processes of academic advising, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler requested an external qualitative study. This qualitative study shaped into three focus groups: faculty/staff, students, and industry members in the community. This report details the findings from the industry members.

Research Questions

The research questions asked: 1) How do industry members in the community perceive an ideal candidate? 2) How can advising play a role toward cultivating ideal candidates? 3) How can UTHSC at Tyler better prepare students for the workforce?

Research Method

On January 24, 2020, the researcher conducted an audio-recorded focus group with four industry members in the community. The participants represented upper-administrative roles, so they possessed knowledge and experience of hiring processes, workforce landscape, and job demands. The researcher transcribed the audio and analyzed the data. The first cycle of analysis consisted of descriptive coding in which the researcher identified descriptions of perceived skills and characteristics. The second cycle of analysis comprised evaluative coding in which the researcher associated advising processes to perceived professionalization.

Analysis

Defining an Ideal Candidate

Participants voiced several characteristics about the ideal candidate. They mentioned great attitude, personable, dependable, organized, time

conscious, strong work ethic, experience, and financially literate. A participant summarized, “Hire for attitude; train for skill.” While the employment application serves to position the job candidate in the process and conversation of employment, the participants assess most other qualities through the interview process. Describing the interview process, a participant expressed, “It’s almost a gut feeling like your intuition kind of tells you that this is the right person.” Based on participant responses, the ideal candidate submits a strong employment application, provides a meaningful interview(s), and exhibits the aforementioned characteristics in a convincing manner.

Obtaining Experience

Many of the participants pointed toward experience as a method to foster some of these qualities in job candidates and generate more job opportunities. A participant reflected on developing a work ethic during school: “I showed up Monday-Friday from three to six, so there was that work ethic built in.” In addition to developing specific qualities, students can gain exposure to a careers of interest. In this regard, a participant mentioned internships/preceptorships for students, so they can figure out “dynamics and

“It’s almost a gut feeling like your intuition kind of tells you that this is the right person.”

- Participant

see if that’s really what you want to do.” Moreover, a participant stated these internships, at times, serve as a “six-month, one-year interview” for the students. In essence, students require experience outside of the school courses, so they can cultivate or enhance their marketability. Participants expressed that the institution can facilitate these interactions by establishing relationships with entities in the community. To establish these

relationships, a participant indicated that the initial groundwork may take up sizable resources for the host institution, yet the school should emphasize how it will help the host institution: “You really have to translate that into how it’s going to help them bridge the gap.”

Learning in School

Participants emphasized several components in the classroom that contribute to producing desirable candidates. Because of the “multi-general workers” present in health professions, participants suggested collaboration between people of different backgrounds when conducting group work in the classroom. This intentional selection of group members will foster communication and collaboration skills between people of various backgrounds.

Moreover, participants mentioned the need for students to practice real-world scenarios in their courses, especially because they will learn about the “hiccups” that transpire as theoretically ideal scenarios collide against practical application. Participants also noted the need for professors to be “available” to students as much as possible because students rely on them for content matter as well as professionalization concerns. Moreover, participants mentioned the need for students to develop awareness of business models, acquire financial literacy, and understand how public health and medicine work together to gain a holistic sketch of the profession.

Interviewing for a Career

A participant mentioned the weight of the interview process for candidates: “You’re trying to evaluate a person for what could be a lifetime career.” Candidates, then, create a “professional brand” or “personal brand in general” through this entire process. Consequently, the interview carries heavy consequences for job candidates. A “mock

interview” surfaced as a sound practice to establish for students in search of jobs or careers. The interview would comprise every single step of a job process—from employment application to appropriate attire during the interview process. Participants identified the résumé as a recurring yet fundamental area of focus, so they suggested spending time and guiding students through this document. The interview process requires appropriate attire and attitude, which participants signaled as important reminders to job candidates. Moreover, the intuitive selection of candidates contextualizes the following statement, “Some of it is just being able to have a conversation with the person.” In this context, participants took note of job candidates that asked questions during the

interview, felt comfortable, and demonstrated a genuine interest and enthusiasm toward the position.

Additionally, professional and personal branding encompass digital platforms. A participant remarked the following:

“Creating a successful professional social media platform that puts yourself out there appropriately to make you desirable in the market—that’s a big thing.” Therefore,

job candidates should recognize their online presence and how this presence fashions a particular brand of themselves for potential employers.

Concluding Remarks

In general, employers expect for candidates to meet the job requirements: experience, credentials, and résumé. Yet, the professional and personal branding of the candidate develops through the interview(s), through online platforms, and through the interest and enthusiasm conveyed toward the positions. Hence, the institution can establish mechanisms that emphasize these aspects of professionalization for students.

“Creating a successful professional social media platform that puts yourself out there appropriately to make you desirable in the market—that’s a big thing.”

- Participant