Adaptable Holistic Advising

A Quality Enhancement Plan in Advising

Bladen Community College
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bladen Community College (BCC) is a small community college in rural southeastern North Carolina. Located in Bladen County, the College serves a diverse group of students, over half of whom belong to racial or ethnic minorities, and many of whom are first-generation college students.

The tagline of Bladen Community College is “Student Centered. Future Focused.” As a result of this emphasis, the College has a reputation among students and the community of being friendly, supportive, and student-oriented. Despite strong service to the community, however, the College recognizes the need for continual improvement and to systemize effective practices.

Advising represents one such area of need. To date, the College has not offered in-depth, systematic training of advisors, and successful advising has been the product of well-meaning staff and faculty rather than the result of strategic planning. For this reason and in order to support College goals to increase retention and completion rates, BCC’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) will focus on 1. developing and implementing an advisor training program through its learning management system, Moodle, 2. reformulating its system of early alerts and interventions, and 3. improving student onboarding and exit procedures.

Bladen Community College arrived at this focus through stakeholder feedback, strategic planning, and a needs assessment of the College. This work started with the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, who surveyed faculty, staff, students, community stakeholders, and the Board of Trustees to determine the areas of greatest need at the College. The major topics then became the subject of discussion during college-wide planning meetings.

From there, the College named a full-time QEP Director, who formed QEP-specific committees and began comparing the results of previous QEP discussions to the strategic needs and plans of the College. The College had begun addressing many of the favored topics since the start of the QEP planning process, but coordinated advising initiatives and systematic advisor training represented key areas of continued need.

BCC has begun restructuring to combine curriculum and workforce development under a One-College model. This change shifted the College from a split advising model with faculty and professional advisors to a centralized model with professional advisors and began laying the foundation for a one-stop shop for student services. For this work to be effective, the College must offer students consistent, high-quality advising and robust, coordinated supports that identify, anticipate, and meet their varied needs.

Based upon this rationale, advisor and student survey data, a review of relevant literature, and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, the QEP Team decided that the sum of its efforts
would focus on Adaptable Holistic Advising and created a marketing plan based upon the acronym AHA! The plan includes advisor training, improved student onboarding and exit procedures, and systematic alerts and interventions to anticipate and support students’ needs.

The QEP Director will develop the advisor training in consultation with advisors, Student Services, Distance Education, and the QEP Implementation Committee. As the College’s new professional advisors complete the training, the QEP Director will make changes based on their feedback so that the training can continue to be relevant as it transitions to the Advising Center for the future onboarding of new advisors.

To ensure that the training fits within an integrated advising system, the QEP Team will help the Advising Center establish appropriate protocols for early alerts and train faculty and Student Services staff to identify at-risk students and enact meaningful interventions. The QEP will also establish stronger, more consistent onboarding and exit processes for students. These procedures will allow advisors to help students plan and frame their time at the College and will allow advisors to collect meaningful data on student success and future needs. New exit processes will help minimize student withdrawals, support students’ transition after BCC, and collect data on gaps that can inform future College initiatives.

The QEP uses surveys before and after the training course to measure advisor knowledge and growth. To understand the QEP’s impact on student success, the QEP Director will look to performance measure data on student retention, completion, persistence and equity and track interventions and referrals in a more consistent manner. Through its Quality Enhancement Plan, Bladen Community College seeks to establish an intentional system of advising in which well-trained advisors deliver a consistent, positive experience for students from entry to exit and thereby improve students’ ability to reach their academic and personal goals.
II. COLLEGE AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Founded in 1967, Bladen Community College (BCC) is one of fifty-eight community colleges throughout North Carolina. The College employs roughly 100 full-time employees, nearly half of whom are instructional faculty. Though most of BCC’s enrolled students come from its home county, Bladen, nearly half of students reside in neighboring counties, such as Robeson, Cumberland, Columbus, and Sampson. Among continuing education students, the number of out-of-county students is even higher.

Despite being the fourth largest by land area of North Carolina’s one hundred counties, Bladen County is less populous than most. Located in the rural southeastern part of the state, Bladen County depends on agriculture—including blueberries, peanuts, and soybeans—food processing, and manufacturing to drive its local economy. The College exists to support these local economies, facilitate students’ smooth transfer to university or into the workforce, and promote the enrichment and advancement of its communities.

In fall 2021, Bladen Community College enrolled 1,217 curriculum students and recorded a duplicated headcount of 1,276 students seeking a continuing education credential (programs that require ninety-six hours or more); of these students, over half belong to ethnic or racial minorities, two-thirds are women, and over half are enrolled part-time (Bladen Community College Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, 2021b).

BCC is also home to Bladen Early College High School and a robust dual enrollment program, Career and College Promise. Dually enrolled high school students attend BCC at no cost, and among the rest of the student population, 72% of students receive federal, state, or scholarship aid; 61.3% of the total receive federal Pell grants (S. Benson, Office of Financial Aid, personal communication, May 4, 2022).

Bladen Community College embraces the tagline “Student Centered. Future Focused.” to help guide its service to students and the community. In addition to the tagline, the College has set strategic goals centered on student success, student support, employee enrichment, and community engagement (Bladen Community College, n.d.). The QEP aligns well with these goals, focusing on further developing employees and processes in order to strengthen student supports and ultimately help students to achieve success.
III. LITERATURE REVIEW AND BEST PRACTICES

Advising Definitions

Appreciative advising—advising model based on five phases of appreciative inquiry (disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver, don’t settle)

Career and College Promise Program (CCP)—North Carolina’s dual enrollment program, which allows high school juniors and seniors to take college courses

Case management model—hands-on advising model in which advisors work with advisees to anticipate and plan for their needs and to connect them with appropriate resources

Completion—earning a college credential (i.e., diploma, certificate, or degree)

Developmental advising—relationship-based advising model based upon collaboration and students’ development as whole persons

Guided Pathways—approach to student success that seeks to make students’ paths to credentials more efficient through structured pathways and intentional supports

Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS)—data storehouse managed by the Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics

Holistic advising—an individualized approach that supports students as whole persons and acknowledges that many non-academic factors could influence student success

National Academic Advising Association (NACADA)—global advising association that supports advisor development and the scholarship on advising in higher education

National Student Clearinghouse (NSC)—educational nonprofit focused on college research and reporting

One-College Model—organizational structure that combines curriculum and continuing education programs and supports into an integrated system of operation

Persistence—the rate at which students reenroll in college from fall to fall, regardless of institution

Prescriptive advising—transactional advising model in which advisors are experts focused on delivering information to advisees

Proactive advising—advising model in which advisors reach out to at-risk students instead of waiting for the student to reach out first

Retention—the rate at which students continue enrollment at the same institution from one fall semester to the next
The Value of Advising

Advising services perform important functions at colleges and universities; they help students find belonging on campus, connect to resources, and navigate barriers. These supports are especially important in community college settings where students are welcomed regardless of their backgrounds or previous levels of academic success. Kuh (2008) notes that “almost 50 percent of all first-time community college students (and in some settings significantly more) are assessed as underprepared for the academic demands of college-level work” (p. 69). For students who are unprepared academically and unfamiliar with college resources, advisors can be a vital means of gaining necessary skills and accessing important campus supports.

Though many people conflate advising with registration, advisors’ work goes beyond signing students up for classes; advisors offer holistic supports that allow students the best opportunity to perform well in their classes. According to O’Banion (2020),

Academic advising is the second most important function in the community college. If it is not conducted with the utmost efficiency and effectiveness, the most important function in the college—instruction—will fail to achieve its purpose of ensuring that students succeed in navigating the curriculum to completion. (p. 1)

If students cannot navigate the many written and unwritten rules and procedures of college, academic ability means little. They need support outside of the classroom, and advisors are ideally positioned to offer or connect students to those supports.

Community College Completion

The value of college completion is well documented. Long (2018) notes that employers recognize the value of credentials and that graduates are more productive and work-ready than those without a degree. Recognition of these attributes translates to extra earnings of $4,300 per year for workers with associate’s degrees and nearly $20,000 dollars for those with a bachelor’s (Long, 2018). Trends also suggest that the value of a degree is only increasing. According to Turner (2018), “compared to a worker with no more than a high school degree, the advantage in earnings for a college graduate has increased from about 46 percent in 1973 to about 82 percent in 2016” (para. 5).

Despite these well-documented advantages, however, nearly 40% of community colleges in the United States have completion rates below 20% (Turner, 2018). These outcomes lag far behind other institutions of higher education in part because community colleges are less selective than their four-year counterparts and private schools (Long, 2018). Because of open-door policies and cheaper tuition, community colleges often attract students who are less academically prepared or in more precarious financial situations, and these factors can impede students’ ability to complete a credential.
Otto and Atkinson (2020) point out that
The community college hallmarks of open access and freedom to use services as needed assume a level of self-directedness that twenty-first century students may not possess. They display vulnerability in terms of goals and indecision, often lack financial support, and are increasingly in a call to action to move away from long menus of options and replace them with more focused and integrated student experiences. (p. 75).

Community colleges exist to support the most vulnerable student populations, and as such, will always face more student barriers than their more selective and better-funded four-year counterparts. Therefore, if community colleges are to increase success and completion rates, they must build systems to help students negotiate these potential obstacles.

**Role of Academic Advising in Retention and Completion**

Martinez and Elue (2020) note that advising is a crucial factor in student persistence; yet, advising efforts are often limited in community colleges, where organizational challenges and student barriers are widespread.

Advisors are among the few agents in a college who can bridge key areas of need for a student and help eliminate barriers that could force a student to drop out. Hunter (2006) argues that students who feel connected to the campus community, who understand how to navigate college environments, and who learn how to develop academic and personal competencies are more likely to persist. Advisors can help support students’ social development, mental and physical wellbeing, and academic progress and bolster their confidence and independence. Few others on campus can deliver on-demand, holistic supports as responsively as advisors. Drake (2011) notes that advising can help students connect with the campus and stay engaged with college as a result.

The Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) (2014) found that developmental students who created an academic plan with an advisor in their first semester were 33% more likely to successfully complete a developmental math or English course. Because developmental education is so often a terminal barrier for students, this advising work helps prevent students from withdrawing before ever completing these early courses (CCCSE, 2014). Price and Tovar (2014) reinforce these conclusions: “students who attend community colleges that provide a supportive environment through academic advising; nonacademic supports (e.g., counseling); and financial supports are more engaged—and more engagement around the support for learners’ benchmark is predictive of higher institutional graduation rates” (p. 14).
Therefore, quality advising can have a meaningful impact on students’ experiences, success, and persistence in college and ultimately improve their ability to reach their completion goals.

Measuring College Completion

Despite the connection between advising and student success, finding meaningful data on completion can be difficult. Chen (2021) points out that attempts to measure community college completion often fail to account for students who transfer or leave college for an extended period. If a student begins college and leaves due to illness, family obligations, or finances, that student may never be counted in completion numbers even when returning and graduating after a long absence. These numbers also exclude students who may have reached goals that are unrelated to earning a degree, like advancing job skills or learning more about a special interest. This gap affects community colleges in particular because their students are more likely to come and go based upon their changing circumstances.

Though completion data may not tell the full picture alone, they are still necessary measures for students and colleges alike, and institutions often partner with state systems, government agencies, and external organizations to better capture reliable data. Two frequently used sources for completion data are the Department of Education’s Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC).

According to their data, college students who complete associate’s degrees in 150% of normal time represent as little as 26% of those enrolled, as measured by IPEDS, or as much as 37.5%, as measured by the National Student Clearinghouse (Long, 2018). Because of these lagging outcomes, many colleges and systems have taken a more active role in supporting students’ pathways to graduation, and advising has emerged as a key area of focus.

Advisor Intervention as a Retention Strategy

In addition to helping students choose programs and plan courses of study, advisors are also valuable agents of intervention and support. CCCSE (2014) identifies alert and intervention as a high-impact practice likely to improve student success. They found that developmental students who reported being contacted when they were having trouble in their classes were 67% more likely to complete a developmental English course (CCCSE, 2014).

Identifying students who may be at risk of withdrawing from a course or leaving the college altogether can allow advisors and others to offer students advice and guidance and introduce them to timely support services. In many cases, advisors can understand the risks even before students themselves. Ohrablo (2018) notes that “advisors are invaluable in supporting students by anticipating their needs and addressing issues of which the students may not even be aware”
Advisors can identify potential pitfalls or emerging problems and help students manage those difficulties before they become too great.

In reviewing evidence on the impact of advising on persistence and completion, Hatch & Garcia (2017) underscore the importance of “establishing students’ academic and social support networks” (p. 381). Some students lack robust support networks at home, and in the case of first-generation college students, may not know anyone outside of the college who is familiar with its processes and culture. Advisors can be this point of contact for students and help them to build a meaningful support network. Hatch and Garcia (2017) show that the quality of students’ early connections at the college and their impression of the institution determine the extent to which they seek help in future. These findings suggest the need for intentional, effective onboarding practices, such as new student orientation and advisor introductions.

**Advising as Equity-Building**

Advising is one of the strongest means of reducing achievement gaps that exist across social, economic, and racial demographics. Some students face greater barriers and possess fewer resources, and these factors often contribute to low college completion rates.

First-generation college students, for example, are less engaged with their institutions, have fewer interactions with faculty, experience lower retention rates, and possess less knowledge about the expectations of college work and culture (Soria & Stebleton, 2012). They often have fewer supports than their peers whose parents have graduated with a bachelor’s degree, and as a result, these students are half as likely to persist to their second year (Swecker, et al., 2013). Academic advising, however, can make a measurable difference in these outcomes; Swecker, et al. (2013) found that among first-generation college students “for every meeting with an advisor the odds that a student is retained increases by 13%” (p. 49). Advisors can facilitate greater connections to the college, support students’ comfort with the institution, and connect them to valuable resources that can teach them to navigate higher education.

Students who identify as ethnic and racial minorities can also benefit from high-quality advising. Tovar (2014) notes that college actors, like advisors, can support minority students’ success and integration into the college environment, and Carnaje (2016) argues that advisors can have a positive impact on the success and retention of students of color by helping them to better frame their college experiences. Advisors can support the success of students of color by humanizing the advising experience, showing investment in their success, and employing proactive advising strategies (Museus & Ravello, 2010).

Advisors’ potential to affect change among special populations also extends to online students, who could be more likely to feel disconnected from the campus community and the supports it
offers. According to Ohrablo (2018), “online students are at significant risk for attrition as they experience isolation and a sense of disconnect from the institution, as well as finding themselves lacking resources and information” (p. 110). Nevertheless, advisors can mitigate some of these risks. Ohrablo (2018) argues that “advisors can greatly impact students’ perceptions of their online experiences by providing ongoing support and information to students” (p. 110). By connecting early and continuing to build relationships and provide timely information, advisors can improve the experiences of online students.

Thus, despite the inherent challenges of advising in a community college—including budgetary and personnel limitations—academic advising can improve the outcomes of disadvantaged populations of students, such as first-generation college students, older students, low-income students, and students in racial and ethnic minorities. This work is a key avenue through which colleges can promote equity and reduce completion gaps across financial, racial, and social demographics.
IV. DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Spring 2020

The Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning visited each of the departments across campus and collected potential QEP topic ideas based on their input. This process resulted in twenty-three separate ideas, focused variously on topics ranging from shrinking skills gaps to supporting students’ academic and non-academic needs and increasing the effectiveness of student services offerings.

Fall 2020

In Fall 2020, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning emailed electronic surveys to allow employees to vote on their top choice among the twenty-three potential topic ideas.

The three most frequent responses focused on 1. Implementing a one-stop shop on campus for advising and registration (31.91%), 2. incorporating guided pathways and structured programs to improve completion (21.28%), and 3. increasing awareness, enrollment, and course offerings of career and technical programs (8.51%).

Before the start of the fall term, employees gathered via Zoom for an institutional planning retreat. The Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning split employees into groups and designated group leaders to facilitate and report on the discussion. These conversations centered on the top three survey choices—one-stop shop, guided pathways, and career and technical education. Most groups favored a combination of the ideas and brainstormed potential ideas for implementing, assessing, and marketing these efforts. Group leaders sent documentation of these discussions to the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning.

Based on employees’ discussions and the top three choices from the previous survey, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning emailed a new electronic survey to students. Because students were unlikely to be familiar with the term guided pathways, the survey presented this choice as focusing on degree completion and efficient paths toward degrees. Students most favored this option with 47.89% of the vote; the second most popular option, chosen by 33.8% of respondents, was the creation of a one-stop shop for advising and registration; and the third most popular choice at 18.31% indicated a preference for career and technical education.

The Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning presented the top three choices to the Board of Trustees and to the Advisory Committee Meetings, which represent local
stakeholders—business, university, and public-school representatives. Though the groups reacted positively to the QEP topics, no substantive changes resulted from these meetings.

Spring 2021

In Spring 2021, the College President selected a faculty member to act as QEP Director and continue the process. The QEP Director began meeting monthly with the College President, Executive Vice President, and Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning to begin discussing the QEP process and examining the needs of the College. These conversations focused on translating stakeholder feedback into a workable QEP topic.

The QEP Director also formed a QEP Executive Planning Committee consisting of representatives from across campus, including curriculum faculty, the Registrar’s Office, and the Business Office. This group brainstormed potential areas of improvement that aligned survey results and institutional planning and looked at institutional data to find crucial areas of need. They found that of the various objective markers at the College, the completion rate was the lowest in the North Carolina Community College System. This fact therefore became central to the committee’s discussions.

QEP Executive Planning Committee
Lisa DeVane—Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning
Wanda Richardson—Assistant Registrar
Brad Rohlf—History and Communications Instructor
Roy Thompson—Accounting Specialist

Because employees favored a combination of topics in their planning discussions and because the College had already taken steps to implement some of the suggested changes, the QEP Executive Committee discussed topics that would unify the different areas of interest. In Summer 2020, Bladen Community College opened an Advising Center that would serve as a single point of contact for new and returning students with fewer than twenty-four credit hours. During this period, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning had also been organizing efforts to create structured program pathways for each of the College’s degree programs.

Because of these ongoing efforts, the QEP Executive Committee and senior leadership decided that topics focusing on a one-stop shop for advising/registration and guided pathways were not ideal focuses for the Quality Enhancement Plan and that career and technical education was too broad for a focused implementation.

Instead, these groups saw the potential to address each of these by focusing on improving advising at the College. Advising would have the potential to tie directly to the Advising Center,
champion Guided Pathways work, and improve career and technical education enrollment and outcomes. This topic would also address an ongoing need at the college: advisor development and consistency of practice.

Thus, after looking at institutional data, considering prior stakeholder feedback, and examining the College culture, the QEP Executive Committee chose advisor training as the central focus of Bladen Community College’s Quality Enhancement Plan.

At the end of the Spring 2021 semester, BCC employees gathered in the College auditorium for professional development. There, the QEP Director explained the QEP process and timeline presented the chosen topic. Afterwards, everyone split into groups, and the QEP Director facilitated the discussion of an advising scenario that asked participants to brainstorm barriers to student advising and necessary support interventions. The QEP Director collected this information and presented it to the QEP Executive planning Committee and senior leadership, including the President, Executive Vice President, and Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning.

**Summer 2021**

The QEP Director and Director of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness attended the SACSCOC Summer Institute.

**Fall 2021**

With the topic selection complete, the QEP Director began to collect information on students’ and advisors’ experiences with advising at Bladen Community College. In advance of final registration, the QEP Director created advising surveys for students, printed flyers with a QR code linked to the survey, and distributed them throughout campus (see Appendix A). Students who completed the survey could present documentation to earn 20% off at the campus bookstore.

The QEP Director also created an advising survey for advisors and visited department meetings in August and September to allow advisors an opportunity to complete the surveys and provide feedback on their experience with advising at the College.

In an effort to communicate the QEP process and allow for additional input, the QEP Director created a newsletter that featured an introduction to the accreditation and QEP process and timeline, an anecdote on the importance of advising, and data on effective engagement practices for students. The QEP Director distributed physical copies of the newsletter throughout the campus and emailed an electronic copy and a link to the advising survey to all students.
To reach more students, the QEP Director distributed longer printed advising surveys to students attending Bladen Community College’s Scholars Breakfast and attended a meeting of the Student Government Association (see Appendix B). Ultimately, the QEP Director collected 101 in-person and electronic surveys, which represented nearly 10% of the total curriculum enrollment of the College.

The QEP Director also formed two committees—marketing and implementation—to seek additional input on the direction and presentation of the Quality Enhancement Plan. The QEP Director emailed all employees to solicit input and invite them to join the committees if they were interested.

The Implementation Committee met regularly throughout the semester to discuss advising efforts at the College and their experiences working with students. The QEP Director discussed results from student and advisor surveys and departmental meetings to inform the committee’s work. The most consistent pieces of feedback centered on the lack of substantive advisor training, the need for consistency in advising across campus, the desire for more effective communication across departments, and uncertainty about processes, technology, and available supports. For the committee, these concerns represented a clear opportunity: to develop a robust program for training advisors. This became the goal of the QEP and refocused future conversations and research.

Not all advising feedback could easily fit into a specific focus, however. For feedback that lay outside of the scope of a QEP, including recommendations for restructuring this work at the College, the QEP Director met with the President and presented information on current and future needs and ideas on how best to support advising as the College grows and changes.

The QEP Director also presented feedback to the Advising Center Director and at meetings of the Deans and Directors at the College to help ensure that advising feedback was part of decision-making even when not directly relevant to QEP work.

Once the committee had focused on advisor training, the QEP Director researched best practices and promising programs across the country. This research led to the creation of a course outline for the program, which the QEP Director revised based on feedback from the Implementation Committee and the campus community.

*Spring 2022*

The QEP Director and the QEP Marketing Committee focused their brainstorming on advisor training and chose the acronym AHA! (Adaptive Holistic Advising) to describe the QEP efforts.
BCC’s Director of Communications and Marketing created logos that could represent this title and the work of high-quality advising.

The QEP Director presented the ideas, title, and logos to a focus group of students. The students expressed interest in the QEP, contributed their thoughts on the qualities of a strong advisor, and voted for their favorite logo. They preferred a logo that featured speech bubbles in the College’s signature green. The students expressed that this logo felt representative of the College and best represented how they communicated.

The QEP Director took the student focus group’s feedback to the QEP Marketing Committee, and the group discussed which options would best suit a wider marketing plan and how to best to begin the process. The Marketing and Communications Director created finalized logo choices, and the QEP Marketing Committee voted on their top choice. This choice became the official logo of the QEP.

The QEP Director presented the logo in an all-campus email and began a QEP comic contest to involve students. The contest appeared in email, on flyers across campus, and on display monitors throughout various campus buildings. The work of the contest winner appeared in the College’s literary magazine, *Ink Quill*, and received a prize donated from the BCC Foundation.

Early in the spring semester, the College hired a new Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Development to replace the former Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer, who had retired at the end of the previous year. The first task of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Development was to implement a one-college model integrating curriculum and workforce development. This work led to an overhaul of the College’s organizational structure, plans for a true one-stop shop for student services, and a shift in advising from a split model involving faculty and the Advising Center to a centralized model of professional advisors.

In response to the changes in organization structure, the QEP Director met with senior leadership and student services representatives to find the best way to integrate its planning into the College’s new focus and structure. Because faculty would no longer be involved in advising, the scale of advisor training would be much smaller, but its importance remained; advising would still impact every student on campus. The training would now focus on getting the professional advisors trained in a consistent manner. Some of these advisors would come from previous roles in continuing education or student services, and some would be new hires. The College planned to increase their numbers as needed to serve the students. Therefore, robust training was still an urgent need.
The changes in structure also presented some additional gaps and opportunities. Because faculty would no longer make up the bulk of advisors, their role in the advising process would need to shift. They would not be degree planning and registering, but as the most consistent point of contact with students, they would still need to be involved. Thus, the QEP expanded to include early alerts and interventions and create a process for faculty to communicate important information about students.

The changes also presented the opportunity for advisors to rethink the way that students begin and end their time at the College. Focusing on student onboarding—new student orientation, advising intake, and success planning—and student exit—career advice, transfer planning, and support planning—became the third prong of the Quality Enhancement Plan.

The QEP Director defined these goals in collaboration with senior leadership, Student Services, and Institutional Effectiveness and presented the Quality Enhancement Plan, timeline, and details during the final all-campus assembly of the academic year.

*Summer 2022*

The QEP Director attended the SACSCOC Summer Institute and began creating the advisor training program in Moodle. As the advising model shifted, the QEP Director collected information from the new Advising Center personnel to ensure that advisor training and student success planning would meet their needs.
V. TOPIC IDENTIFICATION

To align with SACSCOC guidelines and best advance constituents’ needs, the QEP team worked to give every potential stakeholder a voice, to center the effort on critical areas of need for the community, and to align the topic with Bladen Community College’s mission statement and strategic planning efforts.

QEP Topic

Through strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and focused research, the QEP team chose to focus on advising as the topic for BCC’s Quality Enhancement Plan. To improve advising, the QEP will focus on three key areas: creating a master advisor training program, improving student onboarding and exit procedures, and using the retention software Aviso to track student progress and offer timely interventions.

Broad-Based Involvement

From the outset of the Quality Enhancement Plan process, QEP leaders have based decisions upon direct input from students, faculty, staff, trustees, and community members. Throughout the topic selection process, employees of the College were able to put forth ideas during department and campus-wide meetings and via surveys. The Board of Trustees had opportunities to provide input at the start of the process and during regular updates on the QEP’s progress, and community stakeholders were able to express their needs and ideas during curriculum advisory committee meetings.

To ensure that all employees had a voice in choosing the QEP topic, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning attended department meetings and asked the groups to brainstorm potential topics. Ideas from these meetings then became options for employees in a campus-wide survey. Early responses from BCC employees focused on three key areas: creating a one-stop shop for advising and registration, implementing guided pathways, and supporting career and technical education (see Table 1 for top three choices and Appendix C for full results).
Table 1. Top Three QEP Choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Popularity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-Stop Shop</td>
<td>31.91%</td>
<td>Creating a one stop shop instead of sending students all over the place during registration. Simplify the flow, stop creating barriers for students. Students should be able to register, get transcripts, pay, etc. all in one area. Increasing and improving customer service for our students. Effective communication to students during the admissions process. Create an advising center to help students with career assessments and placements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided Pathways</td>
<td>21.28%</td>
<td>Focus on completion of degrees; make sure students take the courses in sequence (e.g., English and math early on); all degree programs have a common 1st semester so students that want to change majors will not lose credits; focus on keeping students on the pathway and successful. Revamp the website to provide students in-depth details about each degree including salary, job availability, job requirements, degree requirements including Con. Ed. courses. Minimizing the credit hours for each degree program. Are there classes that can be eliminated? Create degree specific ACA classes. Create a mandatory orientation for students to complete prior to registration that includes a module on how to be successful in online classes, expectations of being a college student, intro to services on campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase CTE Success</td>
<td>8.51%</td>
<td>Increase enrollment, marketing of programs, increase knowledge &amp; potential of programs, educate the community, advising and recruitment of students, course sequence, increase completion rates and job placement after graduation (career and advising center). Making sure we have the availability of the classes to respond to industry needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students also had an opportunity to weigh in on BCC’s QEP topic. They chose from among the employees’ top three choices: 47.89% favored focusing on completion, the option labeled “guided pathways” for employees; 33.8% chose one-stop shop, and 18.31% selected career and technical education (see Appendix D for results). These top three choices also became the focus
of BCC’s 2020 planning retreat, where employees brainstormed how these options could manifest at the College.

The input from employees and students emphasized completion efforts and a one-stop shop system of advising, registration, and student supports. The College began some of this work before the QEP Director and committees were named. Plans for a one-stop shop resulted in the College’s opening an Advising Center and creating plans to move the business office to Building 2, which already housed Admissions, Financial Aid, the Advising Center, and the Registrar’s Office. These choices would allow students to visit a central location on campus for all of their administrative and registration needs and thereby satisfied one of the top choices in advance of the QEP.

The other popular choice was named “Guided Pathways” in the employee survey, but its description encompassed far more and ultimately centered on supporting completion at the College. The work of creating pathways was already underway, led by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning and created by departments under the direction of their director or dean. The Website Committee implemented feedback to include career opportunities on the website, and the College had previously worked to rid programs of unnecessary credit hours under the statewide Completion by Design initiative.

Because this ongoing work touched upon many areas that students and employees had favored in surveys, the QEP Director and QEP Executive Planning Committee worked to combine the most important remaining elements: communicating more effectively during the in-take process, implementing career assessment, increasing completion rates, and teaching students how to be successful at the College. Advising emerged from these discussions as the best way to unite these different elements and to ensure that the QEP had a substantial basis in student and employee feedback.

With the topic chosen, the QEP Director solicited additional feedback from students and advisors to best focus the work on the most important areas of need. To gain this feedback, the QEP Director attended all faculty department meetings and the department meeting of Student Services, which houses the Advising Center, counselors, and others who directly or indirectly advise students. The QEP Director distributed questionnaires to these groups to best capture their current advising practices and opinions (see Appendix E) and discussed their thoughts, successes, and frustrations in these small group settings.

Advisors’ feedback centered on three key components: the lack of consistency in advising practice, the absence of any real advising training, and uncertainty about some processes and procedures at the College (e.g., financial aid).
To reach students, the QEP Director distributed start-of-semester advising questionnaires to capture real-time advising experiences and attended the College’s Scholarship Breakfast to distribute more detailed questionnaires designed to capture students’ experience in detail. The QEP Director also visited the Student Government Association’s first meeting of Fall 2021 to solicit input and emailed all students with a newsletter covering the QEP progress to date, research findings, and process for moving forward. Students expressed similar experiences as advisors: they valued their advising experiences but sought better communication and more transparent advising processes.

The QEP Director took this feedback to an Implementation Committee made up of advisors representing faculty and staff from across the campus. This group determined that advisor training would best address the needs of the College and the feedback of its stakeholders.

**Implementation Committee**
Sharon Coe—Business and Office Administration Instructor
Marcia deAndrade—Nursing Instructor
Re Gena Gilliam—English Instructor
Travis Locklear—Director for College Readiness
Priscilla Pope McAnulty—Early Childhood Instructor
Wanda Richardson—Assistant Registrar
Jason Springer—Advising Center Director

While the Implementation Committee met regularly to determine the details of the QEP, the QEP Director formed the Marketing Committee, made up of faculty and staff from across campus. This group began meeting in Fall 2021 to determine the best way to inform the campus community about the work of the Quality Enhancement Plan.

**Marketing Committee**
Luis Araujo—Bookstore Assistant/Central Services Technician
Jeanne Butler—North Carolina Information Highway Facilitator
Stephanie Gonzalez—Administrative Specialist for Workforce Training and Business Development
James Johnson—Early Childhood Instructor
Sherwin Rice—Student Resource Center Director
Brad Rohlf—History and Communications Instructor

In addition to committees representing a variety of departments on campus, the QEP Director solicited additional input on the specific course of training at the College. The QEP Director emailed all students and employees to determine the most desirable qualities in an advisor and sought input on best ideas and practices.
Alignment with College and Community Needs

In addition to the feedback from employees, students, and the community that captured individuals’ experiences of the College, the QEP Director and committee members also worked to ensure that the QEP addressed needs captured in national trends and state, local, and institutional data. Bladen Community College’s needs are clearest in data representing student demographics and institutional outcomes. The College serves several disadvantaged populations, and some crucial outcomes, like retention and graduation rates, are low when compared to peer institutions. By focusing the QEP on advising, the College seeks to provide hands-on support to vulnerable populations and thereby increase their ability to remain enrolled and progress successfully until they reach their desired degree or credential.

Across the nation, community colleges already experience lower retention and completion outcomes than their private and four-year counterparts. National Student Clearinghouse (2021) data shows that in community colleges, only 51.6% of students starting college in Fall 2019 returned the following fall; this rate represents a decrease of only two percentage points from before the COVID-19 pandemic. By comparison, Bladen Community College’s fall-to-fall retention rate for the same period was 50.1% (Bladen Community College Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, 2021).

Completion rates are likewise low. The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) collects data on performance measures, which represent key markers of success for colleges throughout the system. On the measure of curriculum completion, a 2016-cohort of Bladen Community College students completed at a rate of 34.8% after four years, and BCC was the only college in the state to score below the NCCCS baseline of 43.1% (NCCCS, 2021a). Other measurements of completion data show similarly low rates. In their IPEDS data, the United States Department of Education (2020) presents Bladen Community College’s graduation rate for first-time, full students who finish in 150% of normal program completion time as 13%, compared to sister schools’ average rate of 32%.

Low student completion rates reflect low education levels in BCC’s home county, Bladen. According to the MyFutureNC (2021a) 2020 Bladen County Attainment Profile, only 27% of Bladen County residents have an associate’s degree or higher, compared to 46% of people across the state of North Carolina (MyFutureNC, 2021b). Further, only 41% of students in the county who enroll in college earn a degree or credential within 6 years, compared to 49% of peer counties (MyFutureNC, 2021a). These data, combined with a deep well of research demonstrating the advantage of a college degree, show a critical need to increase higher education completion rates within the county.
Bladen Community College serves a greater percentage of students who belong to ethnic and racial minorities—54%—than the North Carolina Community College System average—40% (North Carolina Community College System, n.d.-c). Among students enrolled in Fall 2020, 23% identified as black, 15% as American Indian/Alaskan, 12% as Hispanic, and 4% as belonging to multiple races (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Enrollment Demographics

![Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Fall 2020](image)

According to IPEDS data, students who identify as black, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native, or belonging to two or more races have lower rates of college completion at both two-year and four-year institutions than white or Asian students (Department of Education, 2019). Completion data at BCC also reflect this pattern: among a 2016 cohort of students, 40% of white students had graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled with forty-two or more hours four years later; among black students, this rate was 27%, and among American Indian/Alaskan students, the rate was 33% (North Carolina Community College System, n.d.-c). Hispanic students were not represented due to low numbers, but in the previous two cohorts, their rate was either the lowest (in 2014) or second lowest (in 2015) measured (North Carolina Community College System, n.d.-c).

Family income is another potential factor affecting completion rates among BCC’s service population. In Bladen County, 21.2% of the population lives below the poverty line, according to the United States Census Bureau (2019), and MyFutureNC (2021a) presents the child poverty rate at 44%. These numbers are further borne out in the fact that 61.3% of students attending Bladen Community College receive federal Pell grants (S. Benson, Office of Financial Aid, personal communication, May 4, 2022).

This percentage is significant; among students attending open-door colleges, like BCC, those who received federal Pell grants graduated at rates twelve percentage points lower than
nonrecipients (Fain, 2019). For the 2016 cohort of students, Pell recipients’ rate of graduation at Bladen Community College was sixteen percentage points lower (27%) than nonrecipients (43%) (North Carolina Community College System, n.d.-a).

Bladen Community College has also long been home to a robust distance education program. In the fall of 2019, 74% of BCC students were enrolled in at least one online class, and 29% were enrolled in all online classes; this compares to the System average of 57% in one online class and 26% in all online (North Carolina Community College System, n.d.-c). Online coursework brings its own list of potential difficulties to students, especially in rural parts of the country where high-quality Internet access is not always available. Thus, success rates for online courses were consistently lower than for non-online courses, though the gap was often within two to three percentage points, typically less than the North Carolina Community College System average gap (North Carolina Community College System, n.d.-b).

Student demographic and county data therefore suggest a need to promote retention and credential completion. This need is further underscored by internal and external data markers from the College. As a result of this need and research underscoring the power of advising to support student success and promote equity, the QEP team has focused on improving these efforts as the focus of its Quality Enhancement Plan.

Advising practices at the College likewise indicate the need for systematic advisor training. Before the creation of the Advising Center, the College relied primarily on a faculty advising model with academic counselors supporting special populations: Career and College Promise and high-school career and technical education students, special credit students, veterans, students with disabilities, and students focused on narrow programs covered by articulation agreements.

No person or department at the College was responsible for training advisors. Instead, new faculty members would shadow experienced advisors, and as the College adopted new technology or initiatives, relevant personnel would deliver as-needed training. For example, English and math faculty would provide updates on changes to developmental education, representatives from Aviso provided training on using their retention software, and Student Services/faculty practitioners gave training updates on the use of Self-Service.

However, no universal and systematic training of advisors was taking place at the College. New advisors learned by doing, through observation, and by asking questions, and few conversations centered on student-advisor interactions. In a survey of BCC advisors, only 25% of respondents rated BCC’s advisor training as above average (a 4 or 5 on a five-point scale; see Figure 2).
In the same survey, 53% of advisors expressed that they were most comfortable interacting with students, and 55% of advisors were least comfortable with BCC processes and procedures (see Figure 3). Advisors’ ease with students is the likely reason that advising at the College has been as successful as it has and aligns with students’ positive perceptions of advising efforts at the College. However, the fact that advisors did not rate advisor training well and indicated that they were least comfortable with processes and procedures at the College indicates a clear need for improving advising services at Bladen Community College.

The College had long struggled with a registration mentality, in which both students and employees focused their efforts on short, intense registration periods, culminating in two all-day registration days each semester. As a result, many advising sessions were transactional, and the volume of students often excluded the potential for more meaningful interaction.

In recent years, the College has worked on extending registration periods and encouraging students to register early, but the culture has been slow to adapt, and the previous registration mentality lingers. Bladen Community College has a deep culture of caring, so advisors were still doing good work and providing important touchpoints for students, but the environment for
advising was not conducive to deep, ongoing conversations, and many students sought out a
different advisor each semester rather than building a relationship with one individual at the
college.

Advising surveys distributed to students showcase this trend. When asked who taught them about
navigating college, only 41% of student respondents answered “college advisor” (see Figure 4).
Many students taught themselves or learned from friends and family. While this suggests a level
of independence and support, family, friends, and the students themselves may not be well-informed about the intricacies of College policies and procedures.

By improving student onboarding procedures, including new student orientation, and training
advisors with appropriate knowledge, the QEP can help ensure that students receive the best
possible information as early and often as they need it.

Figure 4. How Students Learn About College

Tracking students’ progress was likewise poorly systematized. Previously, Aviso sent grade
alerts to advisors and students; sometimes, advisors would follow up; sometimes, counselors
would follow up; and sometimes, instructors themselves would follow up. This lack of a well-defined process led, at best, to duplication of effort and, at worst, to nobody’s taking
responsibility for communicating with students. Faculty and staff were doing their best to reach,
support, and retain students, but the lack of a coordinated effort ultimately made those efforts fall
short of their potential.

The lack of timely intervention and students’ tendency to see different advisors often meant that
students only sought out advisors’ help when they needed to register for classes, or for some, to
drop or add a course during the semester. In some cases, this lack of a close advisor-advisee
relationship meant that students did not have a person on campus with whom they could discuss
potential problems. Over half of surveyed students (51%) indicated that they had faced an issue
that made continuing college difficult, and a third indicated that they had not reached out to
anyone on campus when they had trouble in their courses. When students did reach out for support, only 14% reached out to advisors (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Support Seeking Behavior Among Students**

![Chart showing support seeking behavior among students](image)

By revamping early alert and intervention procedures, the QEP seeks to identify when students need help and to offer guidance and support services before problems become too great. Previous attempts at alerts and intervention duplicated work and lacked appropriate follow-through and accountability. By establishing clear procedures for early alerts and follow-ups, the QEP can help support students before they have to ask for help.

Improved onboarding will likewise help students to understand the resources available to them so that when they do encounter difficulties, they know that they can reach out to their advisors and that there are supports in place to help.

**Mission Statement and Strategic Planning**

In addition to its close connection to campus feedback, improved advising also supports the mission and vision statements of the College and ties directly to institutional goals and ongoing strategic planning.

Bladen Community College’s current strategic plan focuses on three key elements: recruit, retain, complete. This work has already resulted in the creation of the Advising Center, the addition and restructuring of positions at the College, the move toward a one-stop shop, and plans to integrate continuing education and curriculum under a one-college model. The work of the QEP fits well into this model by ensuring that students have meaningful advising experiences that help them feel at home at the College, form a focused, efficient plan to reach their goals, and navigate obstacles along the way.

The work of the advisor training also helps to fill a gap presented by some of the work ahead. A one-college model will require former curriculum advisors to learn about continuing education
programs and former continuing education advisors to learn about curriculum programs. Training advisors is the best way to ensure that students receive consistent experiences irrespective of their advisor, program, or situation and will help facilitate a smooth transition for the College and its employees. The QEP will also help ensure that the move to a professional advising model will be grounded in student data, research, and effective praxis.

As part of their strategic planning, Bladen’s Office of Human Resources is working to ensure that new employees receive effective onboarding that will prepare them for their roles at the College. This work is especially salient considered alongside BCC’s personnel report, which indicates that the average age of full-time College employees is 51.3 years and that 30% have twenty or more years in the retirement system (Bladen Community College Office of Human Resources). These data suggest the likelihood that Bladen CC will face more retirements in the coming years and will therefore need a strong system of onboarding for replacement hires. Having a ready advisor training can streamline this process to ensure continuity of service for Bladen Community College students.

This QEP likewise supports the mission and vision of the College (see Appendix F). According to Ohrablo (2018), “students, staff, advisors, faculty, and university administrators all rely on an effective academic advising unit to support the institutions’ mission of educating and supporting its students” (p. 271). Bladen’s mission statement focuses on “high-order learning, college transfer preparation, workforce development training, and entrepreneurship opportunities” (Bladen Community College, 2019). Proper advising supports these outcomes specifically and helps frame students’ classroom experiences. Effective advising can help ensure that students have prepared with the right coursework to meet their goals to transfer, enter the workforce, or start a business, and part of the advisor’s job is to help contextualize classroom experiences in a way that will help students understand the connection between their coursework and their goals.

The College needs to embody a forward-thinking approach that connects students with workforce skills and opportunities. This need appears in the mission (“workforce development training and entrepreneurship opportunities”) in the College’s tagline (“Student Centered. Future Focused.”), and in student and employee feedback advocating for a greater focus on the job market, particularly for career and technical education students.

Still, despite the perceived value of career assessment, 58% of surveyed BCC advisors responded that they discussed career opportunities with students “sometimes,” “never,” or “only during the first meeting.” Instead, up to this point, the College has relied on Career Coach software to connect students to career opportunities. However, this information was merely housed on the website without widespread integration into student programs and planning efforts. The College is working to integrate nccareers.org information into the website’s program listings to give them
additional context, but without anyone championing this information, students still may not know how to access or use the resource as part of their academic planning.

The Advising Student Success Network (2021) argues that “when career development is left to chance, it reduces opportunities for all students and potentially magnifies challenges disproportionately experienced by specific subgroups such as Black, Latinx, Indigenous and low-income students” (para. 1). Appropriate training and a renewed focus on student onboarding can ensure that advisors feel comfortable discussing careers and adopt this as a regular part of the academic planning process.

In addition to supporting Bladen Community College’s mission statement, advisor training would likewise support the broader efforts of the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS). The System likewise emphasizes the importance of quality advising and well-trained advisors. Their mission statement, adopted from the North Carolina Community College Advising Association (N3C2A), notes that “quality advising is fostered through institutional support for the onboarding and continuous development of advising personnel and for the access to appropriate advising resources” (“Academic Advising,” n.d.).

Creating a strong advisor training program would commit institutional support, help support advisor development, and serve to onboard newly-hired advisors. Creating new processes for onboarding, student exit, and tracking and intervention will ensure that advisors have the tools necessary in order to do their work effectively.

**Topic Framing and Branding**

The QEP Director, Communications and Marking Director, and the QEP Marketing Committee chose to brand the advisor training efforts under the acronym AHA! (Adaptable Holistic Advising). This branding will remind QEP teams and the College community of the core qualities of good advising: flexibility and individual attention.

The word *adaptable* highlights the importance of advising programs, advisor training, and advisors themselves to be nimble and responsive to students’ varied and changing needs. It also builds on recent experiences with advising during the COVID-19 pandemic that forced advisors and advisees to rethink the ways in which they communicated and connected. This system acknowledges that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to advising; different students have different needs, and individuals’ needs change with their circumstances and experiences both at the College and beyond.

*Holistic* acknowledges students’ complex lives, of which academics may be only one part. Students have interests, hobbies, responsibilities, and challenges that, while often existing
outside the context of their academic experience, still impact their success. This approach will help the QEP emphasize the interconnectedness of the various parts of students’ experiences and the need to understand and build supports for a variety of needs. This emphasis will also continue to push the College away from a registration mentality and better demonstrate the need for wraparound services.

Adaptable and holistic also echoes Bladen Community College’s tagline: Student Centered. Future Focused. This commitment to putting students first and creating sustainable systems that will continue to serve the community’s needs. AHA! also invokes the epiphany experience that so often comes with good advising when a student makes a connection, understands the big picture, or navigates a hurdle to reach a goal.

VI. ACTION PLAN AND TIMELINE

Strong advising can support students’ success at the College, but in order to be successful advisors, employees need appropriate professional development focused on the conceptual, relational, and informational dimensions of an advising relationship. Tovar (2014) found that “key to the success of [support] programs will be the proper training of college faculty and staff to ensure they can function in their capacity of mentor” (p. 20). Yoder and Joslin (2015) affirm the value of successful advisor training: “students, advisors, and administrators will enjoy the benefits of an effective training program because well-advised students learn the tools to meet their own academic and personal goals” (p. 314). Thus, a successful action plan will promote the full and consistent training of Bladen Community College advisors.

Training alone, however, will not be enough to ensure a successful system of advising. The College also needs systems in place that will ensure that students receive the attention and resources that they need throughout their academic careers. Creating processes and resources to help onboard students can support their feelings of belonging on campus and introduce them to vital services. Finding their place on campus is important for all students, especially so for first-generation and minority students.

Onboarding will help frame students’ experiences, and systematic tracking of student progress will help ensure that advisors are able to intervene when a student is at risk. They can make referrals, celebrate student success, and help problem-solve. Refining exit procedures can ensure that students attempting to withdraw have been advised on their potential options and supported through their next steps, whether that is registering for another semester or transitioning to the workforce.

By design, a truly successful system of advising will begin with students’ entry and continue throughout their time at the College. It will connect students with well-trained advisors who support their progress and goals at BCC and beyond. This QEP will ensure that all advisors are
trained consistently and that they are given tools for onboarding, tracking, supporting, and transitioning students.

**Action Plan**

The Implementation Committee determined that an advisor training course would best be created and administered through the College’s learning management system, Moodle. Creating an online course would allow for more flexibility in timing and would allow the College to implement the training for individuals during the onboarding process or at scale across campus. A stable online course would also ensure that advisors would receive consistent messaging on advising, and the Moodle course could serve as a storehouse for resources that advisors could consult even after their initial training is complete (see Appendix G). Administering the course in Moodle would have the added benefit of exposing advisors to the program their advisees will use in their courses so that advisors can be more effective resources for students.

The Moodle course will teach advisors the foundational advising knowledge necessary to build meaningful student-advisor relationships and support students’ success as they work to reach their goals (see Appendix H for full course outline). Advisors may also elect to complete add-on modules that focus on specific subject specializations (business, public service, construction trades, healthcare, and college transfer). These optional modules will focus on advising knowledge specific to these areas. This will add nuance to the discussions, allow advisors to work with scenarios more relevant to their everyday practice, and learn about new areas of advising when their advising duties change.

The Moodle course will be based on key components the NACADA, that National Academic Advising Association, defines as foundational to expert advising:

- The conceptual component includes the ideas and theories that advisors must understand to effectively practice the art.
- The informational component refers to the knowledge that advisors must gain to guide the students at their institution.
- The relational component involves the communicative skills and interpersonal approaches advisors must build including those critical to establishing advising relationships with students. (Folsom, 2015, p. 6).

The conceptual content will introduce advisors to prominent advising models, including developmental advising, proactive advising, prescriptive advising, and appreciative advising. Kuh (2008) notes that “given the array of academic and social issues that students must manage during the transition from high school to college, a cookie-cutter approach to advising students from increasingly diverse backgrounds will not be sufficient” (p. 77). In acknowledgement of this, the QEP will introduce a variety of models rather than force a one-size-fits-all approach.
Though the QEP will not mandate a specific advising model, it will champion a case management framework. In this model, advisors take a hands-on approach to getting to know advisees, connecting them with resources, minimizing barriers, and advocating on their behalf.

According to Pardee (2004), case management models of advising are particularly well suited for populations in which many students are likely to be unprepared or underprepared for college (as cited in Pierce, 2016).

Case management ensures that students have guidance through every stage of their education and can be paired with other advising measures, like proactive or prescriptive advising, as needed based upon individual students and situations. By learning these various models in the context of a case management framework, advisors can be more responsive to students’ individual needs.

The conceptual framework will also present the advising mission statement that the North Carolina Community College System has adopted (see Appendix I) in order to help unite the campus’s efforts under a single philosophy of practice.

The informational content of the course will present the many rules, procedures, and guidelines that advisors must follow to successfully advise and register students. This information includes policies related to the College, such as registration and drop/add procedures; statewide requirements such as System-wide prerequisites and degree requirements; federal rules such as FERPA and financial aid obligations; and agreements between various institutions, such as articulation agreements, transfer rules, and North Carolina’s Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAC), which governs the relationship between the community college and university systems.

For new advisors, the complexity of rules and the sheer number of guidelines can be overwhelming, and when regular changes result from state law or institutional growth, being able to synthesize and manage that information becomes difficult. Surveyed BCC advisors were least comfortable with College processes and procedures, and this lack of comfort could interfere with their ability to appropriately connect advisees with vital information.

Because the information is so vast and varied, the informational section can introduce advisors to situations that it would otherwise take them several semesters or years of practice to achieve. The Moodle course has the added benefit of storing this information for future reference.

The relational component of advising will be the third key area. This information will focus on how best to build a productive relationship between advisors and advisees in order to facilitate a successful case management model. Making meaningful connections with campus employees
will help students to transition better to campus and will continue to shift the college away from a registration-focused mindset. Relational content would focus chiefly on interpersonal and academic skills that advisors should employ and model in their interactions with students. These skills could include appropriate communication, goal setting, needs assessment, and inclusion.

By equipping advisors with a consistent framework for advising, knowledge of College rules and procedures, and vital relational skills, advisor training can improve the quality of advisor/advisee relationships and lead to greater success for students. Trained advisors will make fewer mistakes, build more efficient pathways to graduation, and become informed, approachable resources for students.

**Timeline**

To ensure optimal implementation, the QEP will be rolled out in stages. Prior to the first year of implementation, the QEP Director will work in consultation with the Advising Center Director and current and former advisors to create the training module in Moodle. The Implementation Committee and the Director of Distance Education will review the course to ensure that the materials are clear, adequate, and accurate.

The first official year of the QEP will be devoted to training the professional advisors with the new training modules and collecting data on their knowledge and comfort with advising before and after the course. The QEP Director will then use their feedback to update the training modules to improve onboarding for future advisors. The first year will also focus on planning a new student orientation that will help onboard new students and introduce them to advising, the QEP, and College resources and expectations. The QEP Director will work with instructional deans and the Advising Center Director to train faculty and advisors on effective early alert and intervention practices.

In the second year of implementation, the QEP Director and Advising Center Director will continue to use the Moodle training to onboard new advisors and make updates as changes to the College and its programs arise. The Advising Center will implement the redesigned new student orientation, and the QEP Director will work with advisors and distance education to develop an online student orientation to ensure that students still receive appropriate onboarding even if they cannot attend in person orientations or if they are wholly online students.

The third year of implementation will focus on student exit processes. In this year, the QEP Director, in conjunction with the Advising Center and Student Services personnel, will create a survey for students who withdraw or graduate. This survey will allow the College to collect important data about student success, stopouts, and dropouts and ensure that BCC invests in appropriate resources to help students complete their goals. The QEP Director and the Dean for
Student Success will consult with the Dean for Enrollment and Financial Aid to gather and analyze student withdrawal data to further inform student success initiatives at the College.

In the fourth year of implementation, the QEP Implementation Committee will create quick reference guides and template emails for common advising processes and scenarios (see Appendix F). The QEP Director will work with the Advising Center Director to update new student orientation, alert and intervention procedures, and the advisor training based on feedback and experiences from the previous years.

The fifth year of the QEP, the QEP Implementation Committee will analyze retention, completion, and equity data to see how the QEP impacted student success. The QEP Director will compile the fifth-year report for SACSCOC and will make final updates to the trainings and processes in order to transition them to the Advising Center Director, who will oversee the work going forward.

**Table 2. Implementation Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Fall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>Unveiling of new organizational chart</td>
<td>Transition to One-College model and centralized advising with professional advisors</td>
<td>Submission of Quality Enhancement Plan; On-Site Visit; develop online advisor training and new student orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>Finalize online advisor training and new student orientation; official QEP kickoff</td>
<td>Train professional advisors; roll out new student orientation</td>
<td>Train faculty and staff on Aviso, early alerts, referrals, and intervention process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2024</td>
<td>Update advisor training, new student orientation, and advisor intervention process; develop online orientation</td>
<td>Roll out new online and in-person student orientation</td>
<td>Provide training updates on Aviso, early alerts, referrals, and intervention process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025</td>
<td>Survey advisors, faculty, and students on early alert processes and procedures; develop survey and resource list for exiting students</td>
<td>Train new advisors; update early alert processes and procedures from feedback; implement new student orientation</td>
<td>Implement early alert changes; train advisors to track and document student exits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2026
- Survey advisors and students on their experiences; create quick reference guides for common advising topics
- Update training and advising processes based on feedback; distribute quick reference guides
- Use training modules for new advisor onboarding; implement revised advising processes

### 2027
- Gather student and advisor data; finalize assessment; write five-year report
- Transition training modules to Advising Center Director; revise five-year report
- Finalize and submit five-year report.

### Assessment

To best ensure the success of the QEP, the team will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures to assess its success and to adjust course.

The first assessments will measure the quality and success of the training modules. The QEP Director will build the training modules in Moodle in conjunction with the Advising Center Director, advisors, instructors, and Implementation Committee. By meeting with content and advising experts before and after the creation of each module, the QEP Director can ensure that relevant feedback becomes part of the development of advisor training.

More formal assessment measures will inform updates to the training modules and document advisors’ growth resulting from their engagement with the course. At the start of the training, participants will complete a survey about their knowledge of and comfort with various aspects of advising. This assessment will document advisors’ comfort levels on important topics in each of the key content areas: conceptual, relational, and informational (see Appendix J).

At the end of the course, they will fill out the same assessment, and the QEP Director will be able to assess the extent to which their comfort levels have increased and offer additional resources when advisors feel less confident. In addition to using the information to assess advisors’ growth and knowledge of advising, the QEP Director will also use this information to revise sections of the course that resulted in less growth.

Only 25% of advisors rated BCC’s advisor training as above average in the data-gathering survey. Because a more intentional and formalized training is likely to present information more clearly and consistently, the QEP should result in this rating increasing to 50% or more.

Measuring the effect of the training on advisors will help to show its impact on their knowledge and practices, and further quantitative measures will show the QEP’s impact on student success.
Other markers of success could include persistence, retention, completion, student satisfaction, and equity.

Persistence, retention, and completion are key areas of concern for the North Carolina Community College System, and yearly performance measures reflect those data. Because the state collects and reports this information for every college in the System, the Quality Enhancement Plan teams can easily compare Bladen Community College’s success with similar institutions, historic data, and state averages.

**Curriculum completion.**

The QEP first seeks to improve the rate at which students graduate with a credential or transfer successfully. Yearly, the NCCCS (n.d.-a) captures and reports this outcome, measured as “the percentage of first-time fall credential-seeking students who graduate, transfer, or are enrolled during the fourth academic year with 42 successfully completed non-developmental hours.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Fall 2015</th>
<th>Fall 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bladen CC</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighboring College Average</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE Size Average</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>54.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority Enrollment Average</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Distress Tier Average</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCCCS Average</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Bladen Community College, this number has been below the system average in the last three out of four cycles and has been decreasing since Fall 2014. Because this metric follows students for four years, the rate will not fully represent the QEP until the final years of implementation. Nevertheless, because the QEP will impact all students, it should still improve completion rates, even for students who entered the College before full implementation.
Because of the lagging timeline and the complexity of this measure, the QEP teams expect modest improvements in the first year after implementation with growth each year afterwards. The QEP process should support a rise in graduate rates each year after implementation. This measure has fluctuated up and down, so the QEP seeks to increase the graduation rate one percentage point each year for the five-year life of the QEP.

**Fall-to-fall retention.**

Further, the plan should improve fall-to-fall retention of students, increasing the rate at which students return to Bladen Community College to continue their studies. Like completion, this rate depends on myriad factors, some of which are academic, some economic, social, personal, or otherwise. Therefore, changes to the retention rate cannot be tied directly to the QEP, but the QEP seeks to help stabilize this rate at 60%, which will be the highest rate in recent measured time.

**Table 4. Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017 to 2018</th>
<th>2018 to 2019</th>
<th>2019 to 2020</th>
<th>2020 to 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bladen CC</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fall-to-fall persistence.**

In addition to overall retention rates of students from fall-to-fall, the QEP also has the potential to improve students’ persistence, the rate at which they return to college from year to year. The North Carolina Community College System measures this outcome for first-year students, and it focuses on the rate at which students return to college or university regardless of institution. So, BCC’s rate measures the percentage of the College’s students who continue their education from one fall to the next regardless of whether they return to Bladen Community College or not.

This rate is important to measure in addition to retention because good advising may necessitate that students transfer to another institution better suited to their needs. An improvement in this rate would signal the success of QEP and advising efforts, even if retention rates did not increase at the same rates. Like others, this rate has fluctuated substantially, but the QEP seeks to stabilize this fluctuating measure and ultimately increase the persistence rate to 70%, which is higher than comparable colleges’ averages.

**Table 5. Fall-to-Fall Persistence Rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2016</th>
<th>Fall 2017</th>
<th>Fall 2018</th>
<th>Fall 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bladen CC</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Because numerous factors impact retention and completion rates and because this area is a key focus of the College’s strategic planning, it would be impossible to draw a direct connection from one initiative, like the Quality Enhancement Plan, to something as complex as retention and completion rates. For that reason, the QEP Team will use a variety of other measures to assess the plan and correct course as necessary.

**Student satisfaction.**

Student satisfaction surveys will also measure the success of the QEP. Each year, students complete a review of the College’s services. The survey requests their input on various services across campus, including advising. Because student satisfaction of advising has historically been high, the QEP Team hopes to maintain or increase this satisfaction.

**Table 6. Student Satisfaction with Advising**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I have been properly advised about which courses I need for my major”</td>
<td>93.79%</td>
<td>96.13%</td>
<td>94.4%</td>
<td>95.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel that my registration and student services needs have been met in a timely and efficient manner.”</td>
<td>96.89%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>96.03%</td>
<td>98.46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Equity.**

The QEP should support success for all students and reduce completion gaps among racial and ethnic groups. Research shows that advisors can humanize the advising experience, create belonging, direct students, and advocate on their behalf. These functions have shown to increase
the rates of belonging and success in college environments, and the QEP seeks to use this system of strong advising to shrink the gaps between racial and ethnic groups.

In recent years, the gap between BCC’s highest performing group and lowest performing group has fluctuated from 9 to 38 percentage points (North Carolina Community College System, n.d.-a). The work of the QEP seeks to shrink this gap by five percentage points over the life of the plan. This will put the equity gap at its lowest recorded value, a seven-point difference, and highlight the work still to come.

**Table 7. Completion Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Equity Gaps**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Fall 2015</th>
<th>Fall 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>No data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity Gap</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data gathering and use of services.**

Indirect metrics can also show the QEP’s impact on student success. The QEP process will gather data on interventions, student withdrawals, and use of services in a more systematic way. The QEP Director can share this data with the Student Services and instructional personnel in order to better anticipate students’ need and barriers to their success, which will support future strategic student success planning and help determine needs for the next Quality Enhancement Plan.

The QEP should also result in students’ increased use of advising services by improving their relationships with advisors and confidence in the Advising Center. When surveyed, only 41% of student respondents indicated that advisors had taught them about navigating college (see Figure 4). With more hands-on advising, including early relationship-building and regular interaction and intervention, the QEP seeks to increase this result to 60% or higher. Follow-up surveys in the final years of QEP can help assess student reliance on advisors.

In the same survey, 51% of students indicated that they had encountered an obstacle that made it difficult to continue their studies, and of those, one third never reached out for help. Among
those who did seek support, only 21% reached out to advisors. The QEP should result in more effective advising and thereby increase the number of students who reach out for support to 75% or higher and those who seek out advisors’ support to 50% or more.

Cost

To maximize resources with which to serve students, the College can implement the Quality Enhancement Plan inside of existing structures and with little additional expenditure. The primary work of developing the QEP will fall to the QEP Director, who will work alongside existing personnel to ensure that the training is of appropriate quality. Bladen Community College has committed to employing a full-time QEP Director through the life of the QEP, and those who will help review training content will do so within their typical contractual service work and during their regularly allotted working schedule.

Because the training will be built in the College’s existing learning management system and will continue to support Aviso retention software from state funds, no additional technology expenditures will be necessary, and any supplemental materials are within the typical operating budget for Bladen Community College’s in-house print shop, so no additional costs will be necessary for printing materials.

The QEP Director and committees have worked to ensure that the plan will be sustainable within the College’s current operating budget, and BCC has approved a five-year budget for the QEP to support its continued work. This budget maintains funding for the QEP Director as a full-time position, ensures that there are adequate professional development opportunities, and commits to marketing the plan fully to internal and external stakeholders so that each group can stay informed and invested in the work of the QEP.

Table 8. Approved Five-Year QEP Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Approved Budget Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QEP Director</td>
<td>Salary over 5 years</td>
<td>$306,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>Conferences and workshops for Director and professional development for campus</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Marketing | Outward and inward facing materials | $20,000
---|---|---
Office Supplies | Pens, paper, notepads, etc. | $500
---|---|---
Totals |  | $346,500

**Marketing Plan**

The QEP Marketing Committee chose Adaptable Holistic Advising (AHA!) to name and frame the work of the QEP. The Committee chose the name based upon feedback from a student focus group and brainstormed potential ideas for promoting the initiative across campus.

To further involve students and generate buzz about the QEP and logo, the QEP Marketing Committee created a contest based upon the text bubbles in the logo. They asked students to create a comic highlighting a student-advisor interaction. The winning submission earned a prize donated by the BCC Foundation, a space in the College literary magazine, *Ink Quill*, and recognition on display monitors spread throughout campus.

The QEP Marketing Committee brainstormed additional means of spreading the message of the QEP across campus. This resulted in a variety of paid and free opportunities for getting the word out. The Committee purchased outdoor signs to appear on light poles throughout campus, floor decals of the logo to place in building entryways, and vinyl decals to place prominently on doors and windows of key buildings.

The Marketing Committee also paired with the Student Government Association to add the QEP logo to the BCC t-shirt given to each student every fall. To pair with the shirt, the Committee also purchased highlighters, color-changing cups, drawstring bags, Post-Its, and pens, all branded with the QEP logos. In Fall 2022, every enrolled student will receive the bag filled with QEP-branded merchandise and a quick primer on the Quality Enhancement Plan.

The QEP will also feature on its own page on the BCC website and will include an introduction to SACSCOC and the QEP process, an overview of the plan, a timeline of changes to anticipate, posts spotlighting the QEP, students’ and employees’ AHA! moments, and useful information about advising, registration, and student success.

Semesterly emails, student and employee surveys, and branded messages on display monitors will continue to ensure that new students and employees are introduced to the QEP and that they have ownership of the plan through opportunities for discussion and direct feedback. For further
immediacy, the QEP logo and link to the website will also appear in Moodle and on classroom monitors.
VII. CONCLUSION

Through its Quality Enhancement Plan focused on advising, Bladen Community College seeks to improve the quality of advisor training and support for students as they enter the College, progress toward their goals, and transition to the workplace or another institution of higher education.

By training advisors in a consistent and data-informed way, the Plan will thereby improve their ability to understand, guide, and support students’ success. Advisors will work to prepare students for the rigors of college and help them to navigate BCC’s processes and understand the resources available to them. Advisors will cultivate and reinforce relationships and use data from instructors and other support staff to anticipate and negotiate student barriers. Finally, the advisors will help students to transition to the workforce or into a different program through intentional exit procedures.

These trainings and added student supports will contribute to student growth, belonging, and independence while collecting meaningful data that will help refine this work and inform the College’s future strategic planning.

Advising is a valuable means of promoting student belonging, minimizing barriers, and supporting students’ successful movement toward their goals. This Quality Enhancement Plan therefore has the potential to promote consistent effective practice, improve student outcomes, and increase equity at the College.
VIII. REFERENCES


Bladen Community College Office of Human Resources. (2021). Bladen Community College Personnel Report to the Board of Trustees


IX. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Electronic Advising Survey

Electronic Advising Survey

Circle the options that best describe your experience at Bladen Community College.

1. How difficult was the process of getting started at the college (from your decision to attend to first day of class)? 1=low difficulty; 5= high
   1 2 3 4 5

2. Who or what made it easy or difficult?

3. When you first started at the college, did someone at the college ask you about your academic goals?
   □ Yes
   □ No

4. Did someone at this college talk with you about the benefit of having a goal or earning a certificate or degree?
   □ Yes
   □ No

5. Did someone at this college discuss with you about how long it will take for you to reach your goals?
   □ Yes
   □ No

6. Did someone at this college discuss job or career opportunities based on your career interests with you?
   □ Yes
   □ No

7. Before you signed up for classes, did anyone talk to you about your commitments outside of school?
8. Did your advisor suggest that adjust the number of classes you intended to take?
   - Yes, my advisor suggested that I take more classes
   - Yes, my advisor suggested that I take fewer classes
   - No

9. How did you learn about the steps to sign up for classes? Check any that apply.
   - Advising Center
   - Faculty Advisor
   - Emails/letters from the College
   - College website
   - Other: _________________________________________

10. How long was your first meeting with your advisor?
    - 0-15 minutes
    - 15-30 minutes
    - 30-45 minutes
    - 45-60 minutes
    - Longer than 60 minutes

11. How do you prefer meeting with your advisor? Check all that apply.
    - In person
    - On the phone
    - Via email
    - Video call
    - Other: _________________________________________

12. How much of your coursework did you plan at once?
    - One semester
    - Two semesters
    - Three semesters
    - Your full degree

13. How would you rate your satisfaction with the college’s advising services? 1=low; 5=high

    1  2  3  4  5

14. How could we improve your advising experience?
15. How long have you been at the college? Select all that apply.

- This is my first semester
- I have completed more than two semesters, but I haven’t earned a degree
- I have completed a degree
- I am returning after a gap of more than two years

16. Did your parents attend college?

- Yes, but neither completed a degree.
- Yes, one or more earned an associate’s degree.
- Yes, one or more earned a bachelor’s degree.
- Yes, one or more earned a master’s degree.
- Yes, one or more earned a doctorate or professional degree.
- No, neither attended college

17. Will you be working while attending school?

- Yes, part-time
- Yes, full-time
- No

18. Select the demographic information that best represents you. Check all that apply.

Status at BCC
- Part-time
- Full-time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status at BCC</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Self Identify:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Increase Skills</td>
<td>Hispanic/Latino(a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Print Advising Survey

Print Advising Survey

Circle the options that best describe your experience at Bladen Community College.

1. Before coming to campus, how would you rate your knowledge of college processes? 1=low; 5=high
   
   1 2 3 4 5

2. Rate your level of knowledge of those processes now. 1=low; 5=high

   1 2 3 4 5

3. Who taught you about navigating college?
   - [ ] Friend
   - [ ] Family member
   - [ ] College Advisor
   - [ ] High school teacher/advisor
   - [ ] I taught myself
   - [ ] Social media
   - [ ] Other: _________________________________________

4. How difficult was the process of getting started at the college (from your decision to attend to first day of class)? 1=low difficulty; 5= high

   1 2 3 4 5

5. Who or what made it easy or difficult?

   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

6. When you first started at the college, did someone at the college ask you about your academic goals?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

7. Did anyone talk with you about the benefit of having a goal or earning a certificate or degree?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
8. Did someone at this college discuss with you about how long it will take for you to reach your goals?
   □ Yes
   □ No

9. Did a staff member at this college discuss job or career opportunities based on your career interests with you?
   □ Yes
   □ No

10. When you met with an advisor, did you discuss when next advising session should be?
    □ Yes
    □ No

11. Before you signed up for classes, did anyone talk to you about your commitments outside of school?
    □ Yes
    □ No

12. If yes, did this conversation affect how many classes you took?
    □ Yes
    □ No
    □ N/A

13. Has any staff member recommended that you take fewer classes than you intended?
    □ Yes
    □ No

14. For part-time students, did a staff member ever suggest that you try to go full-time?
    □ Yes
    □ No
    □ N/A

15. How did you learn about the steps to sign up for classes? *Check any that apply.*
    □ Advising Center/Faculty Advisor
    □ Emails from the College
    □ Letters from the College
    □ College website
16. Did someone talk with you about the process for registering?
   □ Yes
   □ No

17. Did someone talk with you about how to pick classes?
   □ Yes
   □ No

18. How long was your first meeting with your advisor?
   □ 0-15 minutes    □ 45-60 minutes
   □ 15-30 minutes   □ Longer than 60 minutes
   □ 30-45 minutes

19. How many times per semester have you met with an advisor?
   □ 1
   □ 2
   □ 3
   □ 4
   □ 5+

20. Did you meet with the same person each time during advising?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ N/A

21. Does the advisor/counselor contact you for a meeting, or do you contact the advisor?
   □ Advisor makes first contact
   □ I make first contact
   □ We both make contact

22. How do you prefer meeting with your advisor? Check any that apply.
   □ In person
   □ On the phone
   □ Via email
   □ Video call
23. How much of your coursework did you plan at once?
   - One semester
   - Two semesters
   - Three semesters
   - Your full degree

24. Did anyone at the college talk with you about how you would be paying for college?
   - Yes
   - No

25. How would you rate your satisfaction with the college’s advising services? 1=low; 5=high

   1 2 3 4 5

26. Is there anything you wish you had known before you came to campus to get admitted and register?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

27. Have you ever had an issue come up in your life outside of college that made it difficult for you to stay on track toward your academic goal?
   - Yes
   - No

28. If you have ever hit a snag in any of your courses—fallen behind in your coursework, not done well on assignments or tests, etc.—did you discuss it with anyone on campus? Check all that apply.
   - No
   - Yes—my instructor
   - Yes—my advisor
   - Yes—a tutor
   - Yes—other:

________________________________________________________________________

29. If you could give the leaders at this college advice about important changes the college could make to improve students’ experience with advising and navigating the college, what would that be?
30. If you designed advising at this college, what would it look like?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

31. Right now, what is the single most important factor that is keeping you moving toward success at this college?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

32. How confident are you that you will stay and complete your academic goals? 1=not very; 5 = extremely confident.

1 2 3 4 5

33. Select the demographic information that best represents you. Check all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status at BCC</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Part-time</td>
<td>□ 18-25</td>
<td>□ Degree</td>
<td>□ American Indian</td>
<td>□ Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Full-time</td>
<td>□ 25-30</td>
<td>□ Certificate</td>
<td>□ Asian</td>
<td>□ Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ 30-35</td>
<td>□ Transfer</td>
<td>□ Black</td>
<td>□ Self Identify:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ 30-40</td>
<td>□ Increase Skills</td>
<td>□ Hispanic/Latinx</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ 40+</td>
<td>□ Other:</td>
<td>□ White</td>
<td></td>
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<td>□ Multiple</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Results of Employee Survey on QEP Topic
Appendix D: Results of Student Survey on QEP Topic

Q1 Choose your number one choice for our next QEP topic from the following list.

- Increase awareness: 18.31% (13 responses)
- Focus on completion: 47.89% (34 responses)
- Create a one-stop-shop: 33.80% (24 responses)

**ANSWER CHOICES**

1. Increase awareness, enrollment, and course offerings of our career and technical education courses (welding, electrical, plumbing, agriculture, carpentry, etc.) Increase marketing of these programs. Respond to the industry needs and ensure students are trained for jobs in these fields. Increase completion rates of students and help with job placement after graduation.

2. Focus on completion of degrees; make sure students take the courses in sequence (i.e. English and math early on); all degree programs have a common 1st semester so students that want to change majors will not lose credits; focus on keeping students on the pathway and successful. Revamp the website to provide students in-depth details about each degree including salary; job availability; job requirements; degree requirements including Con. Ed. courses. Minimizing the credit hours for each degree program.

3. Create a one-stop-shop instead of sending students all over campus during registration. Simplify the flow, stop creating barriers for students. Students should be able to register, get transcripts, pay, etc. all in one area. Increasing and improving customer service for our students. Effective communication to students during the admissions process. Create an advising center to help students with career assessments and placements.

**TOTAL responses:** 71
Appendix E: Advising Questionnaire for Advisors

Advising Questionnaire for Advisors

Circle the options that best describe your experience at Bladen Community College.

34. Before becoming an advisor at BCC, how would you rate your knowledge of advising? 1=low; 5=high
   
35. Rate your level of knowledge of those processes now. 1=low; 5=high
   
36. Which aspect of advising do you feel most comfortable with?
   
37. Which aspect of advising do you feel least comfortable with?

38. How would you rate the advising training you received at BCC? 1=low; 5=high

39. How long is a typical first meeting with an advisee?

40. How long is a typical advising meeting after the first?
41. How many times per semester do you meet with your advisees (face-to-face, phone, or video)?
   - 0
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5 or more

42. How many times per semester do you contact advisees without meeting (email, Aviso messages, etc.)?
   - 0
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5 or more

Select the option that best describes your advising conversations with students.

43. The student and I discuss academic goals:
   - Every time
   - Most times
   - Sometimes
   - Only during the first meeting
   - Never

44. The student and I discuss the benefit of completing a certificate or degree:
   - Every time
   - Most times
   - Sometimes
   - Only during the first meeting
   - Never

45. The student and I discuss how long it will take to reach their goals:
   - Every time
   - Most times
   - Sometimes
   - Only during the first meeting
   - Never

46. The students and I discuss job or career opportunities based on their career interest:
47. The students and I discuss their time commitments outside of school.
   [ ] Yes
   [ ] No
   [ ] N/A

48. If yes, does this conversation affect how many classes students typically sign up for?
   [ ] Every time
   [ ] Most times
   [ ] Sometimes
   [ ] Never
   [ ] N/A

49. How often do you suggest that a student should take fewer classes?
   [ ] Every time
   [ ] Most times
   [ ] Sometimes
   [ ] Never

50. How often do you suggest that a part-time student should consider taking a full-time load?
   [ ] Every time
   [ ] Most times
   [ ] Sometimes
   [ ] Never

51. How often do students come to advising sessions with a clear plan?
   [ ] Every time
   [ ] Most times
   [ ] Sometimes
   [ ] Never

52. How often are students actively involved in their advising sessions?
53. How often do students make first contact for an advising meeting?
   □ Every time
   □ Most times
   □ Sometimes
   □ Never

54. How do you prefer meeting with your advisees? *Check any that apply.*
   □ In person
   □ On the phone
   □ Via email
   □ Video call
   □ Other: ________________________________

55. How much of a student’s coursework do you typically plan at once?
   □ One semester
   □ Two semesters
   □ Three semesters
   □ The full degree

56. How would you rate the quality of the college’s advising services? 1=low; 5=high
   
   1 2 3 4 5

57. Is there anything you wish you had known before you became an advisor?

58. If you could give the leaders at this college advice about important changes the college could make to improve students’ experience with advising and navigating the college, what would that be?

59. If you designed advising at this college, what would it look like?
Appendix F: Bladen Community College Mission and Vision Statements

MISSION STATEMENT

Bladen Community College is dedicated to the educational and cultural enrichment of the local and global communities it serves. The college is committed to quality teaching through both distance and on-site environments for high-order learning, college transfer preparation, workforce development training, and entrepreneurship opportunities.

*Adopted Spring 2021*

VISION STATEMENT

Bladen Community College will provide student-centered, future-focused and sustainable educational opportunities to enhance the quality of life for everyone it serves.

*Adopted Spring 2021*
Appendix G: Advisor Training Resource List

- Moodle Advisor Training
- Advising Handbook—workflow and best practices
- Advising Checklists
- Early Alert Quick Guide
- Advising Email Templates
- Student Withdrawal Checklist and Exit Survey
- Self-Service Quick Guide
- Student Resource Master List
- Aviso Quick Guide
Appendix H: Advisor Certification Curriculum Outline

Module 1: Introduction (conceptual)
- Philosophy of advising: case-management model
- Student-centered focus

Module 2: Advisor-Student Interaction (relational)
- Listening
- Effective communication
- Goal setting
- Needs assessment—personal and academic
- Hard conversations
- Cultural sensitivity

Module 3: Career-Advising
- Career assessment
- Soft skills
- Occupational Outlook Handbook, NCWorks, NC Careers
- Opportunities: internships, job openings, WIOA
- Balancing college and work responsibilities

Module 4: Registration Processes and Procedures (informational)
- Policy
  - FERPA
  - Drop/add
  - New v. returning students
  - Credit for life/work experience
  - Course substitutions
  - Electronic use policy
- Catalogs and degree plans
- Articulation agreements
- Pre-requisites and co-requisites
- Degree, diploma, certificate, non-credit
- Graduation
- Financial aid
  - Program and catalog; taking courses off-plan; repeating classes; lifetime eligibility
  - Half-time, three-quarter-time, full-time financial aid status
  - Satisfactory Academic Progress; Title IV
• FAFSA
  • PELL, scholarships, work study, grants, private loans

• Campus Resources
  • Library
  • Learning Enhancement Center & Writing Center
  • Wellness counseling—mental, financial, physical, etc.
  • Eagle’s Nest
  • Emergency fund
  • Electronic resources (e.g., Upswing, NCLive, library guides)

**Module 5: Technology**
  • Self-Service
  • Aviso
  • Email
  • Moodle

**Module 6: Degree Planning**
  • Dev. Ed.
  • Foundational courses
  • Constructing a schedule

**Module 7: Program Specialization Add-on—Business**

**Module 8: Program Specialization Add-on—Public Service**

**Module 9: Program Specialization Add on—Industrial Systems**

**Module 10: Program Specialization Add-on—Healthcare**

**Module 11: Program Specialization Add-on—College Transfer**
Appendix I: North Carolina Community College System Advising Mission Statement

Advising is an essential part of the North Carolina Community College student experience. Quality advising provides a holistic approach that teaches students to identify and achieve their personal, educational, and career goals. Quality advising is an ongoing, collaborative process between students and well-trained advisors whereby students are connected with appropriate resources and equipped to become confident, responsible, and reflective learners. Quality advising is fostered through institutional support for the onboarding and continuous development of advising personnel and for the access to appropriate advising resources.
Appendix J: Advisor Training Assessment

Advisor Training Assessment

This assessment measures advisors’ comfort with relevant advising topics and should be taken both before and after completing advisor training.

Rate your level of comfort with the following items. (1=no comfort; 5=very comfortable)

Conceptual

1. Understanding various theories of advising (prescriptive, proactive, developmental, etc.).
   1  2  3  4  5

2. Knowing when to use different advising theories.
   1  2  3  4  5

3. Understanding a case management model of advising.
   1  2  3  4  5

Relational

4. Listening actively to students.
   1  2  3  4  5

5. Helping students set goals
   1  2  3  4  5

6. Having difficult conversations with students.
   1  2  3  4  5

7. Relating to students of different backgrounds.
   1  2  3  4  5

8. Building relationships with advisees.
   1  2  3  4  5

9. Communicating effectively with advisees.
   1  2  3  4  5

Informational
10. Understanding my responsibilities under FERPA.
   1  2  3  4  5

11. Understanding developmental education rules
   1  2  3  4  5

12. Understanding degree requirements.
   1  2  3  4  5

13. Understanding prerequisites and co-requisites.
   1  2  3  4  5

14. Navigating the college catalog.
   1  2  3  4  5

15. Understanding how courses transfer to other institutions.
   1  2  3  4  5

16. Using degree plans to create a schedule.
   1  2  3  4  5

17. Creating efficient degree plans.
   1  2  3  4  5

18. Understanding campus resources (LEC, library, Eagle’s Nest, etc.).
   1  2  3  4  5

19. Using registration technology (Self-Service).
   1  2  3  4  5

20. Helping students navigate career decisions.
   1  2  3  4  5

Course Assessment

21. How would you rate the quality of the advisor training Moodle course?
   1  2  3  4  5

22. What were the strengths of the advisor training?

23. How could advisor training be improved?