

# A Moc's First Year

Designing a Comprehensive First Year Experience and Learning Community Model Serving all First-Time Full-Time Students

## QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga  
Chattanooga, Tennessee





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## Executive Summary

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, home of the “Mocs” and our fighting mockingbird mascot, “Scrappy,” is a regional comprehensive university in southeastern Tennessee. Like other campuses, UTC’s administration has experimented with a range of student success initiatives over time including the development and implementation of First



Year Experience (FYE) courses, living learning community models, a freshman common read program, advising centers, an honors college, residential colleges, and Cohort 2025, a first-year academic cohort program. Each initiative has had a different level of success, with only advising developed and centralized so that it can scale and touch all students. This QEP will focus on a specific student success initiative: the development of campus-wide learning communities for all first-time, full-time (FTFT) undergraduates. In addition to increasing student success initiatives broadly, A Moc’s First Year will also address what the COVID pandemic has exacerbated, if not created: a terrific need for intentional community on the UTC campus. We believe *all* of UTC’s student success initiatives would be strengthened by a central, comprehensive, encompassing first-year experience that builds on the recent success of our residential colleges and strengthens the academic experiences of all FTFT undergraduates, residential or not. This QEP offers a way to bridge and connect these various initiatives, culminating in a centralized learning community model that will increase: interaction between new students and faculty; the community on campus overall; the connection of our new students to greater Chattanooga; and student success at UTC, particularly those metrics measuring student retention, academic success, and graduation rates. We understand that while it is difficult to isolate factors impacting graduation rates, it is still important to include them as a measure of student success. Graduation rates are one of a number of measures that, when reviewed together, provide a holistic view of student success.

A Moc’s First Year scales the current departmental and college-specific learning community efforts residing largely in our new residential colleges to meet the needs of FTFT UTC students, residential or commuting. The QEP aligns with the university’s mission which states that “the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga is a driving force for achieving excellence by actively engaging students, faculty, and staff, embracing diversity and inclusion, inspiring positive change and enriching and sustaining our community.” The 2021-2025 UTC Strategic Plan states that “UTC will transform the lives of our students and the futures of our region by increasing access to a distinctive model of education, grounded in the liberal arts and tied closely to workforce opportunities,” going on to indicate that “by 2025 we will . . . improve student performance” specifically by increasing the freshman fall-to-fall retention from 73% to 83% and increasing the six-year graduation rate from 53% to 63%. Under the goal to “define and

promote UTC's distinctive graduation experience," the plan states that we will "implement and expand *Cohort 2025* to include all first-year students." This QEP intends to do just that. The UTC 2021-2025 Strategic Plan also holds that we will "develop and launch a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that is aligned with this strategic plan, central to the university's educational experience, and focused on student success."

As part of A Moc's First Year, all incoming FTFT undergraduates will enroll in a 1-3 credit-hour FYE course; all of these courses will share a common course number (1250). Primarily full-time faculty will teach the 1250 courses that will either link students to a major or introduce them to the UTC academic experience while also introducing them to a major (i.e., either an "Introduction to Environmental Science at UTC" or "The Flora and Fauna of UTC," an experiential course that introduces students to both the campus's ecology and to the study of environmental science at UTC). As we note below, our existing FYE seminars, USTU 1250, currently use an extended orientation model that research indicates is less successful than seminars grounded in actual academic content. Each 1250 section will be linked to an introductory gateway content course (e.g., CHEM 1110); the combination of the two will be termed "a learning community." Faculty teaching both the 1250 FYE courses and the linked content courses will participate in an annual faculty development workshop in which they familiarize themselves with issues pertaining to FTFT students and campus resources those students will need. These faculty will also take time during the workshop to plan two out-of-class experiences for their learning communities: at least one social event that will take place on campus (e.g., a pool party at the UTC Aquatic Recreation Center) and another community-oriented event that introduces them to some aspect of Chattanooga (e.g., a trip to the Hunter Museum of American Art).

While similar initiatives have been attempted at UTC, they have not been fully institutionalized. A historical sketch of UTC's student success programs helps to clarify why.

## **The History of Student Success Initiatives at UTC**

Like other institutions of higher education and particularly those considered regional comprehensive institutions, UTC has worked to retain and graduate the undergraduates it serves. In 1968, the University of Chattanooga became the newest campus in the University of Tennessee system and UTC evolved from a small residential college to a rapidly growing campus of largely commuting students. A series of new residential spaces came on board in the 1990s, all of which were designed as apartment buildings, many with single-resident bedrooms. These university apartments were popular with incoming students, but they limited the likelihood of creating the kind of student community much more frequently found in double-loaded corridor-style dormitories (these latter structures offer significantly less privacy but decidedly greater community). A new suite-style residence hall, West Campus, opened in the fall of 2018 in order to capitalize on the community-building features not prevalent in the popular, but potentially more isolating apartment buildings.



While West Campus had been constructed for the express purpose of creating more communal spaces for incoming residential students, no university wide First Year Experience programming was specifically designed for its residents. And outside of the very successful College of Business (now Gary W. Rollins College of Business) LLC and The High Achieving Mocs LLC, a first year-only LLC in the new Honors College, most LLCs were theme-based and not as successful as those communities that

incorporated shared coursework with its residential members.

In 2008, then provost Dr. Phil Oldham initiated a student success initiative installing Dr. Fran Bender from the English Department as the inaugural Assistant Provost for Student Success in July of that year. Bender engaged in this work from 2008 to 2014 when she retired; she piloted a number of high impact practice and student success initiatives including the following:

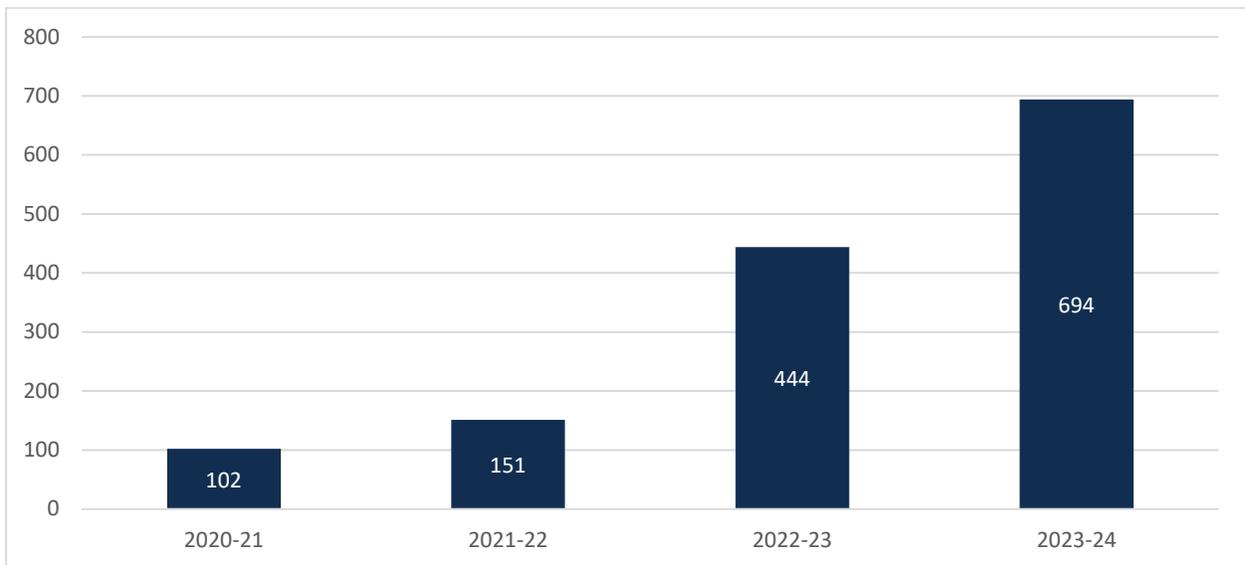
- Four full-time professional advisors hired as the core of a university-based, centralized advising center largely focused on FTFT and undeclared students. This initiative has grown so that the university now has 45 full-time professional advisors with student success centers in three of the four degree-granting colleges as well as the central Advising Center.
- “Clear Paths,” suggested four-year course plans for each major, initiated by the Student Success office and completed by individual departments; this initiative has been fully realized and UTC Clear Paths are frequently used by advisors, faculty, staff, and students alike.
- Pre-scheduling freshmen for classes via their responses to an “academic interest questionnaire,” a process that ensures that all FTFT undergraduates receive a full schedule of classes rather than be forced to pick from what might be left over if a student registered later in the summer registration period.
- A 1-credit-hour First Year Experience course, USTU 1250, in which students are intentionally guided through the transition from high school to college in the “extended orientation” model. This course continues to be taught and is now most fully utilized in our Residential Colleges. It has never been required and only 9.5% of the incoming students on campus enrolled in it in fall 2022, most as unlinked courses in our residential colleges and other themed communities. Offered by itself, its success is questionable; offered in conjunction with another content course, its success seems significantly strengthened. Prior to the offering of USTU 1250, 1-credit hour “topics” courses were offered by individual faculty focusing on individual special topics (i.e., “The History of Baseball,” “The Rhetoric of Obituaries,” etc.). This initiative was also never required or fully institutionalized. Prior to that, in the 1990s, a 3-credit-hour FYE course was offered by another English Department professor based on the model then used by the University of South Carolina; this too was eventually abandoned.
- “Read 2 Achieve,” a campus-wide freshmen “common read” program was initiated as part of our last QEP for SACSCOC. While the program continues, the common book is most often

utilized in the English Department and campus events featuring the book have moved from Welcome Week activities to events during the term. This program continues but with very limited resources or campus support.

While both the Rollins College of Business and the Honors College initially used the USTU 1250 course for their unique communities, each has developed a slightly different version of the course for their separate units, giving them different course numbers and titles. As of Fall 2022, twelve departments now have some version of this course in their home departments with more planning to develop these in the year to come.

In 2018, Dr. Abeer Mustafa joined UTC as the new Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs. Well versed in a residential college model, Dr. Mustafa introduced this concept to UTC in the fall of 2020. All four of the degree-granting colleges, as well as the Honors College, now have residential colleges on the campus, each with multiple living learning communities functioning under each residential college's unique umbrella. These residential colleges are actively combining academic *and* residential experiences to strengthen the communities within their purview; they have great promise and offer a powerful opportunity to strengthen student-student and student-faculty relationships for the campus overall. While membership in the residential colleges has been steadily growing as Figure 1 below indicates, the percentage of on-campus residents living in residential colleges next year is a projection and since the residential colleges also include upperclassmen, the number of incoming FTFT students living in residential colleges will be fewer than the figures represented here. As the campus watches the possibility of scaling the residential college initiative, the QEP will give ALL FTFT students, nondeclared majors and non-residential students alike, the opportunity to participate in an intentional learning community with all its attendant benefits.

Figure 1: Growth in Residential College Participants



Undeclared students may live in these residential colleges, and the College of Arts and Sciences Residential College does, in part, support undeclared students, but there is no single residential college specifically designed to reach and support undeclared FTFT students who are not also in the Honors College. In Fall 2022, 300 out of 1929 of UTC’s FTFT students were undeclared (Figure 2). This number has increased slightly since Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 (Figure 3). Our QEP is specifically designed to extend the excellent work begun in our campus’s residential colleges to *all* FTFT students—and to include in that effort students who are *not* living on campus.

Figure 2: Declared and Undecided Majors by Student Type - Fall 2022

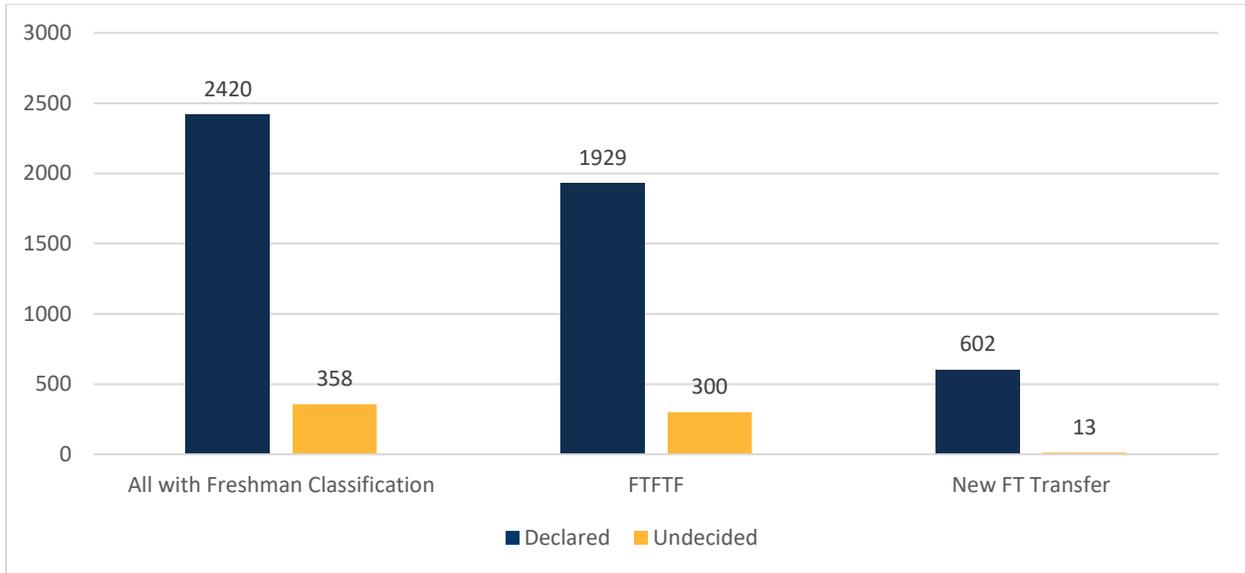
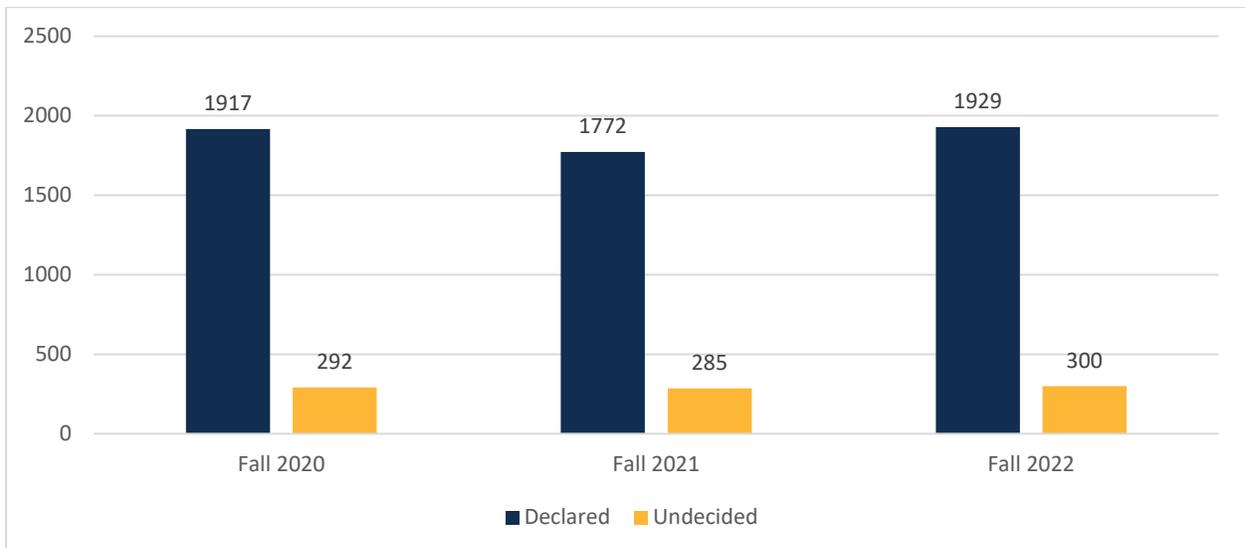


Figure 3: Declared and Undecided Students by Year



In addition, various departments have created their own versions of the freshmen seminar, but few students have been required to take it; those that have largely were required to do so in their majors. New undeclared students not in honors have not had the benefit of this community-building model and course. Indeed, the residential colleges currently are the entities on campus most likely to integrate the FYE seminar into a learning community, a high impact practice that research suggests is most successful. Our own data shows that the FYE seminar offered as a discrete, stand-alone student success initiative has limited efficacy (see Table 1). This data, as will be seen below, is supported by FYE research and literature at large.

*Table 1: One-year Retention of FTFT Undergraduates in FYE Courses Compared to all FTFT Undergraduates*

Demographic Group	Freshman Group	AY15-16	AY16-17	AY17-18	AY18-19	AY19-20	AY20-21	AY21-22
Male	FYE	68.6%	69.5%	73.8%	65.9%	80.0%	73.0%	75.1%
	No FYE	71.3%	70.1%	70.2%	66.7%	73.1%	67.7%	64.8%
Female	FYE	74.3%	74.0%	80.8%	74.5%	79.9%	78.8%	78.8%
	No FYE	76.3%	74.4%	72.7%	73.4%	77.5%	72.9%	72.2%
Students of Color	FYE	72.1%	70.7%	76.7%	66.2%	81.9%	74.7%	78.6%
	No FYE	76.8%	74.0%	71.9%	69.5%	75.1%	70.0%	65.8%
First Generation	FYE	67.9%	64.5%	70.0%	57.7%	67.8%	66.9%	70.9%
	No FYE	72.0%	68.0%	62.8%	63.6%	74.2%	63.5%	62.6%
All Freshmen	FYE	<b>71.8%</b>	<b>72.1%</b>	<b>78.7%</b>	<b>71.2%</b>	<b>80.0%</b>	<b>76.1%</b>	<b>77.1%</b>
	No FYE	<b>74.4%</b>	<b>72.7%</b>	<b>71.7%</b>	<b>70.8%</b>	<b>75.7%</b>	<b>71.2%</b>	<b>69.8%</b>

In 2021, Enrollment Management and Student Affairs launched Cohort 2025, an attempt to bring *all* first-time, first-year UTC students into some kind of focused academic community. All freshmen entering the campus that year were co-enrolled in two academic courses. The faculty teaching these co-enrolled classes were not included in the planning of this endeavor nor were they informed as to the nature of the cohort in which they were working. Furthermore, these “cohorts” were not linked in any way to the students’ on-campus housing. Despite the lack of intentional faculty involvement in the Cohort 2025 initiative and its subsequent limitations, initial data from this experience shows promise regarding retention metrics and GPAs (see Table 2). Nevertheless, the Cohort 2025 initiative was discontinued when it became apparent that a more comprehensive plan was being crafted under the auspices of the QEP. “A Moc’s First Year” is then indeed a direct continuation and elaboration of the Cohort 2025 model.

Table 2: Retention Rates and GPAs of Cohort 2025 Students Compared to all FTFT Undergraduates

	Not in 2025 Cohorts	Any 2025 Cohort
<b>Count</b>	888	1,169
<b>Retained to Spring 2022</b>	88%	92%
<b>Retained to Fall 2022</b>	70%	75%
<b>Cumulative GPA</b>	2.71	2.81

## Process for Identification of the QEP Topic

In the spring of 2021, the Quality Enhancement Planning Committee for the upcoming reaffirmation of UTC’s accreditation by SACSCOC was charged to “inform and engage with members of the UTC Community about the QEP planning process and assist with the development of the selected QEP.” A comprehensive website was built and populated with updated content regarding the timeline, project, background resources, and updates for the development of the new QEP:

<https://www.utc.edu/sacscoc/qep>. Theresa Liedtka, Dean of the Library, and Cindy Williamson, Director of Assessment and UTC SACSCOC Liaison, co-chaired this committee; the full membership is listed below.

## Members of the Quality Enhancement Planning Committee

### *Co-Chairs*

Theresa Liedtka, Dean of the Library  
Cindy Williamson, Director of Assessment and SACSCOC Liaison

### *Ex-officio*

Sherry Marlow Ormsby, Executive Director

### *Representatives from Colleges*

#### *Representatives from the College of Arts and Sciences*

Michelle Deardorff  
Lynn Purkey  
Bradley Reynolds

#### *Representatives from the College of Engineering and Computer Science*

Bradley Harris

#### *Representatives from the College of Health, Education, and Professional Studies*

Shewanee Howard-Baptiste  
Jessica Etheredge  
Kara Hamilton  
Bethany Womack

#### *Representatives from the Graduate School*

Lisa Piazza

#### *Representatives from the Honors College*

Greg O'Dea

*Representatives from the Gary W. Rollins College of Business*

Catherine Middleton

Joanie Sompayrac

*Representatives from the UTC Library*

Bo Baker

*Representatives from the Campus Divisions*

*Representatives from Academic Affairs*

Bengt Carlson

Dawn Ford

Matt Matthews

*Representatives from Athletics*

Emily Blackman

*Representatives from the Chancellor's Office*

David Steele

*Representatives from Communications and Marketing*

Gina Stafford

*Representatives from Enrollment Management and Student Affairs*

Rob Liddell

Val Sample

*Representatives from Finance and Administration*

Allison Evans

*Representatives from Information Technology*

Susan Lazenby

*Representatives from Research and the Graduate School*

Lisa Piazza

*Representatives from Governance Groups*

*Representatives from the Council of Academic Department Heads*

Mike Thompson

*Representatives from Deans Council*

Theresa Liedtka

*Representatives from the Employee Relations Committee*

Melisa Rector

*Representatives from Exempt Staff Council*

Chris Sherbesman

*Representatives from the Student Government Association*

John Adkins

*Representatives from the Graduate Student Association*

Zach Ridder

*Additional Students*

Aria Beloate

Nora Ketron

The co-chairs reviewed a variety of institutional documents—the institutional strategic plan, individual departmental strategic plans, etc.—as well as ongoing initiatives to identify seven topics which were then presented to the QEP Planning Committee and the Executive Leadership Team, a group that includes the Chancellor, the Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, and the Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, among others (for information distributed to the QEP Planning Committee to assist in their work, see Appendix A). These groups narrowed the seven potential QEP topics down to three to be explored in the university community, all of which were concerned with increasing student retention and/or graduation rates. The final three topics included:

- Cohorts and Collaborative Learning
- Community Engagement
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Co-chairs Liedtka and Williamson conducted 24 “QEP Roadshows” in the spring of 2021, introducing the UTC community to the QEP process and the three possible topics; 441 people participated in these. Twelve sessions were open to the entire UTC community while 12 more were specifically requested by different units and departments. Upon completion of these Roadshows, a QEP Survey was launched in late spring to gather further input from the UTC community on the three specific topics; a total of 314 completed surveys were additionally gathered regarding those topics (Appendix B). Several participants thanked the committee for their “transparency and the opportunity to provide feedback during the process” and for “how open the committee has been,” as well as one noting that they saw “a good deal of alignment in these proposals, which hopefully will translate into enthusiasm for the combined full QEP proposal and broad campus support for the final project.” As another participant noted, “the proposals show an interest and capacity for developing a learning communities QEP from several quarters of campus. Combining all of the proposals seems like the best place to start in developing a full QEP proposal.”

The QEP Committee met to discuss input received from the Roadshows and the survey on May 25, 2021, and June 23, 2021 (see Appendix B). All three topics received strong and almost even support from the campus community at large and the QEP Planning Committee selected “Cohorts and/or Collaborative Learning” as our QEP topic. Choosing the topic of cohorts and/or collaborative learning offered UTC the opportunity to explore a wide range of potential curricular or programmatic initiatives to enhance student learning outcomes and/or the larger learning environment as well as building on the Cohort 2025 effort that was launched by residence life in fall 2021 but discontinued. Utilizing the same general principles as Cohort 2025 but with full academic involvement and support was viewed as a potentially highly successful endeavor.

The QEP Planning Committee created the following definitions, available on the QEP website, to ensure a consistent interpretation across campus as their next step was to solicit specific proposals for the QEP itself with the topic of cohorts and/or collaborative learning. An additional series of roadshows were held from November to December to introduce the call for concept papers, which would be used as the basis for a final QEP; 66 people participated in these.

### Cohorts and/or Collaborative Learning

Cohorts refer to a group of students who are working together programmatically or taking courses together. Learning communities integrate learning across courses and involve students with “big questions” that matter beyond the classroom. Cohorts or learning communities may explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines or programs. Collaborative learning experiences combine two key goals: 1) learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and 2) sharpening one’s own understanding by listening to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Collaborative learning experiences can include a set of required common programs or courses, or an organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies or required participation in a learning community.

### Diversity

Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore, evaluate, and reflect on cultures, life experiences, backgrounds, identities, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore “difficult differences” such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Programs and courses that explore diversity prepare students to become informed citizens with comprehensive viewpoints that better prepare them for relationships in and out of the workplace. The practice of diversity is more than acknowledging or tolerating differences and includes involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc. in a set of conscious practices.

### Student Learning

Student learning is defined broadly in the context of the QEP as enhancing student knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or values.

### Student Success

Student success is also defined broadly as improvements in key student outcomes such as student retention, completion, time to degree, placement in field, or performance in “gatekeeper” courses. (Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, p. 59).

The QEP committee solicited proposals from the UTC community for possible QEP projects; writers were encouraged to find ways to incorporate diversity into their proposals focusing on cohorts and/or collaborative learning and were also offered a small stipend—\$100—to further incentivize participation. Nineteen proposals were considered by the QEP Planning Committee (see Appendix C) who selected the following seven full concept papers that were then disseminated campus-wide and discussed in the QEP Planning Committee and the new Reaffirmation Leadership Committee.

- A Proposal for Interdisciplinary Multi-Semester Cohort Experiences
- Bridging People, Places, Programs, and Partners for S.U.C.C.E.S.S. (Students Uncovering Curricular and Co-curricular Experiences for Systemic Change)
- Cohort 2025
- Creating a Chattanooga-Based Project
- Second-year Experience @ UTC

- The Mocs Living Learning Community: A Comprehensive and Collaborative UTC First-year Student Experience and Living Learning Community
- Transforming the UTC Experience with Open Education Resources

Each of these proposals offered a viable campus-wide initiative with the potential to increase student success at UTC but the QEP Planning Committee decided that no single proposal contained all of the necessary elements for a successful cohort project. The QEP Planning Committee devised a combined proposal that ultimately was chosen for further development by the Reaffirmation Leadership Committee. The Reaffirmation Leadership Committee convened a subcommittee to undertake this; this subcommittee met several times to revise and clarify what is now this proposal, “A Moc’s First Year.” The members of this subcommittee included the following:

- Linda Frost, Dean, Honors College
- Stacy Grisham, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Success
- Lauren Ingraham, Vice Provost, General Education
- Theresa Liedtka, Dean, Library
- Pamela Riggs-Gelasco, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
- Chris Sherbesman, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance
- Cindy Williamson, Director of Assessment and SACSCOC Liaison

Linda Frost was selected to draft the final QEP document with oversight and assistance provided by co-chairs Liedtka and Williamson and other UTC members.

After the topic, “A Moc’s First Year,” was selected via the process detailed above, the QEP co-chairs undertook the following steps:

- Disbanding the QEP Committee and forming the A Moc’s First Year Implementation Committee
- Requesting nominations from the QEP Committee for the A Moc’s First Year Implementation Committee
- Populating A Moc’s First Year Implementation Committee with relevant representative members
- Updating the SACSCOC and QEP web sites
- Drafting the QEP Director position description
- Scheduling and coordinating another round of Campus Roadshows to inform the campus community about A Moc’s First Year
- Preparing for the visit of the SACSCOC on-site team

The charge for A Moc’s First Year Implementation Committee is the following:

*Building on the work of the QEP Committee and working in conjunction with the Reaffirmation Leadership Committee, A Moc’s First Year Implementation Committee will develop comprehensive implementation processes for “A Moc’s First Year,” UTC’s Quality Enhancement Plan.*

A Moc's First Year Implementation Committee's responsibilities are as follows:

- Provide oversight and coordination of the QEP implementation process.
- Engage with the UTC community members on the QEP topic.
- With the Reaffirmation Leadership Committee, meet with the on-site QEP External Evaluator during UTC's on-site SACSCOC visit in March 2023.
- Respond to feedback provided by the QEP External Evaluator and finalize a 5-year implementation plan for the QEP.
- Record minutes of all meetings and file with the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Institutional Research (OPEIR).
- Provide regular updates to the Reaffirmation Leadership Committee.

At the time of this writing, A Moc's First Year Implementation Committee membership is being finalized.

## Literature Review and Best Practices

The research addressing first-year experiences and first-year seminars for students is voluminous. This year, the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina will hold its 42<sup>nd</sup> annual conference on the college first-year experience; significant work has been done regarding the various elements of what is now contained under the umbrella of "first-year experience," highlighting when and when not they are effective, and why or why not they are so.

This literature review contains an overview of this research with a closer look at research focusing on the first-year seminar. Nationally, at least 20% of first-year students enrolled in a four-year college do not return for their second year (xiii, Feldman 2018). In Tennessee, the first fall to second fall retention rate was 67.7% for all public institutions in Fall 2021. While bad news for the university, it is worse for the student who has likely acquired significant debt without a degree to help pay for it, and particularly bad for the student from a disenfranchised, minority population whose odds of retaining and graduating are even worse. While better than in the past, UTC's own overall retention rate for fall-to-fall retention for first-time full-time freshmen students entering the university in 2021 was 72.5% (UTC Factbook). The need for a targeted and strategic first-year experience is evident, both in terms of where we need to improve and in terms of where we are even now succeeding.

In his preface to the 2005 *Improving the First Year of College: Research and Practice*, Robert Feldman notes that several themes appear in that volume: these include that "the first year of college is critical in ultimately producing college success" and that the "likelihood of student success can be increased through carefully constructed first-year experience programs" (viii). While Feldman notes that "not all good programs are alike," successful ones do share some common factors including ensuring that "accountability and assessment" are factored into the program" (ix). Feldman revisits these topics in the 2018 *The First Year of College: Research, Theory, and Practice on Improving the Student Experience and Increasing Retention*. In this volume, 31 researchers offer their updated research on the work being done in the realm of FYE classes, experiences, and programs. Feldman again notes in his preface the key

takeaways from this study which include the idea that “clear institutional goals, articulated by a college’s leadership and socialized throughout the institution, are a precursor to improving the success of first-year students” (xvi). University leadership and faculty, guided by overall institutional vision, are key to the success of any first-year program. Feldman argues that “well-designed and well-executed programs make a difference” (xvi) and, 13 years later, he reiterates his earlier idea that there is “no single key to student success in the first year of college” (xvi). Here, his point is that successful initiatives will consider individual groups of students at the “societal level,” i.e., first-generation students, students from various racial and ethnic groups, etc.

UTC librarian Virginia Cairns conducted a targeted literature review to explore current research on the design and content of First Year Experience Seminars and Learning Community Programs. This review is not intended to be comprehensive or systematic. Rather, it seeks to collect and review literature from recent research (generally within the past 10 years) that examines the effectiveness of various types of FYE seminar programs (with respect to course content and cohort enrollment) as well as different types of campus learning community programs (residential, nonresidential, general focus, academic-based, interest-based, etc.). In almost all cases, the studies included in this review examined results at 4-year institutions, although there may be some larger scale studies that included community college students as well. Based on the more than 20 studies examined, several guiding principles were identified that can be of benefit to UTC as we design and implement “A Moc’s First Year.”

## FYE Seminars

Six different studies considered the programmatic design and content of FYE seminars and their correlation with retention and student success. One of the more startling conclusions repeated across multiple studies was that FYE seminars by themselves appear to have little to no measurable impact on retention or academic success (Culver et al., 2020; Hauck et al., 2020). Some studies did detect an impact, but it was not as pronounced as one would expect (Permzadian & Credé, 2016).

According to a schema based on the Survey of First-Year Seminars conducted by the National Resource Center, FYE courses can be grouped into the following categories: extended orientation; academic seminars with uniform content; academic seminars focused on various topics; pre-professional or discipline-linked courses; courses focused on basic study skills; and hybrid courses blending two or more of these types (Barefoot, 1992; Tobolowsky & Associates, 2008). Considering the efficacy of offering a course with a letter grade, research shows that 12% of institutions in that survey utilized a pass/fail grading system which communicates lower expectations than does a letter-grade system; according to one, “if the provision of a letter grade represents a proxy for high performance expectations, it is worthy of note that academic seminars on various topics have the highest rate of letter grades (94%) and pre-professional/discipline-linked courses maintain the lowest rate (66%)” (100; Keup & Young, 2018). Keup and Young also note that “research findings point to academic seminars, particularly those with variable topics or content, as the most consistent model of structural quality among first-year seminars” (119, 2018). Likewise, FYE seminars that have the best chance of lasting impact and success utilize “engaging pedagogy,” practices that include: a variety of teaching methods, a student-centered approach, meaningful and challenging coursework, plentiful opportunities for interaction and group work, a

growth or talent-development mindset, the creation of a safe and supportive learning environment, an engaged faculty, an array of assignments and assessments to gauge learning, and a robust feedback loop” (Keup and Young, 2018; p. 119).

The common thread among successful programs is a thematic or academic focus (Woolfork-Barnes, 2017). Generalized “orientation” or “transition to college life” seminars may help with adjustment to college on some level, but the meatier, academically focused seminars were the ones that impacted student engagement and also helped students develop concrete academic skills (Zerr & Bjerke, 2016).

An extensive meta-analysis conducted by Permzadian (2016) shows that FYE seminars embedded *within* a *living* learning community (a learning community that shares a residential space) produce the strongest results. Although we are not initially focusing on further developing comprehensive residential living learning communities, this information will be instructive to the QEP Director and the future QEP Advisory Board as they consider the addition of a residential component based on growth of current residential college initiatives, residence hall capacity, and numbers of FTFT residential students on the campus overall.

## Learning Communities: Grouping Students in Cohorts

Learning communities are usually defined as student cohorts, scheduled into common sections of first year courses that are often taken within a linked, thematic, or articulated curriculum. Learning community literature shows much more of a concrete impact on student success than do standalone FYE seminars. FYE founders Andrew K. Koch and John N. Gardner specifically argue that while first-year seminars are often the focus of FYE programs, gateway courses in the majors or those that are foundational, high-risk, and high-enrollment, need to be the next focus of those seeking to reform the first-year experience students. Again, students who do not do well in these courses tend to be disproportionately students of color, lower-income, and first-generation students, students who also are also less likely to complete a degree or credential (Koch & Gardner 2018). Most of the cohort studies sought to identify the specific areas where improvement could be noted. Implementing a re-envisioned, academically-based FYE course with a learning community that includes at least one gateway course seems the best combination for first-year success.



Several recommendations for learning communities stand out. The most mentioned impact of learning communities is a boost in levels of student engagement and belonging (Fosnacht & Graham, 2016; Goldman, 2012; Hintz & Genareo, 2017). The development of academic skills and faculty relationships are also highlighted in some studies (Fosnacht & Graham, 2016; Goldman, 2012).

Other studies make strong recommendations that the course content in a learning community be tightly coordinated, overlapping, and linked to other campus experiences such as service learning or community events (Hintz & Genareo, 2017; Lanphier & Carini, 2022). Grouping students by major or a common academic interest was a popular model (Goldman, 2012; Hintz & Genareo, 2017), but at least one study used civic engagement and social justice as the common thread and found it still offered a significant boost in student engagement and belonging (Soria & Mitchell, 2015). It is worth noting that another common recommendation is that institutions need to customize their learning community programs to meet the unique needs of their local student body to boost success and engagement (Fosnacht & Graham, 2016). This is also in keeping with Feldman’s recommendations above.

One potential weakness of the learning community model that is worth mentioning is that many of these programs rely on students self-selecting into them. This may be an indicator that successes measured in a particular learning community may be inflated because those students who wound up enrolled in the cohort were naturally more oriented towards academic pursuits already (Goldman, 2012). As we hope to initiate a model that touches *all* FTFY college students, we hope to avoid this obstacle to our own success.

## Living Learning Communities: Residential and Academic Cohorts

This section represents the largest chunk of literature that was reviewed, with 11 studies examined. Placing students into a common living arrangement while also cross registering them into common courses in the first year is a high impact practice with well recognized results (Brower & Inkelas, 2010). The central recommendation across all of the studies listed here is that grouping students by a common academic major or discipline-specific interest yields the strongest impact on student success, a finding that is key to our development of the revised 1250 FYE course (Hall & O’Neal, 2016; Hurtado et al., 2020; McCay, n.d.; Palm & Thomas, n.d.; Reynolds et al., 2019; Stier, n.d.). This is also the premise of our current residential colleges. The literature suggests that linked curricular content allows for the overlap, reinforcement and integration that result in increased sense of belonging and student confidence (McCay, n.d.; Reynolds et al., 2019). As was also mentioned in the previous section, very general “study skills” and “orientation” type content does not appear to make as much difference in retention and success (Zerr & Bjerke, 2016); indeed, our own data here at UTC reinforces this observation.



Another common result mentioned in the LLC studies was that peer-support and a sense of community develop much more quickly when students live together and also attend the same classes (Caviglia-Harris, 2022; Palm & Thomas, n.d.). Relationships (both peer and faculty) that develop outside of class get mentioned as well (Palm & Thomas, n.d.). Students often list the commonly scheduled LLC courses as their favorites (Hall & O’Neal, 2016).

Students in minority populations, underserved groups or vulnerable communities may especially benefit from the feeling of safety and belonging in their LLC group and may also be better positioned to be aware and take advantage of multiple types of academic and social support (Banks et al., 2021; Cintron et al., 2020; McCay, n.d.).

Hurtado (2020) recommends being intentional about who is included in each LLC to ensure the peer relationships are strongest. Others argue that customization to the unique needs of the student body and taking the time to carefully select each cohort is absolutely key to program success (Caviglia-Harris, 2022). McCay (n.d.) points out that grouping students by a common major may also help them develop a stronger sense of the steps needed to achieve success in a particular career. Finally, an important point is made by Banks (2021) when she notes that course content in LLCs need not focus on rote “skills development” but rather should seek to help each student identify their own strengths and learn to employ them to their own success as they pursue their academic path of choice. Even if students in a cohort do not have a common major in mind, grouping them by common interests or themes (i.e. anime) can still have a benefit on belonging and success (McCay, n.d.).

## Identification of Student Success Measures and Desired Outcomes

A Moc’s First Year will primarily be assessed and tracked using student success measures that include the following:

1. National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) scores related to Sense of Belonging in first-year students.
2. NSSE scores in specific areas related to engagement in first-year students.

All students involved in a current learning community (LC) with one of our residential colleges and those involved in A Moc’s First Year will be tagged with an attribute in Banner, our student information system (SIS). This will allow us to track all students involved in an intentional, residential LC and compare and track their future progress. Students in the residential colleges and those in A Moc’s First Year LCs will be tagged uniquely so that comparisons can be made between these groups as well.

Other student success markers that we will track include the following:

3. GPA’s of first-year students.
4. DFW rates for students in the learning communities and residential colleges.
5. Faculty development workshop efficacy.

## Desired Interventions and Strategies to Achieve Outcomes

This QEP will utilize the following strategies:

- Institutionalize a 1 and/or 3-credit hour first-year seminar as a requirement for FTFT students at UTC that seeks to introduce students in a smaller class to university expectations and to generate community by improving student-faculty interaction at the beginning of any UTC student's career. The current FYE course, USTU 1250, will be revised to allow faculty to teach courses based on intriguing topics that will also introduce students to various majors (e.g., a course on Chattanooga cemeteries that can introduce students to the study of history, sociology, etc.) as well as offering introductory courses in specific majors.
- Enroll all first-time, first-year college students in a course connected to the freshmen seminar, a pairing termed a "learning community" (LC).
- Require each LC to plan two out-of-class events, one that is social and held on-campus, and one that introduces the students to some aspect of Chattanooga.
- Intentionally involve LC faculty who are teaching learning community courses in an annual May professional development workshop in which they 1) discuss issues that arise when teaching freshmen and 2) meet with their linked course instructors to collaborate on their shared events and connected classes.
- Budget to support the cost of faculty teaching these courses and their associated professional development, attendant programming, and the cost of a coordinator to manage and assess the QEP.
- Assess the entirety of A Moc's First Year's strategies via student success metrics (i.e., retention rates, graduation rates, and other academic markers).
- Explore the possibility of extending relevant learning communities into campus residence halls as facilities allow and need requires.

Specific overall desired and anticipated goals are:

1. Increased National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) scores related to Sense of Belonging in FTFT students.
2. Increased NSSE scores in areas related to relevant Engagement Indicators: Collaborative Learning, Discussions with Diverse Others, Quality of Interactions, and Supportive Environment in FTFT students.
3. Increased GPA of FTFT students.
4. Lower DFW rates for students in the learning communities and residential colleges.
5. Continuous improvement in faculty development workshop efficacy.

While we want to see increased retention and graduation rates, there are smaller, more specific goals that have to be measured, as it is difficult to attribute retention and graduation rate increases to one specific program or initiative. There are many factors that make up the causes for increases of such large concepts, and we do anticipate A Moc's First Year being one of those factors. However, assessing Sense of Belonging and Engagement Indicators from the NSSE is the first step toward progress in those areas of increased retention and graduation rates.

The learning outcomes for the new 1250 FYE course are still to be determined by our faculty and those planning the actual class. Looking at Appalachian State’s outcomes for their program is instructive; not only an “Institution of Excellence in the First College Year,” named so by a 2-year research project by the Policy Center on the First Year of College in 2002, Appalachian State is also an aspirational peer institution for UTC.

While all Appalachian First-Year Seminars meet the following general education objectives—developing creative and critical thinking abilities; cultivating effective communication skills; making local-to-global connections; and understanding responsibilities of community membership—each seminar is “first and foremost” an academic seminar, “based on the unique content of an instructor’s scholarly expertise.” According to their website,

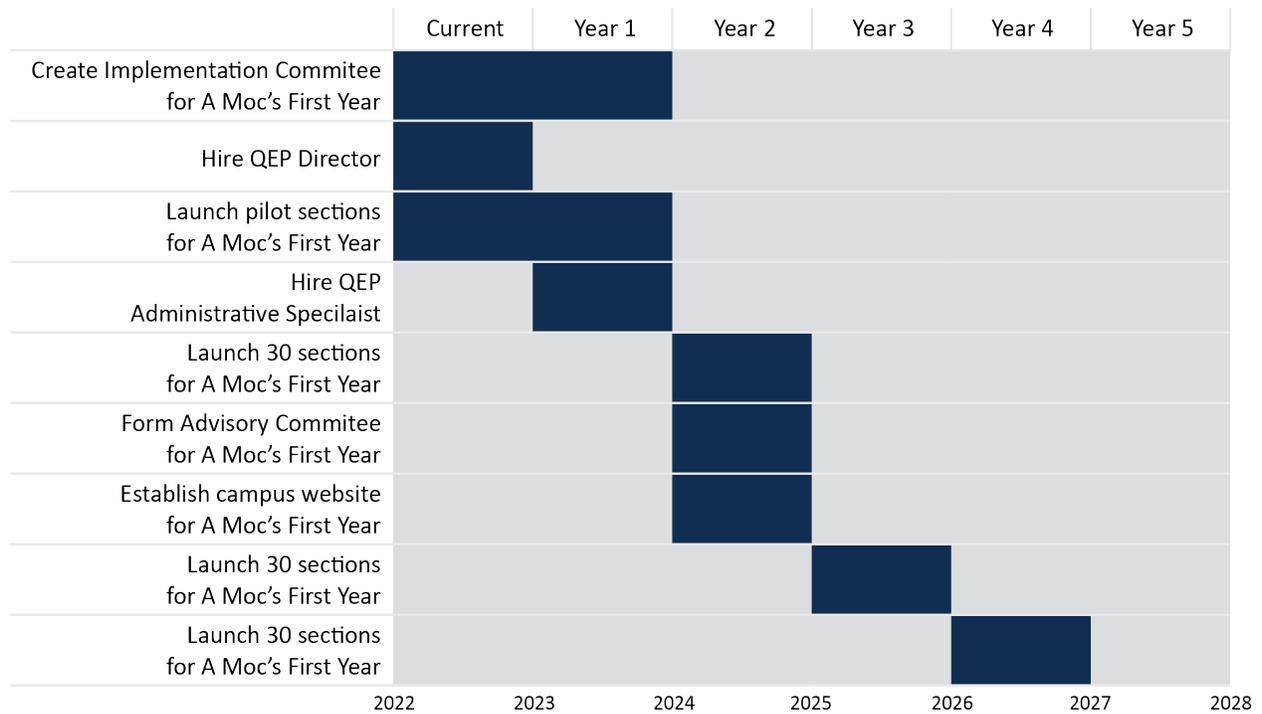
*Each FYS course is unique and based on a topic in which the instructor has expertise and is passionate about teaching. But through their unique topic, each FYS instructor designs a course with either assignments or activities intentionally designed to align with the following ten goals.*

These goals include both “Goals of Exposure” that “require activities but not necessarily graded assignments,” and “Goals of Practice with Course-Embedded Assessments.” Indeed, we at UTC hope to incorporate similar specific goals and course assignments, all in service to the following strategies of launching productive and positive faculty-student interactions that contribute to student retention and success, introducing students to the campus and the surrounding Chattanooga area, and generating whenever possible intentional communities that meet both in and outside of the classroom.

## **Implementation and Implementation Timeline**

The implementation of A Moc’s First Year will involve multiple campus divisions and stakeholders, particularly those from the divisions of Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management and Student Success. Implementation planning is underway. A Moc’s First Year Implementation Committee is working on a detailed roll-out plan. The implementation plan is intentionally gradual, with first-year students joining learning communities in a pilot project, then a staggered implementation over a three-year period. See Figure 3 below for the 5-year implementation plan, followed by an annotated implementation plan that provides additional details. The implementation calendar below runs from July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year.

Figure 3: A Moc's First Year Implementation Timeline



## Annotated Implementation Timeline

### Current Year and Year 1, 2023-2024

#### *A Moc's First Year Implementation Committee*

A Moc's First Year Implementation Committee will spend the remainder of the current year and year 1 finalizing the comprehensive implementation design for A Moc's First Year. Information regarding the planning activities of A Moc's First Year Implementation Committee is included below.

- Chancellor Steven Angle and Provost Jerold Hale charge A Moc's First Year Implementation Committee.
- A Moc's First Year Implementation Committee will report to the SACSCOC Reaffirmation Leadership Committee, until the A Moc's First Year Advisory Committee is formed.
- The committee is comprised of faculty and staff from a variety of UTC disciplines, departments, and divisions. Members are stakeholders in A Moc's First Year's development and bring the functional expertise and knowledge needed to devise and implement the plan successfully. The committee membership includes:
  - Victoria Bryant, Director, Walker Center for Teaching and Learning
  - Endia Butler, Assistant Director, Center for Career and Leadership Development
  - Rebecca Dragoo, Associate Registrar
  - Stacie Grisham, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Success

- Sally Halloran, Senior Director of Marketing
- Liz Hathaway, Assistant Professor, Health and Human Performance
- Melissa Jarrell, Department Head, Social Cultural, and Justice Studies
- Brad Kiser, Assistant Director, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Institutional Research
- Theresa Liedtka, Dean, UTC Library
- Lee Pierce, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management and Student Success
- Angie Russell, Assistant Director, Enterprise Systems
- Val Sample, Executive Director for Residential Education and Campus Life
- Chris Sherbesman, Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration
- Niky Tejero, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences
- Cindy Williamson, Director of Assessment and SACSCOC Liaison
- Kim Wingate, Associate Professor, School of Education
- The committee charge is to finalize the logistics of “A Moc’s First Year,” with responsibilities to:
  - Provide oversight and coordination of the QEP implementation plan development.
  - Engage with the UTC community members on A Moc’s First Year.
  - With the Reaffirmation Leadership Committee, participate in the SACSCOC on-site QEP External Evaluator during UTC’s SACSCOC visit on March 5 to 9, 2023.
  - Respond to feedback provided by the QEP External Evaluator and finalize a 5-year implementation plan for the QEP.
  - Record minutes of all meetings and file with the Office for Planning, Evaluation, and Institutional Research (OPEIR).
  - Provide regular updates to the RLC and meet as needed.
- The committee will meet as a whole, with members serving on two smaller, more nimble subcommittees 1) Faculty and Course Development, 2) Workflow Development and Business Planning
  - Each subcommittee has specific tasks and questions to address (see Appendix D).
- Once hired, the new QEP Director will join as co-chair of A Moc’s First Year Implementation Committee.

*Additional Current Year and Year 1 Goals*

- Hire the QEP Director.
- All departmental versions of 1250 proposed and uploaded into Curriculog in order to be in the 2024-2025 Academic Catalog.
- First A Moc’s First Year Faculty Development Workshop held (repeated each year moving forward).
- First Orientation that identifies participants for A Moc’s First Year and introduces the program overall; program faculty meet with the students at orientation (repeated each year moving forward).
- First mid-term and end-of semester surveys collected from all A Moc’s First Year participants (repeated each year moving forward).
- Run and document assessment reports for all A Moc’s First Year participants.

## Year 2, 2024-2025

- As A Moc's First Year Implementation Committee completes its work, the new QEP Director will work to establish multiple web sites to share with the campus and extended UTC community, including students, parents, faculty, and staff members.
- A Moc's First Year Implementation Committee recommendations will inform many decisions, including such areas as the role of Housing and the AIQ, and information such as sample syllabi and activities, to mention just a few.
- Launch first iteration of A Moc's First Year with 30 sections.
- Form A Moc's First Year Advisory Committee.
- Eliminate general USTU 1250 course offerings.
- Repeated activities:
  - Learning Community Faculty Development Workshop.
  - Orientation that identifies participants for A Moc's First Year and introduces the program; program faculty meet with the students at orientation.
  - Mid-term and end-of semester surveys collected from all A Moc's First Year participants.
  - Run and document assessment reports for all A Moc's First Year participants.
  - Begin compiling yearly data for 5-year report.

## Year 3, 2025-2026

- Launch next iteration of A Moc's First Year with 30 additional sections, bringing the total to 60.
- Assess Housing's potential and capacity to participate in A Moc's First Year.
- Repeated activities:
  - Learning Community Faculty Development Workshop.
  - Orientation that identifies participants for A Moc's First Year and introduces the program; program faculty meet with the students at orientation.
  - Mid-term and end-of semester surveys collected from all A Moc's First Year participants.
  - Run and document assessment reports for all A Moc's First Year participants.
  - Begin compiling yearly data for 5-year report.

## Year 4, 2026-2027

- Launch the final iteration of A Moc's First Year with 30-50 additional sections, bringing the total to between 90 and 110.
- Consider adding spring sections of LC.
- Repeated activities:
  - Learning Community Faculty Development Workshop.
  - Orientation that identifies participants for A Moc's First Year and introduces the program; program faculty meet with the students at orientation.
  - Mid-term and end-of semester surveys collected from all A Moc's First Year participants.
  - Run and document assessment reports for all A Moc's First Year participants.
  - Begin compiling yearly data for 5-year report.

## Year 5, 2027-2028

- Evaluate potential of A Moc’s First Year for transfer students.
- Repeated activities:
  - Learning Community Faculty Development Workshop.
  - Orientation that identifies participants for A Moc’s First Year and introduces the program; program faculty meet with the students at orientation.
  - Mid-term and end-of semester surveys collected from all A Moc’s First Year participants.
  - Run and document assessment reports for all A Moc’s First Year participants.
  - Begin compiling yearly data for 5-year report.
- Complete QEP Impact Report

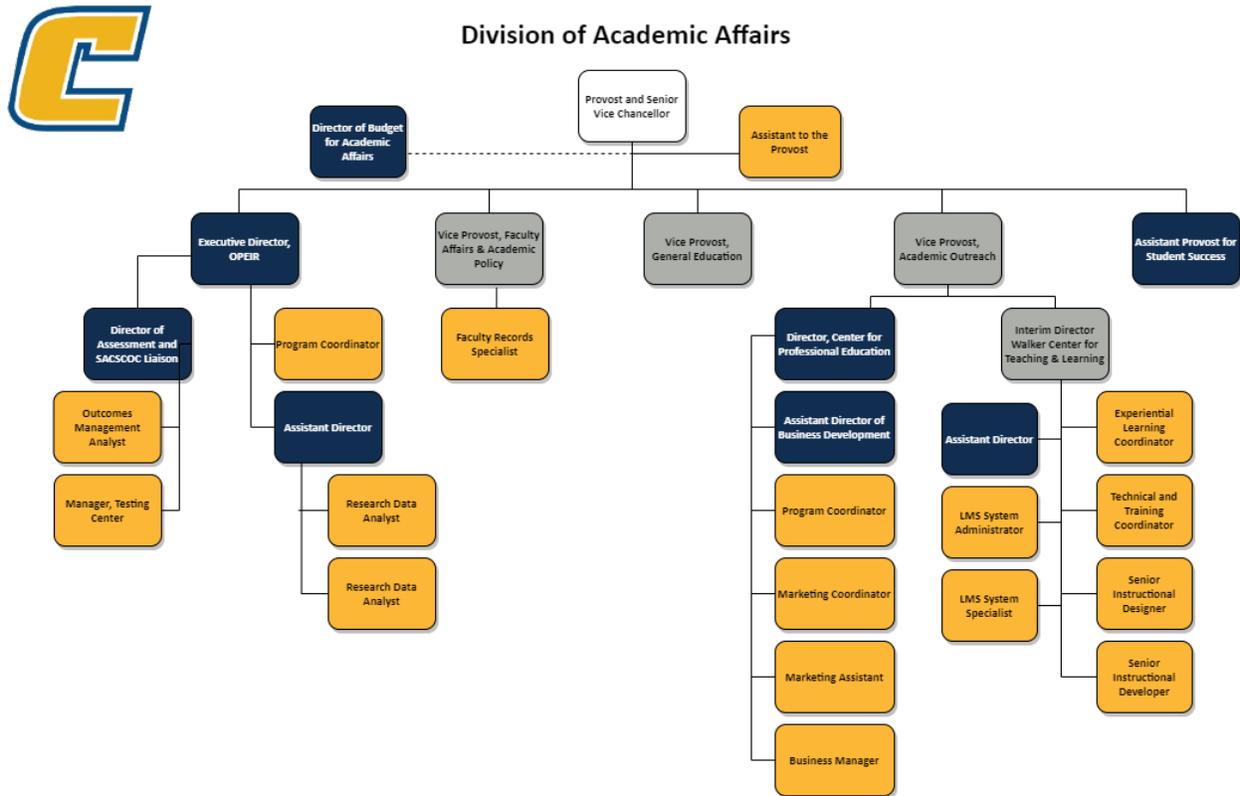
## Resources

SACSCOC expects UTC to commit “resources to initiate, implement and complete the QEP” (SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 7.2). The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) is committed to providing the financial, personnel, and other resources needed to ensure the success of A Moc’s First Year.

## Personnel and Organizational Structure

The QEP Director will serve as the Assistant Provost of Student Success, reporting directly to the provost along with 3 associate provosts, an executive director, and 6 deans. See Figure 4 below. In addition to a QEP Director, we will hire an administrative specialist to assist with QEP operations.

Figure 4: UTC Academic Affairs Organizational Chart



Last updated 11/18/2021

## QEP Director Position Description

*Position Title*

Assistant Provost of Student Success

*Available*

March 2023

*Position Summary*

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) invites applications for an Assistant Provost of Student Success. UTC has chosen A Moc’s First Year as its Quality Enhancement Plan. The purpose of A Moc’s First Year is to enhance our community through the creation of an intentional first year experience and learning community model serving first year students. This is a twelve-month, administrative faculty position.

The ideal candidate has experience that supports inclusive learning environments, has knowledge of student success initiatives both from the academic side and student affairs side, has a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion best practices, and can communicate effectively to generate interest in and excitement for the goals of the A Moc's First Year.

Under the direction of the Provost, the Assistant Provost (AP) of Student Success provides leadership direction to the UTC community of faculty, staff, and students, and facilitates the implementation, strategic design, iterations, assessment, and ultimate success of A Moc's First Year. This new position will work to create a transformative learning environment campus wide. The AP of Student Success will have a demonstrated ability to ability to work constructively with faculty, students, staff, and administration.

### *Responsibilities*

Serve as co-chair of the A Moc's First Year Implementation Committee

- Lead the participation of faculty, staff, and members of A Moc's First Year Implementation Committee
- Provide a detailed annual timeline for all A Moc's First Year activities.
- Maintain documentation of progress on timeline goals and objectives.
- Develop and iterate new workflows and infrastructure for A Moc's First Year operations.
- When implementation is complete, disband committee and form a new A Moc's First Year Advisory Committee.

Lead implementation of A Moc's First Year assessment and evaluation plan

- Create and iterate a comprehensive timeline and schedule for assessment.
- Refine and revise the assessment plan.
- Write and disseminate information reports on assessment efforts.
- Collaborate with the Office of Planning, Evaluation and Institutional Research as needed.

Lead A Moc's First Year implementation

- Organize faculty and staff training and professional development related to A Moc's First Year.
- Lead Enrollment Management and Student Affairs and Academic Affairs on A Moc's First Year workflows, designations, activities, and other initiatives.
- Develop and disseminate information on A Moc's First Year processes to administrators, faculty, staff, and students, including providing workshops and training sessions.
- Communicate regularly and serve as A Moc's First Year liaison with the campus and impacted groups.
- Lead processes for integrating and institutionalizing A Moc's First Year themes, outcomes, and activities into UTC's culture.

Lead a Moc's First Year business operations

- Document funding needs for A Moc’s First Year and prepare budget proposals and analyses.
- Ensure the maintenance of all appropriate files and documents.
- Provide grants, stipends, reimbursements, and other funding for A Moc’s First Year activities.
- Iterate A Moc’s First Year budget, position descriptions, and workflows.
- Supervise an administrative specialist position who assists with A Moc’s First Year initiatives.

Other responsibilities

- The AP of Student Success will participate in QEP-related curricula.
- The AP of Student Success will work on additional Academic Affairs projects and initiatives.

*Required Education and Experience*

- Master’s degree required.
- 3-years or more leadership experience, including a proven history of successful collaborations
- Demonstrated ability to collaborate with academic and enrollment management leadership, faculty, staff, and students and work in an environment that strives to honor shared governance.
- Effective writing, speaking, and nonverbal communication skills appropriate for interacting with diverse constituencies.
- Skills in computer operations and applications for hiring, budget management, performance appraisal and similar job functions.

*Preferred Education and Experience*

- Ph.D. / terminal degree from an accredited university is preferred.
- Experience managing cohort, learning communities, or first-year experience programs.
- Demonstrated knowledge in student development theory, student engagement, and student-success.

## Budget and Finance

### Financial Commitment

UTC has approved the allocation of sufficient financial resources to implement *A Moc’s First Year*. The projected budget was created to ensure the needed resources are available to develop effective first-year learning communities (see Table 3). Below is a 5-year implementation budget, followed by an annotated budget that provides additional detail. The budget calendar is based on the academic year and runs from July 1st to June 30th of each year.

*Table 3: A Moc’s First Year Budget Projections*

	2022-2023 Current	2023-2024 Year 1	2024-2025 Year 2	2025-2026 Year 3	2026-2027 Year 4	2027-2028 Year 5
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<b>QEP Director Salary and Benefits</b>	\$75,000.00	\$150,000.00	\$150,000.00	\$150,000.00	\$150,000.00	\$150,000.00
<b>Administrative Specialist Salary and Benefits</b>		\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00
<b>Instructional Support</b>		\$73,335.00	\$146,670.00	\$220,000.00	\$220,000.00	\$220,000.00
<b>Programming Support</b>		\$36,667.00	\$73,334.00	\$110,000.00	\$110,000.00	\$110,000.00
<b>Instructional Development and Training</b>		\$61,667.00	\$98,334.00	\$135,000.00	\$135,000.00	\$135,000.00
<b>Marketing</b>	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	
<b>Operating Budget</b>		\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$90,000.00</b>	<b>\$436,669.00</b>	<b>\$583,338.00</b>	<b>\$730,000.00</b>	<b>\$730,000.00</b>	<b>\$715,000.00</b>

**Annotated Budget**

**QEP Director Salary and Benefits, \$150,000**

- This request is for a position to coordinate A Moc’s First Year.
- This estimate includes salary and benefits costs.
- Suggested reporting line is to the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.
- Suggested title for the position is Assistant Provost, pending credentials and if the hire is internal or external or Executive Director
- This salary estimate may change and is dependent on Human Resources (HR) evaluation and classification of the position description.

**Administrative Specialist Salary and Benefits, \$75,000**

- This request is for an administrative support specialist position to assist with A Moc’s First Year.
- This estimate includes salary and benefit costs.
- This estimate assumes A Moc’s First Year main office will process all programming requests and receipts, along with providing office and other support to A Moc’s First Year.
- Note: A position description has not yet been drafted for this position.

### **Instructional Support, \$220,000**

- This request is for instructional costs for A Moc's First Year.
- The estimate is for the instructor teaching the 1-credit hour course. The 1-credit course is paired with a 3-credit course. The paired 3-credit course is taught in-load and has no extra instructional pay requirements.
- The proposed pay is \$2000.00 per 1-credit course.
- The goal is that faculty teach the 1-credit course, recognizing capable staff members may also provide instruction.
- This estimate is based on 2,200 first year students, placing approximately 20 students in each section, with approximately 110 sections needed.
- *Note:* this estimate includes *all* academic cohort sections, including not only those in A Moc's First Year, but also those taught in our current residential colleges.
- If a 3-credit course is paired with another 3-credit course for A Moc's First Year, the assumption is they are both in-load, and no additional pay is required.
- A Moc's First Year will be implemented over a 3-year period, so the instructional costs follow that pattern.

### **Programming Support, \$110,000**

- This request is for instructor-led out of the classroom activities that are a required part of A Moc's First Year.
- At present, A Moc's First Year suggests two required activities, one social activity and one Chattanooga oriented activity.
- This estimate is based on \$1,000 per section, with 110 sections, placing approximately 20 students in each section, resulting in \$50.00 per student for both activities.
- *Note:* This estimate includes all academic cohort sections, including those in the launch of the upcoming A Moc's First Year and our current residential colleges.
- *Note:* Some residential colleges received an allocation of \$35.00 per student or up to \$1,000.00 for the first time this year.
- A Moc's First Year will be implemented over a 3-year period, so the programming costs follow that pattern.

### **Instructional Development and Training, \$135,000**

- This request is to incentivize required attendance at development and training for all course instructors teaching within A Moc's First Year.
- The event will be held annually.
- The intent is to pay \$500.00 per instructor.
- This estimate is based on the required attendance of both paired course instructors with 110 sections and 2 courses, so potentially 220 faculty (\$110,000), and \$25,000 for the event proper.
- The training will focus on teaching first year students, learning styles, mental health, building community, first-year experience activities, paired courses and more.

## Marketing, \$15,000

- This request is to pay for marketing materials for A Moc's First Year during the implementation phase.
- This estimate could include items like t-shirts, business cards, pole banners, infographics, promotional giveaways and more.

## Operating Budget, \$25,000

- This request is to provide an operating budget to A Moc's First Year program.
- This request would include supplies, student assistants, technology, travel, swag, and other general administrative expenses.

## Assessment Plan

Measuring and improving student success is at the core of the work of UTC's Quality Enhancement Plan. All effective assessment plans begin with measurable goals. The student success goals for A Moc's First Year will occur throughout its implementation and be the responsibility of those in several key roles. While the Assistant Provost for Student Success/QEP Director will be responsible for ensuring assessment, others will be tasked with administering assessments, collecting necessary data, and analyzing data appropriately. This team of assessors includes the Director of Assessment, Outcomes Assessment Management Analysts, Director of the Walker Center for Teaching and Learning, and various staff members (data analysts, Assistant Director, and the Executive Director) in the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Institutional Research. Assessment related to A Moc's First Year happens in many areas across campus so it is important that all involved communicate effectively and efficiently to ensure appropriate assessment is maintained. Assessment results will inform decisions regarding and changes made to A Moc's First Year as the plan is implemented beginning in Fall 2023 and continues over the next several years. Assessment is a huge undertaking, and by distributing the responsibilities across departments and areas, it is much easier to manage, and the goals within the Assessment Plan become feasible and attainable. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected and analyzed in order to gain a holistic understanding of where students are doing well, where there are challenges, and what faculty and students are learning as part of the process of A Moc's First Year (Astin, 2012).

While A Moc's First Year is intended to launch productive and positive faculty-student interactions and generate intentional communities that meet both in and outside of the classroom, providing a basis of support to the students, student success outcomes are defined more specifically and will allow UTC to monitor the plan's achievement in five main areas. This assessment plan follows Astin's I-E-O model and makes room for additional assessment and evaluation between the Environment and Output stages (Astin, 2012). We want to see increased student success, in general, and there is a need for a means of assessment to be evaluated prior to linking or aligning A Moc's First Year to concepts as broad as graduation and retention rates. These student success outcomes are presented in summary form along with their corresponding measures that will enable UTC to monitor the QEP's achievement:

## Increase National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Scores Related to Sense of Belonging in First-Year Students

Using Astin’s I-E-O assessment model as a guide (Astin, 2012), measures included in the NSSE will determine increases in sense of belonging in students’ participating in A Moc’s First Year. Sense of belonging is “influenced by the campus environment, relationships, and involvement opportunities as well as a need to master the student role and achieve academic success” (Bentrim & Henning, 2022, p. 17). This developmental process of belonging is “interwoven with the social identity development of diverse college students” (Bentrim & Henning, 2022, p. 17), which provides support for the need for institutions to ensure that sense of belonging in students. Moreover, sense of belonging is a basic human need (Maslow, 1962), and institutions can and should be responsible for its facilitation through targeted programs and support for students. While college students experience sense of belonging in different ways, measuring it can be accomplished through specific means of assessment, such as the statements related to sense of belonging that are part of the NSSE. This instrument is especially appropriate considering the interconnectedness of engagement, involvement, and sense of belonging, as explained by Bentrim and Henning (2022).

The NSSE Sense of Belonging scale is comprised of three specific statements to which students respond with their level of agreement (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree):

1. I feel comfortable being myself at this institution.
2. I feel valued by this institution.
3. I feel like part of the community at this institution.

Results from the 2022 NSSE administration related to Sense of Belonging are reported in Table 4 below.

*Table 4. NSSE Sense of Belonging Scale Mean Scores for First-Year Students*

	N	Mean (maximum score of 4)
I feel comfortable being myself at this institution.	541	3.2
I feel valued by this institution.	542	2.9
I feel like part of the community at this institution.	539	2.9

In addition to analysis of responses to these statements, focus groups will be conducted in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of students’ perceptions of sense of belonging.

## Improve National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Scores in Specific Areas Related to Engagement in First-Year Students

NSSE provides a way for institutions to assess the extent to which students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development. NSSE annually collects information from hundreds of 4-year colleges and universities about first-year and senior students’ participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college. Results are broken down by Engagement Indicator and student group, and mean responses from the 2022 administration are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: NSSE Mean Responses by Engagement Indicator and Student Group

Theme and Engagement Indicator		First-Year Students	Senior Students
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	29.4	32.6
	Discussions with Diverse Others	40.0	40.0
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions	42.7	43.3
	Supportive Environment	34.2	32.7
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	22.0	23.9
	Effective Teaching Practices	38.2	40.1

These specific Engagement Indicators were chosen due to their connection to and facilitation of positive student success outcomes. Student self-ratings, values and attitudes, and behavioral patterns should be assessed, as with NSSE, because of their relationship to both environmental and outcome measures (Astin, 2012). Additionally, these inputs are almost always predictive of a given outcome (Astin, 2012).

### Increase GPA of First-Time Full-Time (FTFT) Undergraduates

GPA for all FTFT students, those living in on-campus housing, those participating in residential learning communities (RLC), and those who were enrolled in a First Year Experience (FYE) course are provided in Table 6. Students in a residential learning community (RLC) have much higher GPAs than do other students, and those living in on-campus housing typically have higher GPAs than those not living on-campus. Currently, the mean GPA for FTFT students is 2.79. As is seen in this table, the stand-alone FYE 1250 that UTC has been offering has not increased FTFT GPAs although this number is impacted by the type of student currently encouraged to take the course (first generation, etc.). Using this as a baseline, the goal is to increase FTFT students' mean GPA by 3% (to 2.82) within five years.

Table 6: First-Time Full-Time Undergraduates GPA

FTFT Cohort	N					Average First Year GPA				
	All	Housing	Non-Housing	RLC	FYE	All	Housing	Non-Housing	RLC	FYE
Fall 2015	1,852	1,493	359	100	669	2.72	2.75	2.63	2.90	2.52
Fall 2016	2,066	1,690	376	114	666	2.73	2.75	2.65	2.95	2.60
Fall 2017	2,134	1,644	490	145	132	2.76	2.79	2.63	3.13	2.67
Fall 2018	2,271	1,778	493	140	468	2.70	2.75	2.55	3.28	2.58
Fall 2019	2,297	1,842	455	128	319	2.97	2.98	2.91	3.32	2.87
Fall 2020	2,212	1,509	703	128	351	2.84	2.87	2.77	3.30	2.75
Fall 2021	2,057	1,554	503	178	429	2.79	2.80	2.77	3.12	2.74
<b>All Cohorts</b>	<b>14,889</b>	<b>11,510</b>	<b>3,379</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>3,034</b>	<b>2.79</b>	<b>2.81</b>	<b>2.71</b>	<b>3.15</b>	<b>2.65</b>

## Lower DFW Rates for Students in the Learning Communities and Residential Colleges

Table 7 provides FTFT DFW rates and percentage of credits earned. Students participating in an RLC showed lower DFW rates and achieved a higher average of first year percentage of credits earned. The goal is to decrease DFW rates for all first-year students, including FTFT, by 3% (to 17%).

Table 7: First-time Full-time Undergraduate DFW Rates

FTFT Cohort	N					Average Student First Year DFW Rate				
	All	Housing	Non-Housing	RLC	FYE	All	Housing	Non-Housing	RLC	FYE
Fall 2015	1,852	1,493	359	100	669	21%	19%	28%	17%	26%
Fall 2016	2,066	1,690	376	114	666	21%	20%	28%	16%	24%
Fall 2017	2,134	1,644	490	145	132	21%	20%	26%	15%	24%
Fall 2018	2,271	1,778	493	140	468	23%	21%	31%	11%	26%
Fall 2019	2,297	1,842	455	128	319	17%	16%	20%	13%	17%
Fall 2020	2,212	1,509	703	128	351	22%	21%	25%	11%	24%
Fall 2021	2,057	1,554	503	178	429	21%	20%	23%	14%	21%
<b>All Cohorts</b>	<b>14,889</b>	<b>11,510</b>	<b>3,379</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>3,034</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>23%</b>

## Continuous Improvement in Faculty Development Workshop Efficacy

All A Moc's First Year learning community faculty are expected to attend a professional development workshop annually to better understand the circumstances of each year's FTFT undergraduates as well as the resources offered on campus to support them. These faculty will also use the time to plan their two extra-curricular activities for their learning communities. Faculty will be surveyed pre- and post-workshop to evaluate its efficacy. Additionally, focus groups will be conducted in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of faculty thoughts and perceptions related to development workshops. Results will be used to make improvements to the workshops each year, in turn improving the student experience.

## Expectations

A Moc's First Year seeks to build on UTC's current student success strengths, in particular our residential colleges and the learning communities already contained in them. We hope to expand that energy and passion across the whole campus and Chattanooga, to the benefit of *all* of our FTFT undergraduates whether they are residential or not, whether they have declared a major or not. We envision that this initiative will help us create, restore, and maintain a vibrant sense of community at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga, one that encourages our students to remain at UTC, to make excellent use of their time and intellect while they are here, and to graduate in a timely fashion, fully prepared to contribute vitally to their world. We believe A Moc's First Year can be the foundation for our students' success at UTC and well beyond.

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## Appendix A: Planning Committee Member Packet

### Quality Enhancement Planning Committee

#### Committee Charge and Background Information

##### Committee Charge

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is a required component of the SACSCOC reaffirmation of accreditation process, the topic of which is derived from an institution's ongoing comprehensive planning and evaluation processes. A QEP is a focused program that is designed to improve student achievement that may come from expanding, combining, or reformulating existing programs, or designing something new. It reflects and affirms a commitment to enhance overall institutional quality and effectiveness by focusing on an issue the institution considers important to improving student learning outcomes and/or student success. It may address all or a portion of the university's student body.

UTC's Quality Enhancement Planning Committee (QEP Committee) is comprised of students, faculty, staff, and community members (see QEP Representation). The Committee has a multi-step charge with distinct milestones (see QEP Timeline). To date, the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Institutional Research (OPEIR) reviewed UTC institutional data and recommended 7 topics for Executive Leadership Team consideration for QEP topics. The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) reviewed and discussed the 7 potential topics and narrowed the themes to 3 broad topics for campus consideration.

The 3 potential QEP topics identified are: 1) Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, 2) High Impact Practices with themes of Cohorts and Collaborative Learning, and 3) Community Engagement. (see QEP Topic Summary).

The QEP Committee is asked to engage with the UTC community and evaluate interest in the 3-broad potential QEP topics. Engagements could include surveys, focus groups, department visits, and other means of assessment. The findings from these engagements should guide the Committee in selecting one broad topic for UTC's QEP. The Committee is asked to recommend 1 topic to the Reaffirmation Leadership Team by June 1, 2021.

Upon approval of the QEP topic, the QEP Committee is asked to solicit campus-wide pre-proposals to narrow the QEP topic to a workable goal. The Committee will review received pre-proposals and recommend 2 or 3 proposals to the Reaffirmation Leadership Team by January 7, 2022.

Upon selection of a focused QEP topic, the Committee will oversee the development of a full, workable QEP plan to include student learning outcomes, program goals, plan to assess the QEP, and a budget, including identifying best practices necessary to address the topic. In order to efficiently perform the development duties and responsibilities, the Committee may wish to form several subcommittees such as branding and marketing, budget, course of action, curriculum and assessment, implementation,

instructor certification, QEP outcomes, and student population. The draft of the final QEP is due to the Reaffirmation Leadership Team by September 15, 2022.

Please note, as the QEP topic emerges, a QEP Director and several other new members may be added to the Committee to provide the needed expertise.

### QEP Milestones

1. Inform members of UTC community about the QEP development process
2. Solicit feedback and facilitate input and discussion on potential QEP topics
3. Select and recommend QEP topic to the Reaffirmation Leadership Team
4. Upon topic confirmation, solicit pre-proposals ideas from UTC community
5. Select and recommend focused QEP topics from pre-proposal ideas submitted
6. Add a QEP Director and possible other members to the QEP Committee
7. Research topic-related best practices
8. Develop student learning outcomes and objectives
9. Identify needed action items
10. Determine who is responsible for implementing
11. Determine how it will be assessed
12. Determine who is responsible for assessing
13. Estimate the needed costs
14. Determine a timeline for implementation
15. Submit nominations for QEP lead evaluator
16. Prepare and submit a full Quality Enhancement Plan

### Standard 7.2 Quality Enhancement Plan

Standard 7.2: The institution has a QEP that (a) has a topic identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes; (b) has broad-based support of institutional constituencies; (c) focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success; (d) commits resources to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP; and (e) includes a plan to assess achievement. (Quality Enhancement Plan). The plan should be focused and succinct (no more than 75 pages of narrative text and no more than 25 pages of support documentation or charts, graphs, and tables). Here is link from the SACSCOC web site that provides additional information:

<https://www.sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/Quality-Enhancement-Plan-Framework.pdf>

### QEP Take-aways

1. A SACSCOC accreditation requirement
2. An institutional process
3. Topics emerge from institutional assessment through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes
4. Topic has broad-based support of University community
5. Topic focus is on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success

6. University commitment to provide the resources needed to implement and complete the QEP
7. Includes a plan to assess outcomes and achievement
8. The QEP proposal will be evaluated as part of the institution's reaffirmation of accreditation process
9. The QEP must be fully implemented within five years of reaccreditation

### **QEP Must Haves**

1. Must be supported by research
2. Must have broad agreement that is important and valuable to students, faculty, and staff
3. Must address specific student learning outcomes or student success
4. Must be implementable with reasonable resources
5. Must be assessable

### **Sources of UTC Data Sources for Institutional Assessment**

1. University Mission and Values Statements
2. Strategic Planning efforts and outcomes
3. Institutional Effectiveness efforts and outcome
4. Reviewed National Survey of Student Engagement outcomes
5. Analyzed program review efforts and outcomes
6. Advisory Boards and Council efforts and outcomes
7. Analyzed additional institutional survey efforts and outcomes, such as major field tests

### **Opportunities for University Engagements on QEP Topics**

1. Survey students, faculty, and staff
  - a. Rank choices
  - b. Pick favorite
  - c. Comment on any topic
  - d. Suggest a narrower focus
2. Focus groups
3. Open meetings
4. Department visits

### **QEP Additional Resources**

Reviewing the Quality Enhancement Plan: An Evaluative Framework:

<https://www.sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/Quality-Enhancement-Plan-Framework.pdf>

Quality Enhancement Plan: Policy Statement

<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2020/01/Quality-Enhancement-Plan-1.pdf>

Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Educational Quality

<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/2018PrinciplesOfAcreditation.pdf>

Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement

<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/2018-POA-Resource-Manual.pdf>

Index of SACSCOC Documents

<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2020/10/Index-of-SACSCOC-Documents.pdf>

Sample QEPs

<https://sacscoc.org/quality-enhancement-plans/>

## QEP Timeline

Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Institutional Research (OPEIR) reviews institutional data for potential QEP topics.	Spring 2021
Provost forms Quality Enhancement Planning Committee (QEPC).	Spring 2021
Executive Leadership Team provides 3 potential broad QEP topics to QEPC.	Spring 2021
QEPC introduces potential QEP topics to UTC Community.	March - May 2021
QEPC gathers input, interest, and support from the UTC Community on the potential broad QEP topics.	March - May 2021
QEPC recommends 1 topic to Reaffirmation Leadership Team for QEP focus.	June 1, 2021
OPEIR continues review of institutional data on selected topic.	June - August 2021
QEPC introduces selected, broad QEP topic to the UTC Community.	August 2021
QEPC sends open call for focused pre-proposals on selected QEP topic to the UTC Community (3 to 5 pages).	Fall 2021
QEPC gathers input, interest, and support from the UTC Community on pre-proposal topics of potential interest.	Fall 2021
QEPC recommends 2 to 3 pre-proposal topics to Reaffirmation Leadership Team as potential final, focused QEP program.	January 7, 2022
Reaffirmation Leadership Team selects 1 proposal as UTC QEP topic.	February 4, 2022
QEPC introduces final, selected QEP topic to the UTC Community.	February 2022
QEPC, working as a whole or through subcommittees, develops a full draft of the QEP program, including a campus awareness campaign.	March 2022 - Summer 2022
QEPC makes final QEP draft document available for UTC Community campus-review.	August - September 2022
QEPC submits full draft of QEP program to Reaffirmation Leadership Team.	September 15, 2022

UTC nominates QEP Evaluators to SACSCOC.	October 1, 2022
QEPC meet with UTC campus team responsible for SACSCOC On-Site Visit (schedule interviews, kick-off presentation, questions for lead evaluator).	October 1, 2022
UTC submits QEP to SACSCOC six-weeks prior to on site visit.	January 23, 2023
UTC SACSCOC Site Visit.	March 6-9, 2023

## QEP Appointment Letter

### MEMORANDUM

TO:  
 FROM:  
 DATE: March 22, 2021  
 SUBJECT: Quality Enhancement Planning Committee

Every 10 years the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga (UTC) is responsible for undertaking a thorough review of its programs and practices as part of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) regional accreditation process. UTC's reaffirmation of accreditation planning is underway, with the site visit scheduled for March 2023.

As a part of the SACSCOC regional accreditation process, UTC will submit to SACSCOC a Reaffirmation Compliance Certification Report and a new Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). Two committees are being formed to address the creation of these accreditation requirements and to ensure a successful reaccreditation effort. I am pleased to appoint you to serve as a member of the Quality Enhancement Planning Committee, responsible for the creation of UTC's new QEP.

The co-chairs of the Quality Enhancement Planning Committee are Theresa Liedtka, Dean of UTC Library and SACSCOC Reaffirmation Coordinator and Cindy Williamson, Director of Assessment and SACSCOC Liaison.

You will be contacted soon for an organizational meeting of the Quality Enhancement Planning Committee. Attached please find a Quality Enhancement Planning Committee charge and background information. If you have any immediate questions or concerns, please contact Theresa Liedtka or Cindy Williamson at [Reaffirmation@utc.edu](mailto:Reaffirmation@utc.edu).

Thank you for your many contributions and continued support of UTC!

CC: Supervisor  
 Attachments: QEP Committee Charge and Additional Information document

## 7 Potential QEP Topics

The following 7 topics were identified as potential QEP Topics of Interest based on a review of institutional planning and assessment data.

1. Equity, diversity, and inclusion
2. Civics, ethical decision making, and an informed citizenry
3. Community engagement
4. Cultures of collaboration
5. Information technology
6. Writing
7. High impact practices

The following 3 topics were identified as potential QEP Topics of Interest based on input from the Executive Leadership Team.

1. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
2. High Impact Practices with Themes of Cohorts or Collaborative Learning
3. Community Engagement

Some questions to consider when reflecting on each of these broad topics:

- What strengths are there in focusing on X as a long-term QEP topic as it relates to student learning outcomes and success?
- What limitations or drawbacks are there in focusing on X as a long-term QEP as it relates to student learning outcomes and success?
- How can an QEP on X increase our student learning outcomes and student success?
- How would you suggest UTC narrow the broad topic X to a manageable, more focused topic?

## Brief overview of potential QEP Topics

### *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion*

Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) has rapidly progressed from a culture of compliance to one of strategic import and action. Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is one of four pillars in the new UTC Strategic Plan, 2021-2025. The plan will have an EDI goal as well as infuse themes of EDI across other goals to promote educational and programmatic efforts that are consistent with UTC's commitment to EDI. A QEP focused on EDI would increase student engagement and learning by creating a climate that welcomes differences among people, resulting in an engaged, creative university community where people's differences contribute to furthering learning and advancements in all fields of study and all aspects of University life. Of note, diversity/global learning is a high impact practice, per the Association of American Colleges & Universities.

### *High Impact Practices with Themes of Cohorts or Collaborative Learning*

High impact teaching and learning practices are shown to be beneficial to student success and engagement in study after study. A high-level overview of the Association of American Colleges & Universities 11 high impact practices is found [here](#). UTC has some experience with the majority of these practices, but of particular interest as potential QEP topics are cohort learning or learning communities, common intellectual experiences, and collaborative assignments and projects. A QEP focused cohort, learning communities, common intellectual experience, or collaborative assignments would enhance opportunities for student to work collaboratively thereby increasing the quality and quantity of student engagement, interactions, teamwork, and problem solving.

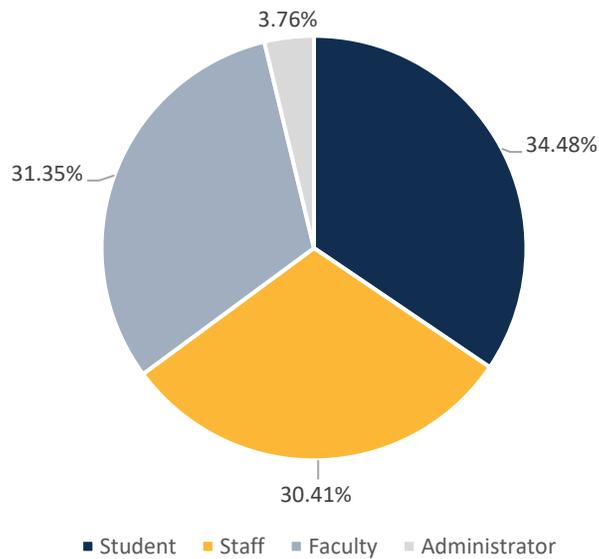
### *Community engagement*

UTC has a strong and long-standing culture of community engagement and was awarded the distinction in 2015 of a "community engagement" classification from the Carnegie Classifications of Institutions in Higher Education. UTC embraces the Carnegie definition of community engagement as "the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good." A QEP focused on community engagement would work to enhance opportunities for student community engagement by increasing the quality and quantity of student community engagement experiences and by creating tangible outputs of this engagement.

## Appendix B: Topic Selection Survey Results

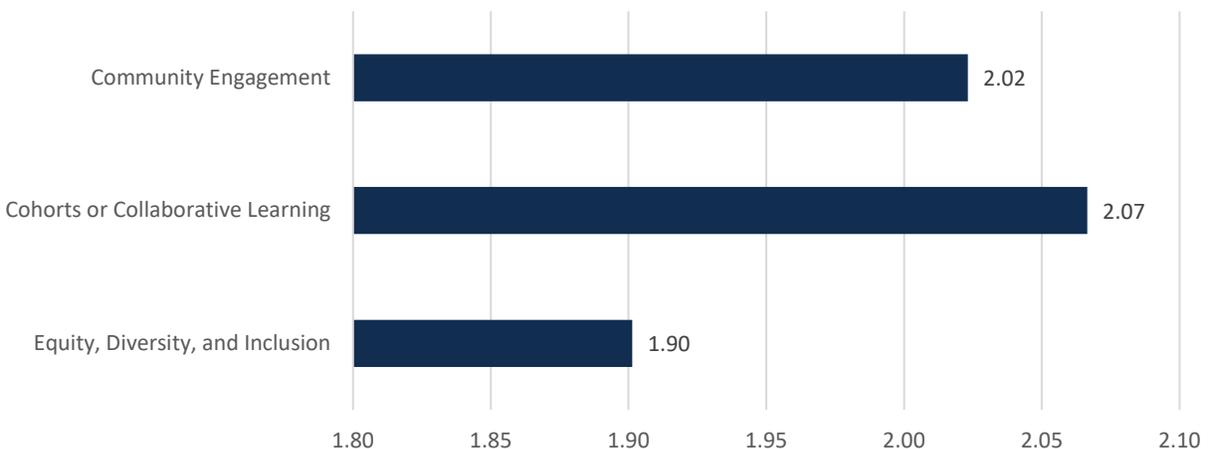
The QEP Topic Selection Survey was open to all UTC students, faculty, staff, and administrators beginning April 27, 2021, and closing May 14, 2021. There was a total of 441 responses, with 314 completed. Almost 77% of respondents attended a QEP Roadshow session. The majority of respondents were students, although there was fairly equal representation among faculty, staff, and students.

Figure 5: Respondents Role at UTC



The ranking averages for each topic were very close, with EDI leading at 1.90. Community Engagement follows closely at 2.02, with Cohorts trailing at 2.07.

Figure 6: Average Ranking of Each Topic

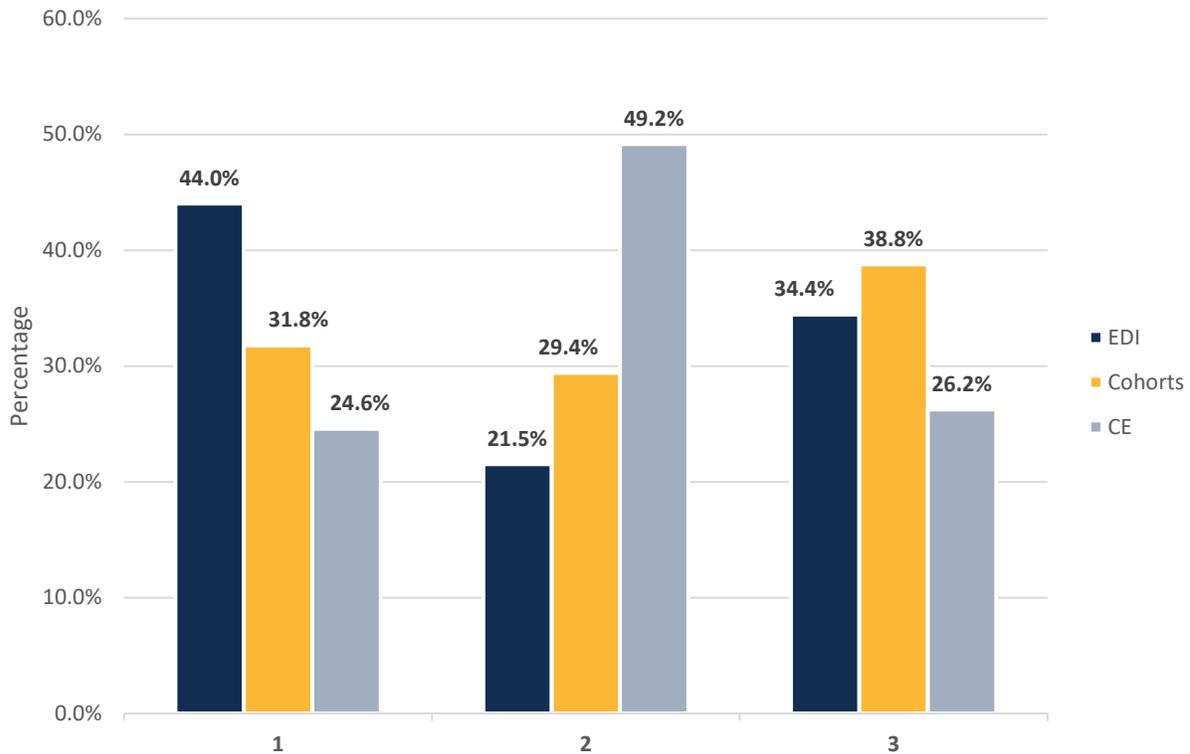


Below is a breakdown of the way each topic was ranked across 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> places:

Table 4: Breakdown of Topic Votes' Rank

Topic	1 <sup>st</sup> Place Votes	2 <sup>nd</sup> Place Votes	3 <sup>rd</sup> Place Votes
EDI	First	Third	Second
Cohorts/CL	Second	Second	First
CE	Third	First	Third

Figure 7: Topic Rankings



There were over 100 comments in total, with 48 being specific to one of the topics. Below are some examples of comments from each category; a full list can be found at the end of this document.

- EDI: 26 comments; 18 positive or pro-EDI
  - I think it's time to take a more serious look at equity and inclusion. I like the other topics, but I think this topic that is timely, but it's also easy for many academic departments to include in the curriculum.
  - Equity, diversity, and inclusion are all words that sound very nice, but the doctrine that goes along with it appears to be against meritocracy. I will be there to push back against toxic ideologies.

- To see why 'Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion' is my top choice, just take a look at the lack of racial diversity among our campus faculty. Then, consider positive comments made yesterday by one of our state legislators about the 3/5th's compromise as well as the disturbing legislation recently introduced in an effort to silence the LGBTQ community. As an academic community existing in a state where hate is openly expressed in our capitol building, UTC must take on the challenging work of EDI.
- I would love to see more action taken regarding an open and inclusive campus...less language based on gender-role stereotypes, more equal opportunity, treatment, leadership advancement of both introvert/extrovert leaders, more direct and clearer acknowledgement of racist history and past, embrace and engage the learning and development of anti-racism, louder and stronger statements in support of diversity and intolerance of systemic and organizational standards benefiting the few
- Cohorts: 9 comments; 8 positive or pro-Cohorts
  - At this point in a student's educational process as well as recent experiences during the pandemic with individual learning methods, it is apparent that many students are in need of the knowledge and guidance that can be gained from their peers and educational mentors. Finding creative ways that students can be herded into a group learning environment where they are surrounded by like-minded individuals will generate competitive and productive conditions resulting in higher GPA's and increased graduation rates.
  - I strongly support the topic 'Cohorts or Collaborative Learning.' I believe this could have a large impact in the classroom for the positive benefit of all UTC students in many fields of study. Within this topic of Collaborative Learning, much could be done to also facilitate equity, diversity, and inclusion. As students are working together collaboratively, then considerations of diversity and inclusion will automatically be addressed as well. The topic 'Cohorts or Collaborative Learning' could have a large impact for our campus community.
  - I favor the cohorts/collaborative learning option because it can encompass the other two as well as a broader range of topics. A cohort/collaborative learning experience could focus on an aspect of diversity/inclusion or, itself, involve community engagement, but it wouldn't be limited to those.
- CE: 13 comments; 11 positive or pro-CE
  - Community engagement is our hallmark - we should always be striving to improve this.
  - Community outreach is a big deal, and I think it needs to be more of a focus than diversity. If you reach the community, you automatically have diversity.
  - I especially love when UTC is engaged with our community. A good relationship among all parties cannot help but foster stronger ties and collaboration in the future. Any time UTC can be involved with groups outside of the university, communication and engagement is enhanced and we grow stronger and wiser.

Seven respondents indicated that all topics were equally important and 8 indicated that they did not have enough information to rank them.

There were several comments containing recommendations for specific focus within topics and most fell under EDI.

There were two comments specific to the need/want to encompass other topics under Cohorts.

We didn't see the alignment between comments in the survey and verbal feedback received during the Roadshow sessions.

Full list of comments by category:

### **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**

- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion are the most important things when it comes to developing a young adult. UTC already does a great job of promoting these ideals on campus, but we can always advocate more for them.
- I think it's time to take a more serious look at equity and inclusion. I like the other topics, but I think this topic that is timely, but it's also easy for many academic departments to include in the curriculum.
- UTC does not seem to be a diverse community and at within the UTC community there are an abundance of people that make it an unwelcoming space for those that do not fit typical societal stereotypes. UTC is fairly involved in the community and should focus on collaborative learning after they have fixed the issues regarding diversity and inclusion.
- I fully support the EDI topic.
- I don't like any of them. DEI is way too broad but can be paired down to something usable.
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion are all words that sound very nice, but the doctrine that goes along with it appears to be against meritocracy. I will be there to push back against toxic ideologies.
- Diversity and inclusion to alumni for higher educational opportunities
- As a gay white male, I get two different messages on campus. One is that I am special, unique and worthy (gay) and one is that I am evil and responsible for the downfall of mankind. Reconcile which students you are indicating matter because most white folks are disengaging, gathering in smaller circles, and closing ranks. You're creating a divide with all this 'diversity and inclusion.' It doesn't mean 'inclusion' for everyone. It means inclusion for people who aren't white. According to CollegeFactual.com, 76% of students are white. That's a lot of people who you are potentially alienating. Every time I hear how bad white people are, I shut down and distance myself a little further. It's obnoxious, and frankly wrong. I'm not evil. But people who won't approve of me one way or another don't deserve my time or energy. I'm basically at 'get my degree, get out, and never look back.' I have no interest in graduating, no interest in campus involvement, and most certainly have no interest in someone drumming up victimization support for being gay. It's just one detail about me. I'm also a rugby player, a father, a hard worker, and many other things. The more focus is put on these special classes the less special they are.
- Ultimately, UTC needs to push for classes to be more widely accessible for all students. COVID has made it possible for me to take several classes I need, but as we return to in person learning

many of the classes I need to take conflict with my working schedule. I work full time and have to in order to pay for tuition and living expenses, so many classes are unavailable to me because they are from 8-10:50am or 12:00pm-2:15pm etc. that would directly fall at the beginning or middle of a shift. It is not realistic to expect students to be able to attend school without working a full-time job.

- I feel that UTC is not very inclusive, and any show of inclusivity is just that, a show. Many professors look down on students that have DRC accommodations. Almost all my professors, even in small classes, have not taken the time to learn my name or spell it correctly when responding to an email or in response to assignments. Professors have called me out and given me a hard time in front of other students and during class sessions for not understanding a concept and, instead of explaining it, just mocking me in front of my peers. My advisor has not been accessible nor has the dean for my college. I've sent many emails that have taken weeks to respond to which is unacceptable. I feel invisible at UTC as a student, and I would honestly change colleges if I wasn't so close to graduation.
- A genuine examination of equity, diversity and inclusion needs to take place on this campus.
- I think it would be a grave disservice to not have diversity, equity, and inclusion in this discussion, REGARDLESS, of the final topic.
- As an instruction librarian and information researcher, I'd like to express the importance of information literacy (and a host of associated literacies) in the process of EDIA work. One of our obligations as an institution of higher learning is to provide an environment in which our students can develop skills that will help them not just in their careers, but as citizens in a democracy. The ability to see the systemic racism within information systems (most notably, Google) should be a critical component of an EDIA QEP that might be realized. In an era when disinformation and misinformation are sometimes lauded at the highest levels, students must be able to discern fact from fiction using evaluative reasoning. This work is not, and cannot be, the purview of librarians alone but must instead be addressed in meaningful ways throughout a student's matriculation and must be viewed as a social good.
- Although Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is a great topic I feel like students may be a little overwhelmed by that topic at this time.
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion is always important, but I observe so many things that the University is already doing. I am somewhat ambivalent regarding this topic.
- Making progress on this should include the resources to track and report on the data for both the short term and long-term views.
- I would like to see the 'equity, diversity, and inclusion' topic focus on ALL the diverse populations on campus. Often, only one specific minority group is 'favored' on campus and the other diverse groups on campus are often overlooked/underappreciated.
- To see why 'Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion' is my top choice, just take a look at the lack of racial diversity among our campus faculty. Then, consider positive comments made yesterday by one of our state legislators about the 3/5th's compromise as well as the disturbing legislation recently introduced in an effort to silence the LGBTQ community. As an academic community existing in a state where hate is openly expressed in our capitol building, UTC must take on the challenging work of EDI.

- I really think we need to focus on DEI. We need to make a better statement on campus about this. Our actions so far have been weak. If we make it part of the QEP, it will require action.
- Sometimes I think you need to look at the big picture around us to see what the best choice might be. I think the arrival of Stacy Lightfoot combined with the events of the past year both locally and nationally point to EDI as being a sound opportunity for us to do something new and unique that also fulfills a concrete need on this campus. UTC needs to orient itself towards EDI with sincere focus and bring about substantive change from the status quo. What better way than to center our QEP around these issues? Involve faculty, staff, students, and administration in the effort - top to bottom - make it ever present for the next few years. It is what we need to do.
- Given the other initiatives on campus and the current climate, the equity, diversity, and inclusion topic would seem timely and intricately connected with many (if not most) majors.
- I think that EDI could and should be integrated throughout what we do and may not be the best independent choice. In light of the state of our current democracy, civic engagement should be a key concern of everyone. I would like to see this as a hallmark of our identity.
- I'd love to see us looking at how other campuses are integrating DEI education into their curriculums and work to integrate it into ours. Other institutions I have worked at have DEI performances and workshops as a part of orientation and throughout FYE to provide students with a foundation and establish norms on campus of non-discrimination and respect for difference.
- I think an EDI QEP focus is really timely in terms of the upheaval of our nation, so I ranked that top. From our student body to our administration there is lots of work to be done in terms of Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion. The others are also solid choices, though. I probably would have ranked the Cohorts or Collaborative Learning & Community Engagement equally as #2.
- I think EDI provides a solid frame for the QEP topic that can include aspects of the other two.
- I support going bold on embracing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Some may worry that doing so will draw wrath from our state legislature. That's a real concern, but I'm confident that David Steele and Stacy Lightfoot can help us navigate this concern. Cohorts are already covered in the Cohort 2025 plan, so I see that as the lowest priority for the QEP. If EDI is untenable for our QEP, I can happily get behind Community Engagement.
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion is so important, and I am glad that it is an area of focus. I would rather our energy go into this important area than into cohorts or collaborative learning. These may fit well with some student, but many students will not want to participate.
- The broadness of the topic is important to allowing various groups to be a part of the conceptualization and implementation of the idea ultimately selected. I do not believe DEI is the right direction because it takes on so many different and varied interpretations and could lead to more discrepancies in the directions taken.
- We can do all the EDI things in the world, but state legislators are too frequently making a mockery of these efforts. More importantly, the Tennessee Promise effectively guts Gen Ed for many students by further reinforcing notions that it should be gotten out of the way. Overall, none of these goals really offers UTC what it needs most — a more coherent and cohesive identity.

- Bengt Carlson has done a tremendous job in supporting the growth of collaborative, active learning. UTC has very actively sought to improve inclusive practices. There is still a lack of diverse representation in some colleges though.
- To my knowledge, UTC does well on community engagement. Enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion is something we are less well known for. Collaborative learning will also become more imperative to our future students and is a good area of focus for us.
- There is so much push for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion that people are going to become numb especially because The System is NOT rife with inequalities. Continuing to push this false narrative only creates perpetual victims. These perpetual victims will rarely get ahead in life because 'someone' is holding them back and they will rarely realize that that someone is themselves. Why not instead change this topic to Personal Accountability or Self-Empowerment?
- I really wish sexual discrimination would be discussed more at the graduate level. This university really needs to work on that in some departments. I would love to see more focus on diversity in the faculty and in the department heads as well as at a graduate level.
- I think one of the weaknesses when it comes to D&I is the lack of quick response with Bias Incidents. In my residence hall this year there were multiple instances of racial biases, and they were not handled in a timely manner. This led to members of the community not feeling safe and welcomed.
- I would love to see more action taken regarding an open and inclusive campus...less language based on gender-role stereotypes, more equal opportunity, treatment, leadership advancement of both introvert/extrovert leaders, more direct and clearer acknowledgement of racist history and past, embrace and engage the learning and development of anti-racism, louder and stronger statements in support of diversity and intolerance of systemic and organizational standards benefiting the few
- This seems like a pivotal time to commit to work in the EDI space. Although we have had this reflected in strategic plans and value statements of the past, this seems like the greatest opportunity to align our campus forcefully behind this topic and hold ourselves accountable to make progress. The other topics are appealing, but I suspect we already have a strong foundation in those areas. The QEP is a chance to be bold and commit to action, and I think our students are eager for more engagement with EDI in both the curriculum and out-of-class experiences.
- Going to school as an older yet full-time student has been challenging because the University does not offer enough summer classes to spread out a program of study evenly over the school year. Many careers, such as teaching, have summertime available that is not there in the school year. Yet, there are no courses for me to take this summer. I feel excluded from the learning process because of my age. I see unrealistic expectations on working students and would love for the discrimination to be addressed. Thank you

### **Cohort and Collaborative Learning**

- At this point in a student's educational process as well as recent experiences during the pandemic with individual learning methods, it is apparent that many students are in need of the

knowledge and guidance that can be gained from their peers and educational mentors. Finding creative ways that students can be herded into a group learning environment where they are surrounded by like-minded individuals will generate competitive and productive conditions resulting in higher GPA's and increased graduation rates.

- I said this in the Roadshow I attended, but I think supporting cohorts--a complete restructuring of the freshmen year experience with the potential to hit housing, general education, first year experience, Read 2 Achieve, and many individual classes and faculty--will lend this critical move on our campus the support and backing it will need to succeed.
- Cohorts will contribute to creating long-lasting learning communities and if they are purposefully diverse in composition that will contribute to creating additional supportive networks for students. Community engagement is certainly important, but we need first to create strong learning communities on our campus.
- I favor the cohorts/collaborative learning option because it can encompass the other two as well as a broader range of topics. A cohort/collaborative learning experience could focus on an aspect of diversity/inclusion or, itself, involve community engagement, but it wouldn't be limited to those.
- If we focus on cohorts and collaborative learning, we can infuse the other two ideas. However, if we focus on the other two, we might miss out on cohorts and collaborative learning benefits.
- I strongly support the topic 'Cohorts or Collaborative Learning.' I believe this could have a large impact in the classroom for the positive benefit of all UTC students in many fields of study. Within this topic of Collaborative Learning, much could be done to also facilitate equity, diversity, and inclusion. As students are working together collaboratively, then considerations of diversity and inclusion will automatically be addressed as well. The topic 'Cohorts or Collaborative Learning' could have a large impact for our campus community.
- There are already more than enough initiatives and directives in support of the first topic that I feel it would be a waste to pour more resources in. While I think the school does already have decent community engagement, I think the importance of integrating learning and experience with the surrounding community is unparalleled.
- Collaborative learning is the most important one, I think. Equity, diversity, and inclusion is a topic that is borderline over-addressed in universities without real tangible solutions. There is a massive opportunity gap, but it mostly happens pre-college and is out of the hands of universities. Cohorts and collaborative learning could provide immediate results.
- Excited about the possibility of building on the Honors College living/learning community and extending that type of cohort around campus.
- My experience of cohort/collaborative learning at UTC has been very mixed. Mostly poor. What should be an exciting learning environment has proved to be beset with issues that should be cleaned up before going forward with a fuller commitment to this style of learning. The majority of students in my cohort over the last 4 semesters who I have had to work collaboratively with on 10+ projects have found ways to behave immaturely and not contribute to the progress of a project in its entirety. One person even plagiarized my work as her own in the final paper we had to present. Students have found ways to get by and even not contribute any work. Many times, waiting 1 hour before an assignment is due to hand in work they just threw together and still they pass the grade. Some have not contributed anything and still get full credit. I have had

many experiences with students not communicating for the length of a project with anyone in the collaboration and again, come forward the last day the project is due with some work without ever having collaborated with the group on details of the project. Only to get a passing grade once again. While some instructors feel this is fine if they show their work, I'm not sure I agree that it is a true collaboration. The level of disrespect alone this shows to other students seems to me to be a failure of the collaboration. A big fault in the system of collaboration and cohorts going forward is there is no affirmation of oversight to a project that can be assured by the faculty in student collaborations to secure the work of each student from plagiarism, etc. There are platforms available in software programs and even ones available on the UTC website, but they are not utilized. I have been cut off from work and not able to see grades and professor comments. I have been locked out of projects and not able to get access to work documents. All this needs to be resolved before going forward. Thank you for a chance to express my opinion. Good luck.

### **Community Engagement**

- Community engagement is our hallmark - we should always be striving to improve this.
- Community outreach is a big deal, and I think it needs to be more of a focus than diversity. If you reach the community, you automatically have diversity.
- Three possible emphasis areas for Community Engagement: (1) outreach to pre-college institutions and community colleges to make sure students are prepared to study at UTC, (2) service learning, internships, . . . , i.e., opportunities for UTC students in the community, and (3) follow-up post-graduation - outreach to employers and alumni
- We are in downtown Chattanooga, yet we are not that visible to the community. We should be enhancing our community engagement dramatically.
- I value Community Engagement highest of the three topics, because I feel that students need to connect with the area in which they live. The skill to work with others who may not share the same interests and goals is critical to becoming successful contributors to personal, professional, and civic enterprises.
- in a pandemic the collaborative lrng is tough for teachers. Would love to see us engage the community more.
- I ranked CE first because the other two options can easily be a part of doing CE. Want to do something related to Chattanooga's food desert? That's going to include equity, diversity, and inclusion. Want students to help local nonprofits write winning grants? That's a collaborative learning experience.
- I don't feel that UTC is as engaged with the city and the region as it could be. This is a major opportunity that we need to take advantage of.
- There definitely needs to be more engagement in the community. I understand that Covid put a limitation on a lot of things; however, community engagement with students is a key factor in thriving. I found myself at times being depressed due to the lack of events and community activities. These events allow for students to make friends. As a Freshman, I hardly have any friends at all. I am a very social person; and the lack of connection really threw me into phases of depression.

- I think UTC already has a lot of pockets of community engagement, and the potential for more. The effect UTC can have on the city of Chattanooga could be immense. One important part of that would be equity, diversity, and inclusion. One example would be Dr Sartipi's Center for Urban Informatics and Progress. How many people know that exists? That kind of data can inform so many types of decisions for both 'town' and 'gown'.
- I especially love when UTC is engaged with our community. A good relationship among all parties cannot help but foster stronger ties and collaboration in the future. Any time UTC can be involved with groups outside of the university, communication and engagement is enhanced and we grow stronger and wiser.
- Community Engagement may be a topic that is uneven for all programs to integrate and support. The burden of integration may be a load that eats up time and effort in terms of implementation instead of moving toward the goal. If Chattanooga were a larger city with more facets to explore in terms of Community Engagement, it would not be as labor intensive as it seems to me. The purity of the topic could get left behind to try to find a way to place a check box next to the notion instead of truly adding a benefit to students. The strength of a 'Community' and interactions may be too dependent on entities that may not support what is deemed assessment worthy and/or crucial to the education of a student in terms of program accreditation or experience. A five-year run at community engagement does not seem sustainable for five years with the number of programs and students who would need to be involved. I have a sensitivity in terms of protecting students and their experience. How can we vet and invest in end results of community engagement if the entities are absent, invisible, unwieldy, or unhealthy? It seems like our 'community' would benefit from either of the other topics and create community engagement in the embracing of cohorts, collaborative learning, or equity, diversity, and inclusion. For the investment in a QEP to really be a game-changer, it must be able to be implemented across campus through many programs, departments, and goals. Community Engagement seems like one of those ideas that looks good on a grant, is easier for some departments to implement, but could become a puzzle for some.

## Multiple topics

### EDI/CE

- I think that the community engagement in the Chattanooga area includes better efforts at Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. These efforts make UTC a richer and better campus.
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and Community Engagement are the two topics I think have the greatest strength because all students on the campus do not experience student wellness the same in my opinion. Without a campus focus on health promotion for all students with equal access and community engagement we cannot expect higher student success outcomes.
- I believe that we still have work to do in EDI work. There is success in pockets, but it's not happening across the board in all programs. We are lacking diversity in the middle levels of the university. The number of black faculty and staff is decreasing, and we need to have some hard conversations as to the reason. Community engagement is a strength and continues to grow. We must build by reaching even more communities so that UTC is the 'go-to' regional educational institution.

### EDI/Cohort-Collaborative Learning

- Maybe learning could include experiential and outcomes to measure impact
- EDI and cohorts I rank as equally important, I just think it might be easier to develop measurable student learning outcomes for cohorts / collaborative projects that are not just effort based. Also, I think if we structure the collaborations/cohorts thoughtfully, EDI can be both a process and an essential element of goals within that framework.
- Such a chasm exists in Chattanooga relative to access to healthcare, mentoring, growth opportunities, and education. The University does a great job of coming alongside the community in a variety of ways, but it seems there are so many other avenues to impact our local citizens, especially in ways that could address EDI and collaborative learning from a baseline level, versus secondary or tertiary interventions.

### EDI/Cohorts/CE

- All three of these intersect with one another so it is difficult to focus on just one.
- Supports topics equally
- I support all the topics suggested, but I thought it might be hard to engage people outside the campus in the current time.
- These are all significant categories and our choral performance ensembles regularly meet all three as a course of our instruction.
- I like the fact that (in theory, at least) all three could be incorporated into our work over the coming years. All three have value, and all three are aligned with our institutional trajectory
- I find the opportunity to align Cohort or Collaborative learning as a QEP topic with the Strategic Plan and the refresh of the General Education Curriculum nearly irresistible. Considering the importance of the other topics (Community Engagement and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion), I believe that existing efforts in both areas can be strengthened with the new work intended in cohort-based, collaborative learning.
- I believe the university needs to find more and better ways of connecting with the Chattanooga community on projects of importance to the university and the Chattanooga area. Traditionally, we have done ok at this, but we can do better. Diversity and inclusion are also vitally important, but it goes hand-in-hand with community engagement, in my mind.
- I do believe that equity, diversity, and inclusion can be achieved through the implementation of other goals so that topic is not excluded by not being highlighted. These items should be embedded in all things. The library of a University should be primarily used for students at the University. However, it would be quite the civic undertaking to find ways to allow the University Library to help support the community and reach out to potential students in high schools and senior citizens that can also attend the university. So collaborative learning can be inclusive and at the same time support the community.
- EDI work seems like a struggle in Tennessee. Race is difficult alone, but when you add in other aspects like religion, gender, sex, ethnicity, accessibility, you can be climbing a steeper hill than Cardiac. But it's good and needed and not done in other QEPs so I support it.

- Community Engagement could be good, town/gown relations are always important, but I would always want to focus on the campus first. Certainly, our students can be more engaged in Chattanooga and vice versa. We could expand our footprint into the greater community, especially with sports, housing, service, and the arts.
- Cohorts or Collaborative Learning is the most focused topic and simple to achieve. It requires much collaboration between the Registrar and Housing. It requires changes to curriculum and an intentional effort by many community members to change their perspective of education.
- I would support any three of these QEP topics, and all three could be combined. My ranking, however, was determined by the (debatable) assumption that Community Engagement could most easily and naturally envelop EDI and Cohorts/Collaborative Learning (as opposed, e.g., to trying to explain to the campus and Chattanooga community how Cohorts/Collaborative Learning fits into EDI). EDI should be central to all (or nearly all) we do as an institution. But I think we would gain the most and broadest traction by emphasizing Community Engagement and the many, many ways our students, faculty, and staff daily serve and benefit the people and communities of Chattanooga and Tennessee.
- I see them as equal objectives. We can use cohorts and collaborative learning to promote and ensure community engagement and DEI.
- All are important topics.
- I think each category could be combined under one. Community engagement could be a strong underpinning to cohorts or collaborative learning, which could also lead to equity, inclusion, and diversity. I attended a session where STEAM came up, and I thought that was an interesting way to bring multiple disciplines together that could impact any of these topic areas.
- By addressing community engagement, we can organize our students into cohorts for collaborative learning. By engaging with the broadest possible community, we will address equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- All three areas are critical to growth and impact of the University.
- I think the topics are very important that have been identified.
- I believe and have strong evidence from my own work and from others' (see Common Fire: Lives of Commitment in a Complex World), that real Diversity, Inclusion and Equity can ONLY be achieved through community engagement, specifically, with 'Constructive Engagement with Otherness,' to use the phrase of Sharon Parks et. al., in Common Fire. If that's done well, Collaborative Learning takes care of itself. So, all three are vital but only work if the first two are engaged correctly. But for this to work, it takes real dedication of resources, commitment, time and reward and I don't see our university faculty, most of whom have a bad case of 'R-1-itis,' will ever commit to doing this at scale.
- Seems like the cohorts or collaborative learning is broader to accomplish across the various disciplines. Not every discipline (and every course) can have a community engagement component. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion is more of a university policy/practice to be implemented, than a quality education plan. It would not be easy to effectively implement it throughout the variety of courses in the various disciplines.
- I don't think I really have enough information, but I know these are all three areas in which improvement will benefit our students.

- While I think equity, diversity, and inclusion is important, I worry that it would be difficult to carve out an approach that would adequately address the topic in a meaningful way. That said, I think it could inform the work on either of the other options, especially the cohort model. That also seems like a good opportunity as it coincides with the upcoming Cohort '25 project.
- It does not make sense to pick an approach or strategy before there is a goal or target. Of these options, the one that is most likely to lead to real outcomes that benefit students is developing and strengthening cohort and collaborative learning opportunities. The others are buzz-words that are not well-defined or well-understood in terms of their impact.
- The QEP is to focus on improving learning or the learning environment or both. Equity, diversity, and inclusion offers the opportunity to create multiple levels of engagement and learning that will enrich individual growth, as well as the potential to improve the environment. We talk about this often in higher ed, but actual implementation and change is hard to achieve. A QEP with this focus, and done well, might have an impact toward real change. Second, collaborative learning seems to focus more on student learning, which is the point of a college education, but it could also foster collaboration amongst colleges and departments, thus improving the learning environment. Undergraduate cohorts, and the well-known learning community strategy, is harder to achieve and keep cohorts together to see real outcomes. If done creatively, it could be effective. Finally, UTC is already strong in community engagement and, although it offers learning opportunities, the other two topic areas seem to offer the potential for broader impact if change is truly made.
- I ranked cohorts first because I think UTC has a very diverse student body in terms of age, background, family and work responsibilities, etc. We need to do more to facilitate cohort learning for transfer students, adult learners, and others. I also think UTC as an institution does a fine job partnering with the community, so although it's important I didn't rank it first. I ranked EDI last because frankly I'm concerned that this term is starting to mean equality of outcomes, rather than equality of opportunities. I'm afraid that placing EDI at the forefront of our plan will embolden that kind of thinking, and I strongly oppose that.
- Since UTC is supposed to be an engaged metropolitan institution, it makes sense that the topic of Community Engagement should be the first choice. Cohorts/collaborative learning would be a reasonable second choice, even though it does not directly address our mission. Frankly, the topic of 'equity, diversity, and inclusion' seems like jumping on a bandwagon and, moreover, is generating a lot more heat than light these days.
- I believe that there is a real need for UTC to continue seeking out valuable partnerships and experiential real life learning opportunities for students in our community. I believe that this hands-on approach to solving real world problems, becoming civically aware and engaged, and making connections with local organizations, leaders, and citizens. I think that there are also lots of opportunities with a QEP in community engagement that would allow for EDI and Collaborative Learning opportunities. I think it is the best fit for inclusion of all these elements.
- I believe community engagement goals have been met or surpassed during 2015-2020. Diversity and inclusion goals have seen considerable progress. Collaborative learning and cohorts have great momentum but require additional resources and commitment.
- Collaborative learning and equity, diversity and inclusion could be learned through active community engagement. I suggest offering activities that would strengthen community

engagements and relations such as workshops, volunteer days, visiting nonprofit organizations, tree planting etc.

### General Comments

- These sound like great topics. It might be interesting to learn more about the specific initiatives or activities that would be involved under each topic.
- I'm pleased to see Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the group of potential topics. We are excited to work with the new Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Engagement to promote support for students/staff. It feels as though there is a sea change happening on this front and this brings hope for both us and for the larger world. Thank you!
- I did not make my choices based on anything except what I think is most critical at this point as well as what I believe is most measurable in a myriad of ways. Whether UTC comes out looking good or bad, I think it is absolutely critical that we measure this area and begin to formulate a plan that moves us into the 21st Century in this area.

### Other comments

- I don't think these are the primary avenues the university should consider improving itself.
- Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning
- If we do not re-create community, on this campus we will not thrive as a residential, ftf learning community post-pandemic
- The most important topic to include would be Developing and Retaining a Highly Qualified Tenure-Line Faculty
- Global Awareness
- I think something that should be considered is how to help students with their assignments and staying on top of everything, since some students like me have issues with that kind of stuff.
- The technology at UTC and the labs are lacking severely. It's like stepping back to 2010 when going into most of the computer labs.
- UTC is kind of a bloated bureaucracy; it would be worth improving communications between colleges/departments as they don't seem to communicate often... if ever. Also, for this survey the topics I just ranked were not explained, so I guessed. I have no idea which are most important to me because it wasn't explained what they mean.
- There needs to be a more immersive student engagement program at UTC, both socially and academically. i feel that academic clubs, groups, etc. could highly benefit campus engagement if there were more options, as well as if the clubs were promoted socially as they are academically. I think many students at UTC who are not a part of Greek Life or one of the few select student organizations on campus, feel disconnected and deprived of the college experience, especially when compounded with university official's strict guidelines for 'fun'.

## Appendix C: Quality Enhancement Plan Proposals

Table 5: Quality Enhancement Plan Proposals

Assigned Number	Title
QEP Proposal 1	Developing a Humanities-Based Multidisciplinary Minor or Certificate Program Focusing on Arts, Entertainment, and Tourism
QEP Proposal 2	Integration of COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) Partnerships at UTC
QEP Proposal 3	A Proposal for Interdisciplinary Multi-Semester Cohort Experiences
QEP Proposal 4	The Mocs Living Learning Community: A Comprehensive and Collaborative UTC First-Year Student Experience and Living Learning Community
QEP Proposal 5	Freshman Employment Program
QEP Proposal 6	Campus Recreation Junior & Senior Career Preparation Cohorts
QEP Proposal 7	SafeMocs Academy
QEP Proposal 8	MOCS: Mixing, Optimizing, and Connecting Students [Mixing (to combine or blend together), Optimizing (to make the best version of oneself), Connecting (to join together)]
QEP Proposal 9	T.R.I.U.M.P.H.: Training, Research, and Interprofessional collaborations that Uplift Mentees to Promising Horizons
QEP Proposal 10	Second Year Experience @ UTC
QEP Proposal 11	Gaming and E-Sport Cohort Experience
QEP Proposal 12	Outdoor Integration: Expanding resources to enhance outdoor, cohort-based, experiential learning experiences.
QEP Proposal 13	Bringing Learning to Life
QEP Proposal 14	“A Moc should have a nest: Proposal to create the Nest Community Collaborative”
QEP Proposal 15	Major Ready STEM life Skills
QEP Proposal 16	Transforming the UTC experience with Open Education Resources
QEP Proposal 17	Cohort 2025
QEP Proposal 18	Creating a Chattanooga-Based Project as part of a Reimagined General Education Program
QEP Proposal 19	Bridges to Success: Bridging People, Places, Programs, and Partners for S.U.C.C.E.S.S. (Students Uncovering Curricular and Co-curricular Experiences that Support Systematic change)

## Appendix D: Questions and Tasks for A Moc's First Year Implementation Committee

1. Discuss course development and content for new and existing LC / 1250 courses
  - a. First-time, full-time student requirement.
  - b. Courses needed for Year 2, 2023-2024, will need to be submitted by October 15, 2023 (to be approved and available for Year 2 Fall consideration).
2. Confirm requirements for 1 and 3-credit courses.
3. Determine how to pair LC course with paired 3 credit course
4. Develop a 1-credit course(s) for undeclared students (year 3)
  - a. Roughly 25% of students come in undeclared
5. Develop content to replace current USTU content, populate to web, Canvas, Orgsync
6. Create a sample syllabus
7. Create list of Chattanooga activities or options for instructor use
8. Create list of meal ideas and options for instructor use
9. Consider if we implement a model for transfer student inclusion (year 4)
10. Develop and recommend professional development workshop for involved instructors
11. How do we adjust the AIQ to assign 1 or 3-credit courses?
12. How are the courses labelled, ex. dept-1250 (major intro) or qep-1250 (special topics).
13. What can Banner do to help, including registration, identification of courses, identification of learning communities (what are the RCs doing)?
14. Impact on departments that already have 120 or more credit hours?
15. Housing, what role, if any do they play
16. Review and recommend any changes to initial Implementation timeline.
17. Review and recommend any changes to initial budget
18. Do we need an exception process, if so, what does it look like.
19. What happens when a student changes major after the first year?
20. If a student drops either of the paired courses, what happens?
21. How many sections do we need, and of which type (special topics and major introduction)? (faculty or workflow)
22. Do we need a process for exceptions?