

## Office of the Chancellor

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**From:** Office of the Chancellor  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 13, 2019 8:48 AM  
**Subject:** Update on QEP

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for continuing to participate and “step up” in shaping the new strategic plan, Leading Forward.

Seventy (70) individuals signed up to serve on one or more of the task forces that will provide suggestions for how we advance our agreed upon objectives and goals over the next five years. The Leading Forward Strategic Plan will provide our institution a sense of direction. Once we have action steps in place, we’ll assign measurable outcomes to each goal that will help us determine, at a glance, how well we are addressing our goals...and, thus, attaining our mission. The strategic plan is an important tool for guiding our day to day decisions from the department and unit levels, up through the chancellor and system offices. The strategic plan will also help us make decisions about how to utilize our human, physical, fiscal, time, and talent resources as we move into our future.

A new QEP:

As you are aware, we completed and submitted our fifth year interim SACS-COC review in March 2017. After providing more clarification on two standards, SACS-COC officially accepted our report in June 2018. At the end of the fifth year interim report cycle, institutions are required to determine a new Quality Enhancement Plan, write a proposal, and submit that proposal to SACS-COC for comment. As I have mentioned in several meetings (including Faculty and Staff Assemblies), the process for identifying a new QEP topic has been streamlined. The topic must emerge from the strategic planning process, but there is no requirement that it be voted on by the campus or any subgroup of constituents. However, to make certain we were engaging the campus broadly in the discussion, the QEP topic has been evaluated by several campus committees.

First, based on the information gathered from campus constituents during the planning process, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee discussed three possible QEP topics. The three topics were: Intrusive Academic Advising (utilizing an Advisor Center Model), Critical Inquiry Reboot (reworking the CI course to produce better outcomes), and a focus on Retention, Progression, and Graduation (RPG) strategies. The SPS Committee favored Academic Advising for they thought that Advising would ultimately be a topic that provided the greatest overall impact for all USC Aiken students and it should have a positive impact on RPG.

In order to get more feedback, I sent the recommendations of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee to the UPC, a sub-committee of Faculty Assembly.

Christine Wernet and the UPC members provided a well-thought out list of strengths and challenges that each of the topics might pose. They felt that Critical Inquiry changes might be addressed other ways beyond using it as the QEP topic and that the RPG as a focus of the Quality Enhancement Plan posed significant challenges (especially if the topic was too broad). The UPC found more merit to using Advising as the focus of the QEP, than the other topics and felt it would have the biggest impact on student welfare. That recommendation was announced in Faculty Assembly.

Meanwhile, for a time now, the RPG committee has identified pro-active advising as a key element of student success. Additionally, the university, under the guidance of the provost, is working on ways to bring greater focus to advising by strengthening the Center for Student Achievement in the Library. Independently, the Faculty Welfare committee has also turned its attentions to Academic Advising and has administered two surveys to departments on that topic. The Faculty Welfare committee has also invited members of the Center for Student Achievement (Troy Mothkovich and Sheneika Lofton) to their meetings to discuss the current status of advising and seek recommendations for improvements.

In the 2019 budget, a supervisory position was created to help strengthen advising in the Center for Student Achievement. The search for a coordinator of Academic Advising is currently underway.

Thus, it seems that Advising is the topic that is receiving the widest endorsement and is a process around which there is much concern.

We are moving forward with the concept of Academic Advising as the QEP, but we are still in the development phase. Nicole Spensley and IR/IE office are charged with working with Academic Affairs to seek model QEPs on this topic, while the QEP taskforce meeting for the first time this week will be making recommendations on how conceptualize and operationalize a QEP around the creation of professional advising on campus. Once the taskforce has made recommendations we'll complete a report to SACS-COC and they will provide feedback on the plan, which includes an evaluation of resources we are proposing to support the plan.

If you wish to be on that taskforce to shape the discussion, please contact Corey Feraldi, convener of the QEP Taskforce, and join that discussion.

Thank you, again, for your participation and feedback throughout the Leading Forward Process.

Sincerely,  
**Sandra Jordan**  
Chancellor

P.S. Please take note: the Critical Inquiry QEP ended with the Fifth Year Report. Discussions concerning the Critical Inquiry Class have begun in the appropriate faculty and academic fora, but have no further connection with the QEP.