

Quality Focus Essay

Introduction

The quality focus essay (QFE) is intended to identify two to three areas that are vital to the long-term improvement of student learning and achievement over a multi-year period. During the process of self-study, the Accreditation Steering Committee at Cypress College engaged in a series of dialogues to identify the topics that are of significant importance to long-term improvement of teaching and learning. Additionally, the committee focused on topics that both encompass the overall functioning of the institution and are difficult to attribute to any specific standard. Thus, the areas identified for QFE impact the institution as a whole. As a result of this dialog and big-picture view, the following three topics were selected by the Accreditation Steering Committee:

1. Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes
2. Distance Education Model
3. Extended-day Funding Model

QFE #1 – Student Learning Outcomes

Background: Cypress College began using TracDat in 2008, four years after it began the development of the course, program and institutional learning outcomes. In 2009, Cypress College received the RP Group’s “Excellence in Documenting SLO Assessment” award for its SLO activities. In 2013-14, the College began adding Administrative Units Outcomes to TracDat, which included Campus Services, Student Services, and Special Programs. However, in 2014, the College received feedback from the Accrediting Commission that although the College had SLOs for many of its courses, the program learning outcomes and institutional learning outcomes had not kept pace. The College commissioned an outside consultant, Dr. Matthew C. Lee, to examine the issues and make recommendations. His 24-page report, the *Cypress College Gap Analysis Report and Recommendations: The Outcome Cycle*, was provided to the College in December of 2014. The report identified several gaps in the reporting and accountability for the ILO, PLO, and SLO process, and in the connections to administrative units/support services. In addition, Dr. Lee noted that the College had not addressed some of the new accreditation requirements, including the disaggregation of student subpopulations to correct achievement gaps. In response, the College provided resources to insure 100% of the active courses, (maintained in CurricUNET) had SLOs on the approved course outlines of record. The College also provided administrative support to provide faculty with data entry assistance for entering their assessment results into TraDat. Currently in TracDat, 100% of the instructional programs have participated in the SLO assessment process (with at least one course assessed), and 1024 of the 1331 courses in TracDat or 77% have been assessed. Finally, the Departmental Planning and Program Review Committee worked with Institutional Researchers to create a more robust program review process that provided faculty with additional “pre-populated” data that distinguishes distance education from on campus success rates, disaggregates subpopulations of students by program, and adds employment and labor market data. Each instructional department prepares a comprehensive self-study every four-years and

the Program Review Committee then meets with the Department Coordinator in a collegial exchange of ideas to discuss challenges and best practices. The committee provides a written summary of all commendations and recommendations to each department. The results are summarized in a Program Review Annual Report, which is submitted to the College after it is presented to the Academic Senate. In the 2013-14 cycle, the Program Review Committee began making summary recommendations in its annual reports to improve SLO reporting and participation rates. While SLO reporting and participation rates have improved at the course and department levels, the College has identified the need for a broader effort to account for how these results and the results from the administrative unit outcomes work together to influence institutional learning outcomes, including certificates, degrees, general education, basic skills, distance education, transfer, and employment.

Desired Goal: Cypress College will re-double its efforts to focus on an essential goal of student learning outcomes: to remind students how evidence of their SLO achievements can build and reinforce their own educational scaffolding in support of higher levels of learning, skill attainment, and success.

Measurable Outcomes: Cypress College will work to streamline its current processes and accountability to improve participation rates, increase effectiveness, and provide more evidence of institutional (ILOs), program (PLOs), and course (SLOs) learning outcomes. In addition, the College will continue to enhance overall institutional effectiveness through a “Committee of Chairs” vested with a goal of improving and documenting the connections and collaboration between instructional and administrative unit outcomes (AUOs) to eliminate achievement gaps and to increase student learning and achievement. Finally, the College will look to secure improved information system capabilities for SLO tracking and disaggregation that provides cross-platform integration among the various systems (i.e. Banner, CurricUNET, myGateway, TracDat, Blackboard, and NOCCCD), and that has the capability to load and maintain actual samples of student work and SLO assessments.

Action Steps for Implementation

Action Step 1: Improve the institutional effectiveness of outcomes by revisiting and streamlining all campus PLOs, AUOs, and ILOs to make certain that each reporting unit knows the answers to the questions posed in columns 3, 4, and 5 of the James O. Nichols’ 5-column model below, and that they understand how the results in their areas are measured and accounted for in the ILOs.

Nichols' 5-column model (modified by Gary J. Williams, Crafton Hills College)

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
Mission/Goals	Intended Outcomes/Objectives	Means of Assessment/Criteria for Success	Summary of Data	Use of Results
The mission and applicable goal(s) of the program, department, or administrative unit.	What will the student think, feel, know or be able to do as a result of a given educational experience [or program]	What are the criteria for success? What tools will be used to establish and measure success?	Summarize the findings. How close were the results to the criteria for success?	What do the data tell us about our process? What, if anything, do we need to do to our course, program, or department to improve? What resources are necessary?

Timeline: Complete ILOs by August 2017. PLOs will be completed within the existing four-year program review cycle (2017-2020). AUOs TBD.

Responsible parties: TBD for ILOs and AUOs. Department chairs responsible for PLOs.

Resources needed: TBD

Assessment plan to evaluate outcomes: SLO Coordinator and AUO Coordinator to submit annual report to College and Academic Senate.

Alignment to standards: Standard IB4, IB6, IIA1, IIA2, IIA3, IVA1, IVA2, IVA4, IVA6

Action Step 2: Increase the faculty and administrative participation rates by making certain that all reporting units input their outcomes into the tracking system, so that the data can be pulled up to the program and institutional level and reported for the ILO assessment, including General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs). Assign responsible parties for each area who will participate in Action Step 3.

Timeline: Begin in Spring of 2017 and complete by August 2019.

Responsible parties: TBD

Resources needed: TBD

Assessment plan to evaluate outcomes: SLO Coordinator and AUO Coordinator to submit annual report to College and Academic Senate.

Alignment to standards: Standard IB4, IB6, IIA1, IIA2, IIA3, IVA1, IVA2, IVA4, IVA6

Action Step 3: Establish a "Committee of Chairs" vested with a goal of improving and documenting the connections and collaboration between instructional and administrative unit outcomes to eliminate achievement gaps and to increase student learning and achievement.

Timeline: Fall 2017-Spring 2020. Determine frequency of future meetings.

Responsible parties: Santanu/Phil/Kathleen

Resources needed: Lunch

Assessment plan to evaluate outcomes: SLO Coordinator and AUO Coordinator to document results in their annual report to College and Academic Senate.

Alignment to standards: Standard IB4, IB6, IIA1, IIA2, IIA3, IVA1, IVA2, IVA4, IVA6

Action Step 4: Secure and utilize an improved information system with better capabilities for SLO tracking and disaggregation that provides cross-platform integration among the various systems (i.e. Banner, CurricUNET, myGateway, TracDat, Blackboard, and NOCCCD), and the capability to load and maintain actual samples of student work and SLO assessments.

Timeline: Fall 2017-Spring 2020

Responsible parties: Phil/Kristina/Kathleen/Treisa/District IS Staff.

Resources needed: Contracts with vendors.

Assessment plan to evaluate outcomes: TBD

Alignment to standards: Standard IA2, IB4, IB6, IC14, IIA1, IIA2, IIA3, IVA1, IVA2, IVA4, IVA6

QFE #2 – Distance Education

Background: As the demand for distance education courses grows, Cypress College remains committed to offering a robust Distance Education Program with quality courses and appropriate campus support. Programs across campus have expanded DE course offerings significantly since the college conducted its last program review in 2011-2012. Recent data indicate that approximately 21% of Cypress College students enroll in DE classes as a portion of their regular load (Table 1). Distance education courses generate 11% of the college’s annual FTES (Table 2). DE enrollments have increased by 9% since the last Program Review, while traditional courses are seeing decreases in enrollment; this suggests that students are migrating from traditional courses to DE courses (Table 3).

Table 1. Students Enrolled in by Online or On-Campus Status

	Fall 2013		Fall 2014		Fall 2015	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Online Only	842	5.2%	741	4.6%	872	5.3%
Both On-Campus and Online	3,339	20.6%	3,228	20.0%	3,566	21.5%
On-Campus Only	12,012	74.2%	12,155	75.4%	12,115	73.2%
Total	16,193	100.0%	16,124	100.0%	16,553	100.0%

Table 2. Cypress College Enrollment Trends

	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015
DE Enrollments	5,491	5,382	5,667	5,340	5,984
Non-DE Enrollments	40,647	37,993	38,384	38,286	38,614
Total Enrollments	46,138	43,375	44,051	43,626	44,598

Source: Cypress College Data System

Table 3. Cypress College Enrollment Trends by DE Status

	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	% Change Fall 2011 to Fall 2015
DE Enrollments	5,491	5,382	5,667	5,340	5,984	9.0%
Non-DE Enrollments	40,647	37,993	38,384	38,286	38,614	-5.0%
Total Enrollments	46,138	43,375	44,051	43,626	44,598	-3.3%

The success and retention rates of students in traditional courses have always been higher than DE courses at Cypress College and across the State. However, Cypress College success rates for DE courses are higher than statewide statistics, and the disparity in success rates between traditional and online courses has decreased over time (tables 3 and 4).

Table 4. Fall 2015 Success Rates for Cypress College and Statewide

	Cypress College		Statewide Average	
	Enrollments	Success Rate	Enrollments	Success Rate
DE (Online/Hybrid)	5,984	63.8%	515,231	62.4%
Non-DE (On-Campus)	38,611	71.4%	3,392,965	70.8%
Total/Overall	44,595	70.4%	3,908,196	69.7%
DE and Non-DE Gap		7.6%		8.4%

Source: CCCCCO Data Mart

Table 5. Fall 2015 Success Rates by Instructional Method

	Enrollments	Success Rate
Online	3,742	62.5%
Hybrid	2,242	66.1%
On-Campus	38,611	71.4%
Total/Overall	44,595	70.4%

Source: Cypress College Data Systems

The disparity in success rates between online and traditional courses is explained, in part, by the competing demands and personal circumstances (health, career, and family obligations) which DE students (as a general demographic) cite as the reasons for enrolling in DE courses. Increased success and retention was a focus of the last Distance Education Plan (2011-14) which outlined multiple objectives to improve program quality. Goals included educating faculty about 508 accessibility compliance for students with disabilities; establishing protocols for the authentication of DE students; increasing awareness of (and access to) student services, and insuring that DE courses provide regular and substantive contact between students and faculty. The college has achieved these goals effectively.

The stability and success of Cypress College's DE Program may also be attributed to the long term adoption of the Blackboard LMS and exceptional faculty training. The college elected a Blackboard managed host site, which provides web-based and phone support 24/7.

In order to offer a DE class at Cypress College, faculty are required to complete a three-unit "Basics" training course which provides a comprehensive review of Blackboard tools and features as well as standards for legal compliance and best practices for teaching online. The DE Program provides less intensive training for faculty who wish to utilize Blackboard to web enhance their course. The web-enhanced orientation covers relevant topics such as accessibility, copyright, and Blackboard basics. Individualized instructional design support and advanced training (in the form of workshops) are offered continuously as new tools and features are integrated to the LMS. The College also provides and promotes opportunities for professional development including attendance at online learning conferences and webinars. Results of the last program review confirm that majority of faculty are satisfied with the quality of the LMS and Blackboard training.

The immediate needs of the DE Program identified in the accreditation self-study include a gap in ongoing assessment and planning. One of the attributing factors was the lack of a faculty DE coordinator from 2014-2016. The College has outlined the following action steps to address these deficiencies. These include actions conducted during the 2016-2017 academic year and plans for implementation and change in the 2017-2018 academic year.

Desired Goals: Cypress College will continue its efforts to improve and expand its DE program to meet current definitions and standards for distance education and to address the needs of 21st century learners. This includes a reorganization of the DE Program, evaluation of the current courses and technology utilized, and writing and finalizing a new DE plan.

Measurable Outcomes: Please see action plans at the end of the DE QFE

Action Steps for Implementation:

Action Step One: Increase program and institutional effectiveness by reorganizing DE Program personnel.

When the DE program was established, the college appointed a single faculty coordinator to oversee all aspects of the program – planning and review, faculty training, technical support and operations. In 2014, the last faculty DE coordinator concluded her term, and the position has remained unfilled. The DE Program was sufficiently robust that it remained successful during the 2014-2016 timeframe. However, during this time it was determined that as a result of the complexity and rapid growth of distance education, it was no longer tenable for a single faculty coordinator to oversee all aspects of the DE program. To sustain growth and program quality additional personnel were needed. The College

initiated plans to reorganize the infrastructure of the DE program to optimize allocation of resources and support to DE students and faculty.

Over the course of the semester in Fall of 2016, the Academic Senate, the DE Advisory Group and administration met to outline the duties for a new DE faculty coordinator and Distance Education Technology Coordinator. Two new positions (a faculty coordinator and technology manager) were created, submitted and approved at the Academic Senate, Planning and Budget Committee, President's Staff, and President's Council.

Faculty: A DE faculty coordinator will be appointed to oversee pedagogical aspects of the program—training, professional growth and development, and program planning and review. A MOU will be developed at the beginning of the spring 2017 semester. To fill the identified need, a professional expert (faculty) was hired to review DE curriculum and begin developing the DE Plan from December 2016 to the establishment of the DE Faculty Coordinator.

Manager: Once the faculty position has been completed, a technology manager will be hired to oversee operations and to provide technical and design support.

Classified Staff: Classified staffing requests have been submitted to the campus Planning and Budget committee; the goal is to establish permanent classified positions to address support and business needs of the DE Program.

Timeline: Fall 2016 - Fall 2017

Responsible parties: Faculty and administration

Resources needed: TBD

Assessment plan to evaluate outcomes: DE Quality Review

Alignment to standards: IB, IIA&C, IIIA

Action Step Two: Update campus literature to effectively advertise the DE program and to clarify course criteria and expectations as defined by delivery mode: “online,” “hybrid,” and “web-enhanced.”

The criteria for DE courses (“online,” “hybrid,” “web-enhanced”) are clearly defined in the schedule of classes and college catalogue; these definitions reflect ACCJC standards and align with criteria outlined by the Department of Education. However, the expectations of faculty offering hybrid courses vary widely, and it is apparent that some students are confused by these distinctions. The college will continue to develop strategies to advertise DE courses more effectively so that students can identify suitable course formats.

Timeline: Spring 2017-Spring 2018

Responsible parties: DE Coordinator, Department Coordinators, Division Deans

Resources needed: None

Assessment plan to evaluate outcomes: Spring 2017 Schedule of Classes reflects the updated definitions.

Alignment to standards: IC, IIIA

Action Step Three: Administer a survey to identify and evaluate specific needs of DE students and faculty.

The DE Advisory Committee created a faculty survey that will be administered in Spring of 2017; the goal of the survey is to identify needs of students and faculty that have not been addressed in the most recent DE plan, to develop strategies to promote student equity, to target areas of deficiency with regard to training and support, and to identify resources and thus allocations for program development and improvement.

Timeline: Spring 2017-Fall 2017

Responsible parties: Administration of Distance Education, Faculty Professional Expert and the Institutional Research Office

Resources needed: TBD

Assessment plan to evaluate outcomes: A review of the final results will be submitted to the Distance Education Committee for discussion related to student equity, a new DE Plan and inclusion in the DE Quality Review.

Alignment to standards: IB&C

Action Step Four: Create a DE Plan to update policies and practices related to distance education and to improve program quality.

The plan will include strategies to address the achievement gap and to improve the success and retention rates of DE students; encourage broader faculty involvement in planning for distance education; establish a formalized DE committee with representatives from divisions across campus; amend the faculty training course to eliminate redundant training; expand training for emerging technologies; explore alternate LMS platforms and DE delivery models; expand effective usage of the LMS; revisit authentication protocols; establish a dedicated space for conducting orientations, study sessions, proctored exams, and tutoring for students enrolled in DE courses.

Timeline: Spring 2017 – Fall 2018

Responsible parties: Administration of Distance Education, Faculty Professional Expert, the Institutional Research Office and campus committees

Resources needed: TBD

Assessment plan to evaluate outcomes: A final DE Plan will be submitted and approved by Academic Senate, Planning and Budget and other related campus committees.

A final DE Quality Review will reflect the new DE Plan and survey results and will be finalized fall 2017 for submission to the IR Office.

Alignment to standards: IB&C, IIA&C, IIIA&C

QFE #3 – Extended Day Funding Model (EDFM)

Background: Cypress College is a part of North Orange County Community College District – a multi-college district comprised of two colleges and the non-credit North Orange Continuing Education. The District adopted an Extended-Day funding Model (EDFM) in 2015 in response to a recommendation in the prior accreditation cycle and after a prolonged period of deliberation in a number of district-wide committees related to allocations to the campuses. The District establishes the annual Full-Time Equivalent Student (FTES) target based upon the allocation of growth funding by the State Chancellor’s Office, available human capital, the physical infrastructure, and other available fiscal resources. FTES production is the primary source of revenue for the District and is calculated principally on the basis of hours of classroom instruction. While enrollment is a predominate factor in determining FTES revenue, the cost of instruction is also impacted by a variety of other factors. For example, the cost of instruction is impacted by the number of faculty who are either tenured, tenure-track, or adjunct. The cost is also impacted by high-cost programs such as Nursing, Dental Hygiene and Automotive Technology. The fiscal model currently in place requires contributions from the District and from the College to cover the cost of instruction.

Under the current funding model, the regular salary and benefits of tenured and tenure-track faculty are paid by the District directly. The District also allocates revenue to the campuses based on the established FTES targets. This allocation is intended to address salary and benefits of adjunct faculty, including overload that is paid to the tenured and tenure-track faculty members. During the past two years, both the District and the College have met established annual FTES targets. During this time, the proportion of unfunded FTES generated by Cypress College has been less than 1%. However, to produce the District-established target, Cypress College expended on average approximately \$1 million more per year than the District-budgeted allocation. The following table provides the deficits in extended day budget during the last two fiscal years. The situation is not much different in the other campuses of the District, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 6 Extended Day Budget - Ending Balances by Site

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Cypress College	-\$970,757.00	-\$1,120,218.00	-\$1,479,790.00
Fullerton College	-\$2,923,083.00	-\$3,638,653.00	-\$2,099,780.00
NOCE	-\$922,028.00	-\$513,639.00	-\$138,900.00

As illustrated above, in order to meet the FTES target, Cypress College is spending significantly more than the allocation as determined by the EDFM. The situation is similar at Fullerton College and North Orange Continuing Education. To address this on-going budget deficit, Cypress College has utilized locally-generated resources previously used to address one-time

funding needs of the campus. The result has been diminished capacity to provide instructional-support needs such as tutoring, computer replacement, supplies and equipment. The increasing encroachment due to the implementation of the EDFM is critical and will increasingly impact the quality of Cypress College programs.

In the current student demand environment, it is not possible for the College to meet its FTES target within the District-allocation of revenue for this purpose as explained below. There are three primary drivers of the EDFM: number of faculty members on reassigned time, average class size, and average pay-rate of adjunct faculty members. Of these three factors, only one is under the control of the campus, the number of faculty members receiving reassigned time. Class size is determined by the District Curriculum process. Adjunct pay is negotiated. Although reductions in reassigned time are possible, the duties addressed would shift to other staff members. Thus, the College may not achieve any savings by such an adjustment. The class size required for full funding by the model is 35. This is much higher than the average class size of the College which is impacted by required low class sizes in the Career/Technical Education programs. Additionally, the collectively bargained contract between the District and United Faculty precludes the campus from addressing class size locally. Finally, use of the average pay of adjunct faculty members influences the model heavily. A campus with a large number of adjuncts who are above the average pay is impacted negatively. While establishing the EDFM, the average longevity and actual pay distribution of adjunct faculty members were not factored. If FTES cannot be generated within the allocated amount, the College faces the choice of reducing sections to balance its budget, utilizing increasingly its one-time reserves, or a combination of both. All of these choices impact student access and success in the long term. If sections are reduced, access for students will decline. Any reductions in CTE or upper division classes will negatively impact completion, transfer and job attainment, in addition to limiting access.

If the campus continues to fund the deficits using local resources, the dollars available for funding one-time needs will diminish drastically. Cypress College has a robust process of identifying its one-time funding needs to improve its programs and services. Additionally, some of the services such as Distance Education, Computer Replacement, and the Learning Resource Center do not have any line-item allocation in the annual budget. These critical functions are paid for through the one-time funding process annually. If the funding for dollars used to fund these initiatives/activities is diverted to FTES production, these critical student support services for students will be compromised. The following table illustrates the extent of funding made available to critical functions of the campus to support the students during the last year.

Table 7 Cypress College Diminishing Carryover Balances

2013-14	8,504,587
2014-15	5,833,148
2015-16	2,334,909

Desired Goals: Budget Centers within NOCCCD should receive from the District sufficient resources to be able to meet their FTES targets within their allocations.

Measurable Outcomes: District and college constituency group representatives will re-evaluate the EDFM and modify it accordingly. The EDFM will be modified to ensure adequate resources are provided to meet extended day expenditures in the future. Budget Centers will not use local revenue to generate FTES.

Action Steps for Implementation

Action Step One: Modify Extended Day Funding Model to provide adequate resources to meet college FTES targets.

The District Fiscal Officers group will make a recommendation to the District Consultation Council (DCC) for approval and adoption of the necessary modifications to the EDFM so that campuses are adequately funded for their extended day budgets. Approved plan will be submitted to the Board of Trustees (BOT) for final approval

Timeline: Fall 2017-Fall 2018

Responsible parties: District Fiscal Officers group, DCC, Board of Trustees

Resources needed: TBD

Assessment plan to evaluate outcomes: evaluate the new EDFM to determine if campuses are adequately funded for their extended day budgets.

Alignment to standards: IVC5 & IVD3