

# STUDENT SUCCESS BEST PRACTICE: THOMAS NELSON COMMUNITY COLLEGE



ADDRESS: 99 THOMAS NELSON DRIVE  
HAMPTON, VA 23666

WEBSITE: WWW.TNCC.EDU

## STUDENT SUCCESS CATEGORY --

- ACADEMIC PROGRAM
- STUDENT SERVICES
- WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
- COLLEGE BUSINESS PRACTICE
- TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION
- OTHER:

TITLE: "ADVISING: PLAN NOW. SUCCEED NOW"

## PROCESS

Thomas Nelson's best practice evolved from the SACSCOC reaccreditation review and specifically from our choice of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The first step in the process that we followed to identify a strategic need at the college was a campus-wide survey that was conducted in October 2013. The survey asked participants to describe the College-wide initiative that they felt would have the greatest impact on student learning, or the environment supporting student learning, and explain how this initiative would lead to broad, positive impacts on student learning. One hundred five members of the college community participated in the survey, including faculty, staff, and administrators, and part-time as well as full-time employees. Concurrently the QEP Topic Selection Committee was appointed, consisting of two teaching faculty, two classified staff, and two mid-level managers (administrators). The committee was charged with identifying 3-5 potential topics along with rationale and supporting data. After conducting an in-depth review of the survey responses, the committee was able to identify six themes that emerged as important areas of concern for the college-wide community.

The next step in the process required facilitating broad-based, inclusive campus conversations to gather input and garner support. To this end the Topic Selection Committee presented an overview of the emerging themes to key constituencies in a series of meetings early in 2014. The constituent groups were the Faculty Senate, Faculty Forum, College Support Staff Association, Council of Mid-Level Managers, the Student Government Association officers and representatives of the Student Senate. Feedback was provided during the face-to-face meetings and through correspondence following those meetings. By mid-March 2014, the Topic Selection Committee had pared down the six emerging themes to four proposed topics with rationales (provided with the assistance of the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness) and documented each in a formal report that was presented to the college community. One of those four topics was Advising/The First Year Experience.

For the final selection of the topic, President Dever appointed a QEP Topic Work Group consisting of one faculty member and three administrators. This group reviewed the report of the Topic Selection Committee and all of the feedback received by that committee

and applied specific overarching criteria to make their decision. The topic chosen had to address a strategic need or opportunity related to student learning, result in measurable outcomes, be sustainable over a period of 5 years and beyond, be supported across the college, and be significant in long-term impact. In addition the college must be able to devote the required institutional resources to support the plan. One additional factor that informed their decision was consistent feedback on student satisfaction surveys suggesting the need to improve advising and counseling services.

### 2007 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)

- Satisfaction with both Academic Advising/Planning and Career Counseling were below national benchmarks for large community colleges
- Only 42% used Academic Advising/Planning services sometimes or often, despite 56% indicating that those services were very important to them
- Only 22% used Career Counseling services sometimes or often, despite 49% indicating that those services were very important to them

### 2014 Thomas Nelson Student Experience Survey

- 60% were satisfied/very satisfied with Academic Advising services
- 44% were satisfied/very satisfied with Career Planning and Job Placement services
- Academic Advising and Career Planning and Job Placement services were among the lowest rated services provided by the college

The data justified the need to focus on the topic of Academic Advising; thus it was selected for the QEP and development of the plan was turned over to the QEP Steering Committee.

## STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation stage has been centered around improving three areas: communication, collaboration and engagement, among all stakeholders. The implementation process began in the spring 2016 term with the decentralization of advising and creation of advising centers based on academic divisions. In conjunction with the academic deans, program heads and advising personnel, we focused on training, information sharing and improving communication regarding academic programs. The implementation process has included collaborative events, meetings and information sessions between advising, career services and faculty aimed at promoting student success. We have changed several processes and enhanced utilization of technologies to better communicate and provide services to students. Using various platforms, such as division meetings, All College Day and faculty orientations, we have engaged the campus community in our new advising process and encouraged involvement. Faculty members roles are evolving from advising to mentoring. Faculty are heavily involved in the implementation process through the establishment of faculty mentoring activities, which include but are not limited to club sponsorships, providing research opportunities, hosting program information sessions, and one-on-one mentoring.

## ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

Assessment of Advising: Plan Now. Succeed Now. will focus on students who enter Thomas Nelson Community College new to higher education. The College enrolls approximately 1,300 of those students each fall semester. Assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness of the plan will primarily be based on learning outcomes assessment and review of key student success metrics. The learning outcomes for the plan are summarized below, and describe the knowledge, skills, and abilities that graduates of Thomas Nelson will possess upon completion of their studies and after engagement in the advising program:

- (1) Articulate academic and career goals and objectives based on assessment of interests, values, skills, and abilities
- (2) Apply previously understood information, concepts, and experiences to new situations and/or previous assumptions
- (3) Make purposeful decisions regarding balance among education, work, and personal life

These learning outcomes will be assessed in a formative manner in the College's student development course (SDV 100), and in a more summative manner through a Student Advising Planner that each student will maintain and update during their time at the College and through an Exploration Inventory that will be administered during the final advising session with each student. In combination, these assessments will provide the College with information on the extent to which the intended student learning outcomes are being developed, reinforced, and mastered by its students as they engage in the new advising model.

In addition to these key learning outcomes for students, the College also expects to see demonstrable improvements in student success as a result of plan implementation. Student retention and completion metrics will serve as indicators of the extent to which the plan is successful in this regard. Benchmarks and targets for performance on those metrics have been set, and actual student success data will be compared to those levels as the plan is implemented. The student learning outcomes, as well as these other indicators of the success of the plan, will be assessed regularly and used to inform improvements.

## PLAN FOR SCALE & SUSTAINABILITY

The Advising Centers saw over 8000 students in the enrollment period leading up to the start of fall classes 2016. Four previously vacant P-14 positions have been filled and each advising center will receive an additional part time Advisor. Additionally, one full time advisor will be hired for each of the next four years beginning this year.

While the QEP primarily addresses entry, progression and completion, the College has also built a strong connection strategy to complete the model of the loss-momentum framework which includes the following:

1. Admissions Advisor- a new full time position to provide admission and outreach services to prospective students.
2. New Student Success Center- a one-stop location for all admission and enrollment related questions/concerns.
3. Transfer and Career Coordinator- a repurposed position to work with students at intake to identify either a transfer pathway or a straight to the workplace pathway.
4. Testing Coach- a new full time position to prepare students mentally and academically for the VPT.
5. Radius- Client Relations Management software to manage the 1300+ applications the college receives each month, with the goal of turning more of them into enrollments. Radius has other functionality as well, for retention and targeted outreach.

By building the connection piece of the framework, and adding additional staff support, the QEP is both stronger and sustainable.

## COLLEGE DESCRIPTION

Thomas Nelson Community College, one of 23 colleges within the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), is a comprehensive, public, two-year community college. The College enrolled its first 1,232 students in Fall 1968 at its Hampton Campus. In 2003, the College officially established the Historic Triangle Campus to serve students in the Greater Williamsburg area.

Thomas Nelson's current mission statement is as follows: Thomas Nelson Community College changes lives, empowers students to succeed, and enhances the civic and economic vitality of the Peninsula community through high quality education and workforce training, excellent services, and innovative partnerships. The College serves the Virginia Peninsula, encompassing the cities of Hampton, Newport News, Poquoson, and Williamsburg, and the counties of James City and York, in southeast Virginia. Thomas Nelson is an open enrollment institution; students are eligible for admission to Thomas Nelson if they are high school graduates or the equivalent, or if they are 18 years of age or older and able to benefit academically from study at the College, as demonstrated by assessment in reading, writing, and mathematics.

In Academic Year 2015-2016, Thomas Nelson served 13,966 students (unduplicated headcount) in credit instruction, making it the fifth largest college within the Virginia Community College System in terms of headcount. In Fiscal Year 2015, the College served 7,647 students (unduplicated headcount) in non-credit instruction. The College serves a highly diverse region, and its student body closely reflects the demographics of the greater community. Of the College's 13,966 credit students, 58.8% are female and 57.0% are under the age of 25. By race/ethnicity, 48.4% of students are White, 34.1% are Black or African American, 6.6% are Hispanic, and the remaining 10.9% identify as another race or as two or more races, or did not specify their race/ethnicity.

Traditionally underserved populations, as defined by student race/ethnicity, first-generation status, and Pell Grant receipt, comprise 67.9% of the College's unduplicated credit headcount. Additionally, the College's students have a variety of educational goals. Of its 13,966 credit students in 2015-2016, 47.6% were enrolled in transfer degree programs; 32.4% were enrolled in applied degree programs, certificate programs, or career studies certificate programs; and 20.0% were non-curricular. Thomas Nelson serves a region that is home to many military service members and their families. In Academic Year 2015-2016, 28.3% of Thomas Nelson credit students indicated a military affiliation (e.g., active-duty, veteran, military spouse, or military dependent).

The College is committed to best serving its students and community, and is engaged in a five-year strategic plan, titled Focus 2020, that is designed to advance the institution in the areas of excellence, partnership, and student success.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Kris Rarig

Interim Vice President for Student Affairs

rarigk@tncc.edu,

757.825.3886