



THE FIFTH-YEAR INTERIM REPORT

Name of Institution:

Dalton State College

Address of the Institution:

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Part I: Signatures Attesting to Integrity
(Applicable to all institutions)

Directions: Please include Part I with Parts II, III, and V on the same electronic device or with the same print document. It should not be combined with Part IV.

By signing below, we attest that **Dalton State College** has conducted an honest assessment of compliance and has provided complete and accurate disclosure of timely information regarding compliance with the identified Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards, and Federal Requirements of the Commission on Colleges.

Date of Submission: **September 14, 2018**

Accreditation Liaison

Name of Accreditation Liaison

Henry M. Codjoe, Ph.D.
Director, Institutional Research and Planning



Signature

Chief Executive Officer

Name of Chief Executive Officer

Margaret Venable, Ph.D.



Signature

Part V: The Impact Report of the Quality Enhancement Plan

Directions: Please include Part V with Parts I, II, and III on the same electronic device or with the same print document. It should not be combined with Part IV. Entitle it “QEP Impact Report.”

Definition: The QEP Impact Report, submitted five years prior to the institution’s next decennial review, is a report demonstrating the extent to which the QEP has affected outcomes related to student learning. It is part of the institution’s Fifth-Year Interim Report.

Audience: The QEP Impact Report is reviewed by the Committee on Fifth-Year Interim Reports.

Elements: With each copy of the QEP Impact Report, include a copy of the Executive Summary of your institution’s QEP submitted to the Commission following your institution’s recent reaffirmation.

The Report itself should address the following elements:

1. a succinct list of the initial goals and intended outcomes of the Quality Enhancement Plan;
2. a discussion of changes made to the QEP and the reasons for making those changes;
3. a description of the QEP’s impact on student learning and/or the environment supporting student learning, as appropriate to the design of the QEP. This description should include the achievement of identified goals and outcomes, and any unanticipated outcomes of the QEP; and
4. a reflection on what the institution has learned as a result of the QEP experience.

The report should not exceed ten pages, excluding the Executive Summary but including the narrative, all appendices, and/or any other supporting documentation (whether in printed or electronic format).

Introduction

In Fall 2012, SACSCOC approved Dalton State College's first Quality Enhancement Plan, *Improving the Academic Performance of High-risk Students through Learning Support English: Getting on the "Write" Path*. The overall goal of the Plan, as presented in the original document, is "to improve underprepared students' writing abilities and also use the critical thinking and active engagement inherent in the writing task to help students develop skills that will increase their likelihood of success in all their learning tasks, including writing."

In our five years, we maintained the interventions laid out in the original plan with some changes to software, textbooks, and exit policies. Because of changes at the system level, the student population also expanded to include students less prepared for college-level work, but student success continued at levels unprecedented in Dalton State's pre-QEP developmental program. That continued success contributes to the ongoing institutionalization of the QEP initiatives.

Goals and Outcomes of the Quality Enhancement Plan

The goals of *Improving the Academic Performance of High-risk Students through Learning Support English: Getting on the "Write" Path* are centered in Dalton State's commitment to college opportunities and access for all. We believe a college education is critically important, not just to promote economic development and individual advancement, but also to help individuals interact with society in a thoughtful, considered fashion. Therefore, the goals of the QEP reflect the problem-solving and decision-making abilities our graduates will need as well as the writing ability that will serve them well, whatever their walks of life.

I believe the writing portion of the Compass test would be more accurate if the student actually had to WRITE, instead of correct someone else's writing.

-Student, Year 1

The two goals of the QEP are as follows:

1. Students will exit English 0098 ready for college-level writing.
2. Students will become stronger self-directed learners.

In order to achieve these goals, we set four student learning outcomes:

1. Students will be able to identify and to write complete, grammatically correct, appropriately punctuated sentences.
2. Students will be able to write paragraphs with at least one appropriate, concrete example.
3. Students will be able to write essays with clear theses, introductory paragraphs, body paragraphs, and conclusions.
4. Students will exhibit the characteristics of self-directed learners.

Changes Made to the QEP

Year 1

In Year 1, we discovered that while additional staffing in the Writing Lab was very helpful in serving all of our students, we had very low usage at night, with only 0.41% of students visiting after 7 pm. So, we began closing the Lab at 7:00 pm and moved those tutor hours to the much busier afternoon.

Year 2

In Year 2, at the direction of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia (USG), of which Dalton State College is a part, we discontinued use of the COMPASS exam as an exit requirement for all Learning Support courses. Dalton State had been using scores on the

COMPASS as one measure of student success on SLO 1, "Students will be able to identify and to write complete, grammatically correct, appropriately punctuated sentences." However, the first measure of that outcome, our blind-graded exit essay, addresses the real goals of the course far better. The COMPASS exam is primarily an editing test, and our course is designed to prepare students to write for themselves on the college level, not to edit the work of other writers. Therefore, we have removed this measure and will continue to use the more effective measure of our exit essay coupled with a diagnostic essay graded with the same rubric at the beginning of the term.

Also during Year 2, we implemented an early exit option for students who are doing so well in the course that it seems they needed only a quick review. Students who had achieved scores of 75% or higher in their essay averages were given the chance to write the exit essay during the eighth week of the course. If they passed based on the exit essay rubric and the same grading structure as on the exit essay—that is, blind graded by three members of the faculty "Action TEAM," who taught all of the QEP classes—then they were allowed to move on to other courses. This was a particular advantage to students in terms of time and progression because we scheduled the early exit essay and grading to allow them to register for a class in our half-session ("C" session) courses in the place of English 0098 for the second half of the semester. The early exit also allowed faculty to focus on the remaining students; as a result, success rates in the course rose from 79% in Fall 2012 to 85% in Fall 2013, and the Fall 2013 cohort succeeded in English 1101 at a higher rate than the Fall 2012 cohort, as well. Because of these successes, we made the early exit essay a permanent feature of the course.



One thing I like about the textbook is that it seems very helpful. I personally feel like textbooks help me more. I know it's online, but if you teach a point in the textbook online, you can quickly take notes from it.

-Student, Year 3

Year 3

Year 3 did not involve changes as substantive as the changes from Year 2. However, we did change the software solution that we use for automated writing evaluation by an artificial intelligence engine, moving from a bookstore purchase model that not all of our students actually purchased to a free online automated writing evaluation service. During Year 3, this software was purchased by Turnitin.com, but we were allowed to continue using it as a pilot project in Years 3 and 4; in Year 5, the College purchased a site license from Turnitin.com to keep the software free for students.

Year 4

In Year 4, there were changes in the student body as the College changed its admission criteria, for the first time accepting students in need of remediation in all three areas, reading, writing, and mathematics. However, changes to the QEP were quite limited. With support from a grant from the University System of Georgia, two team members wrote an open-access textbook for the course to further reduce student costs, and two sections of English 0098 successfully piloted the use of that textbook in Fall 2015. All sections used the open textbook in Spring 2016, and the QEP Action TEAM members have made plans to use the open access textbook in upcoming semesters.

A notable effect of the change in college-wide admissions standards was that the number of students enrolled in QEP classes increased significantly. The additional numbers required more sections of the course, but the enrollment in each was capped at 18 as our plan required. In Fall 2015, the total number of sections offered was 10, reflecting an increase from the 4 sections offered in Fall 2014.

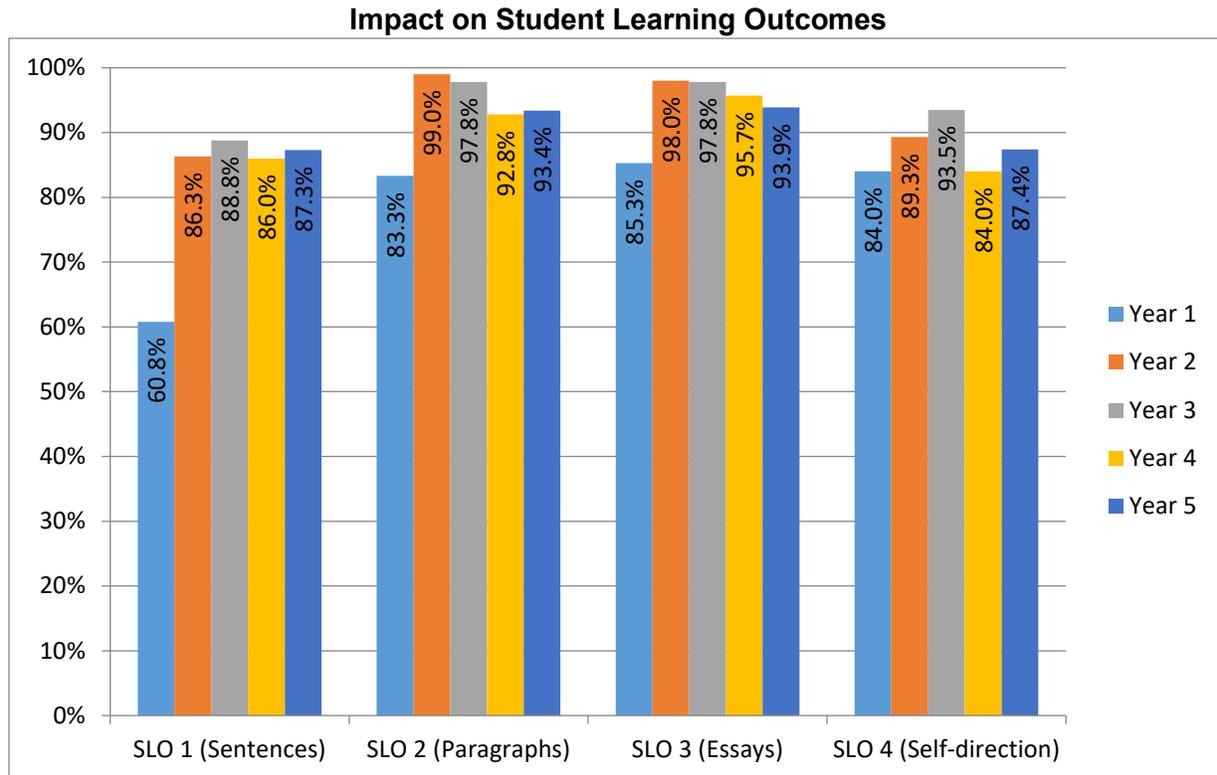
Year 5

In Year 5, changes in the student body and minor changes to the program from Year 4 were continued, but no new program-level changes were made. All sections of English 0098 used the open-access textbook written by two faculty team members for the course during Year 5, which guaranteed all students first-day access to course materials.

Because the change in college-wide admissions standards meant more students were admitted, the number of students enrolled in QEP classes continued at the higher level seen in Year 4. The additional numbers required more sections of the course, each was capped at 18. In Fall 2016, the total number of sections offered was 10.

Impact of the QEP on Student Learning

The overall impact of the QEP changes on student learning during the five years was positive and pronounced. In every outcome, students succeeded at levels greater than the goals we set in the Plan, and after Year 1, this held true for every student learning outcome. Furthermore, students who completed the program went on to success in the college-level writing courses at rates greater than the overall success rate in those courses.



The vertical axis above indicates percentage of students successful on each measure. Outcomes 1 through 3 are measured by an end-of-term essay, which is graded by all members of the QEP Action TEAM. These English faculty members holistically assess the exit essays in a blind grading session (i.e., no faculty member knows the authors of the papers he or she is assessing). A common end-of-term essay rubric (below) serves as a measure for a diagnostic pre-test as well as for the exit essay itself, the post-test. The benchmarks and criteria on the rubric are judged on a pass/fail basis.

EXIT ESSAY RUBRIC		
REQUIRED BENCHMARKS		
Two or fewer Type I errors		
Essay is sufficiently long (departmental minimum is 300 words).		
Essay addresses prompt.		
CRITERIA		
	Pass	Fail
Essay has a clear thesis and develops and supports it.		
Essay has an introduction and conclusion and is organized into clear paragraphs.		
Essay uses sufficient concrete examples to support the ideas.		
Type II and Type III errors do not interfere with the writer's meaning.		
Essay contains language that is clear and idiomatically used.		

Outcome 1:

For Outcome 1, student success was measured by an absolute-bar benchmark and a criterion on the end-of-term essay rubric. Benchmark 1 states, “Two or fewer Type 1 errors” (Type 1 errors are sentence-formation mistakes: comma splices, run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and errors in subject-verb agreement). Criterion 4, as revised in Year 2, states that the “Type 2 and Type 3 errors do not interfere with the writer’s meaning.”

Year	Success rate	Discussion
1	60.8%	The baseline success rate from Fall 2012 (fall semester of Year 1) was 55%. Because that rate was low, we began adjustments immediately. Students succeeded in far greater numbers (78%) on Benchmark 1 than they did on Criterion 4 (55%). Benchmark 1 is a measure of students' ability to construct true sentences, as opposed to fragments, comma splices, or run-on sentences, and to have those sentences be free of the basic sentence-construction error of faulty subject-verb agreement. Criterion 4, while significant, measures students on a broad spectrum of less-serious errors in grammar and construction. The criterion language of "few" errors seemed imprecise, especially for a group-graded post-test. In addition, some faculty members were assessing differently at the end of the semester than they had on the pretest. Through discussion in meetings of the Action TEAM, a more consistent faculty response was achieved in Spring 2013, with an overall success rate of 64%.
2	86.3%	Over the summer between Years 1 and 2, the Action TEAM met to discuss Criterion 4 further. TEAM members still felt that “few” was a vague term. Also, since much of the thrust of English 1101 is dealing with just these sorts of errors, the criterion held students enrolled in English 0098 to a higher standard than those admitted to English 1101 without a remediation requirement. The TEAM revised the rubric to read that “Type 2 and Type 3 errors do not interfere with the writer’s meaning” in Criterion 4.
3	88.8%	In Fall 2014, the overall student success rate on this measure was 88.5%, with that 88.5% representing the success rate on both Criterion 4 and Benchmark 1. The Spring 2015 success rate was 89.3% on this measure, with students succeeding at that level on both Benchmark 1 and Criterion 4
4	86.0%	In Fall 2015, the overall student success rate on this measure was 89.1%, with that 89.1% representing the success rate on both Criterion 4 and Benchmark 1. The Spring 2016 success rate was 78.3% on this measure, with students succeeding at that level on Criterion 4. On Benchmark 1, the student success rate was 85.0%.
5	87.3%	In Fall 2016, the overall student success rate on this measure was 88.9%, which represents the success rate on Benchmark 1, slightly lower than the 90.7% success rate on Criterion 4. Spring 2017 saw an overall success rate of 82.4% on this measure, with students succeeding at that level on Benchmark 1. On Criterion 4, the student success rate was 84.3%.

Outcome 2:

The end-of-term essay criterion for Outcome 2 is that an "Essay uses sufficient concrete examples to support the ideas." The baseline success rate from Fall 2012 was 82%.

Year	Success rate	Discussion
1	83.3%	Only 82% of students succeeded on this measure in the fall, and so the Action TEAM met and agreed that, for a test of pure writing ability, there was no reason that students could not make up examples if they knew of none to draw on from their own lives. The faculty agreed to tell students that made-up examples are allowed in this context, though they will be inappropriate on some essay tests in other classes.
2	99.0%	Because of the dramatic increase in student success, faculty have agreed to continue to remind students that our test is solely designed to measure writing ability, and thus, for our purposes, it is acceptable to make up examples.
3	97.8%	Students in Fall 2014 succeeded at a rate of 98.4%, and success in Spring 2015 was 96.4%. The students' automated writing evaluation service, RevisionAssistant, also emphasizes examples and support as one of the four domains it measures, so the idea of examples and their importance is reinforced from several quarters.
4	92.8%	Students in Fall 2015 succeeded at a rate of 92.5%, and success in Spring 2015 was 93.3%.
5	93.4%	Students in Fall 2016 succeeded at a rate of 95.1% , and success in Spring 2017 was 88.2%. The Action TEAM has continued to teach supporting examples explicitly, to encourage students to add such examples in their early drafts, and to point out explicitly that, in a test of writing ability, unlike a written test in a content area, made-up examples are acceptable.

Outcome 3:

This outcome deals with students' ability to organize an essay. This outcome is measured by two items on the essay exit rubric. Criterion 1 reads, "Essay has a clear thesis and develops and supports it." Criterion 2 reads, "Essay has an introduction and conclusion and is organized into clear paragraphs."

Year	Success rate	Discussion
1	85.3%	The Action TEAM began sharing resources for teaching essay structure to help the 15% of students who did not meet this measure in early spring 2013. The student success rate on this measure in Spring 2013 was 90.9%, an improvement over the previous term. Different students respond to concepts explained in different ways, so the practice of making teaching materials from other instructors available to students who have trouble may have helped those students.
2	98.0%	The student success rate on this measure in Fall 2013 was 99.0%, and in Spring 2014 the rate was 96.4%.
3	97.8%	The student success rate on this measure in Fall 2014 was 98.3%, and in Spring 2015 the rate was 96.4%.
4	95.7%	The student success rate on this measure in Fall 2015 was 97.3%, and in Spring 2015 the rate was 91.7%.
5	93.9%	The student success rate on this measure in Fall 2016 was 95.0%, and in Spring 2017 the rate was 90.2%.

Outcome 4:

For Outcome 4 as a whole, the baseline success rate from Fall 2012 was 84%. The criterion for this outcome, "Students will exhibit the characteristics of self-directed learners," is measured in several ways, employing student usage data from the following self-direction development strategies:

- Students will use an automated writing evaluation service to work with drafts of their own writing.
- Students will use the Writing Lab for targeted help.
- Students will enroll in and meet Outcome 4 of the First-year Experience Seminar.
- Students will adopt four or more of the following learning strategies:
 - Attend class regularly
 - Complete all major assignments
 - Participate in classwork and/or discussions
 - Complete journal, blog, or wiki entries
 - Use Writers Resource, My Writing Lab, or other software in the Writing Lab
 - Present to the class on a grammatical or composition topic
 - Complete self-evaluations and Writing Lab plans based on those evaluations and assess the effectiveness of the Writing Lab plans

What helped me in this course is the writing lab, going over the material I need to focus on most...
-Student, Year 5

Year	Success rate	Discussion
1	84.0%	The limiting factor in this outcome was Writing Lab visits; the Action TEAM decided to begin sharing the data on the correlation between Lab visits and student success. As self-directed learners, students should have access to data supporting course requirements.
2	89.3%	The student success rate on this measure in Fall 2013 was 96.0, and in Spring 2014 the rate was 69.6%. Although results improved, an issue with use of automated writing evaluation occurred particularly in the spring semester. Because the software was available as an add-on to a textbook, students were required to purchase a new textbook in order to also purchase the bundled access card. In the spring, students expect to find used textbooks available, and students repeating the course from the previous semester expect to be able to reuse the textbook they have already purchased. Therefore, a number of students did not purchase the new textbook.
3	93.5%	The student success rate on this measure in Fall 2014 was 100%, and in Spring 2015 the rate was 95.7%. Faculty members' emphasis on strategies that result in student success and on the actual data from students who have succeeded in the QEP program in terms past seems to convince most students that they, too, can be successful and that the success strategies we recommend are worth doing. A change to a free automated writing evaluation software package also eased some financial constraints on students.
4	84.0%	The student success rate on this measure in Fall 2015 was 96.9%, and in Spring 2016 the rate was 88.2%.
5	87.4%	The student success rate in Fall 2016 was 84.4%, and in Spring 2017 the rate was 86.0%.

Unanticipated outcomes

The Open Educational Resource (OER) movement in higher education gained widespread popularity and momentum during the term of this QEP. The transformative impact of having an open-access textbook was easy to see: Students did not need to buy the textbook, so they had no excuses for not using it. They were able to see the book both in class, since all sections are taught in computer labs, and outside of class, and they took advantage of having easy access to the book. Students liked being able to have practice exercises that were easily accessible, along with explanations that were crafted specifically for them.

An event that we believe increased student buy-in for using an open online textbook was a student contest we held to name the textbook, which the team had forgotten to do prior to full implementation. Students suggested names through an online poll and then voted for their favorites; the faculty team and the dean of the School of Liberal Arts donated gift cards as prizes for ten runners-up and the final winner. Students chose *The Roadrunner's Guide to English* in honor of Dalton State's Roadrunner mascot.

Reflection on What the Institution Has Learned as a Result of the QEP Experience

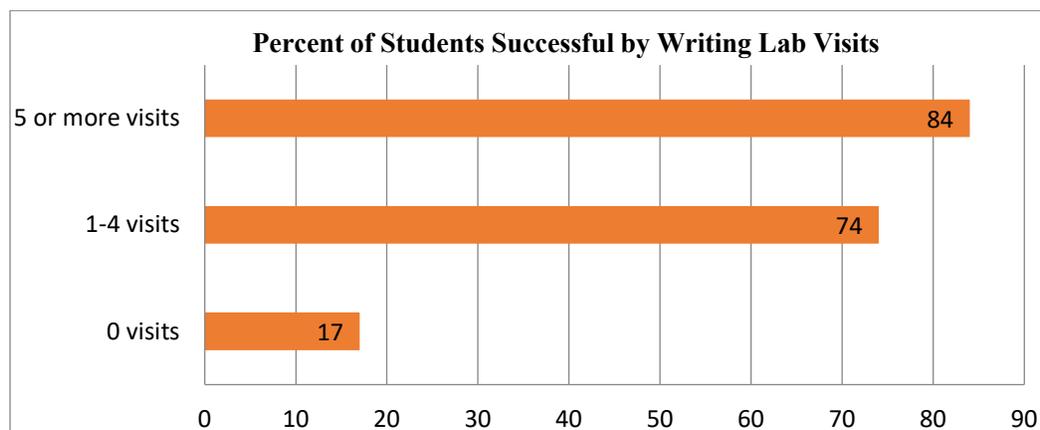
As a result of the QEP and its interventions to help students achieve success, we have learned that the strategies we have implemented as a part of our QEP allow us to help a wider range of students than we had realized.

While the benefit of smaller classes is not news to anyone who teaches, particularly in a labor-intensive field like writing, class size matters. Students do better in smaller classes with more individual attention, and this is particularly true when in-depth feedback must be given on every piece of writing. The QEP dropped the LS English class sizes from 28 to 20 in the first two years and further dropped them to 18 for the final three years. Not only were students more successful in the smaller classes, but also they noticed and commented on the difference.

In addition, student success is correlated with use of the Writing Lab. Students who visit the lab more frequently are more likely to pass the course, and this correlation holds even when students are required to visit the Writing Lab. Records prior to this QEP suggested that students who visit the Writing Lab several times are more likely to succeed, but at that time, visiting the Writing Lab was voluntary, so it was difficult to determine whether lab use itself or the students' dedication to study that prompted them to visit the Lab was the deciding factor in their success. Having a resource like the Writing Lab staffed by faculty tutors has contributed to our students' success in building a firm foundation for college-level English.

My learning needs were met greatly because of the help of my English teacher. If I ever had a question, there was always help and my class was so small that that we all had a chance to learn and receive the information needed.

-Student, Year 4



Finally, having an early exit option encourages all students to try harder early in the course. The early exit also allows for faster progression toward a degree; students who early exit can take a C-session class that meets for the second half of the semester. Students who do not manage to exit early can be discouraged, but generally reminders that they will get increased individual attention and that it does not matter when during the term they “make it” help to reduce that discouragement. Those who remain in the course really seem to band together, and those who do exit early continue to encourage their friends in the First-year Experience course. Also, faculty are left with much smaller classes after the early exit, and the Action TEAM members have taken advantage of this to individualize the course with the support of the Writing Lab, having each student work on only his or her own needs during the final weeks. This tailoring of the course to individual needs enables more students to remediate points of weakness and to exit the course more prepared for college-level writing.



The book made my job as instructor much easier. Since it was designed specifically for our students, there were no chapters that were extraneous and no shortage of the exercises my students needed to improve their writing performance...the results showed in the number of students who passed my class [9 of 11]. I have to believe that having the textbook boosted their performance. Usually, spring term is a time when many students do not pass because they are repeating the course, or they are just weaker students. Having so many pass was just amazing!

-Faculty TEAM member, Year 4

