



Open Pathway Quality Initiative Report

Institutional Template

The enclosed Quality Initiative report represents the work that the institution has undertaken to fulfill the Improvement Process of the Open Pathway.

Signature of Institution's President or Chancellor

Rita Cheng Date

6/1/16

Rita Hartung Cheng, President

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Northern Arizona University

Name of Institution

Flagstaff, AZ

City and State

The institution uses the template below to complete its Quality Initiative Report. The institution may include a report it has prepared for other purposes if it addresses many of the questions below and replaces portions of the narrative in the template. This template may be used for both reports on initiatives that have been completed and for initiatives that will continue and for which this report serves as a milestone of accomplishments thus far. The complete report should be no more than 6,000 words. Quality Initiative Reports are to be submitted between September 1 of Year 7 and August 31 of Year 9 of the Open Pathway cycle. Submit the report as a PDF file to pathways@hlcommission.org with a file name that follows this format: QI Report No Name University MN. The file name must include the institution's name (or an identifiable portion thereof) and state.

Date: May 26, 2016

Name of Institution: Northern Arizona University

State: AZ

Contact Person for Report: Dr. K. Laurie Dickson

Contact Person's Email Address: Laurie.Dickson@nau.edu



Overview of the Quality Initiative

1. Provide a one-page executive summary that describes the Quality Initiative, summarizes what was accomplished, and explains any changes made to the initiative over the time period.

Northern Arizona University has invested in targeted student success programs to bolster first year student success. The purpose of our Quality Initiative project was to develop a methodology for the systematic assessment of these programs. By analyzing the impact of two (of eight) student success programs on the academic success of our first year students, we identified efficient and effective approaches to program design and assessment and identified key factors that impact student success. The developed methodology was then used to assess other student success programs, and the formative and summative assessment findings were used to inform the continual improvement efforts of all of our programs. The desired long-term impacts were to (1) improve retention rates and (2) strengthen the culture of continual improvement across all student success programs.

The two programs selected for the project were *Peer Jacks Mentoring*, an Enrollment Management Student Affairs-managed program, and *Student Success Coaching*, an Academic Affairs-managed program. Using data from three student cohorts (one more cohort than proposed), we answered the following three research questions:

(1) Which factors contribute to retention to the second year?

First-term GPA (grade point average) was the best single predictor of retention to the second year and core HS GPA was the best single predictor of first-term GPA.

(2) Which academic preparation, demographic, and college experience factors contribute to first-semester GPA?

Other academic preparation, demographic, and college experience factors (such as participation in certain first-year success initiatives) impacted students' retention directly and/or indirectly by impacting students' academic performance (measured as first-term GPA).

(3) Does the student success program have a positive effect on participants' academic performance or retention after controlling for relevant non-programmatic factors?

When controlling for demographic and academic readiness variables, program participants had a higher average first-semester GPA, a lower academic probation rate, as well as, a higher retention rate compared to matched non-participants.

Engaging in the Quality Initiative project led to the development of a collaborative, sustainable and scalable process to assess our student success programs and to guide our continual improvement efforts. Annual reports summarizing assessment results of our student success programs provided uniform, comparable evidence to support administrative leaders' decision-making processes. We are continuing our trajectory of incremental improvements in retention, from a low of 63% in the 1996 cohort to the recent high of 76% in the 2014 cohort of first-time, full-time Flagstaff mountain campus students.

Scope and Impact of the Initiative

2. Explain in more detail what was accomplished in the Quality Initiative in relation to its purposes and goals. (If applicable, explain the initiative's hypotheses and findings.)

The purpose of NAU's Quality Initiative was to develop a statistical methodology to determine whether and to what degree our programs were improving retention and to use the findings to foster continual improvement efforts across all student success programs. To do so, we set the following goals for our project:

- Goal 1: Conduct an in-depth examination of two programs to understand their purpose, program design, populations served, and formative assessment accomplishments.
- Goal 2: To develop a statistical model for retention that can assist us in determining the extent each student success program effects student retention
- Goal 3: To document the most promising assessment processes, findings, and modeling techniques in order to develop a plan for formative and summative assessment that can be utilized by all of our student success programs

Goal 1. In-depth Examination

We systematically analyzed the impact of the *Peer Jacks Mentoring* and the *Student Success Coaching* programs on student success. Program descriptions, learning outcomes, populations served, and formative assessment findings are provided below. Program leaders were eager to engage in this continuous improvement endeavor as they already had a strong framework for enhancing their programs based on formative and summative assessment findings.

Peer Jacks Mentoring Program Description

Peer Jacks was a support program, housed in Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, designed to assist first-year, out-of-state students in their transition to university life. Eligible students had the opportunity to participate in meaningful one-on-one peer mentoring and attend social events tailored to the social and academic profiles of out-of-state students in order to connect with other students with similar interests. The program helped students develop social networks, become familiar with campus resources and tools for monitoring academic success and progress, learn more about themselves, and deepen their commitment to obtaining their degree at NAU. Peer Jacks accomplished this through the following learning and developmental outcomes:

- Sense of connectedness/community
- Successful transition to campus environment
- Knowledge of campus resources and processes
- Use of campus resources/Referral follow-up
- Purposeful academic monitoring/Self-guided learning
- Values exploration and development

Population Served

Peer Jacks focused on new, domestic, out-of-state first year students. Occasionally, an international student participated in Peer Jacks.

Table 1. Peer Jacks Mentoring Participation Rates

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-2015
Total First-Time, Full-Time (FTFT) entering students	4,059	4,325	4,340
Total FTFT Out of State entering students	1,428	1,738	1,505
Participants in Peer Jacks	553	631	593
Of all FTFT	14%	14%	14%
Of all Out of State FTFT	37%	36%	39%

Formative Assessment Accomplishments

During the last three years, the program focused on using assessment findings to refine and improve peer mentor preparation, which would ultimately improve their participants' experience. Major accomplishments, discussed below, included the development of Communication and Resource Matrices, a refined Graduate Assistant (GA) mentor supervision curriculum, and an investigation of program engagement for students of color.

- The Matrices were tools designed to assist peer mentors in communicating effectively with mentees. The Communication Matrix provided more in-depth and systematic feedback to mentors about specific behaviors they use (or do not use) to communicate effectively with mentees. The Resource Matrix was a tool that used the mentor vernacular to organize and describe students' needs and linked these needs to resources.
- The re-design of the GA mentor supervision curriculum focused on enhancing mentor-mentee interactions concerning how to provide timely information, how to engage in purposeful questioning, and how to decipher mentors' comfort level with topics, such as financial concerns or relationship issues.
- The investigation of program engagement for students of color revealed that students of color were slightly over-represented in Peer Jacks, and that they rated some aspects of the program higher compared to other students. However, we also found that students of color were less likely to complete the program evaluation. These assessment findings prompted us to reflect on the differing experiences and behaviors of white students and students of color, and to adjust our program to better serve all of our students.

Significant program improvements resulted from engaging in these formative assessment efforts.

Student Success Coaching Program (SSC) Description

The mission of the Student Success Coaching (SSC) program was to establish a foundation for success in college and life. The program was designed to empower each student through a voluntary coaching relationship with an NAU employee or retiree trained in life-coaching tools and resources. The program equipped students to manage their transition to college, access the support they need when they need it, and explore academic and career opportunities. Student Success Coaching accomplished this through the following learning and developmental outcomes, including students':

- Use of key academic and campus resources
- Application of time management strategies
- Development of communication strategies
- Successful adjustment to the campus environment
- Responsibility for identifying and achieving personal goals
- Involvement in clubs and organizations

Initially housed in University College, SSC has been moved into Enrollment Management and Student Affairs for the 2016-17 academic year, due to institutional restructuring.

Population Served

SSC targeted first-year students who were not served by other student success programs.

Table 2. Student Success Coaching Participation Rates

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-2015
Total First-Time, Full-Time entering students	4,059	4,325	4,340
Participants in Student Success Coaching	2.5% (n = 100)	2.8% (n = 123)	2.4% (n=102)

Formative Assessment Accomplishments

During the last three years, SSC focused their efforts on improving the interactions between the coaches and the students. To do so, SSC revisited their program outcomes outlined above and anchored formative assessments to the following revised outcomes. Based on a whole person approach, students were offered the opportunity to:

- Explore their sense of direction and belonging
- Build engaging and reflective relationships
- Identify strengths and celebrate successes
- Discover solutions that work
- Practice new skills
- Clarify their purpose and goals

The regular use of two principal formative assessments – The Weekly Coaches report and Student Intake Forms – served as the basis for SSC to make impactful and incremental changes in real-time. Use of the Weekly Coaches Report helped to monitor student/coach relationships, address concerns, and held coaches accountable. The Student Intake Form asked students to assess themselves in three categories before they met with their coach for the first time: 1) Connections to the campus community 2) Personal and Academic Tools and Strategies, and 3) Exploration of personal and academic opportunities. The form was used as a pre- and post-assessment to measure program impact and provide coaches with baseline data that helped guide coaching sessions (Figure 1). Taken together, the revised program outcomes and formative assessments anchored program activities and resulted in significant student success.

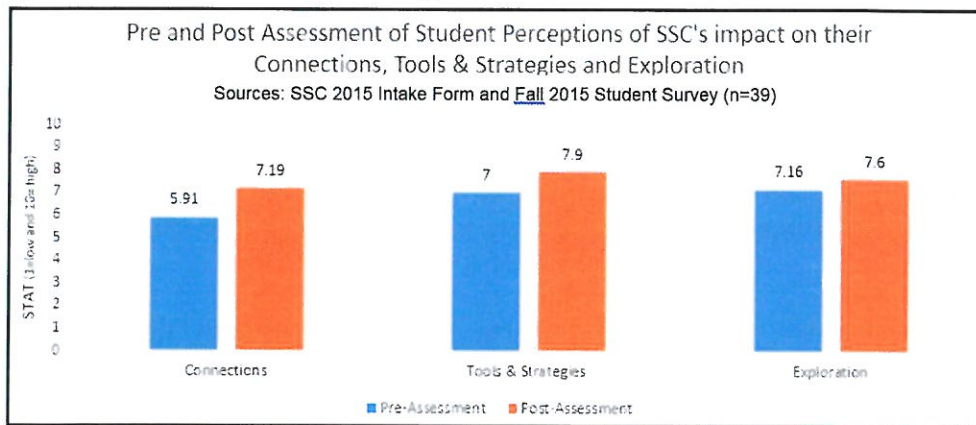


Figure 1. Pre- and Post-Assessment of Student Perceptions of SSC's Impact on Their Connections, Tools, & Strategies and Exploration

Goal 2. Develop Statistical Model

The Office of Curriculum, Learning Design, and Academic Assessment (OCLDAA) and Enrollment Management and Student Affairs Analytics & Assessment Office (EMSA-AAO) collaboratively

developed a statistical approach to assess the impact of each student success program on student performance. This summative assessment evaluated the individual impact of each program on performance, as measured by retention from first to second year, average first-semester GPA, and rates of academic probation at the end of the first semester.

Research Questions

- (1) Which academic preparation, demographic, and college experience factors contribute to first-semester GPA?
- (2) Which factors contribute to retention to the second year?

Factors Contributing to Academic Performance and Retention of First-Year Students to the Second Year

The goal of this first set of analyses was to define a reproducible statistical model that could identify predictors of first- to second-year retention on the Flagstaff Mountain campus. Within the limits of our ability to control and measure academic preparation, demographic, and college experience variables such as credits attempted, AZ residency, first generation status, and participation in first year experiences, this analysis estimates the impact of these factors on institutional retention.

Methods

Three regression analyses were conducted to identify factors that contribute to first-semester GPA and student retention. First, multiple linear regression was used to identify factors contributing to first-semester GPA. Then, we conducted two logistic regression analyses to identify factors contributing to retention (the first retention model excluded first-semester GPA as a predictor of retention, and the second included first-semester GPA as predictor of retention). In combination, the three analyses helped to clarify the impact of incoming characteristics, early college experiences, and college performance on retention.

Results

We identified that while Core HS GPA is the best single predictor of first-semester GPA, many variables, including several that measure first-semester experiences, have a direct effect on first-semester GPA. Many of these variables impact first-semester GPA, rather than having a direct effect on retention. When first-semester GPA is not included in the model, Core HS GPA is the best predictor of retention. Other variables such as first generation status, number of attempted credits, and participation in residential learning communities and supplemental instruction also have a direct effect on retention when first-semester GPA is not included in the model. Consistent with retention theory and research¹, this analysis provides evidence that several academic preparation, demographic, and college experience factors, including participation in certain first-year success initiatives, have effects on NAU students' retention directly and/or indirectly through first-semester GPA.

The next set of analyses provides information about the impact of a program on participants' outcomes while controlling for academic preparation and demographic characteristics.

Research Question

- (3) Does the student success program (Student Success Coaching or Peer Jacks) have a positive effect on participants' academic performance, or retention after controlling for relevant non-programmatic factors?

¹ Braxton, J., Hirschy, A., & McClendon, S. (2004). *Understanding and reducing college student departure*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
Robbins, S., Allen, J., Casillas, A., Peterson, C. H., & Le, H. (2006). Unraveling the differential effects of motivational and skills, social, and self-management measures from traditional predictors of college outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*, 598-616.

Methods

Propensity score analysis was conducted for each individual student success program to identify a non-participant group, matched on key observable demographic and academic preparedness indicators², to serve as a comparison group for the outcomes. Conclusions about the programs' impacts on student outcomes were drawn based upon differences in academic performance and/or retention between the two groups. We used statistical significance as one, but not the only, metric to determine impact; confidence intervals and simple differences in outcomes by group were also provided.

Psychosocial variables that may be important to student success were measured a priori by the Student Strengths Inventory (SSI)³ and accessed to identify statistical differences between the matched groups.⁴ There were few noticeable differences in ACT/SAT test scores and SSI scale scores between the matched non-participant and participant groups suggesting that these variables did not explain the impact of these programs.

Results

Retention trends for each student success initiative are summarized below for three cohort years (2011, 2012, and 2013) from the propensity score analyses conducted on the two programs.

Table 3. Academic performance comparing Peer Jack Participants to Matched Non-participants

Outcomes	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Retention from first to second year	3.4% higher (n=552) Not statistically different, $p = 0.20$ Effect Size (Odds-Ratio): 1.19 Odds of second-year retention are 1.19 times greater for participants compared to non-participants.	8.1% higher (n=628) Statistically different, $p < 0.10$ Effect Size (Odds-Ratio): 1.52 Odds of second-year retention are 1.52 times greater for participants compared to non-participants.	8.9% higher (n=593) Statistically different, $p < 0.10$ Effect Size (Odds-Ratio): 1.63 Odds of second-year retention are 1.63 times greater for participants compared to non-participants.
Average first-semester GPA	0.15 points higher Statistically different, $p < 0.10$ Effect Size: 0.15	0.09 points higher Statistically different, $p < 0.10$ Effect size : 0.09	0.20 points higher Statistically different, $p < 0.10$ Effect size: 0.21
Academic probation at the end of the first semester	5.4% lower Statistically different, $p < 0.10$ Effect size (Odds-Ratio): 1.50 Odds of <u>not earning</u> probation status are 1.50 times greater for participants compared to non-participants.	0.2% lower (comparable) Not statistically different, $p = 0.36$ Effect Size (Odds-Ratio): 1.01 Odds of <u>not earning</u> probation status are 1.01 times greater for participants compared to non-participants	7.0% lower Statistically different, $p < 0.10$ Effect Size (Odds-Ratio): 1.73 Odds of <u>not earning</u> probation status are 1.73 times greater for participants compared to non-participants

- Over the three-year period, retention was higher for Peer Jack participants compared to non-participants (by 3.4%, 8.1% and 8.9%, respectively; statistically different for years two and three, $p < 0.10$). Comparatively speaking, the odds of retention also gradually improved from 1.19 times to 1.63 times greater for participants compared to non-participants.

² Such as, Arizona residency, gender, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) ethnicity, ACT/SAT scores, high school GPA, term enrolled units, cumulative GPA, etc.

³ The Student Strengths Inventory is administered to first-time freshman and addresses a variety of topics including ACT/SAT scores, Academic Engagement, Academic Self-Efficacy, Educational Commitment, Resiliency, Campus Engagement, Social Comfort, Certainty to Graduate from NAU, and Likely to transfer to other institutions before graduating from NAU.

⁴ The mean difference between participants and matched non-participants in first-semester GPA, the first-year cumulative GPA, and post-hoc test scores and psychosocial variables was determined by one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) or t-tests. The pattern of frequency distribution for categorical data in first-semester probation, retention to second semester, and retention to second year between participants and matched non-participants was determined with the frequency analysis χ^2 option.

- Average first-semester GPA was 0.15 points higher the first year of the project, 0.09 points higher the second year, and 0.20 points higher the third year for Peer Jack participants compared to non-participants (statistically different for all three years, $p < 0.10$).
- The academic probation rate was 5.4% lower in the first year of the project, comparable in the second year, and 7.0% lower in the third year for Peer Jack participants compared to non-participants (statistically different in the first and third year, $p < 0.10$).

Table 4. Academic performance comparing Student Success Coaching Participants to Matched Non-participants

Outcomes	2012-13	2013-14	2014-2015
Retention from first to second year	7.0% higher (n=100) Statistically different, $p < 0.10$ Effect Size (Odds-Ratio): 1.69 Odds of second-year retention are 1.69 times greater for participants compared to non-participants.	8.1% higher (n=123) Not statistically different, $p > 0.10$ Effect Size (Odds-Ratio): 1.57 Odds of second-year retention are 1.57 times greater for participants compared to non-participants	12.7% higher (n=102) Statistically different, $p < 0.10$ Effect Size (Odds-Ratio): 1.96 Odds of second-year retention are 1.96 times greater for participants compared to non-participants.
Average first-semester GPA	0.05 points lower Not statistically different, $p > 0.10$ Effect Size: -0.05	0.27 points higher Statistically different, $p < 0.10$ Effect Size: 0.26	0.27 points higher Statistically different, $p < 0.10$ Effect Size: 0.25
Academic probation at the end of the first semester	0% difference (comparable) Not statistically different, $p = 0.36$ Effect Size (Odds-Ratio): 1.00 The odds of <u>not earning</u> probation status are the same for participants and non-participants	6.4% lower Not statistically different, $p = 0.17$ Effect Size (Odds-Ratio): 1.62 Odds of <u>not earning</u> probation status are 1.62 times greater for participants compared to non-participants.	8.9% lower Not statistically different, $p = 0.19$ Effect Size (Odds-Ratio): 1.81 Odds of <u>not earning</u> probation status are 1.81 times greater for participants compared to non-participants.

- Over the three-year period, retention was higher for Student Success Coaching participants compared to non-participants (7.0%, 8.1% and 12.7%, respectively; statistically different for years one and three, $p < 0.10$). Comparatively speaking, the odds of retention improved from 1.69 times to 1.96 times greater for participants compared to non-participants with slightly lesser odds during year two (1.57 times).
- Average first-semester GPA was 0.05 points higher the first year of the project and increased to 0.27 points higher for the second and third years for Student Success Coaching participants compared to non-participants (statistically different for years two and three, $p < 0.10$).
- The academic probation rate was comparable between Student Success Coaching participants and non-participants in the first year of the initiative and then the difference between the groups' probation rates increased from 6.4% in year two to 8.9% in year three (not statistically different all three years, $p < 0.10$). Yet based on effect sizes, the odds of a participant earning a good academic standing increased from no difference to 1.81 times greater for participants compared to non-participants by year three.

Goal 3. Assessment of Other Programs and Documentation of Assessment Findings

The successful collaboration of the assessment offices in Enrollment Management and Student Affairs and Academic Affairs led to the development of common processes for summative assessment, which we used to assess other student success programs. Involvement in the Quality Initiative motivated programs to improve documentation of their assessment processes, data

collection, and assessment findings. Supportive conversations facilitated the sharing of formative assessment approaches, measures, and results among program administrators and practitioners, which enhanced the continual improvement efforts of all of our student success programs.

Annual reports documented the summative assessment findings of NAU's student success programs. One of the biggest challenges encountered during this project related to effectively communicating the assessment results to diverse audiences. To address this challenge, we incorporated statistical representations, such as effect size (Odds-ratios and Cohen's *d*), that convey magnitude and practical significance to practitioners, researchers, and administrators. Digestible reports with easily interpretable findings facilitated administrators' ability to evaluate and compare programs.

Discussions of the annual reports provided additional opportunities to deliberate about program progress, changes, and decision making with stakeholders. EMSA and OCLDAA also co-hosted an annual NAU Assessment Fair which provided an excellent venue for cultivating cross-department communication through poster presentations and roundtable discussions.

3. Evaluate the impact of the initiative, including any changes in processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, student learning and success that are now in place in consequence of the initiative.

Engaging in the Quality Initiative prompted us to more effectively manage resources, act strategically, and continually improve our student success programs and assessment practices. Outcomes and changes that resulted as a consequence of our project include:

- Enhanced approach to assessment and evaluation, involving the development of program-level logic models that include the goals, objectives, activities, resources, outcomes, and intended results. These models helped practitioners see their programs with fresh eyes and thus, introduced critical new insights to their leaders regarding program design. These models, in turn, guided data collection, analysis, interpretation, and program improvements.
- Refined documentation processes for program planning and formative assessment practices that led to productive collaborative conversations, improved program design, and student success.
- Developed guidelines for NAU's research analysts to use to ensure statistical matching methods are consistently implemented across programs in order to reduce imbalance, model dependence, and researcher bias.
- Increased collaboration between EMSA, Academic Affairs, Information Technology Services, Registrar's Office, and Admissions to address data discrepancies and streamline data collection.
- Improved communication and coordination between EMSA and Academic Affairs that led to a systematic approach for the dissemination of summative assessment results to program practitioners and upper leadership at NAU.
- Formed a Student Success and Retention committee with institution-wide representation charged to use data-driven decision making processes related to student success programs.

4. Explain any tools, data, or other information that resulted from the work of the initiative.

It became clear over the last three years that isolated data sources impeded our ability to effectively interact with our students in real-time and focus on predictive analytics. Significant work is underway to remedy these issues. For example,

- We recently signed a contract with Civitas Learning to provide analytics consulting and organizational and outreach tools for our academic advisors.
- We are currently working on an Educause-supported Integrated Planning and Advising for Student Success project to transform student advising and mentoring via unification of our student information streams into a single system that will inform and coordinate faculty and staff interactions with students.
- We purchased a customer relations management software (Sales Force) to host all of our student information in a single system.

Through these efforts, students will experience improved continuity between advising and mentoring offices, and as necessary, timely intervention. The expected results are an elevation of our institutional standard for student support and improvements in student progression and graduation achievement across all sectors of our student population.

5. Describe the biggest challenges and opportunities encountered in implementing the initiative.

While NAU has experienced significant budget challenges in recent years that have strained campus resources, we continue to be committed to increasing student success and engaging in campus-wide systematic and strategic continual improvement. At the outset of the Quality Initiative project, NAU's leadership was primarily interested in the overall impact of the student success programs on student performance. More recently, the conversations have expanded to include questions related to the return on investment, scalability, and the scope of students served. The expanded focus affords us the opportunity to assess the practical significance of a program's effect by cost and magnitude and to provide evidence that will inform program practitioners and administrators about which programs provide the most affordable and favorable outcomes.

Commitment to and Engagement in the Quality Initiative

6. Describe the individuals and groups involved at stages throughout the initiative and their perceptions of its worth and impact.

The Quality Initiative was overseen by EMSA Analytics & Assessment Office (EMSA - AAO) and the Office of Curriculum, Learning Design and Academic Assessment (OCLDAA; in Academic Affairs). The EMSA Peer Jacks Mentoring program and the Academic Affairs Student Success Coaching (SSC) programs were selected to incorporate strong partnerships and collaborations across these institutional areas. Personnel for the initiative included the following:

- Associate Vice Provost for Curriculum & Assessment (OCLDAA)
- Associate Director for Curriculum & Assessment (OCLDAA)
- EMSA Analytics & Assessment Director
- University College Student Success Executive Director

- OCLDAA Research Analysts (2)
- EMSA Research Analyst (1)
- Student Success Coaching Coordinator & Program Coordinator (2)
- Peer Jacks Program Coordinators (3)

EMSA - AAO and OCLDAA collaborated to conduct logistic regression and propensity score analyses for all of the student success programs and to share findings in an annual report. By reviewing the findings with program coordinators, the impact of this collaboration has assisted programs to consider both formative and summative assessment goals and to identify approaches to improve program design to enhance their goal achievement. Quality Initiative bi-annual reports were also shared with the Strategic Planning and Budget Council - a standing committee of faculty, students, staff, and administrators.

Generally, project participants reported that the collaboration between EMSA - AAO, OCLDAA, and the two project programs was the most beneficial aspect of the project. The collaboration created opportunities for the exchange of ideas, a sustained conversation, a critical analysis, and a support team that focused on mutually beneficial assessment strategies and methods which resulted in program improvements.

7. Describe the most important points learned by those involved with the initiative.

At the end of the Quality Initiative, we asked project participants to identify the most important points learned from this project. Overall, participants reported that engaging in the assessment process was an extremely valuable experience because it contributed to student success, “often through small, incremental knowledge gains applied to improving messaging, outreach, program delivery, program content and structure, staff training, or program management in general” (EMSA-AAO Director). Sample comments from project participants are provided below:

- “I learned that while the typical assessments are important to do, it’s the things like putting in a whole assessment framework around the impact of the role/program on peer leaders that led to strengthening the program for the participants.” ... “I liked looking at the program in a 360 view because it demonstrated where there were things that could be done better but also where we were missing the opportunity to highlight the strengths of the program.”
- “As a result of participation, the Student Success Coaching program refined data collection processes to align with program outcomes. As a result, SSC was held accountable and was able to conduct in-depth examinations to uncover ‘blind spots’ to discover the correlation between the program’s activities and student retention.”
- “Numerous interrelated factors ... are known to broadly impact student learning outcomes and likelihood of being retained for the first year.”... “I realized that some other factors/areas are beyond the scope of our two offices, and we need to continue working on this area systematically in future.”

Resource Provision

8. Explain the human, financial, physical, and technological resources that supported the initiative.

OCLDAA and EMSA-AAO administrators and research analysts, program coordinators, and the University College Student Success Executive Director were the human resources involved with the implementation of the project. Beyond the ongoing support of these student success programs, the Quality Initiative-specific financial, physical, and technological resource use was minimal.

Plans for the Future (Feature Milestones of Continuing Initiative)

9. Describe the plans for ongoing work related to or as a result of the initiative.

The collaborative partnership developed as a byproduct of this initiative has resulted in discussions about how to increase the engagement of NAU's other student success programs in systematic program design and assessment efforts. Some of the most promising approaches include the following:

- Focus assessment activities on data driven decision-making to help programs to achieve their goals
- Strengthen responsibility for continual improvement within each program by providing professional development in data collection, analysis and reporting
- Incorporate one-on-one consulting and guidance into annual reporting initiatives to build skills across programs in:
 - describing program activities and goals, and other aspects of program design,
 - collecting evidence for key indicators related to performance, and
 - tailoring reports to specific audiences within and outside the NAU community
- Identify common challenges in program design and assessment across programs, and then develop work groups to address the challenge in a collaborative, supportive environment.
- Create methodological guidelines for NAU research analysts to use for assessment and cost analyses across student success programs.
- Continue to explore ways to communicate effectively with our stakeholders.

In support of our ongoing commitment to student success, NAU has secured the services of a retention specialist to facilitate the development of a comprehensive retention strategic plan. The structured 3-year plan includes targeted strategies, action plans, and the direct engagement of faculty and staff in the planning and implementation of retention best practices that are customized for NAU. The Student Success and Retention Committee will lead the retention efforts as we work toward the Arizona Board of Regents retention goal of 80% by 2024-25. Outcomes from the Quality Initiative project will continue to inform the work that we do. Specifically, we will facilitate the development of purposeful program designs that enrich student experiences and create a motivating, fulfilling culture of continual improvement and innovation.

10. Describe any practices or artifacts from the initiative that other institutions might find meaningful or useful and please indicate if you would be willing to share this information.

NAU is happy to share both formative and summative assessment tools and methods, including the Results-based Planning process, the SSC weekly reporting system, SSC student and coach surveys, the Peer Jacks Mentoring Communication and Resource Matrices, and the methodology that we used to conduct the individual program impact studies.

