START SMART. FINISH STRO

Quality Enhancement Plan 2020–2025

Well into our second century of achievement, SMU looks to the future and is more committed than ever in these unprecedented times to the pursuit of academic quality. We are building upon and rea rming our founding principles and values as we rally behind our commitment to the continued improvement of our programs and the creation of unparalleled opportunities for our students – tomorrow's innovators, leaders and informed citizens – to successfully achieve their educational objectives. It is in support of these goals that we share "SMU in Four" – SMU's Quality Enhancement Plan.

Re ning the Student Experience at SMU

Quality Enhancement Plan
2020–2025

Prepared for

<Placeholder: Name of Accreditation Agency here>

<Placeholder Month XX, 2021>

On-site review:

<Placeholder Month XX–Month XX, 2021>

SMU's O ce of Student Academic Engagement and Success (SAES) is pleased to submit to <Placeholder Name of Accreditation Agency here> the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for the University. This proposal addresses SMU's e orts to better monitor and support our students' academic progress and improve our rst-year retention and four-year graduation rates.

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Executive Summary

SMU in Four – SMU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) – is the University's comprehensive approach to improving SMU's retention and four-year graduation rates. To this end, our QEP advances student academic success through its most essential form: progress toward degree. The strategies in this QEP build upon existing University practices to integrate three important levers, which will be activated across academic majors and student-support resources to address the needs of all SMU students and ultimately lead them to greater levels of success.

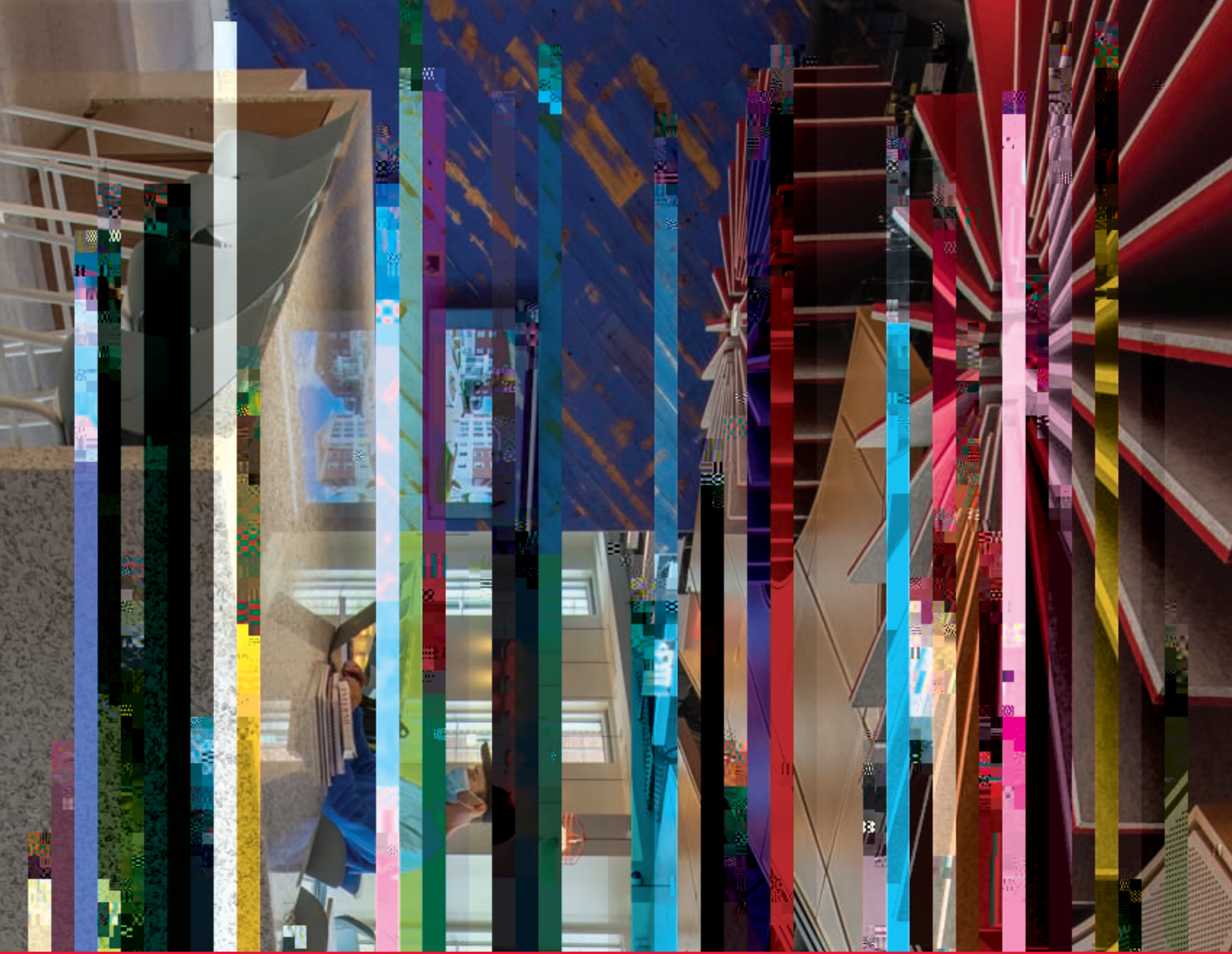
Our goals are to improve the first-year retention rate from 91% to 94% within three years and the four-year graduation rate from 73% to 74% within three years. We will also address gaps in these outcomes by race and ethnicity, first-generation students, and Pell-eligible students.

Second, SMU's QEP will adopt new business processes and technological solutions underlying these pillars in order to improve the student experience with our campus student information system and in order to increase staff and faculty awareness of student experiences and outcomes. In addition, we will improve information sharing and record keeping among staff and faculty advisors in order to improve the effectiveness of our early alert system and to understand differences in first year and gateway courses. We will increase faculty understanding in our first year and gateway courses as to how the early alert system operates and how to engage effectively with university advisors. In other words, these three pillars are intentionally designed to build synergies across the pillars to collectively improve our first year retention and four year graduation metrics.

In order to assess the success of efforts to improve progress reports, advising and first-year and gateway courses, we will use direct and indirect measures to advance toward the goal of improved retention and four-year graduation rates. The measures include progress-report data, course-level data and surveys of students and faculty. Together, this data will allow the University to evaluate and improve strategies to reach the QEP goals.

The planned improvements to progress reports, academic advising and first-year and gateway courses present a comprehensive approach to improving SMU's retention and four-year graduation rates. These strategies cut across academic majors and student-support offices to address the needs of all SMU students. The strategies in this QEP build upon existing University practices that have led to significant successes in retention and graduation. Ultimately, these strategies have the potential to lead to greater levels of student success.

Frankly, SMU has already achieved a great deal of student success in these outcomes. That said, we believe we can continue to improve; however, improvement will require addressing student success on multiple fronts. Our campus conversations lead us to focus explicitly on the student's academic experience in the classroom and with academic support services in the first two years, which lead to our focus on the three pillars identified above. Furthermore, we believe that we need to address even the modest gaps in outcomes that exist between racial and ethnic groups, our first-generation, and our Pell-eligible students. Using an identity conscious approach to our retention and student success work, we believe we will be able to close these gaps while we seek improvements (Pendakur 2016).



Process used to develop the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

An April 2016 document, “Implementing the Strategic Plan 2016–2025,” was appended to the Strategic Plan. This implementation plan presented six foundational goals that the SMU Board of Trustees identi ed to meet the lofty requirements of its Strategic Plan. The plan gave all sectors of SMU clear and identi able guidelines to ful lling the expectations of the leadership of the University. The rst goal of the implementation plan outlined explicit objectives to increase the retention rate from rst to second year for undergraduate students to 92% by 2020 and 94% by 2025, and increase the four-year and six-year graduation rates for undergraduate students to 74% and 82%, respectively, by 2025. [2]

TABLE 1. OVERVIEW OF CURRENT RETENTION AND GRADUATION OUTCOMES BY COHORT

	2011	2016	2019	Strategic Goal 2020	Strategic Goal 2025
First Year Retention	90.7%	91%	90%	92%	94%
4 Year Graduation	71%	75%			74%

First-year retention for students admitted in fall 2019 was 90%; 75% of students admitted in 2016 graduated in May 2020. Although these are strong outcomes nationally, there are reasons SMU strives to see improvements even though we have now met our strategic goal for four-year graduation rates.

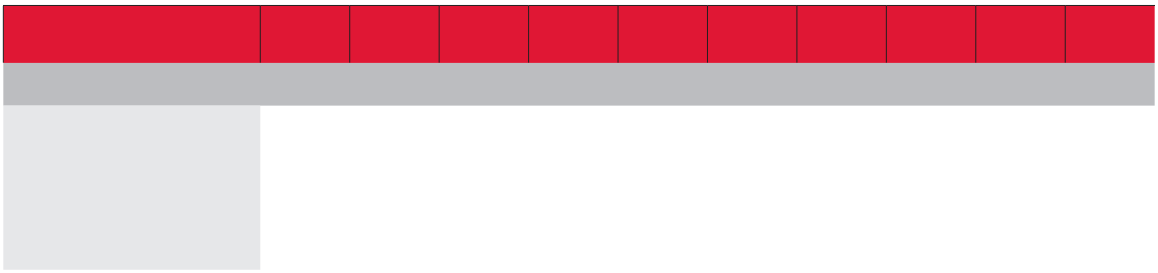
The key lies in the single heading in the introduction of the Strategic Plan: “Competitive Environment.” The Strategic Plan noted:

> To improve its competitiveness, SMU must continue to advance its standing among preeminent national universities through a number of indicators commonly used to rank schools by quality. It must convey e ectively the University’s academic quality… to the public, in particular to prospective students, both undergraduate and graduate. It must increase the national and international recognition of its faculty and academic programs…. Similarly, SMU must improve its retention and graduation rates across all student demographic cohorts…. SMU’s standing on selectivity, retention and graduation rates, however, does not yet match benchmark schools outside its region, such as Duke,

of its aspirational institutions, not to those of its cohort institutions. Good levels of retention of undergraduates were not good enough. They had to be better.

Table 2 shows SMU's ranking on four-year graduation rates relative to those of our cohort and aspirational peers. Although SMU has achieved its four-year strategic goal of 74% for our 2015 cohort, we still lag behind the average rate among our aspirational peers. A list of SMU's peer and aspirational institutions can be found in Appendix 1.

TABLE 2. SMU FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATES – TIME AND PEER COMPARISONS



Looking at rst-year retention by race and ethnicity in Table 3, we nd modest di erences in rst-year retention, with white students regularly achieving the campus average, while Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino and Asian students vary considerably from year to year.

TABLE 3: FIRST-YEAR RETENTION RATE BY ETHNICITY, 2015–2019

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Overall Cohort	90.5%	90.9%	90.6%	91.5%	90.3%
White	90%	90.1%	90%	91%	90.3%
Black/African American	96.2%	89.4%	87%	90.2%	95%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Hispanic/Latino	88.6%	92.3%	95.8%	91.9%	90.4%
Asian	87.6%	92.2%	86.2%	96.7%	88.7%
Two or More	94.5%	95.5%	87%	92.6%	90.4%

Source: Of ce of Institutional Research Enrollment Reporting

Looking at these trends, we conclude that the transition from rst to second year is not always the period of time where racial and economic gaps are most prominent; yet we know di erences appear at the point of four-year graduation. Figure 2 displays a consistent gap where Pell-eligible and rst-generation students at SMU graduated at a lower rate in four years. Table 4 presents signi cant gaps by race and ethnicity. The persistent gap between our overall cohort and Pell-eligible students lowers our U.S. News & World Report ranking on the social-mobility index, and has been identi ed as a gap that needs to be addressed quickly.

FIGURE 2: SOCIOECONOMIC DIFFERENCES IN FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATES

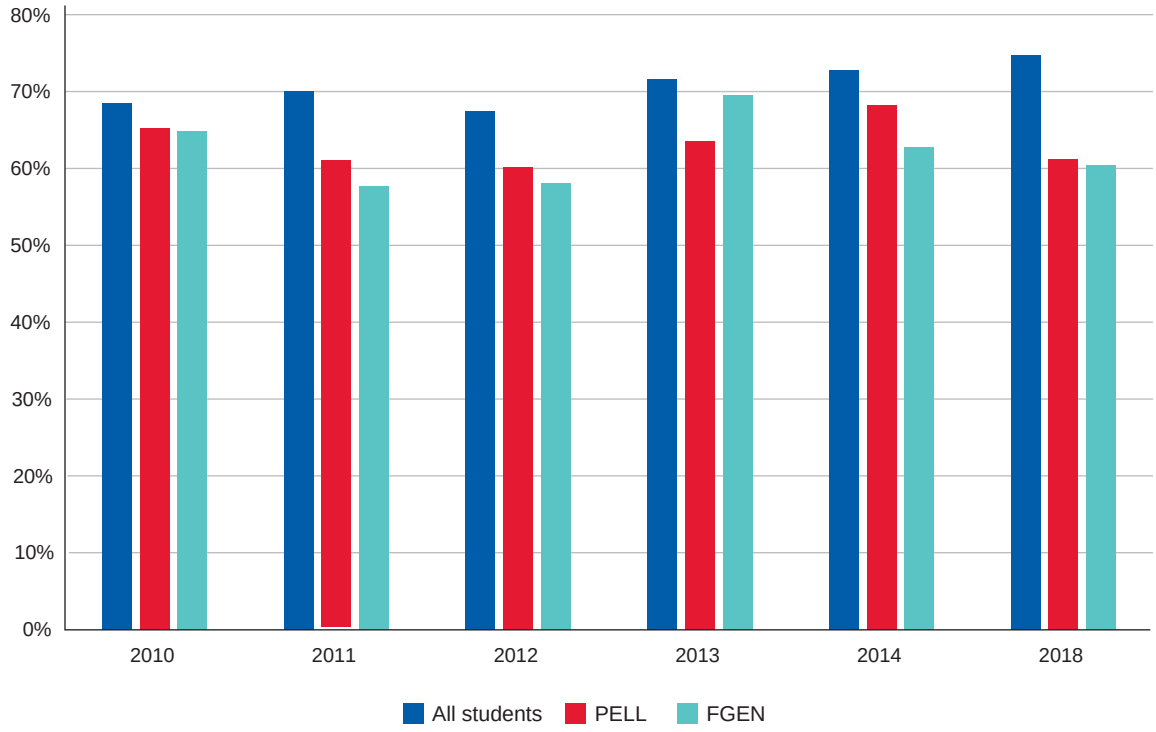


TABLE 4: FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION BY ETHNICITY, 2016 TO 2020 (GRADUATION – SPRING TERM)

Ethnicity	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Cohort	67.6%				

and Stature of Southern Methodist University." This was a statement of the academic goals and the resources identi ed to bring them to reality at the end of this long dialogue. The third recommendation from this document related to student success and retention and called for "develop[ing] a uni ed support system for retention and graduation by creating an O ce of Student Success and Retention." These plans presented an exciting challenge and opportunity to engage everyone at SMU in this central de ning activity of the University.

The "Enhancing the Academic Quality and Stature" document was an inspiration for the provost to appoint the Task Force on Student Success and Retention in March 2018. Chaired by the vice president for enrollment management and composed of members from the Division of Student A airs, the O ce of the Provost and Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, the task force was charged with examining the current e orts at retention and success of undergraduates, with determining how best to create an o ce to take on these challenges within the O ce of the Provost, and how to de ne the o ce's functions and scope to tackle the issue of student success and retention in the most e ective way. This nine-member task force met frequently from March to May 2018.

The task force recommended the appointment of an associate provost for Student Success and Retention with a budget for an o ce designed for its administrative exibility. The new positions and sta were established to oversee, from a central point, the improvement of student retention and graduation rates at SMU. SMU's retention and graduation rates were

undergraduate schools. An additional concern raised was that SMU was also losing students who were academically ourishing, but found the atmosphere of student life too often centered on social activities. Some of these students were recruited for their academic accomplishments. In our case, a stronger “culture of success and opportunity” must involve all students, not just at-risk students.

The central theme of the task force report, “Academic Engagement

Campus partners also highlighted the importance of the additive impact of social, personal and nancial experiences in explaining rst-year departures. In addition, exit interviews

Finally, the campus conversations in 2018 highlighted that student support sta in both academic and student a airs believed students transferred for very di erent reasons and to very di erent places. Using data provided by the National Clearinghouse, we are able to determine the rst transfer destination for our rst-year students. While the majority choose to transfer to a four-year public school, approximately 35% will transfer to another four-year private school. Between 10% and 15% of each cohort will choose to transfer to one of SMU's cohort and aspirational peer schools. Between 35% and 45% transfer to a school ranked by U.S. News & World Report as above SMU. Slightly more than half will transfer to a school outside Texas.

FIGURE 3: TRANSFER DESTINATIONS BY TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS FOR COHORTS 2015–2019

At the same time that SMU was trying to understand more about rst-year retention, we began a campuswide conversation around possible topics for the next Quality Enhancement Plan. These conversations primarily took place among the academic leadership team and focused on outcomes identi ed either in the 2016–2025 Strategic Plan or in the "Continuing the Ascent" report put forward by the provost and the president. Given the importance of meeting our two strategic goals of improving rst-year retention and four-year graduation rates and our rm belief that we could retain and graduate more of our students, the provost announced in June 2019 that the 2021 QEP would be focused on student retention and academic success. We then turned our attention to the work of identifying the key components.

2019: Developing the QEP – SMU in Four

During summer 2019, a group of campus stakeholders was charged with considering a campuswide technology solution to track student engagement and well-being and to identify ways to improve the accuracy and e ciency of advising through improvements in our student information system, PeopleSoft. A student success consultant with experience in software solutions led campus stakeholders in a series of conversations to identify our current strengths and weaknesses and our system requirements. At the same time, the associate provost for Student Academic Engagement and Success conducted hourlong

intensive conversations with peer and aspirational schools to ask about their experiences with solutions such as Star sh by Hobsons and EAB Navigate. This work culminated in campus visits to New York University, which recently implemented Star sh, and to Duke University, which worked with HighPoint to improve the student experience with PeopleSoft.

By the end of the summer, the group recommended three changes. First, that we implement HighPoint to signi cantly improve the student experience and to create degree plans to help students and departments plan course o erings. Second, that we utilize features within PeopleSoft to improve our early-alert e orts and record-keeping among advisors. Finally, to change many of our business processes and some of our academic policies and practices in order to help students know when they are getting o -track toward a four-year completion goal.

With a concrete understanding of how technology and changes in business processes might

Student advising pillar

TABLE 7: KEY FINDINGS FROM NSSE 2019[6]

for students to take longer to graduate than necessary, and this may negatively impact their ability and desire to ultimately graduate from SMU. Examining the student experience for the entering cohorts between 2011 and 2015 revealed important information: First, about 50% of students who did not complete 27 credits by the end of their second term were still behind at the end of their second year. These students graduated at a rate of about 30%. However, those students who were able to make up the credits and had at least 57 credits by the end of their second year greatly increased their chances of graduating – to roughly 75%. Students who were encouraged and able to make up the credits in the summer via interterm classes or transfer credits ultimately performed distinctly better. Second, not only did the students who made up the credits graduate at a higher rate, they were also less likely to earn failing grades or to withdraw from courses during subsequent terms. Failing to earn 27 credit hours by the start of the second year was a remarkably good predictor of future pace and performance. Without clear rules or at least consistent expectations among advising sta concerning the accumulation of course credit hours, SMU has allowed itself to overlook these students, and has not e ciently identi ed and supported them.

sizes must be taken into consideration; however, one of the most alarming conclusions from this table is that there appears to be strong evidence that falling behind in the first year and remaining behind in the second year significantly impacts four-year graduation rates for nonwhite students to an even greater degree than for white students.

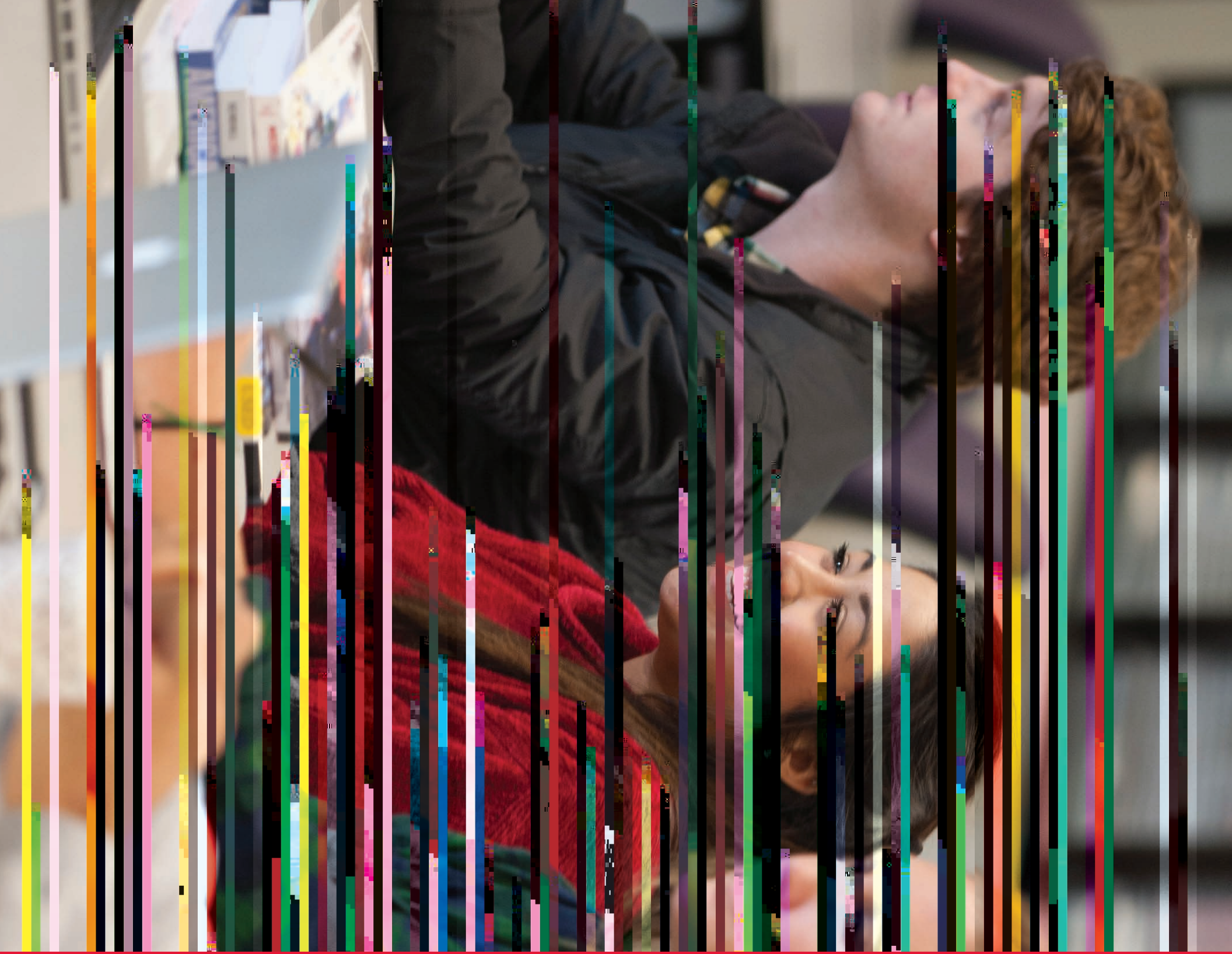
TABLE 9: FIRST-YEAR CREDIT-HOUR COMPLETION AND GRADUATION RATES BY RACE/ETHNICITY (COHORTS FALL 2011–FALL 2016)

From this work we determined that an advising pillar within SMU in Four would focus on the

Similarly, there are a variety of internal stakeholders who play a role in the development and delivery of rst-year and gateway courses, including the Council on General Education, the O ce of Institutional Planning and Assessment, deans, department chairs and individual instructors. All these stakeholders play critical roles in the oversight, implementation and success of rst-year and gateway courses. However, there is opportunity to bring together stakeholders from across campus to improve the design and teaching of these courses.

2020: Anticipated Launch of SMU in Four

SMU welcomed a new provost in July 2020. With the full support of Elizabeth G. Loboa, we moved forward on our plans to simultaneously work on improving student outcomes and experiences under all three pillars. A faculty steering committee was identi ed and working groups were establisheth GrMToirs anupplemenear anl roleos.m8



Identification & implementation of strategies for improvement

Because of the complexities of student retention and graduation, we recognize that our QEP strategies must be pervasive, at an institutional level, to be truly e ective. To this end, we focus on making signi cant changes in three areas of academic support and engagement – early alerts, advising, and rst-year and gateway courses. These three essential levers – three pillars of the QEP – will boost SMU's response to helping students overcome obstacles to success, and thus improve the University's retention and graduation rates.

Identi cation and implementation of strategies for improvement

As previously discussed, SMU in Four is designed to improve the rst-year retention and four-year graduation rates at SMU and to make sure that we do not have socioeconomic or racial and ethnic di erences in these two measures of student success. To do this, we will focus on signi cant changes in three areas of academic support and engagement that will enhance SMU's response to the problems identi ed. They are changes best positioned to improve the University's retention and graduation rates.

Literature Review

SMU is well aware that student retention and graduation are complex phenomena. They rely on many factors. We believe that the strategy of this QEP to undertake three initiatives, each a pillar, will truly provide us with the leverage to improve retention and graduation for our undergraduates.

Research concerning student retention and success has been around for several generations, even as the issue of low completion rates of undergraduates nationwide has become a public issue in the last two decades. This extensive body of research centers around several themes, or theories. Most center not on detachment and separation, but on attachment and persistence of undergraduates. Some focus on the daily structure, habits or skills they need (if they do not have them) to get them through to graduation. Those students who do not receive these things often leave.

The principle behind this area of higher education research is that institutions admit students and should support them through their entire college careeviugh their ent (ou.9 (-10 (or(e the n(s haou.9 (-10 (oa9 (e)

We rely on foundational theories of student success and retention to ground our enhanced practices central to SMU in Four:

Integration

Vincent Tinto's integration model (1987, 1993) is the foremost one, where students are thought to be made part of – or feel they are part of – the social and educational setting. Tinto's model uses behavioral interactions with peers and faculty to measure integration within the institution. Residential undergraduate life may play a signi cant role here. Basically, those who are more integrated are more likely to persist. As students feel at home, part of the larger group, they are less likely to leave it.

Involvement

Alexander Astin's model of student involvement (1984) sees retention and success in measures of student involvement. Involvement is easier to measure than attachment. Astin posited ve basic assumptions about involvement. He argues that involvement requires an investment of psychosocial and physical energy. Second, Astin says, involvement is continuous, and that the amount of energy invested varies from student to student. Third, aspects of involvement may be qualitative and quantitative. Next, what a student gains from being involved (or their development) is directly proportional to the extent to which they were involved (in both aspects of quality and quantity). Last, academic performance is correlated with student involvement. Others, too, have noted that engagement tends to improve academic outcomes of all students, including transfer students (Laanan, 1996).

Sense of Belonging

Literature on student success and retention has thus also developed around the student's sense of belonging. Research has made clear that a student's "subjective sense of belonging" is a valid and unique factor in student intention to persist and actual persistence (Haussmann et al., 2009). This internal, emotional sense is a valid concern for researchers and administrators. Bad or unpleasant experiences with administrators, sta or faculty may erode a feeling of belonging. A bad experience with peers may also lead to departure, but peer relations and social connectedness may also create a sense of belonging (Allen, et. al., 2008). Literature has grown around the sense of belonging for students of color. Students who experience a hostile campus environment because of race or ethnicity may turn to community-building and fostering their critical navigation skills. These serve as a way to cope with the wider

Second-year students may frequently take all 60 credit hours they have earned with them as transfer students – so this may be an important transfer-out point. We may expect this is

Roughly two years of attempting to meet with and record all students who requested leaves of absence or withdrawals from SMU have certainly uncovered to the O ce of the Provost the complexities of persistence and withdrawal at SMU. The widest quantitative account, utilizing 445 responses to a National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) analysis, asked students whether or not they had considered leaving campus. SMU students in this survey who were most likely to consider leaving campus due to dissatisfaction with only three aspects of their experience on campus: (a) the quality of interactions (QI); (b) the supportive environment (SE); and (c) the amount of collaborative learning (CL). These factors are generally congruent with both the larger anecdotal evidence and the literature on persistence and completion.

A striking turn has taken place in the research focus in the past 15 years. After so many small and medium-size studies of student behaviors and completion or noncompletion across various types of institutions of higher education, the central question has turned to “what works” in keeping students through to graduation.

The premier theorist, Vincent Tinto (2012), noted: “Much of the research on student attrition has not been particularly useful to those in the eld who seek to develop and implement programs to improve retention and completion because it assumes, incorrectly, that knowing why students leave is equivalent to knowing why students stay and succeed. The process of persistence is not the mirror image of the process of leaving…our knowledge of e ective action remains fragmented and poorly organized.”

The same can be said of institutional action. (p. 5) That is, institutions need to know what does work, and what does not. Tinto summarizes the results of what we know under four headings: (a) Expectations. “High expectations are a condition for student success, low expectations a harbinger of failure.” (b) Support. “Without academic, social, and, in some cases, nancial support, many students, especially those who enter college academically underprepared, struggle to succeed.”(c) Assessment and feedback. “Students are more likely to succeed in institutions that assess their performance and provide frequent feedback in ways that enable students, faculty, and sta alike to adjust their behaviors to better promote student success.” (d) Involvement. “The more students are academically and socially engaged with faculty, sta , and peers, the more likely they are to succeed in college.”

Overview of SMU in Four: Three Pillars

The di cult task for successful retention and graduation e orts, the truly useful research informs us, is to make them pervasive and e ective. Because they are being done in our own way, in many forms, at present, it is easy to consider SMU is attending to these matters already. It is. But to make them more e ective will require the di cult task of institutional change. This will require a three-pronged approach for immediate and long-term impact on retention and graduation of all students. Combined, the three kinds of enhancements we have developed, referred to as “pillars” of the QEP, are designed to give us reasonably greater ability to improve how we provide these sources of contact, support and feedback to all our students. Our three pillars of enhanced practice are:

Early-alert Pillar: Early alerts are formal programs of identifying and directing students who need academic help. They have been extensively described (Moore-Harrison, et al. 2015), and are part of institutional e orts to identify and give feedback to undergraduates early in a term. Early alerts have a positive e ect on student learning and retention. (Felten, et al. 2016; Upcraft 2005). They may also assist in providing intervention before poor study habits or attendance go wrong. A recent study has shown that early timing of alerts yields a signi cant improvement in outcomes over later ones (de Monbrun 2019). SMU in Four focuses e orts on growing our understanding of our present early-alert practices, which rely primarily on academic performance of students, and broadening our e orts to include self-perceived achievement of students and co-curricular experiences that add to a student’s sense of belonging (Haussmann et al., 2009).

Advising Pillar: Advising is perhaps the oldest means of support for undergraduates, described by King and Kerr (Upcraft, et al. 2005) as “the hub of the wheel that establishes links to all other support services on campus” (p. 320). Ideally it should span from the student’s education plans to their career goals and their life plans. (Crockett, 1984). Yet there are a


SMU

A range of comprehensive strategies for each of the three pillars we have identi ed as essential to student success – early alerts, advising, and rst-year and gateway courses – will be activated from Year One (2021) to Year Five (2025) of the QEP to help us better monitor and support students in their progress to degree completion. These enhancements will create an immediate and long-term impact on the retention and graduation of all students.

Timeline

For each of the three QEP pillars, we discuss our current practices and our expected enhanced practices, to be implemented by each of the implementation teams assigned to the speci c pillar outlined in the Organizational Structure section (see page 42).

Early Alert Pillar

Current Practices

Presently, SMU expects faculty to complete two grade alerts each semester. As already noted, faculty respond unevenly across the colleges, and even departments, to this request. Some divisions report 90% of grades, while others report only a fraction – 34%. Overall, 75% of early and midterm grades are currently reported.

Early Progress Reports (EPRs) are sent out at the end of the fourth week of the semester and Midterm Progress Reports (MPRs) at the end of the eighth week by the University Registrar. While EPRs are generated for a subset of students (all rst- and second-year, return and transfer students with 30 or fewer credit hours), MPRs are requested for all students. The early grade reports ask faculty to identify students in their classes with academic de ciencies de ned as those whose work is earning C- or below. EPRs and MPRs are closed after 10 days, and the information is shared with the student, academic support services, University advisors and directors of student academic programs, such as the University Honors Program. This information is also available to those with authorized access to the student's record, such as a parent.

Currently, students who have three or more de ciencies receive direct outreach from the University Advising Center (UAC) and the Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center (A-LEC) in the form of separate emails to meet and to discuss possible changes to their enrollment status or to o er academic support services including free tutoring. The break point of three or more de ciencies was informed by an extensive analysis by the O ce of Institutional Research in fall 2019. Those who have fewer than three may hear from a designated program director. At present, if students have one, two or even three de ciencies early in the term, the decision to seek academic support is up to them. In fact, some students with no reported de ciencies (NR) request additional academic support. Although all University-designated major advisors may see their advisees' grade de ciency reports, at present, very few of them actively use the information.

Enhanced Practices

Strategy 1: Increase Participation in Current Early-alert E orts

As part of SMU in Four, we intend to broaden faculty participation in both EPRs and MPRs. We will begin to disseminate the faculty participation data in a user-friendly dashboard to deans and department chairs to make it easier to identify those faculty and departments who need improvement in reporting their grades. Deans will be more motivated to act upon this information with the implementation of performance-based funding put in place by the new provost. Additionally, plans are in place to add a comment box to the current EPR and MPR reporting system. The boxes are intended to help elevate the quality of information obtained from faculty regarding students. Training and awareness will be provided to faculty on this once it is implemented.

Strategy 2: Broaden Data Used in Early-alert E orts

A consensus across members of sta , faculty and students is that additional more-holistic data, beyond EPR and MPRs, is needed to inform SMU's early-alert e orts. Piloted on campus in 2020, Dropout Detective, a retention tool based on Canvas (our learning management system), will serve as a supplement to current grade reports. Drawing on faculty-inputed and student-usage Canvas data, Dropout Detective provides real-time dashboards to faculty and sta to identify at-risk students. This data will be viewed in tandem with EPRs and MPRs to help inform student outreach e orts.

We will also work with academic support services in the A-LEC and SMU Libraries as well froy k /GS0 gs /T1_3 1 Tf 0 ,5s(arl)13 (Dr)5 (op)-on thisi0 (s arade)-9.9 ss wooards es in the A-LEC and outreach e or

be trained on the reasons driving the data and how to use the new dashboards. This e ort will directly connect the early-alert pillar with the advising pillar.

Strategy 4: Formalize a New Early-alert System

Finally, we want to integrate information from across the University to create a real-time system of early alerts that brings together data from across the University. The rst phase will involve evaluating the quality of the data currently available in Canvas – our learning management system – and comparing de ciencies identi ed in Canvas at the same time we identify de ciencies reported by faculty in EPR/MPR. A concerted e ort will be made to work with the rst-year and gateway pillar initiative to build capacity and interest among the faculty to use Canvas. The second phase of data integration will focus on bringing together data from RLSH and the O ce of the Dean of Students to consider students holistically.

Implementation Plan

Because data about the use and e ectiveness of a fully utilized early-alert system remains partial, the pillar committee studying early alerts resolved on the following steps for 2020 through 2025 to make the early alert network more e ective:

TABLE 10. EARLY-ALERT PILLAR PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

	Implementation Year					
Early-alert Pillar Enhanced Practice	2020	Year 1 2021	Year 2 2022	Year 3 2023	Year 4 2024	Year 5 2025
Capture baseline metrics	X					
Increase participation in current early-alert efforts		X	X	X	X	X
Broaden data used in early-alert efforts		X	X	X	X	X
Expand parameters for student outreach			X	X	X	X
Formalize new early-alert system				X	X	X

Advising Pillar

Current Practices

Undergraduates of SMU are registered for degrees in one of the following schools: Cox School of Business, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, Lyle School of Engineering, Meadows School of the Arts or Simmons School of Education and Human Development. With some exceptions, students are not admitted to these programs as rst-year students. In their rst two years, premajor students are considered the responsibility of the UAC, which assists all beginning students with registration and planning their courses to ful ll University-wide requirements of the Common Curriculum. These general education requirements apply to all undergraduates.

advisor approaches their work and where they need additional support and training. Through this survey we will be able to evaluate pain points, opportunities for improvement and evaluate the overall sense of satisfaction among our faculty advisors. In our rst year of SMU in

Strategy 3: Creating Consistent Advisor Practices

Implementation Plan

The pillar committee studying advising resolved on the following steps for 2020 through 2025 to make advising at SMU more e ective:

TABLE 11: ADVISING PILLAR PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

	Implementation Year					
Advising Pillar Enhanced Practice	2020	Year 1 2021	Year 2 2022	Year 3 2023	Year 4 2024	Year 5 2025
Capture baseline metrics	X					
Understanding the Advisor Experience		X		X		X
Improved Advisor Training and Technology Resources		X	X	X	X	X
Creating Consistent Advisor Practices		X	X	X	X	X
Implementing Academic Policy Changes			X	X	X	X

X

The problem of instilling student success in rst-year and gateway courses is not simple: They are typically taught by a large number of instructors. They are taught at least every year, if not every term. Analysis has shown that there is a signi cant range of success with students at this level, at least as measured by student grades. In fact, a scrutiny of courses with substantial rst-year student enrollment indicates that there is a signi cant variation in these rst-year courses. For example, approximately 250 students enroll in CHEM 1303 during their rst semester; approximately 25% of these students will earn a D or F or withdraw before the end of the semester. Another example is PSYC 1300, in which approximately 180 rst-semester students will enroll; 17% of these students will earn a D or F or withdraw before the end of the semester.

Enhanced Practices

The pillar committee studying rst-year and gateway courses resolved on the following steps for 2020 through 2025 to make these courses at SMU more e ective:

Strategy 1: Course Redesign Initiative

The rst strategy to improve teaching and course design in rst-year and gateway courses is a Course Redesign Initiative. Focused on the critical intersection of faculty and students early in a student's academic experience, this initiative will focus on redesigning courses to promote student success by focusing on student learning outcomes, assessment strategies, student feedback and emphasizing engagement with course content.

An established strategy used by many universities across the country, such as the University of Houston and the University of Michigan, the Course Redesign Initiative will provide a forum for select faculty and faculty support units to work together over the course of an academic year to improve the course design and teaching of key SMU courses to improve student success in these courses.

TABLE 12: COURSE REDESIGN PROCESS

Month	What gets done?	Who is involved?	Connections to student success
Month 1	• Kickoff meeting • “Level-set” technology options (Canvas, mastery paths) • Review student success data • Understand what has “worked” with the course previously • Identify course goals and learning outcomes	• Faculty teaching course • Of ce of Information Technology (OIT), Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), Enrollment Management Research Group (EMRG), SMU Libraries • Department chair • Director of Undergraduate Studies • Faculty who have taught the course previously • A-LEC/Writing Center/Student support units (as appropriate)	Bring together student and faculty as appropriatm2.M1T

• Faculty teaching course
•
• pi<</roctorwoget the tdonsTd .55apstts ,ions Ofnal, etc.on

and expressed interest and commitment by the department. Note: Each course will likely have multiple sections extending the reach of the initiative to a signi cant percentage of rst- and second-year students.

Strategy 2: Student Engagement Institute

Providing faculty with pedagogical development opportunities can improve understanding of best teaching practices, develop faculty community and o er an opportunity to learn more about SMU students. The Center for Teaching Excellence, along with the other faculty support units, will organize a Student Engagement Institute to provide support for faculty teaching rst-year and gateway courses. The goal of the institute is to help faculty learn how to better engage their students.

Academic engagement o ers a critical element in supporting SMU's student success and retention e orts. Promoting academic engagement can be particularly useful for improving the success of students of color, rst-generation students and low-income students (Pendakur, 2016). The institute will provide faculty with the research basis, strategies and practical suggestions to increase student engagement. Through hands-on activities, the goal of the institute will be to help faculty increase student engagement and participation.

The Student Engagement Institute will be continually improved based on lessons from the Course Redesign Initiative to include elements that other faculty found worked well to improve engagement at our University. Additionally, the institute will be an opportunity to promote pedagogical development in faculty at a scale beyond what can be achieved through the Course Redesign Initiative.

Strategy 3: Improve Process for Assigning Instructors

Given that academic departments manage course assignments and faculty load, they play a substantial role in the teaching of rst-year and gateway courses. However, little discussion, coordination and planning of these assignments occurs within or across departments. The third strategy aims to engage department chairs as collaborators in the student retention and student success initiative. First, research will be conducted to understand how these teaching assignments are made and the considerations that go into this decision-making process. Second, based on the research ndings, collaborative opportunities will be developed, such as at the annual department chair retreat or at a brown-bag session to discuss the importance of rst-year and gateway course instruction and teaching assignments. Through formal and informal gatherings, department chairs will be encouraged to put SMU's best instructors in rst-year and gateway courses to ensure a strong academic foundation for undergraduate students.

X X X

Implementation Plan

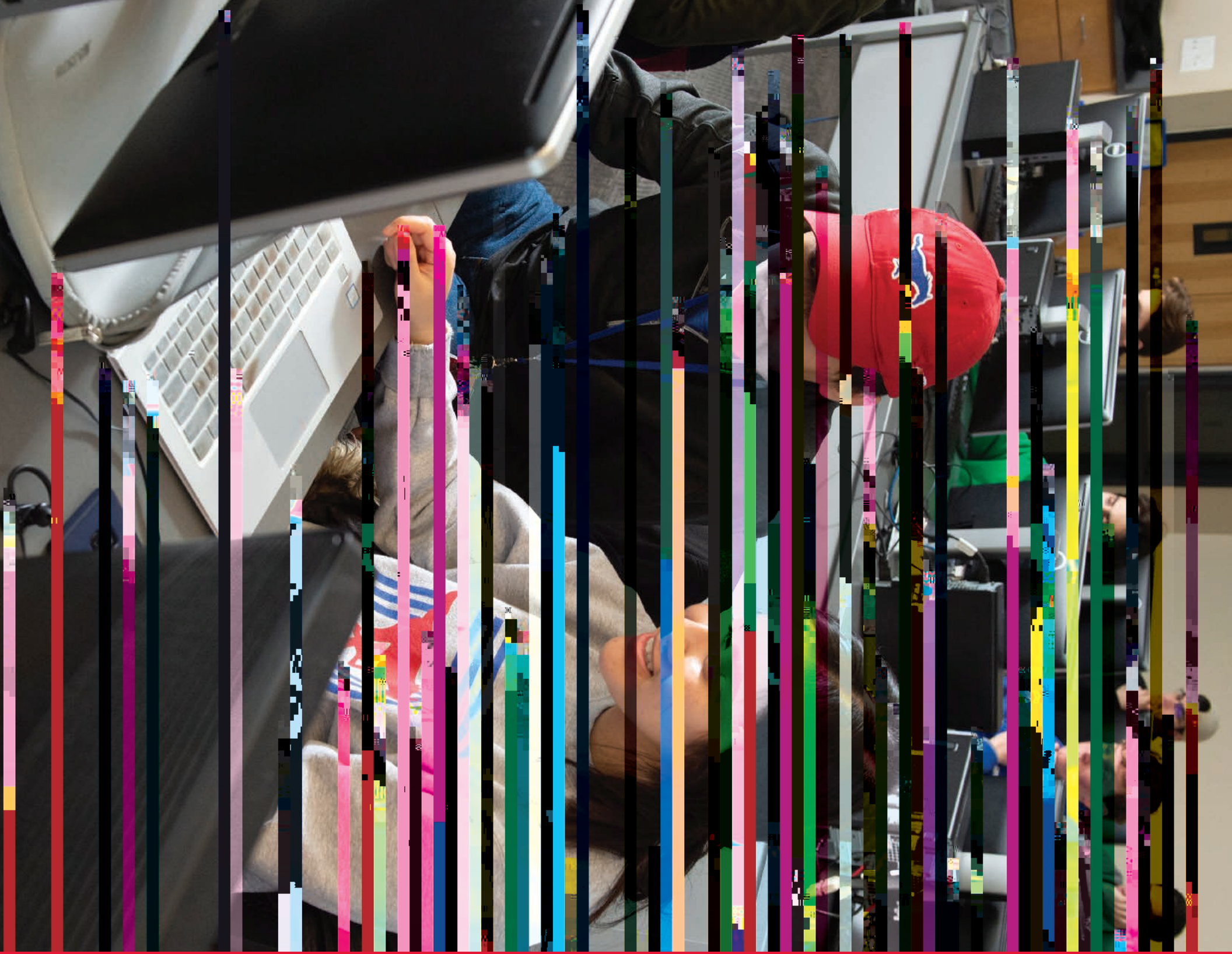
The pillar committee studying rst-year and gateway courses resolved on the following steps for 2020 through 2025 to enhance instruction at SMU:

Capture Baseline Metrics X

Course Redesign Initiative

Student Engagement Institute Launch X X

Improving Process for Assigning Instructors X X



Organizational structure

SMU in Four is a comprehensive plan to improve our e orts to successfully help students move through their academic journeys at SMU. Thus, discrete parts of the University will need to engage and collaborate with one another as we seek to increase our understanding of and eliminate obstacles to student success while enhancing communication across o ces that o er support. As a campuswide initiative, SMU in Four is organized by three layers of leadership: the strategy team, the faculty steering committee and key personnel and strategy team members with oversight of the three pillars of the QEP. Because the implementation of SMU in Four will require ever-widening circles of dedicated administrators, faculty and sta , the QEP organizational structure includes a communications group to steward the clear communication that is key to the success of SMU in Four.

FIGURE 4. SMU IN FOUR TEAM STRUCTURE

The six members of the strategy team are from the O ce of the Provost, the Center for Teaching Excellence, the O ce of Institutional Planning and E ectiveness and the O ce of Information Technology. The three main pillars of the QEP, early alerts, advising and rst-year and gateway courses, are directed by members of the strategy team, but consist of personnel from over a dozen special o ces and resources of the University, including the Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center, the University Advising Center, Residence Life and Student Housing, the O ce of Student Support, SMU Libraries, OIT and the chair of the Faculty Senate Academic Policies Committee. The three pillar groups seek direction from the faculty steering

committee, made up of dedicated and skilled senior faculty who can o er their insights to all these groups in order to ensure their e ectiveness and their success in a long-term process that inevitably will see some setbacks and new approaches. Because the planning and ongoing

The projected budget for the ve years of the implementation of SMU in Four was created in partnership with campus stakeholders and in consultation with the faculty steering committee. The budget makes room for crucial investments ranging from integrating technology to improve advising, communication, data-gathering, risk assessment and more, to the hiring of full- and part-time sta as key resources. SMU in Four will also feature in-kind contributions

Resources

Budget

Annotated Expenses

1. Project Manager
   - With the knowledge that improved software may be highly useful in improving advising and communication with students, a full-time consultant was hired in spring 2019. The consultant assists in re-examining procedures and software and has been a part of most discussions concerning advising, communication and data-gathering. This has already proved invaluable in determining the appropriate software and procedures for SMU.

2. HighPoint Technology
   - The technology added onto PeopleSoft to improve the student experience with enrollment, managing their nancial aid information, and maintaining their four-year degree plans.

3. Tableau
   - Technology to present and distribute data to stakeholders.

4. Dropout Detective
   - Risk-assessment tool that analyzes Canvas course activity and outcome data to identify students who are not doing well and those who are.

5. Technology Adoption
   - Resources to provide comprehensive training to users on campus to develop and use Tableau dashboards. Hopefully, users would complete the o cial Tableau certi cations process appropriate for their level of use.

6. Marketing and Printing
   - Resources to promote the SMU in Four initiatives among sta and students during the 5-year implementation.

7. Professional Development
   - Resources to support QEP sta to attend annual Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) conference.

8. Early2lds. Hopefull<FEFi.

10. Mustang Advising Network Group
    - Resources to create training videos and materials to support the monthly topics.

11. NSSE Assessment Instrument
    - Resources to pay license for using the survey and modest incentives to encourage participation.

12. Advising Dashboard Buildout
    - Resources to hire a part-time Tableau-certi ed specialist to build the dashboard designed to securely provide speci c users with the data for their speci c area. Each major advisor would go to the same dashboard where they can see the overall University data and see their department in su cient detail.

13. Two Advanced Ph.D. Students
    - Toward the e orts of the rst-year and gateway courses pillar, two advanced Ph.D. students will be hired. It is expected that these students will have appropriate disciplinary knowledge to assist faculty in designing discipline speci c assignments, content and activities. Working closely with faculty and CTE, these students will enable CTE to support departments in redesigning courses in such a way as to increase student learning, student success and retention. Given that rst-year and gateway courses are among the most enrolled at SMU, the two Ph.D. students will improve the quality of these courses for hundreds of enrolled undergraduate students and the University's teaching mission.

14. Course Design Institute
    - Anticipated cost to provide release time during the summer and academic year. Additional resources for technology (hardware and software) and other items to support teaching in redesigned courses. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

15. Student Engagement Institute
    - Resources to provide materials and incentives for participation.

16. FSSE Assessment Instrument
    - Resources to pay license for using the survey and modest incentives to encourage participation.

In-kind Contributions

TABLE 15: SMU IN FOUR IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Our measured rates of retention and graduation will be monitored by the associate provost for Student Academic Engagement and Success, the director of Student Success and Retention and the director of the Center for Teaching Excellence, as well as by University leadership. Our assessment strategy aligns with our pillar-based strategies for improvement, with each of the three pillars serving to improve our retention and graduation rates. Assessment results will be reviewed on a semester basis by the strategy team, the faculty steering committee and pillar working groups, and used to modify pillar activities and plans as needed.

Assessment

As stated in the introduction to this QEP report, our goal is to improve first-year retention from 91% to 94% within three years, and to see the four-year graduation rate of 74% be achieved for all racial and ethnic groups at SMU and for Pell-eligible and first-generation students.

Because the QEP outcome itself is a set of statistical goals, assessment methods for the QEP outcomes are, at first consideration, relatively direct. Our measured rates of retention and graduation will improve to the point that they meet our goal. These measures will be directly monitored by the associate provost for Student Academic Engagement and Success, the director of Student Success and Retention, and the director of the Center for Teaching Excellence. They will be calculated following the present standard method with data from the registrar and the Division of Enrollment Management. These goals, being widely shared and aligned with the University's strategic plan, will be monitored as well by University leadership.

Our assessment strategy follows the same pillar-based enhanced practice organization discussed in Section III: Identification and Implementation of Strategies for Improvement. Each pillar serves a vital function in the advancement toward and achievement of our outlined retention and graduation rate goals. The following sections, organized by pillar, provide details and timing on our planned assessment measures for each proposed enhanced practice strategy. Where feasible, we draw on already available and routinely collected data sources such as University-wide surveys and student information system data. Additional details on the methodology and timeline for each measure is provided in Table 17: Detailed Assessment Plan by Pillar.

Early-alert Pillar Assessment Instruments & Measures

The overall goal of the advancements to the current early-alert practice at SMU is to create a more complete, data-informed system for identifying at-risk students and informing sta outreach strategies. Three enhanced practices are at the heart of the early-alert pillar. These are the proposed measures we will put in place to track progress toward outcomes specific to these e orts:

Early Progress Reports (EPR) and Midterm Progress Reports (MPR): Progress grades are collected twice per semester to support student academic performance, success and retention. The grades captured are used only for advising purposes, but are not recorded on the permanent academic record. Early Progress Reports are requested from instructional faculty in in the fourth week of instruction for all new first-year and transfer students, VA benefit recipients, undergraduates with fewer than 30 hours and students on probation regardless of hours completed. Beginning with the spring 2020 term, midterm progress grades are requested for all undergraduate students in the eighth week of instruction.

Two metrics related to EPRs and MPRs are of particular interest to SMU's QEP e□orts. The

Advising Pillar Assessment Instruments & Measures

As a key touchpoint to all undergraduate students, SMU endeavors to devote more resources to our advising team. As part of SMU in Four, the advising pillar focuses on understanding the current advisor experience and providing more carefully curated advisor training and technological supports to create more consistent advising practices and policies to aid in the success of all students. The following newly proposed and already-in-place measures will serve to help inform and track improved advising practices.

Advisor Experience Survey: Faculty Fellows from the O□ce of the Provost plan to develop a survey instrument to fill a hole of present institutional knowledge on advisors' perceptions of advising and their experiences as advisors at SMU. The survey will be administered three times over a five-year period via Qualtrics, and the results will inform any changes needed to proposed enhanced practices of the advising pillar.

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Data: SMU administers the NSSE to all first-year students and seniors every year. The next administration is scheduled for spring 2022 so that we are able to capture the change from first to senior year. In addition to the general NSSE survey, SMU will also be administering the Academic Advising topical module created by NSSE, and that is most closely related to the work of the QEP. This module examines students' experiences with academic advising, including frequency, accessibility and types of information provided. We will request permission to administer this module annually to a random sample of SMU students. (https://nsse.indiana.edu/)

SMU Graduation Survey: The University's graduation survey is a tool used to measure student achievement and provide information on students' post-graduation plans. The graduation survey is a confidential survey that tracks graduating undergraduate and graduate students' future pursuits and activities that include employment and continuing education plans as well as their experiences while at SMU. The survey is administered each fall, spring and summer by the O□ce of Institutional Planning and E□ectiveness. Specifically, we plan to use responses to current survey questions related to academic advising as well as to develop and add a question specifically seeking information around the advising experience, beginning in spring 2021.

The Graduation Follow-up Survey: As a follow-up to the graduation survey, a survey is administered each fall, spring and summer to undergraduate and graduate alumni six months after they complete their SMU degrees. The survey is intended to examine specific attitudes toward the University's communications, events and engagement e□orts. This survey also asks questions similar to those in the graduation survey, including information regarding employment, graduate school and salary. Similar to the graduation survey, responses to current survey questions related to academic advising as well as a new question specific to the advising experience will be used as part of the QEP.

Student Semester Enrollment Data: Captured through PeopleSoft, SMU's enrollment management system, student semester enrollment data will be collected with the goal of understanding what students do and do not register for at least 12 hours during their allotted registration time.

Advisor Meeting and Scheduling Data: Students are expected to meet with their academic advisor before each semester. During this time, they are tasked with designing their schedule for the following semester. Using data from booking.com, SMU's scheduling system, advisor meeting data will be collected to track at what rate students meet with their advisors each

TABLE 17: ADVISING DETAILED ASSESSMENT PLAN

TABLE 18: FIRST-YEAR AND GATEWAY COURSES DETAILED ASSESSMENT PLAN

Pillar	Enhanced Practice Strategy	Outcome	Instrument/Tool	Methodology	Data Collection
First Year & Gateway Courses	Course Redesign Initiative	Instructors of frst-year and gateway courses will use pedagogical approaches that support student engagement and success	FSSE Data Select questions from the FSSE: 1. TBD	FSSE is administered every year in the Spring to an SMU-provided sample of i1/t5estgicfacultyessSpriof	Strtorsof

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Implementation of the Assessment Plan

In coordination with the o□ces of Institutional Research, Student Academic Engagement and Success and Institutional Planning and E□ectiveness, the associate director for learning analytics in the Center for Teaching Excellence will coordinate all QEP assessment e□orts and data collection. Assessment results will be reviewed on a semester basis by the strategy team, the faculty steering committee and pillar working groups, and used to modify pillar activities and plans as needed. A semester assessment report summarizing the findings and any recommended modifications to the QEP will be completed each term.

Appendix 1: SMU Aspirational & Peer Universities 2018-present

Aspirational Peer Universities

Aspirational universities are institutions with which SMU seeks to be comparable in characteristics and quality.

Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

Boston University
Boston, Massachusetts

Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts

Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia

Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts

Tufts University
Medford, Massachusetts

Tulane University
New Orleans, Louisiana

University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana

University of Rochester
Rochester, New York

University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California

Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Cohort Peer Universities

These universities are those defined as operationally comparative.

American University
Washington, D.C.

Baylor University
Waco, Texas

Fordham University
Bronx, New York

George Washington University
Washington, D.C.

Lehigh University
Lehigh, Pennsylvania

Pepperdine University
Malibu, California

Syracuse University

Appendix 2: NSSE findings spring 2019

Appendix 3

Appendix 4: SMU in Four Implementation Sta f ng

O f ce of the Provost

Need department name

Elizabeth Loboa, Provost and Vice President for Academic A f airs

Sheri Kunovich, Associate Provost for Student Academic Engagement & Success

Lydia Allen, Writing Center Director

Caitlin Anderson, Assistant Director

Scott Bartlett, Assistant Director

Josh Beaty, Assistant Director

Sue Bierman, Executive Director of the Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center

Kate Bell-Miller, Transfer Student Specialist

David Doyle, Assistant Dean University Honors Program

Susan Harris, Senior Academic Advisor

Janet Hopkins, Academic Advisor

Marta Krogh, Director of the Hilltop Scholars Program

Beth McConville, Academic Advisor

Pamela McNulty, Director of Pre-Health Advising

Nikole Melgarego, Academic Success Counselor

Chris Meyers, Senior Academic Probation Counselor

Brandon Miller, Associate Director University Honors Program

Sheumona Miller, Senior Academic Advisor

Dee O'Banner, Academic Advisor

Jay Orendu□, Director of Student Success and Retention

Dania Ortiz, Academic Advisor

Alyssa Reiman, Academic Advisor

Jeanene Renfro, Senior Academic Advisor

Ellen Richmond, Director of the University Advising Center

Matthew Robinson, Director of Student Persistence and Achievement

Becca Umobong, Director of Academic Skill Development

Prisna Virasin, Academic Advisor

Ben Walter, Academic Counselor

Larry Winnie, Manager of Second Century Initiatives

Kerry Wright, Academic Counselor

Need department name

Patricia Alvey, Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and E f ectiveness

Ed Collins, Executive Director of Assessment

Yan Cooksey, Associate Director of Assessment

Molly Ellis, Associate Director of Learning Analytics and Student Success

Michael Harris, Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence

Addy Tolliver, Senior Instructional Designer

Need department name

Michael Tumeo, Director of Institutional Research

Matt DeMonbrun, Associate Director

Stephen Forrest, Senior Data Analyst

Caroline Kirschner, Data Analyst

Salma Mirza, Senior Data Visualization Specialist

Peter Moore, Associate Provost for Curricular Innovation and Policy

Dayna Oscherwitz, Assistant Provost for General Education

Need department name

Wes Wagner, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management

Nancy Skochdopole, Director of Transfer Services

Need department name

Daniel Eady, Chief of Sta f

For more than 100 years, SMU has shaped minds, explored the frontiers of knowledge and fostered an entrepreneurial spirit in its eight degree-granting schools. Taking advantage of unbridled experiences on the University's beautiful campuses and SMU's relationship with Dallas – the dynamic center of one of the nation's fastest-growing regions – alumni, faculty and more than 12,000 graduate and undergraduate students become ethical leaders in their professions and communities who change the world.

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