

**QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN**  
**AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY**

**ENHANCING STUDENT RETENTION AND SUCCESS:  
FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR, ADVISING, AND STUDENT LIFE**

FEBRUARY 20, 2004

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## **Executive Summary**

### *Enhancing Student Retention and Success: First-Year Seminar, Advising, and Student Life*

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for Austin Peay State University (APSU) focuses on improving student retention. Retention overall is an area of weakness identified by institutional data analysis and a major concern for the University; and instead of attempting to solve the complete retention problem all at once, we are using a two-phase approach. The first phase addresses the need to improve retention for freshman from the fall in which they enter to the fall of their sophomore year. The second phase, which is not a part of this QEP, will address the need to improve retention for all students.

While important to all universities, retention is of special concern to APSU. Data analysis for the past six years reveals that both APSU's fall-to-fall retention rate and six-year persistence-to-graduation rate have been consistently the lowest among the public four-year institutions in the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) and University of Tennessee (UT) systems. These data on APSU's retention and persistence problems provide sufficient evidence to place retention at the heart of our QEP.

Campus-wide input was instrumental in the development of a three-part plan for improving student retention and success in the first phase. First, a QEP subcommittee developed a first-year seminar designed to both orient students to the University and enhance our liberal arts mission. Entitled "Liberal Arts and University Life," this course, for which a pilot was conducted during the Fall 2003 semester, combined aspects of a traditional freshman experience course (e.g., emphasis on study skills, health and wellness, introduction to the library and student support services, etc.) with an overview of the content, goals, and value of a liberal arts education. Second, a QEP subcommittee on academic advisement researched best practices in advising and recommended possible improvements to current advising procedures at APSU. Among this group's recommendations are renewed emphasis on training for faculty advisors, new advisor incentives and accountability measures, and centralized advising of undecided students. Third, a student life and support services subcommittee reviewed current programs and operations that have an impact on retention, researched best practices in the field, and explored recommendations for new programs and services that have a potential for positive impact on student retention and success. Finally, representatives from all three subcommittees formed a group that investigated early alert procedures and recommended such actions as the establishment of an office to oversee intervention procedures for at-risk students.

In addition, two new positions, a Director of Retention Services and a part-time Minority Retention Specialist, have been created to provide leadership for implementing and sustaining the plan. Under the guidance of the new Retention Services Director (now retitled to Director of Academic Support), a Core Retention Team worked throughout Fall 2003 to identify all existing retention activities from across the campus and submitted a report and recommendations in Spring 2004.

Given the complexity of the retention issue, we anticipate that the first phase, which served as the focus of our QEP, will be followed by a second phase that will need to be designed and implemented over the course of several years to address campus-wide retention at all levels.

## **Introduction**

Retention is the topic for the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) of Austin Peay State University (APSU). This topic is of major importance to APSU because for the past six years, our fall-to-fall retention rates have been consistently 10 percent lower than those of the other four-year institutions in the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) and University of Tennessee (UT) systems. These comparative data sets isolate first-time, full-time freshmen, thus diminishing the impact of part-time student enrollment patterns. Further, APSU has the lowest six-year persistence-to-graduation rate in the TBR and UT systems for first-time, full-time students, falling 10 percentage points below our cohort schools. Described in numbers rather than percentages, APSU is losing a little more than 200 students from fall to fall and approximately 400 students from the beginning of the freshman year to the end of the six-year window within which students are expected to graduate.

This QEP explains what we have accomplished to address our retention problem and what we plan to do to greatly reduce the problem over the next few years. In providing that explanation, we define student learning appropriate to the focus of the QEP, provide data that delineate APSU's retention and persistence problems, describe APSU's culture and context, provide evidence that the APSU community was actively engaged in the development of the QEP, show how the QEP Planning Committee addressed the problem of retention through focused subcommittees, list the recommendations from the QEP subcommittees, discuss how the recommendations will be implemented, explain the creation and purpose of the Core Retention Team, list the Team's recommendations, and present a method of conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the QEP.

### **Definition of Student Learning Appropriate to the Focus of the QEP**

Studies have shown that engaged students are more likely to be retained. In the classroom, student engagement is best nurtured by active learning. Outside the classroom, student engagement is best nurtured by active participation. According to Baxter and Terenzini,

Recognizing that students are active participants—not passive recipients—in the learning process and in their making of meaning, that students approach this process from multiple frameworks, and that students' academic and cognitive development are shaped by their out-of-class experiences as well as their formal academic experiences all make the educational process's connection to students' experience a central component of learning (Baxter & Magolda, 1992). Contemporary conversations across disciplines are focusing not only on knowledge acquisition alone, but also on the processes by which students acquire new knowledge and skills, how they make sense of the new ideas, attitudes, people, and experiences they are encountering in the college experience.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Baxter, Marcia and Patrick T. Terenzini. "Learning and Teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Trends and Implications for Practice." <http://www.acpa.nche.edu/seniorscholars/trends/trends4/htm>

Nationally, the traditional definition of student learning as relatively passive - i.e., students take in information through lectures and then use that information to respond to examinations - has been challenged in favor of a model of learning that is often called deep or active learning, which stresses the need for students to have various, even daily, opportunities to respond to ideas, particularly in collaborative settings. This new learning paradigm requires an accompanying teaching paradigm to encourage such learning. To promote the new teaching and learning paradigm, APSU will pursue the following initiatives as part of our long-term retention efforts:

- Training teachers of freshman courses to use pedagogical techniques that promote the engaged student (e.g., collaborative learning, Socratic dialogue);
- Promoting the new teaching-learning paradigm to all faculty;
- Seeking out faculty who will have a commitment or willingness to develop pedagogical initiatives based on the new teaching-learning paradigm and conduct ongoing workshops on engaging pedagogy;
- Implementing regular peer review of classroom teaching using Gamson and Chickering's "The Seven Principles of Effective Teaching" or a similar model;
- Reinforcing evaluation of teaching using the feedback loop;
- Using the National Survey of Student Engagement as a benchmark for our pedagogical efforts.

### **Goals of the QEP**

Implementation of the above teaching-learning initiatives is being preceded by our QEP, which has a more narrow focus on retention of students during the freshman year. Thus, we established the following goals of the QEP, which is the first phase of a long-term retention effort:

- Conduct data analysis to determine reasons for our poor retention rates;
- Develop, pilot, and institute a first-year course designed to help promote retention;
- Implement an early alert system in conjunction with the first-year course;
- Study advisement to determine what changes can be made to promote retention;
- Strengthen/add support systems to promote retention.

The ultimate purpose of the QEP goals is to promote retention at the freshman level. The measurement of retention will be accomplished through the Institutional Effectiveness Tracking System.

**Description of Importance of QEP Topic:  
Retention and Persistence Statistics for APSU**

According to statistics provided through Tennessee’s Performance Funding program and more detailed data from the APSU Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness, APSU’s fall-to-fall retention rates and six-year persistence-to-graduation rates are consistently lower than those of the other four-year institutions in the TBR and UT systems. As noted above, for the past six years APSU’s retention and persistence rates have been 10 percentage points below those of our cohort institutions. The charts below show the trends in six-year persistence to graduation rates and fall-to-fall retention rates of first-time, full-time freshmen (Charts 1 and 2).

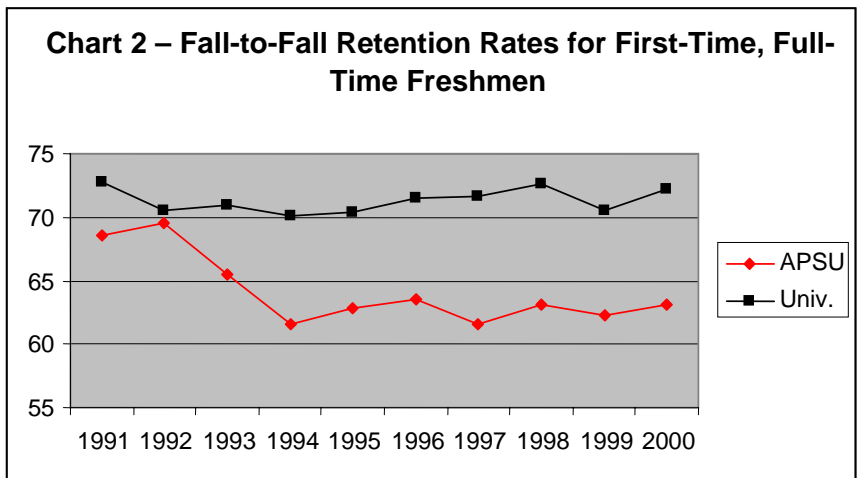
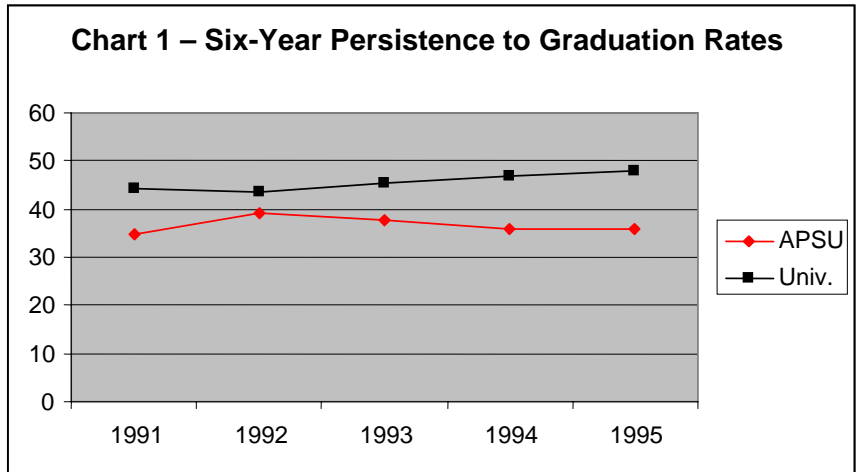


Table 1 displays the persistence-to-graduation data for the cohorts entering the public higher education system between 1990 and 1997. The statistic shown in Table 1 represents the percentage of first-time, full-time freshmen from each of the years who completed their

degrees within the standard six-year window. Data are shown for all four-year institutions in Tennessee.

**Table 1 - PERSISTENCE-TO-GRADUATION RATE COMPARISONS (6 YEAR RATES)**

<b>COHORT YEAR:</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>
<b>TBR Universities</b>								
APSU	40.4%	34.8%	41.5%	37.7%	35.7%	36.0%	35.3%	35.6%
ETSU	41.6%	39.3%	38.7%	37.4%	41.9%	40.7%	39.0%	43.1%
MTSU	40.6%	37.6%	38.1%	39.0%	42.8%	40.2%	44.2%	44.7%
TSU	32.7%	35.6%	37.7%	40.1%	43.3%	47.3%	49.5%	47.7%
TTU	47.6%	47.5%	49.3%	51.5%	51.4%	49.1%	53.0%	45.8%
UM	35.3%	35.6%	34.9%	36.1%	35.9%	36.6%	37.3%	37.9%
Sub-total	40.2%	38.8%	39.7%	40.2%	41.8%	41.2%	42.9%	42.8%
<b>University of Tennessee</b>								
UTC	44.5%	44.6%	46.5%	45.7%	50.1%	50.2%	50.0%	47.0%
UTK	58.4%	59.1%	59.2%	60.5%	61.2%	63.9%	63.0%	63.3%
UTM	43.4%	41.1%	40.8%	44.2%	44.6%	46.5%	47.8%	45.6%
Sub-total	53.1%	52.8%	53.0%	53.8%	55.3%	57.9%	58.0%	56.9%
<b>Total Universities</b>	<b>45.4%</b>	<b>44.2%</b>	<b>44.8%</b>	<b>45.4%</b>	<b>47.0%</b>	<b>47.9%</b>	<b>49.0%</b>	<b>48.7%</b>

Table 2 below shows actual fall-to-fall retention rates for all four-year institutions in Tennessee. Each cohort of first-time, full-time freshmen is compared to determine the percentage of each that returned to school the following fall semester.

**Table 2 - FALL-TO-FALL RETENTION RATE COMPARISONS**

<b>COHORT YEAR:</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>TBR Universities</b>								
APSU	69.5%	68.9%	68.1%	68.8%	68.1%	68.9%	69.7%	70.5%
ETSU	73.7%	74.9%	77.4%	74.1%	76.6%	78.0%	73.8%	76.6%
MTSU	79.4%	78.4%	78.0%	79.4%	74.5%	77.9%	80.2%	79.8%
TSU	80.4%	80.2%	84.0%	82.5%	79.0%	79.6%	77.9%	76.4%
TTU	80.7%	82.1%	76.8%	79.0%	81.1%	80.0%	78.8%	80.3%
UM	77.7%	78.4%	78.8%	79.9%	77.0%	78.3%	77.9%	79.9%
<b>University of Tennessee</b>								
UTC	83.2%	83.8%	82.6%	84.8%	83.0%	84.8%	84.6%	81.3%
UTK	85.7%	85.6%	86.1%	86.5%	85.4%	86.4%	85.5%	85.8%
UTM	77.3%	78.5%	75.7%	75.6%	73.3%	77.0%	77.9%	78.5%
<b>Total Universities</b>	<b>79.9%</b>	<b>80.2%</b>	<b>80.2%</b>	<b>80.5%</b>	<b>79.1%</b>	<b>80.3%</b>	<b>79.9%</b>	<b>80.1%</b>

In actual numbers, APSU is losing about 225 students from fall to fall and about 350 to 400 students from the beginning to the end of the six years in which students are expected to graduate. As an example, Table 3 shows the APSU Fall 1995 cohort (749 freshmen) with a count each year of the number of those 749 students that were enrolled during the fall semester or had graduated. The same numbers are shown for all universities in the TBR and UT systems.

**Table 3 - FALL 1995 COHORT OF FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME FRESHMEN  
Six Year Trends in "Enrolled" or "Graduated"**

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
APSU	749	521	447	390	372	348	<b>348</b>
		70%	60%	52%	50%	46%	<b>46%</b>
Universities	13680	10933	9703	8943	8107	7930	<b>8086</b>
		80%	71%	65%	59%	58%	<b>59%</b>

This loss of students in the first two years of the collegiate experience is alarming and invites the question of whether one or more groups of students on the APSU campus are lowering overall comparative statistics. When the retention and persistence data are broken down by various demographic characteristics, it becomes evident that not a single segment of the APSU student population approaches the average fall-to-fall retention or six-year graduation rates of the other public, regional universities in Tennessee. The two following tables show comparison of statistics by race (Tables 4 and 5). To offer a reference point, the first two lines of data in each chart reflect the chosen statistic for all students in Tennessee's public regional universities and for all students at APSU.

**Table 4 - Fall to Fall Retention Rates by Race**

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
<i>All Regional Univ's</i>	78.3	78.1	78.5	75.9	78.3	78.0
<i>APSU All</i>	68.9	68.1	68.9	68.1	68.9	69.7
APSU Caucasian	69.8	69.3	69.7	67.5	69.6	71.2
APSU Afric. Amer.	63.2	62.9	68.1	71.8	70.5	68.6
APSU Other Min.	70.0	69.4	66.0	71.9	60.4	56.6

**Table 5 - Six-Year Graduation Rates by Race**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
<i>All Regional Univ's</i>	39.5	39.0	41.1	42.9	42.7	44.0
<i>APSU All</i>	34.7	39.3	37.6	35.7	36.0	35.3
APSU Caucasian	36.7	40.0	39.1	37.6	38.4	37.8
APSU Afric. Amer.	30.1	33.5	34.0	28.8	23.9	24.6
APSU Other Min.	27.3	42.9	29.4	25.0	40.5	25.0

Comparisons based upon sex and age reveal more gaps within the institution, particularly in the category of students beginning their college experience between the ages of 20 and 24. The following tables reveal that within this age group, less than 50 percent of the students are not retained to the sophomore year and less than 20 percent persist to graduation (Tables 6 and 7). There does not seem to be a major gap between the sexes.

**Table 6 - Fall to Fall Retention Rates by Sex and Age**

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
<i>All Regional Univ's</i>	78.3	78.1	78.5	75.9	78.3	78.0
<i>APSU All</i>	68.9	68.1	68.9	68.1	68.9	69.7
APSU Female	74.5	70.9	70.7	69.3	68.9	71.4
APSU Male	59.5	63.0	66.1	66.3	68.9	66.8
APSU < 19 Years	73.5	72.2	72.7	70.6	72.5	74.1
APSU 20-24	51.0	45.3	40.0	47.4	39.7	46.8
APSU > 25 Years	50.0	56.3	51.1	60.0	50.0	46.0

**Table 7 - Six-Year Graduation Rates by Sex and Age**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
<i>All Regional Univ's</i>	39.5	39.0	41.1	42.9	42.7	44.0
<i>APSU All</i>	34.7	39.3	37.6	35.7	36.0	35.3
APSU Female	38.0	40.3	41.6	40.3	40.8	39.5
APSU Male	28.9	37.6	31.5	28.6	29.2	28.3
APSU < 19 Years	39.2	44.6	41.7	39.5	40.5	40.9
APSU 20-24	11.4	15.4	16.0	24.2	14.9	14.0
APSU > 25 Years	19.3	26.6	27.0	12.1	18.2	12.5

Another segment of the population that merits analysis are those students entering the institution with marginal academic abilities. Tables 8 and 9 reflect the retention and persistence rates of students required to take coursework at the remedial (comparable to eighth-grade) and developmental (comparable to tenth- and eleventh-grade) levels. It is interesting to note that the retention rates of students requiring no remedial or developmental coursework approach the statewide norms, and the graduation rates of these students far exceed the statewide norms.

**Table 8 - Fall to Fall Retention Rates by Remedial & Developmental Need**

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
<i>All Regional Univ's</i>	78.3	78.1	78.5	75.9	78.3	78.0
<i>APSU All</i>	68.9	68.1	68.9	68.1	68.9	69.7
APSU Remedial Only	65.0	68.0	62.5	36.4	57.9	41.7
APSU Develop. Only	58.7	61.5	60.7	64.9	63.1	67.1
APSU Rem. & Dev.	60.0	52.4	56.7	63.0	51.1	66.0
APSU No Rem./Dev.	78.1	75.2	78.2	73.4	76.0	73.8

**Table 9 - Six-Year Graduation Rates by Remedial and Developmental Need**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
<i>All Regional Univ's</i>	39.5	39.0	41.1	42.9	42.7	44.0
<i>APSU All</i>	34.7	39.3	37.6	35.7	36.0	35.3
APSU Remedial Only	24.3	15.4	29.2	21.1	10.3	30.0
APSU Develop. Only	28.9	33.3	34.1	33.1	26.2	24.8
APSU Rem. & Dev.	23.2	18.1	15.9	10.3	21.2	8.3
APSU No Rem./Dev.	44.7	51.1	45.3	45.0	48.0	47.5

In an attempt to better analyze issues surrounding these levels of student departure, the University conducted a broad study of several cohorts, with the end goal of developing a model of student departure grounded in the characteristics of the APSU student. Relying upon logistic regression, the analysis supports the development of an “early alert” flag for each student upon enrollment in the fall semester. By determining those students who are most at risk of drop-out, the programs and services developed and implemented in this Quality Enhancement Plan may be targeted for effectiveness. The chart below shows the variables included in the regression analysis. The cohorts of first-time, full-time freshmen covered the years from 1992 to 2001.

Variable Definitions

Chart 3 - Variable Names and Values for Regression Analysis
Gender (1=Female, 2=Male, 9=Missing)
Age (Between 16 and 99)
Race (1=AA, 2=Other Minority, 3=Caucasian, 9=Missing)
On Campus Residence (1=On campus, 2=Off campus, 9=Missing)
Remedial Need (1=Took Rem or Dev course, 2=Did not take, 9=Missing)
Remedial Need Level (This is a quantitative variable ranging from 0 to 4. For example, a zero signifies that the student took all remedial classes, while a 2 signifies that a student took all developmental classes, and a 4 signifies that a student took all college level classes.)
Credit Hour Status (1=Full-time, 2=Part-time/Less than 12 hrs.)
Financial Aid (1=Need-based federal & state grants only, 2=Need-based federal & state grants and scholarships, 3=Scholarships only, 4=No grants or scholarships, 9=Missing)
Loans (1=Received loan, 2=Did not receive loan)
High School GPA (Between 0.0 and 4.0)

**Notes:**

1. Comparison value is the value to which the other categorical variables are compared. For example, Gen(1) – Female is compared to the Male value.
2. Missing values are not used in the logistic regression analysis.
3. Quantitative variables are compared by every increase of 1 in the variable. For example, the high school GPA goes from 2.2 to 3.2.

Methodology

- The models use backward logistic regression to analyze the significance and impact of the chosen predictor variables.
- 1,500 cases were randomly sampled to avoid an over-fit where all variables appear significant.

- A check for accuracy of the sampled data was done by taking a second 1,500 case sample from the remaining data to verify the similarity of both samples.

Analysis of one-year retention for Fall 1992 to Fall 1996 first-time freshman cohorts (Analysis 1).

- The model correctly classified 67.3 percent of the cases.
- Five variables were significant: credit hour status, age, high school GPA, scholarship-only financial aid, and on-campus residence.
- Credit hour status was the strongest indicator showing that full-time students are 3.5 times more likely to return the next fall than part-time students.
- High school GPA was the second strongest indicator. It shows that for every 1 point gain in the high school GPA, the student is twice as likely to return the next fall.
- Scholarship-only students have the third strongest indicator.

**Analysis 1**

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 4(a) CRED(1)	1.263	.205	37.837	1	.000	3.536
AGE	.027	.013	4.091	1	.043	1.027
HSGPA	.795	.120	43.985	1	.000	2.214
FA			9.523	3	.023	
FA(1)	.075	.129	.337	1	.562	1.077
FA(2)	.435	.343	1.608	1	.205	1.545
FA(3)	.651	.220	8.777	1	.003	1.918
ONCAMP(1)	.428	.128	11.166	1	.001	1.534
Constant	-3.718	.553	45.220	1	.000	.024

**a Variable(s) entered on step 1: CRED, RAC, GEN, AGE, HSGPA, FA, RD, ONCAMP.**

Analysis of one-year retention for Fall 1992 to Fall 1996 full-time, first-time freshman cohorts (Analysis 2).

- The model correctly classified 67.0 percent of the cases. This model differs from Analysis 1 in that it includes only full-time students (students enrolled for 12 or more hours).
- Two variables were significant in the model: high school GPA and scholarship-only financial aid.
- High school GPA has the strongest impact. For every 1 point gain in high school GPA, the odds that the student will return the next fall go up 2.4 times.
- Scholarship-only financial aid has the second strongest impact. A student with scholarship-only financial aid is 1.8 times more likely to return the next fall than a student with no financial aid (the comparison value).
- Age and on-campus residence do not play a significant role in the equation when all part-time students are removed from the analysis.

## Analysis 2

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 4(a)	RAC			5.952	2	.051	
	RAC(1)	-.433	.268	2.604	1	.107	.648
	RAC(2)	.262	.159	2.719	1	.099	1.300
	HSGPA	.860	.121	50.908	1	.000	2.363
	FA			8.453	3	.038	
	FA(1)	.091	.132	.479	1	.489	1.095
	FA(2)	.352	.312	1.273	1	.259	1.422
	FA(3)	.577	.205	7.935	1	.005	1.780
	ONCAMP(1)	.220	.118	3.493	1	.062	1.246
	Constant	-2.084	.354	34.685	1	.000	.124

a Variable(s) entered on step 1: RAC, GEN, AGE, HSGPA, FA, RDLEV, ONCAMP.

Analysis of six-year graduation for Fall 1992 to Fall 1996 full-time, first-time freshman cohorts (Analysis 3).

- The model correctly classified 70.2 percent of the cases. This model is different from Analysis 2 in that it analyzes six-year graduation.
- Four variables are significant in this model: high school GPA, scholarship-only financial aid, remedial and developmental level, and on-campus residence.
- High school GPA and scholarship-only financial aid are again the best predictors.
- The remedial level was significant in this analysis. It was not significant in the retention analysis for full-time, first-time freshmen. A student taking two developmental courses and two college-level courses would be classified as a 3.0.  $\{(2*2+2*4)/4\}$

## Analysis 3

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 4(a)	HSGPA	1.212	.136	79.218	1	.000	3.359
	FA			12.208	3	.007	
	FA(1)	-.182	.144	1.597	1	.206	.833
	FA(2)	-.141	.267	.278	1	.598	.869
	FA(3)	.487	.179	7.395	1	.007	1.628
	RDLEV	.278	.109	6.468	1	.011	1.321
	ONCAMP(1)	.308	.119	6.666	1	.010	1.361
	Constant	-5.442	.498	119.300	1	.000	.004

a Variable(s) entered on step 1: RAC, GEN, AGE, HSGPA, FA, RDLEV, ONCAMP.

Analysis of one-year retention for Fall 1997 to Fall 2001 full-time, first-time freshman cohorts (Analysis 4).

- The model correctly classified 66.0 percent of the cases. This model is different from Analysis 2 in that it analyzes the full-time, first-time freshmen cohorts for Fall 1997 to Fall 2001 instead of Fall 1992 to Fall 1996.

- The significant variables for the Fall 1997 to Fall 2001 full-time, first-time freshmen are the same as the significant variables for the Fall 1992 to Fall 1996 full-time, first-time freshmen, except for the addition of remedial and developmental level as a significant variable.
- A student who is taking all college-level courses is 1.23 times more likely to continue the next fall for each 1 point gain in the remedial level ( $1/0.808 = 1.23$ ). This is different from the graduation analysis that found students taking less remedial and developmental coursework are more likely to graduate within six years.

#### Analysis 4

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 4(a)	HSGPA	.822	.122	45.179	1	.000	2.276
	FA			19.923	3	.000	
	FA(1)	-.282	.127	4.906	1	.027	.754
	FA(2)	.388	.288	1.815	1	.178	1.473
	FA(3)	.630	.201	9.882	1	.002	1.878
	RDLEV	-.214	.098	4.790	1	.029	.808
	ONCAMP(1)	.220	.116	3.635	1	.057	1.247
	Constant	-1.269	.433	8.604	1	.003	.281

a Variable(s) entered on step 1: RAC, GEN, AGE, HSGPA, FA, RDLEV, ONCAMP.

#### Conclusions from Regression Analysis

- Full-time credit-hour status as a first-time freshman is the strongest predictor of one-year retention and six-year graduation.
- When full-time credit-hour status is not in the model, high school GPA and scholarship-only financial aid are the two strongest predictors of one-year retention and six-year graduation rates.
- Other variables like age, remedial and developmental level, and on-campus residence have a minor impact on retention and graduation rates.
- Race and gender do not have a significant impact on either retention or graduation rates in these four models.
- About 30 to 35 percent of the variance in the model can be explained by other influence outside of the chosen variables.

In conclusion, these data indicated a need for investigation into APSU's retention and persistence problems and provided the incentive for placing retention at the heart of our Quality Enhancement Plan for re-accreditation by SACS. Because historically many institutional characteristics such as "non-traditional students" and "local demographics and traffic patterns" have been blamed for the retention gap, the analysis and recommendations associated with the QEP project will help separate perceptions from realities.

## Description of APSU's Culture and Context

Austin Peay State University is Tennessee's designated comprehensive liberal arts institution and supports and promotes an atmosphere that is unusual at a public university. In ways similar to those of a private institution, Austin Peay nurtures learning and personal growth through small classes, close student/faculty interaction, and personal attention by the support staff.

The University is located on an urban campus in northern middle Tennessee that for over 180 years has been used for educational purposes. Currently serving 7,600 students, the University began as Austin Peay Normal School when it was created as a two-year junior college and teacher-training institution by Act of the General Assembly of 1927. In 1939, the State Board of Education authorized the school to inaugurate a curriculum leading to the Bachelor of Science degree. The degree was first conferred on the graduating class at the 1942 Spring Convocation. By Act of the Tennessee Legislature of February 4, 1943, the name of the school was changed to Austin Peay State College. Between 1951 and 1952, the College was authorized to confer the Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in Education. In 1966, the State Board of Education conferred University status, effective September 1, 1967. By 1968, the University was authorized to confer the Master of Arts, Master of Science, and associate degrees.

The State Board of Education relinquished its governance of higher education institutions to the Tennessee State Board of Regents in 1972. Since 1972, the University has added the Bachelor of Fine Arts, Education Specialist, Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Master of Music, Master Arts in Education, and Bachelor of Professional Studies degrees.

Both the main campus and the Austin Peay Center at Fort Campbell serve a diverse student body with complete academic programs. Off-campus and distance-learning facilities offer curricula to expand the reach of the University to populations not easily served on traditional campuses. The University enriches the traditional instructional program through close interaction with the surrounding community. The University provides programs, services, and facilities that contribute significantly to the intellectual, economic, social, and cultural development of the region. Undergraduate programs in the liberal arts and sciences and in pre-professional and professional programs are the nucleus of the University. Curricula promote critical thinking, communication and information skills, leadership, and a commitment to lifelong learning. The liberal arts core provides for all students a broad, multicultural foundation in literature, the arts, history, mathematics, and the natural and behavioral sciences. Graduate programs serve the needs of the region and provide advanced experiences for students preparing for doctoral studies. The graduate programs demand a superior level of academic achievement requiring scholarship, independent judgment, academic rigor, and intellectual honesty.

Out of approximately 7,600 students on both the main campus and Fort Campbell campus, approximately 1,600 attend the Austin Peay Center at Fort Campbell (FC).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> APSU Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness, Enrollment and Degree Data System

Historically, the Fort Campbell campus has been seen by many faculty as a separate campus, not only geographically but also because

- the FC campus offers Associate of Science, Associate of Arts, and Associate of Applied Science degrees;
- the student body at FC is generally distinct from the student body on the main campus;
- the FC education center is located on a military reservation and is administered under the auspices of the U.S. Government;
- the schedule of eight-week courses separated by a four-week hiatus is designed to encourage military personnel to pursue educational opportunities;
- the University's Memorandum of Understanding with FC states that 50 percent of the students should be active duty personnel, 25 percent dependents, and 25 percent civilian personnel; thus, the avowed purpose of the FC center is to provide soldiers and their dependents with educational opportunities, including a heavy dose of degrees in applied fields, such as engineering technology, construction management, and culinary arts;
- the Bachelor of Professional Studies at FC is designed to allow a person who has a variety of credits from several institutions to bundle academic credits and add sufficient coursework to attain a bachelor's degree;
- the interaction between the FC and main campus is not uniform. Some faculty on main campus teach a course at times at FC, but other faculty never teach at FC. Some students complete their entire program of courses at FC. Some students enroll in courses at both the main campus and FC.

In short, the FC campus and the main campus have different cultures based upon their missions, students, and teaching schedules. However, in the last three years, a significant effort has been made to ensure that FC is given proper recognition and resources so that the two campuses can be seen as a unified institution.

Although officially a regional university, APSU also simultaneously serves unofficially as a community college. Thus, 80 percent of the students who attend Austin Peay are from Montgomery County or the eight contiguous counties that surround Clarksville in part because the closest in-state community college is in Nashville—Nashville State Technical Community College (NSTCC)—and Austin Peay students, because of their crowded schedules that include work, family, and school, tend to forego the daily round-trip to NSTCC that would take about two hours. Additionally, the FC campus attracts nontraditional students who are composed of active duty military personnel, dependents of those personnel, and civilians. Most of those students live on the military base or close to it.

The varying quality of education in the surrounding counties of our service area also accounts for the high number of students who are admitted to APSU with academic deficiencies and required to take Developmental Studies classes. The educational profile of our region may also account for some of the academic preparatory issues we face. For instance, the percent of college graduates in our service area ranges from 10 to 19 percent (by

county) compared to the national average of 24 percent.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Tennessee is below the national average in terms of college graduates, with 19 percent of adults possessing the baccalaureate degree.

In addition to preparatory issues, many students who come to Austin Peay juggle a heavy workload with academic classes. The literature on student employment says that students should not work more than twenty hours per week. Otherwise, their academic performance tends to slip. It is not uncommon for our students to work more than thirty hours a week and continue to fulfill familial responsibilities while taking a full load of classes. Not uncommonly, professors will note that a student is struggling in class because he or she is overextended, and the student will end up dropping the class. At the same time, students who have such crowded schedules often are receiving financial aid and must maintain 12 semester hours to be eligible for full financial assistance. Because of their very tight schedules, these students may not have time to participate fully in extracurricular activities, and they can be easily frustrated if the window of time they have scheduled for conducting campus business does not allow them sufficient time to complete that business for whatever reason.

With the completion of a new 300-room unit, Hand Village, in the fall of 2003, 1,400 rooms are available on-campus for students. Out of a main campus student body of approximately 6,000, about 21 percent live on campus. The rest are commuter students. The approximately 1,600 students at the Fort Campbell campus also are commuter students. The significant number of commuter students helps explain low attendance at a number of campus events, including evening concerts, dramas, and athletic contests. Indeed, an analysis of our schedule of classes shows that the vast majority of our classes are scheduled from 7:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. Very few classes are scheduled in the afternoon and evening. Commuter students tend to come to class and leave for work or family obligations and return when they must attend classes again.

The student body at APSU is quite diverse with 65 percent Caucasian, 19 percent African American, 5 percent Hispanic, and 11 percent Other. Of those students, 37 percent are men and 63 percent women, which fits with a national trend of more women than men enrolling in higher education. Although we do not have statistics concerning the number of students who have children, repeated concerns about students bringing their children to class when the public schools are closed suggest that nontraditional students often balance school, work, and care for young children.

Approximately 60 percent of the student body receives some form of financial aid.<sup>4</sup> In addition, many students work outside of class. One reason that students work and apply for financial aid is that we do not have sufficient academic scholarships. For the 2003-2004 academic year, we were unable to fund three hundred students who qualified for an academic scholarship. Thus, we are not competitive in attracting academically-gifted students who apply to APSU.

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census 2000, Survey of Population, County Level Data

<sup>4</sup> APSU Office of Student Financial Aid & Veterans Affairs and APSU Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness

The faculty at Austin Peay are required to teach 24 teaching load credits each academic year – typically 24 semester hours of coursework. This heavy teaching load coupled with a significant service expectation leaves little time for scholarship. Faculty recognize the priority of teaching and dedicate themselves to that task. In comparison with the other TBR universities, Austin Peay has the highest percentage of full professors. In fact, across campus senior faculty who have dedicated their lives to Austin Peay can be found in virtually every department. Some have never taught anywhere else. Within the next five years, it is estimated that approximately 30 percent of the faculty will retire, and the campus will be busy recruiting new faculty. The change in faculty status from many full professors to more assistant and associate professors will surely change the campus climate as new faculty bring different perspectives to the teaching and learning environment.

The past five years have brought significant change and, in some cases, turmoil to APSU. The previous president received a vote of no confidence from the Faculty Senate. In addition to the no-confidence vote, in January 1999 a Level 4 tornado ripped through Clarksville and left in its wake a good bit of damage to the Austin Peay campus. These two events—the destructive tornado and the no-confidence vote—have left a deep mark on those who experienced them and were followed by the resignation of the previous president. President Hoppe came to the campus in January 2000 when the pieces of both events were being picked up. Rebuilding morale and trust is a work in progress. Part of that rebuilding has included restructuring the academic departments, recruiting both internally and externally new leadership from the department, dean, and vice president levels; consequently, the administration has also changed considerably during the last five years. Indeed, during the last two years, four department chairs with long-standing tenure at Austin Peay have been replaced, and eight chairs in total are new chairs. Although the present four deans are not newcomers to campus, all are interims, with searches for permanent deans to be finalized by late spring of 2004. Of the three vice presidents, only one has been at Austin Peay seven years. The other two, although not new to the TBR system, have been in place one to three years. President Hoppe began her fourth year in January of 2004.

The change in senior administration has been accompanied by changes in personnel and administrative philosophy. When President Hoppe arrived on campus, Austin Peay had no online courses. Today, we have sixty-one online courses and three degree programs offered online. In addition, we are very much involved in a system-wide, collaborative degree program, the Regents' Online Degree Program (RODP). Thus, in a matter of a few years, the faculty have taken on the challenge of learning how to communicate with students online and creating a variety of online courses.

Change at Austin Peay has also been accelerated by recent TBR initiatives, in response to the state's concern about allocating resources more effectively to higher education. After a decade-long decline in state financial support for higher education, the Tennessee legislature in 2001 decided that higher education had to ensure that it could do "more with less." In response to state concerns, in 2001, TBR engaged in an exercise entitled "Defining Our Future." The thrust of "Defining Our Future" is to do more with less. To accomplish this Herculean feat, TBR has instructed the campuses to reduce all degree programs to 120

semester hours (with the exception of those that cannot be reduced to 120 without endangering accreditation, e.g., music, art, and nursing). To facilitate transferability among TBR institutions, the campuses have developed a common core of 41 general education hours. The reduction in Austin Peay's core has been a catalyst in the campus reconsidering and redefining its liberal arts mission because Austin Peay's designation as the state's comprehensive public liberal arts university was staked primarily on our large (48 to 54 hours) liberal arts core required of all students.

Another consequence of "Defining Our Future" is the shifting of remedial and developmental studies to community colleges. Because the state funds community colleges at two-thirds of the rate for universities, remedial programs, once part of the university curriculum, have been transferred to community colleges, and the Developmental Studies Program (DSP) will be reduced in funding to the community college rate in 2005. The intention of this cut in funding is to encourage universities to cease offering DSP courses, thus increasing the enrollments of community colleges. Austin Peay has yet to determine whether to negotiate with Nashville State Technical Community College (NSTCC) to develop a cooperative agreement whereby NSTCC would provide the personnel for teaching developmental courses and APSU would provide the facilities. Because a significant number of our students need developmental courses, including minority students, making these courses available to students is an ongoing issue of access that historically has been at the heart of TBR's mission but appears to be waning in importance as budgetary issues take precedence.

In short, Austin Peay is at a crossroads. The questions we ask are the following:

- Can we continue to tout our role as a liberal arts university when, in fact, the 48- to 54-hour core that defined us as a liberal arts institution is no longer possible and the 120-hour requirement greatly limits the opportunity to devise a curriculum flexible enough so that all students can fully experience the intellectual rewards of a liberal arts education?
- Since funding is based on student credit hour production, can we afford to lose the revenue generated by DSP courses, even when the funding for those courses will be reduced in 2005?
- Indeed, since the only new money available to us at present (and for the foreseeable future) is money generated by increased enrollment, what can we do to ensure that students stay at APSU until they graduate?
- If we recruit and admit students, do we not have the responsibility to provide the programs and services that will give them the best possible chance of success, regardless of their level of preparedness?
- In addition, how can we move the campus community to embrace wholeheartedly a service culture that promotes student retention and success?

## **Evidence of Engagement of the APSU Community in the Development of the QEP**

From the earliest discussions of potential topics in the summer of 2002 through the fuller elaboration of the plan during the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 academic years, input from the entire University community has been instrumental in the development of our QEP. This community includes faculty, administrators, staff, students, alumni, and board members, all of whom have been solicited for ideas, support, and/or participation in developing the QEP. Following initial vetting of potential topics among the reaffirmation leadership team—which includes the University President, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Accreditation Liaison, and the Faculty Representative who co-chairs the team—the QEP was addressed in a variety of public forums, as described below.

The first dialogue with campus leaders took place at a pre-Fall 2002 administrative retreat for vice presidents, deans, directors, coordinators, and department chairs. At this retreat, members of the leadership team explained the requirements and parameters of the QEP, described plans that were developed by pilot institutions, presented some preliminary ideas for the project, and solicited suggestions for additional topics or refinement of the preliminary ideas. Among the issues discussed were the University's liberal arts mission, student retention and persistence to graduation, academic advisement, the liberal arts core, a freshman experience course, online learning, adjunct instruction, learning communities, and learning cohorts (Appendix 1). Throughout this dialogue, concerns about the University's retention and persistence-to-graduation rates drew much attention, suggesting a likely focus for the QEP. Further, several participants noted that many of the other topics generating interest (e.g., a freshman seminar, learning communities) were relevant to student success and thus might be successfully integrated into a QEP whose focus was improving student retention. Among those supporting this integrated approach were the library faculty, who in August 2002 voted to endorse retention as the QEP focus, advocated for a freshman experience course as part of the plan, and requested the involvement of the information literacy librarians in the planning process.

The earliest discussion with the entire University community was a presentation during the President's Fall Convocation in the week prior to the start of Fall 2002 classes. The University's faculty, staff, and administration were invited to this presentation. On this occasion, the reaffirmation leadership team introduced and described the QEP as part of the reaffirmation process as defined in the SACS *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* and again solicited input for QEP topics that would be especially appropriate to student learning and consistent with the mission, goals, and concerns of the University. This presentation was followed by information-sharing sessions with the Deans Council and the Faculty Senate in early Fall 2002.

As a result of these meetings, discussions, and written feedback, the leadership team drafted a "Proposal for the Quality Enhancement Plan" and distributed it to the entire University community via a campus-wide e-mail on September 12, 2002. The proposal announced a QEP that would address the global topic of retention through a three-pronged

approach, including a freshman seminar, new initiatives for academic advisement, and new programs addressing student life and support services, with an early alert system integrated into all three components (Appendix 2). There followed two open forums on the QEP proposal designed to elicit feedback, further refine the plan, and ensure participation and support from all stakeholders. These forums were well attended by faculty, staff, and administrators. Members of the leadership team also met with the Faculty Senate and the Student Government Association (SGA) to discuss the proposal. The SGA subsequently held an open forum to encourage student feedback on the proposal, with the Vice President for Academic Affairs in attendance to answer student questions and concerns. The SGA President and Vice Presidents followed this forum with written statements of support and advice for the proposed QEP.

The QEP proposal was also publicized in the student newspaper and in the December 2002 issue of the electronically-distributed APSU *SACS Update* newsletter (Appendix 3). Further, the University President has sought advice and support for the QEP from representative members of our alumni and governing board. Specifically, she has discussed our proposed plan with The President's Circle of Advisors, which includes business and community leaders; the APSU National Alumni Association Board; and local representative of the TBR, Board Member Demetria Boyd.

For the purposes of conducting initial research and planning, the leadership team next appointed a QEP Planning Committee composed of faculty, administrators, staff, and undergraduate students. Members represented eleven academic departments plus the library, two college offices, and fourteen administrative divisions or offices. This large and diverse Planning Committee was organized into five separate subcommittees as follows: the Freshman Course Subcommittee, the Advising Subcommittee, the Student Life and Support Services Subcommittee, the Retention Data Subcommittee, and the Early Alert Subcommittee (Appendix 4). All committee members convened for a first meeting in mid-October 2002. At this meeting, the leadership team presented the subcommittees with their individual charges and a calendar for action. This large-group meeting was followed by break-out sessions for the individual subcommittees to begin discussing their charge and making preliminary plans. At this first meeting and again during a Spring 2003 session, the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness presented information and statistical data on APSU students and retention.

Through all of these presentations, forums, discussions, and publications, the leadership team has actively and effectively engaged all constituencies within the University community in the QEP, as follows:

- Faculty
- Students
- Administration: President, Vice Presidents, Deans, Directors, Chairs, Coordinators
- Advisory Groups: Deans Council, Faculty Senate, Student Government Association
- Staff from such key offices as Admissions, Finance and Administration, the Registrar, and Student Life and Leadership

- The Divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs
- The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness
- University Alumni
- The Governing Board

### **How the Subcommittees Addressed the QEP**

Each subcommittee of the QEP Planning Committee was charged with conducting research and preparing reports and recommendations for its separate facet of the QEP. Following the initial meeting of the full group in October 2002, the subcommittees worked independently throughout the 2002-2003 year to perform their function.

**The Freshman Course Subcommittee** was charged with developing a pilot course for Fall 2003 called “Liberal Arts and University Life,” benchmarking model courses from other institutions, recommending placement of the course within an appropriate unit, identifying potential teachers for the pilot sections, preparing a standard syllabus, selecting textbooks and materials, helping train instructors for the pilot sections, and proposing methods of assessing the course and its success in terms of student retention. After the Freshman Course Subcommittee reviewed research about first-year courses and discussed the content of the first-year course at APSU, it selected a textbook for the pilot course. The publisher of the textbook sent a trainer to provide pedagogical insights into teaching the first-year course, and about forty faculty and staff who expressed interest in teaching the pilot course attended the training session on campus. Then a team prepared a syllabus for the course (Appendix 5), selected an additional book to highlight the liberal arts, determined grading standards, and sent out a call for those who were interested in teaching a section of the three-credit pilot course. Those selected to teach the course were asked to attend an orientation session in which the syllabus was discussed and questions about the syllabus answered. Throughout Fall 2003, teachers of the first-year course met as a group regularly to assess successes and obstacles in the course and to provide additional pedagogical insights into how to teach particular modules in the pilot course. In addition, the subcommittee appointed two people to collect data on the pilot course, including the Director of Institutional Research and Planning.

**The Advising Subcommittee** was charged with reviewing current procedures, training, and oversight for academic advising; determining strengths and weaknesses; benchmarking exemplary advisement programs and procedures at other institutions; and preparing a report and recommendations for changes in advisement that might positively impact student retention. The subcommittee divided into smaller groups tasked with working on separate facets of the charge, e.g., advising centers, advisor training, advisor incentives, advisor accountability, peer mentoring, current practices, and research. Institutions from the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) were used to benchmark best practices, while information was also gathered on advising centers in the TBR four-year universities. The advising subcommittee presented its final report and recommendations in June 2003 (Appendix 6).

**The Student Life and Support Services Subcommittee** was charged with reviewing current programs and operations involved in student life and support services that have an impact on retention, determining strengths and weaknesses, benchmarking exemplary programs and operations at other institutions, investigating possible new plans or procedures that might positively impact student retention, and preparing a report and recommendations for improvements. The work of this group was augmented by that of the Core Retention Team, which is described more fully on page 28 of this QEP.

**The Retention Data Subcommittee** was charged with collecting, analyzing, assessing, and reporting on retention data including official withdrawals, unofficial stop-outs, and factors affecting stop-out students. This subcommittee presented initial data to the SACS Leadership Team and the full QEP Planning Committee during an October start-up meeting and shared further findings in Spring 2003.

**The First Alert Subcommittee** was composed of members selected from each of the other subcommittees plus a chair to oversee their work. This group was charged with providing communication and coordination of early alert plans among the QEP subcommittees and preparing a report with recommendations. This group also used COPLAC and other institutions to benchmark best practices in the field and submitted its report in June 2003. This report, including recommendations for an early warning system, is included with the report from the Advising Subcommittee (Appendix 6).

### **Recommendations from the Four Principal Subcommittees and the Core Retention Team**

#### **Freshman Course Subcommittee Recommendations**

Based on the success of the pilot first-year course during the first third of the semester and the overwhelming national data that confirms the benefit of a first-year course, the VPAA began processing the paperwork necessary to institute a one-credit course (changed from three credits due to an external mandate to reduce total degree hours) as a requirement for all first-time freshmen based on the following recommendations:

- Require all first-time freshmen, full-time and part-time, to pass the one-hour first-year course.
- Transfer the administration of the first-year course from Academic Affairs to the Director of Retention (later changed in title to Director of Academic Support).
- Annually provide training for all who teach the first-year course, including those who have taught the course previously.
- Annually review the syllabus for the first-year course to determine whether it needs to be modified in light of student evaluations of the course.
- Appoint a committee of faculty to monitor the quality of the first-year course by assessing its effectiveness yearly.

## **Advising Subcommittee Recommendations**

Research conducted by the QEP Subcommittee on Advising underscored the importance of effective advising in retaining students, particularly those in the early years of their college career, those who are undecided about their major and career choice, and those at risk of dropping out due to personal or financial difficulties. Beyond the essential role of providing sound academic advice, a faculty advisor can serve as an information source or conduit to university services (e.g., counseling, financial aid, tutoring) that the student might need to succeed in classes and stay in school. Finally, the advisor may be the one faculty member with whom the student has a relationship at the university. Research such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) has demonstrated that having a positive connection with a faculty member is an important factor in student engagement and retention. Although students may also know the professors in their classes, students sometimes feel that they should not “bother” professors about issues outside of the parameters of the class. In contrast, an advisor does not have class-specific connotations and is thus someone with whom the student might feel comfortable discussing any issue of an academic or non-academic nature. A faculty advisor, therefore, can be an important component in an early-alert system and retention program.

Currently at APSU, students who have declared a major are advised by faculty within the appropriate department. Students who are undecided are assigned to faculty across the University who have been designated as advisors for undeclared majors. For several years prior to June 2002, APSU operated an Academic Advisement Center that served undecided students and was a center of operations for advisor training. At the time of its closing, the center was serving 440 students and was staffed by a director, a secretary, two staff members, and faculty advisors (ten in spring 2002) who had reassigned time from teaching to work in the center. Due to budgetary constraints, the center was closed in Spring 2002, and the University went to a decentralized model of advisement. Students who were being served by the center were reassigned to faculty within the College of Arts and Sciences, and all new undecided students since that time have been assigned to the designated “undeclared majors” advisors around campus.

Given the importance of good advising, advisor training must clearly be a University priority, and some training is currently provided for advisors at APSU. Workshops are held each spring for all faculty who will advise entering freshmen and transfer students during the summer Transitions program. Additionally, the Registrar’s Office has provided training in the use of electronic resources for advisors available through our computerized student information system and on the University web page. No special training has been provided to the advisors for undecided students.

Based on its review of academic advising at APSU, the Advising Subcommittee recommended that APSU continue to support efforts that are working but also seek ways to improve our current advisement program and services, all with an eye to improving student retention and success. Specific recommendations include the following:

- Regular and consistent training should be required for all faculty advisors, including workshops as part of the orientation of new faculty and mandatory refresher training at least every three years for all faculty. Such training should be

hands-on, detailed, and focused on campus-wide advising issues such as the general education core, DSP deficiencies, high school deficiencies, and electronic resources for faculty advisors. To improve advising for the individual majors, departments should conduct their own training or assign advising mentors to all new faculty.

- To encourage improved advising, the University should institute new incentives such as recognizing outstanding advisors with a cash award and increasing the emphasis on advising effectiveness in tenure, promotion, and merit-pay reviews. The University should also establish a system for student evaluations of advisors similar to the system currently in place for evaluating instructors, and department chairs should try to ensure equity in advising loads.
- Frequent advising should be required for new students. Based on its research into best practices, which revealed that some institutions require frequent (even weekly) meetings with advisors, the subcommittee recommended that freshman students be required to meet with their advisor often during the first year. The initial recommendation was six meetings per semester, but feedback obtained from campus QEP forums indicated that three meetings per term would be preferable for APSU. The number and timing of these meetings will be specified as a requirement in the syllabus of the new freshman experience course.
- The University should reinstate centralized advising for undecided students and reestablish a center for advisement as soon as this is financially feasible. An advising center offers undecided students a central location for their advising needs, a sense of belonging, and advisors who are specially trained to work with them. Research indicates that advising centers can have a powerful impact on student success and retention. At least half of the sixteen COPLAC institutions use an advising center to serve their undecided students and provide advisor support, while all five of the other TBR four-year institutions operate an advising center for their undecided students. An advising center at APSU could also oversee advisor training and the type of peer-mentoring program that was proposed by the student member of the Advising Subcommittee (see Appendix 6).

### **Student Life and Support Services Subcommittee Recommendations**

The Student Life and Support Services Subcommittee divided into two groups: the Student Services Subcommittee and the African-American Student Retention Subcommittee, which was later superseded by a Minority Retention Task Force.

#### Student Services Subcommittee

The Student Services group used the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) to review and benchmark current programs and services. The CAS standards are designed to establish, adopt, and disseminate unified and timely professional standards for student services, student development programs, academic support services, and related higher education programs and services. These standards promote assessment and improvement of higher education services and programs through self-study, evaluation, and the use of these established standards.

Each Student Affairs and Enrollment Services unit established a self-study team consisting of eight to ten individuals with at least three to five being students, and at least two from outside of the unit. Each team examined the relevant standard, compiled and reviewed documentary evidence, reported all evidence in a narrative section of its report, and appended the documents to a final self-assessment report (which, due to size, is available to reviewers in our document room).

Consistent with its charge, the Student Services Subcommittee met with students to discuss a wide range of problems and opportunities in student retention. These discussions were informed by the available data from the 1999 and 2000 Student Satisfaction Inventory, the University's "Withdrawal Survey," and the results from the CAS standards review. The subcommittee identified an extensive list of retention goals and recommendations for improving the overall retention of our students. From that list, the SACS Leadership Team selected the following as most critical for the first phase of the QEP implementation:

- Recognizing the importance of service to our students, the subcommittee recommended that the University adopt service excellence standards for all student service units. This could entail the establishment of orientation, training, and a reward system for service excellence.
- To better prepare students for success at the University, the subcommittee recommended that the New Student Transition program be expanded to include a two-day program for traditional freshman students and a one-day program for nontraditional freshmen and transfer students. Additionally, the subcommittee called for expanded fall welcome week activities for all students.
- To provide students with easy access to enrollment service units, the subcommittee recommended that a one-stop triage unit, first piloted in Fall 2003, be made permanent as of Fall 2004 in Ellington Hall. The triage unit will comprise representatives from Admissions, Financial Aid, Veterans Affairs, Records, and the Business Office.

#### African-American Retention Subcommittee and the Minority Retention Task Force

Under the Geier Consent Decree approved by the Court in January 2001, Austin Peay State University was required "to assess the current retention practices and programs and propose changes to those practices that will close the persistence gap between black and white students." To satisfy the Geier mandate, APSU has engaged in several efforts to study and improve retention of African-American and other minority students. These efforts have included the use of focus groups, consultants, and existing quantitative data comparing APSU's minority retention to other institutions.

As part of the QEP, a subcommittee of the Student Life and Support Services group began deliberations on issues affecting African-American student retention. Subsequently, because of the Geier mandate and the University's recognition of the magnitude of minority attrition, the work of that subcommittee was handed off to a larger Minority Retention Task Force appointed by the President in July 2003. The Task Force is composed of the following subcommittees: African-American; Latino; and Asian, Native-American, and Other Minorities. Additionally, a Data Review group collected and analyzed data related to

minority student retention. The Minority Retention Task Force will complete its work by the end of this academic year, and its recommendations will be folded into the QEP at that time.

### **First Alert Subcommittee Recommendations**

The First Alert Subcommittee reviewed best practices at six institutions that have successful freshman experience programs as well as notable retention and persistence rates. These institutions share several factors which seem to enhance their ability to retain students.

One common practice is the incorporation of early-warning and retention activities into a freshman experience course. One example is assigning peer mentors or facilitators to the freshman seminars. These peer facilitators carefully monitor attendance, academic problems, and even personal or emotional difficulties students encounter during their freshman year. Some are even intrusive in their responsibilities for seeing that their students attend classes regularly and complete assignments in a timely fashion. Another example is the required use of a daily planner to help freshman students keep track of exams, assignment due dates, and other class-related activities. During the first week of classes, students in the freshman seminars are required to fill in all important dates and information related to their classes. Faculty teaching freshmen-level courses are sometimes asked to initial information pertaining to their particular classes, thus ensuring that both instructor and student are aware of key dates.

A second common practice is regular monitoring of at-risk students through “Early Alert” or “Student at Risk” forms. These forms are completed by instructors of freshman classes and submitted to an appropriate administrative office (e.g., Director of Academic Services), who is charged with following-up through phone calls, appointments, and informal meetings with the student who has been identified as experiencing problems.

Finally, several of the institutions contacted have created learning communities where students take classes in the residence halls (a living/learning environment). Some also cluster students into several common classes to provide a “buddy system” or a student “pod.”

The following recommendations resulted from the First Alert Subcommittee’s efforts:

- An early-warning system should be instituted at APSU and overseen by an office responsible for student retention and success (e.g., Office of Academic Support). “First alert” or “student at risk” cards should be distributed to faculty teaching lower-level classes at the beginning of each semester. Completed cards should be sent to the Director of Academic Support, whose staff would then make personal contact with the at-risk students.
- Some first-alert and retention mechanisms such as mandatory attendance, use of daily planners, and use of peer facilitators should be built into a required freshman experience course.
- The concept of clustering “pods” of freshmen into the same classes should be started on a trial basis to see if strong bonds and learning communities evolve.

### **Core Retention Team Recommendations**

Because of the critical need to improve student retention, the SACS Leadership Team wanted to ensure that all existing retention efforts be identified and reviewed in light of the QEP committees' work. Consequently, eight key administrators responsible for current retention activities met weekly throughout Fall 2003 and developed a report of their findings. The recommendations of this Core Retention Team are summarized below (and the entire report will be available in our document room):

- Develop a computer-assisted tracking system for first-time, full-time freshmen focused on student input variables in order to show graduation, departure, and continuance rates.
- Recognize that the freshman year is unique in the college/university experience, and develop a coordinated First Year Experience (FYE) program that includes comprehensive orientation of new students, the freshman experience course, and intrusive advising.
- Further develop the current Learning Center to become an Academic Support Center with an advisory committee that will include faculty and students.
- Plan and organize technology-enhanced student collaboration with faculty, peer mentors, and other students that transcends the traditional boundaries of time and place, to include fireside chats and learning communities.

### **Implementation of Recommendations: Action Items and Assessment**

After careful consideration of the research, analysis, reports, and recommendations of the Quality Enhancement Plan subcommittees and the Core Retention Team, the SACS Leadership Team has determined that the following action items (Chart 4) are the most crucial for implementation of the QEP goals described on page 6.

<b>Chart 4 - Action Items of the APSU Quality Enhancement Plan</b>	
Action Item 1	The University will institute a freshman seminar (LART 1000: Liberal Arts and University Life) to be required for all first-time freshmen. A pilot course was taught in Fall 2003.
Action Item 2	The University will fully implement an "Early Alert" system to identify and work with students at risk of failing or dropping out. A pilot system went into effect in 2003-04.
Action Item 3	The University will institute a centralized unit responsible for advising of undecided students.
Action Item 4	The University will implement mandatory advisor training for new faculty and refresher training every three years for current advisors.
Action Item 5	The University will implement an accountability system providing for student evaluation of advisors and incentive programs for quality advising.
Action Item 6	The University will adopt service excellence standards for all student service units and implement an accountability system providing for assessment and evaluation.
Action Item 7	The University will expand the programs associated with New Student Transition and New Student Orientation.
Action Item 8	The University will fully implement a "one-stop, triage unit" for enrollment service and business office activities.

Action Item 9	The University will develop a comprehensive minority retention program.
Action Item 10	The University will develop and implement a computer-assisted tracking system for first-time freshmen to identify at-risk students each term and plan intervention strategies.
Action Item 11	The APSU Learning Center will be further developed to become an Academic Support Center with an advisory committee that will include faculty and students.
Action Item 12	The Academic Support Center will plan and organize student collaboration with faculty, peer mentors, and other students.
Action Item 13	The University will conduct further research on questions and concerns generated by the analysis of data related to retention issues.

Each of these purposeful and strategic action items will form the basis of the APSU Quality Enhancement Plan and will be assessed on an annual basis for progress made and additional needs for action. In the chart to follow (Chart 5), each action item is shown with principal unit(s) responsible, specific implementation activities in 2004-05, methods of assessment for the activity, and criteria for determining success. Our Criteria for Success take into consideration the mobility of a military culture, which creates a variable that we cannot predict or measure.

<b>Chart 5 - Action Items (with Detail) of the APSU Quality Enhancement Plan</b>	
<b>Action Item #1</b>	The University will institute a freshman seminar (LART 1000: Liberal Arts and University Life) to be required for all first-time freshmen. A pilot course was taught in Fall 2003.
<b>Principal Unit(s) Responsible for Action</b>	Office of Academic Affairs, Director of Academic Support, University Registrar, and Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness
<b>Implementation Activities in 2004-05</b>	A. Academic Affairs will appoint a Course Planning and Oversight Committee composed of faculty from each college and representatives from key areas that provide support for academic endeavors (e.g., the library). This committee will be charged with creating a common syllabus, overseeing annual training of LART 1000 instructors, and reviewing the syllabus annually to determine needed modifications based on student evaluations and instructor input. B. Instructors will be selected and trained for the fall and spring sections of LART 1000. C. The course will be listed in the 2004-05 Undergraduate Bulletin and the Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 schedule of classes. D. All first-time freshmen will be required to take the course.
<b>Methods of Assessment</b>	A. Student satisfaction surveys will be given to all students enrolled in LART 1000 in fall and spring. B. Standard course evaluations will be administered each term. C. The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness will collect and analyze data annually to determine the course's impact on student retention.
<b>Criteria for Determining Success</b>	A. Students will be better prepared to succeed in their academic courses and university careers. B. Retention of students from their freshman to sophomore years and beyond will be improved. We will have closed the fall-to-fall retention gap of first-time freshmen by 2 percentage points within two years and by 5 percentage points within five years.

<b>Action Item #2</b>	The University will fully implement an "Early Alert" system to identify and work with students at risk of failing or dropping out. A pilot system went into effect in 2003-04.
<b>Principal Unit(s) Responsible for Action</b>	Director of Academic Support, Office of Student Affairs, and Office of Academic Affairs
<b>Implementation Activities in 2004-05</b>	A. Faculty will be asked to report students exhibiting characteristics such as excessive absences, tardiness, low performance on tests, etc. B. The students identified through this process as being "at-risk" will be contacted to enable early intervention by a counselor and to make appropriate services available. These students will be assisted with the goal of improving performance in the current and subsequent semesters. C. Graduate student tutors will be trained to develop knowledge of the student support services available on the Austin Peay State University campus.
<b>Methods of Assessment</b>	All students referred to Early Alert will be tracked for results.
<b>Criteria for Determining Success</b>	The service will be out of the pilot-phase and fully operational in fall of 2004.
<b>Action Item #3</b>	The University will create a centralized unit responsible for advising of undecided students.
<b>Principal Unit(s) Responsible for Action</b>	Office of Counseling, Advising & Career Services, Director of Academic Support, and Office of the Registrar
<b>Implementation Activities in 2004-05</b>	A. Two professional staff advisors will be hired, bringing to four the available undecided advisors at the main campus and Austin Peay Center at Fort Campbell. B. A committee will be appointed to develop a comprehensive training program for advisors of undecided students. C. All undecided students will be advised by these trained professional advisors.
<b>Methods of Assessment</b>	A. Students will be asked to complete surveys of their satisfaction with the services provided. B. The staff advisors will report to the Director of Counseling, Advising and Career Services, who will evaluate their work in an annual performance review.
<b>Criteria for Determining Success</b>	A. A centralized advising unit will be functional by July 2004. B. All undecided students will be advised by professional advisors assigned to this unit. C. Although basic advisor training should occur in late spring of 2004 (see Action Item #4), the comprehensive advising training program will be in place by Spring 2005.
<b>Action Item #4</b>	The University will implement mandatory advisor training for new faculty and refresher training every three years for current advisors.
<b>Principal Unit(s) Responsible for Action</b>	Office of the Registrar, Office of Counseling, Advising & Career Services, Director of Academic Support, and Office of Academic Affairs

<p><b>Implementation Activities in 2004-05</b></p>	<p>A. In the late spring of 2004, an advisor training session will be conducted by the Office of the Registrar and the Office of Counseling, Advising &amp; Career Services. This training session will be required of all faculty/professional staff participating in the Transitions programs in summer of 2004. The basic components of this session(s) must be: 1) training on the basic Student Information System (SIS) and Web for Faculty screens used by advisors; 2) review of the core curriculum and differences by degree type; 3) review of the basic differences between degree programs, i.e. needs for calculus, foreign language, etc.; and 4) distribution of an Advising Manual containing a quick reference sheet for SIS, core curriculum, major curriculum, and enrichment program opportunities. B. New faculty will undergo advisor training as part of New Faculty Orientation to the University. C. In the future, all faculty will participate in refresher training at least every three years. Ideally these training sessions will be developed to occur on October 1 for preparation for spring registration and on March 1 for preparation for summer and fall registration. The spring session will always be a requirement for advisors participating in Transitions.</p>
<p><b>Methods of Assessment</b></p>	<p>A. Faculty participation in the advising sessions will be tracked by the Office of Academic Affairs and the Registrar. B. Surveys will be conducted to gauge faculty satisfaction with each training session. Ideas for improvement will be solicited through these surveys.</p>
<p><b>Criteria for Determining Success</b></p>	<p>A. An advising website linked to Academic Support and an Advising Manual will be developed and simplified for ease of use by faculty. B. Tracking of faculty participation in the advising training sessions will reveal that by April of 2005 at least 90 of the 270 regular, fulltime faculty will have participated in a training session. C. An advising training session will be held each term beginning in Spring 2004.</p>
<p><b>Action Item #5</b></p>	<p>The University will implement an accountability system providing for student evaluation of advisors and incentive programs for quality advising.</p>
<p><b>Principal Unit(s) Responsible for Action</b></p>	<p>Office of Academic Affairs, Deans, Department Chairs, and Faculty Senate</p>
<p><b>Implementation Activities in 2004-05</b></p>	<p>A. Department chairs will examine the distribution of advisees among faculty and make an effort to ensure equity of load beginning in Fall 2004. B. A Faculty Senate committee will be appointed in Fall 2004 to review a proposed Advisor Evaluation Form and develop a plan for its implementation in Fall 2005. In addition, this same committee will develop a method for administering a faculty incentive program that will honor one "Outstanding Advisor" with a plaque and \$500 cash award. The first award will be given in Spring 2005.</p>
<p><b>Methods of Assessment</b></p>	<p>Data obtained from the Advisor Evaluation Form will reflect levels of student satisfaction with their advisement process. The outcome of the evaluations will be used to determine faculty needs for further advisement training and/or adjustment of duties by department chairs to compensate for a reduced advisee load.</p>

<b>Criteria for Determining Success</b>	Results will include a more efficient processing of students during pre-registration periods due to enhanced training of faculty and more awareness of advisement quality. The goal will be that 70 percent of faculty are rated "excellent" or "good" on advisor evaluation documents in Fall 2005.
<b>Action Item #6</b>	The University will adopt service excellence standards for all student service units and implement an accountability system providing for assessment and evaluation.
<b>Principal Unit(s) Responsible for Action</b>	Student Affairs, Enrollment Services, Business Office, and Human Resources
<b>Implementation Activities in 2004-05</b>	A. Ongoing training for service enhancement will be developed. B. Available training opportunities through Human Resources (i.e. handling difficult situations and conflict resolution) will be expanded. C. An orientation for newly-hired staff that includes service expectations will be created. D. A monitoring and reward system for service excellence will be developed.
<b>Methods of Assessment</b>	A. Service excellence will be included as a part of the annual performance appraisal. B. Offices will regularly assess and report on internal and external views of the service culture for the unit.
<b>Criteria for Determining Success</b>	Due to the increased emphasis on service excellence, the ratings of Student Service units on the Student Satisfaction Inventory, Enrolled Student Survey, and National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) will be at or above the national norm.
<b>Action Item #7</b>	The University will expand the programs associated with New Student Transition and New Student Orientation.
<b>Principal Unit(s) Responsible for Action</b>	Director of Academic Support, Transitions Steering Committee, Enrollment Services, Student Services, Business Office, and Academic Advising Infrastructure
<b>Implementation Activities in 2004-05</b>	A. The University will enhance the quality of the summer Transitions programs (both Freshman and Transfer) by: 1) establishing an early Scholarship Session option for traditional freshman scholarship students; 2) developing a one-week Bridge program for students admitted under alternative admission criteria; and 3) streamlining a one-day program geared toward transfer students and non-traditional freshmen. B. In addition to these activities, Fall Welcome Week activities will be expanded to include an Orientation session for all new students. Attendance at this event will be tied to LART 1000 classes.
<b>Methods of Assessment</b>	A. Retention rates for new students will be analyzed over the last three years and compared to future cohorts. B. Analysis of the events through student and family member evaluations will be conducted.

<b>Criteria for Determining Success</b>	Retention of new students in the Fall 2005 cohort will improve 2 percentage points over the figures seen in the 2000-2003 cohorts, which will put that figure at approximately 72 percent. Evaluations of the Transitions and Orientation events will reflect 80 percent of students rating the program and services as "good" or "excellent."
<b>Action Item #8</b>	The University will fully implement a "one-stop, triage unit" for enrollment service and business office activities.
<b>Principal Unit(s) Responsible for Action</b>	Office of Academic Affairs, Admissions, Office of the Registrar, Financial Aid & Veterans Affairs, and Office of the Registrar
<b>Implementation Activities in 2004-05</b>	A. During the summer of 2004, the AP Central Steering Committee will review what was learned from the pilot of this service during the spring of 2004. B. Changes from that review will be implemented and the service fully implemented in August 2004.
<b>Methods of Assessment</b>	A. Feedback will be collected from both the enrollment service and business office staff tasked to work in the unit and the main offices of the units represented in AP Central. B. Surveys will be done of students each semester to gauge satisfaction with the AP Central service and the offices represented there.
<b>Criteria for Determining Success</b>	When fully implemented, the service will be operational during all regular business hours and will offer - in a cross-trained environment - assistance with admission, advising processes, registration, drop/add, financial aid, and fee payment.
<b>Action Item #9</b>	The University will develop a comprehensive minority retention program.
<b>Principal Unit(s) Responsible for Action</b>	Office of Academic Support, African American Cultural Center, Office of Student Affairs, and Office of Academic Affairs
<b>Implementation Activities in 2004-05</b>	The study and recommendations being developed in spring 2004 by the Minority Retention Task Force will be reviewed by the SACS Leadership Team.
<b>Methods of Assessment</b>	To come from Task Force recommendations, which are due at the end of spring 2004.
<b>Criteria for Determining Success</b>	Fall-to-fall retention rates of students of color will be raised to the APSU average for all students by 2005.
<b>Action Item #10</b>	The University will develop and implement a computer-assisted tracking system for first-time freshmen to identify at-risk students each term and plan intervention strategies.

<b>Principal Unit(s) Responsible for Action</b>	Director of Academic Support, Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness, and Office of Academic Affairs
<b>Implementation Activities in 2004-05</b>	A. The University will identify variables that have a significant impact on student retention. In addition to the data in APSU's Student Information System, data gathered via CIRP, NSSE, and Student Satisfaction Survey will be used to complete the analysis of critical variables. B. The tracking system will be constructed by the Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness in consultation with the Office of Academic Support. C. All data will be compared with institutions of the same classification as generated by CSRDE.
<b>Methods of Assessment</b>	A predictive model and a computer-assisted tracking system will be developed and operational by June 2005.
<b>Criteria for Determining Success</b>	Future retention initiatives will be directly related to data analysis and the predictive model.
<b>Action Item #11</b>	The APSU Learning Center will be further developed to become an Academic Support Center with an advisory committee that will include faculty and students.
<b>Principal Unit(s) Responsible for Action</b>	Director of Academic Support, Office of Academic Affairs, and Office of Student Affairs
<b>Implementation Activities in 2004-05</b>	A. Tutoring staff will be created from a pool of graduate assistants and student scholarship recipients. B. A faculty advisory committee will be formed to assist in decision-making regarding the Center. C. Structured activities will be developed to ensure collaboration between the center and faculty and/or academic units. D. A communication plan will be developed to publicize services available through the center. E. Supplemental Instruction will be added for courses that have a failure/withdrawal rate in excess of 30 percent. F. The unit will work with Career Services to offer appropriate workshops that reflect the needs of students.
<b>Methods of Assessment</b>	Assessment will include weekly reports regarding Center use, student evaluations of peer tutoring sessions, tracking of student performance in classes for which tutoring and/or supplemental instruction are received, and faculty referrals.
<b>Criteria for Determining Success</b>	Data collection will reveal that peer tutoring and supplemental instruction make a positive difference in student performance; advisory committee evaluations and recommendations for changes will be reflected in Center practices; faculty referrals will increase and demand for services will reach maximum capacity.
<b>Action Item #12</b>	The Academic Support Center will plan and organize student collaboration with faculty, peer mentors, and other students.

<b>Principal Unit(s) Responsible for Action</b>	Director of Academic Support, Office of Student Affairs, and Office of Academic Affairs
<b>Implementation Activities in 2004-05</b>	A. Activities will be developed to facilitate student engagement in the academic community. B. Learning communities will be developed through initiatives involving residential students, commuter students, innovative class scheduling, and service learning. C. Appropriate activities will be incorporated into the LART 1000 course.
<b>Methods of Assessment</b>	Student and faculty participants in the events will be surveyed to determine satisfaction.
<b>Criteria for Determining Success</b>	Collaborative activities to engage students outside the classroom will be documented. Seventy percent of student evaluations will rate the activities as good to excellent in benefiting their learning experience.
<b>Action Item #13</b>	The University will conduct further research on questions and concerns generated by the analysis of data related to retention issues.
<b>Principal Unit(s) Responsible for Action</b>	Director of Academic Support, Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness, Office of Academic Affairs, and Office of Student Affairs
<b>Implementation Activities in 2004-05</b>	The researchers involved in the development of the Quality Enhancement Plan will continue to conduct further research on questions and concerns generated by the data analysis.
<b>Methods of Assessment</b>	As a part of the continuing research agenda in the area of retention, the University plans to do more follow-up surveys with students that withdraw from the institution, more analysis of the trends in remedial and developmental instruction, and more study of the admissions standards of the institution.
<b>Criteria for Determining Success</b>	The University will have completed its additional research agenda into a better understanding of student characteristics, institutional strengths and weaknesses, and challenges in the internal and external environment by spring 2006.

### **Comprehensive Evaluation of the QEP**

To determine whether we are successful in improving our fall-to-fall retention rates, the Office of Academic Support will collect data on the freshman cohort for Fall 2004 and subsequent terms, including the multiple aspects of the First-Year Experience (FYE) program. Specifically, we will

- evaluate the impact of the new freshman seminar on fall-to-fall retention;
- evaluate the use and success of the early alert program;
- evaluate the use and success of the new advisors for undecided students;
- evaluate the use and success of student support services.

We will use data collected by all components of the FYE to match student retention with student use of those services. The data that we collect from the above sources will enable us to make adjustments in our approach to retention throughout the next five years. Our goal is to reduce our retention gap, as measured in relation to the other four-year TBR institutions, by one percentage point per year for the next five years. By 2009, the fall-to-fall retention of freshmen will be approximately 75 percent.

To accomplish the above increase in fall-to-fall retention, the University will demonstrate that retention goals are a high priority within its strategic plan, will use that priority to ensure that adequate resources are allocated for the implementation of the retention initiatives, will monitor and assess the implementation of the initiatives, and will document the use of the assessment for improvement through the Institutional Effectiveness Tracking System.

In conclusion, Austin Peay State University affirms that it has developed a QEP that is vital to the improvement of student learning through the creation of innovative intervention strategies, enhanced academic support functions, and increased opportunities for student engagement. We stand committed not only to implementing the action plan for the QEP but also to accomplishing the long-term initiatives necessary to ensure the success of students at all levels.