Fall 2008 Quality Enhancement Survey Report

With Focus on Four Quality Enhancement Plan Topics

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Research

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1.0 Introduction

The Fall 2008 Quality Enhancement Survey (QES) gathered the responses of students, faculty, staff, and administrators to the presentation of four potential topics the East Georgia College may choose from as the focus of its quality enhancement plan (QEP). The College will prepare the plan as part of its efforts to earn reaffirmation of accreditation from the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Besides the survey questions focusing on QEP topics, Swainsboro students were asked fourteen additional questions and EGCS students were asked four additional questions. Responses to these questions are presented in a separate *Fall 2008 Student Profile Report*.

The responses of each group to questions addressing the QEP topics are analyzed and compared, including the responses of student and faculty subgroups. The sub-grouping of students is based on their location, whether they take classes on the home campus in Swainsboro or classes in Statesboro at East Georgia College at Statesboro (EGCS). In addition, faculty are divided into math faculty and non-math faculty and asked to respond to different sets of questions related to the first potential topic, Math Anxiety. The questions posed for the remaining three topics are the same for both math and non-math faculty, so the responses to these questions are aggregated without distinguishing among faculty.

Listed below are the four topics addressed by the Fall 2008 QES survey. Full descriptions of the issues related to the topics and suggested approaches for implementing the topics are presented in the report Appendix: Summary of Responses. (Because of its length, the appendix is presented in a separate electronic file.)

**Topic 1:** Turning math anxiety into math confidence (Math Anxiety)

**Topic 2:** Enhancing classroom instruction to promote effective communication, reflective thinking and ethical responsibility (Thinking and Communicating)

**Topic 3:** Promoting college success by providing new students with a full array of learning skills beginning with two-semester freshman experience that is integrated into selected core curriculum courses and reinforced with active learning opportunities throughout the curriculum. (College Success)

**Topic 4:** Using technology to promote more effective teaching and learning in a diverse college environment (Diverse College Environment)

Shown in Table 1 below are the number of respondents in each group and sub-group. The table indicates that 1,453 students, 56 faculty and 27 staff and administrators responded to the survey. The Responses for each group and subgroup are presented in the accompanying appendix. The appendix shows the percent breakdown of responses for each question posed. The questions vary from survey to survey depending on the composition of each group or subgroup. Highlights from the responses of each group and subgroup are discussed in the following section of this report.
Table 1: Summary of Fall 2008 Semester QES Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups/Sub-groups</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty – Math</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty – Non-math</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students – Swainsboro</td>
<td>549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students – Statesboro</td>
<td>904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff/Administrators</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.0 Highlights of Survey Results by QEP Topic

In each the sections that follow, the responses of the faculty will be presented first, followed by the responses of students, and finally the responses of staff and administrative personnel.

2.1 Topic 1 – Math Anxiety

Three of the nine math faculty responding to the survey indicated that between 50 and 75 percent of their students complained of suffering from math anxiety. Another three math faculty members indicated that between 25 and 49 percent of their students suffered from math anxiety. Four of the math faculty *strongly agreed* with the statement that students who complain of math anxiety have difficulty doing well in their classes and another four *agreed* with the statement. Thirty-three percent of the math faculty respondents *agreed* that the math anxiety of their students persists from course to course, but another 44 percent indicated they didn’t know. Finally, while five of the respondents either *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that adopting Topic 1 for the College’s QEP would help their students learn the subjects they teach more effectively, the other four respondents either *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed*.

Among forty-seven non-math faculty respondents, 83 percent either *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that students taking learning support math can still do well in their courses. In response to whether students should be ready to take college level math classes in order to do well in their classes, 32 percent of non-math faculty *agreed*, but another 51 percent either *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed*. Similarly, while 23 percent of non-math faculty *agreed* that students who complain about math anxiety have difficulty doing well in their courses, another 58 percent either *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed*. Forty-one percent of the non-math faculty either *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that adopting Topic 1 for the College’s QEP would help their students learn the subjects they teach more effectively, while 32 percent either *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed* and the remaining 19 percent didn’t know.

All respondents were asked how each of the topics could be improved. Among faculty, suggestions for improving Topic 1 included greater availability of counselors, working with middle school and high school math teachers, applying the cognitive skills needed to do math in
non-math subjects, and encouraging the development of the students’ sense of responsibility. Perhaps the most luminous faculty response to the improvement question is presented below:

Perspective of __ year old man who is re-teaching himself algebra: I repeat the same math mistakes that I made as a young man. Solution: constant tutoring, numerous testing to identify facts quickly forgotten, and lots of praise.

More than two-thirds of the students on both the Swainsboro campus and at EGCS answered no when asked whether they have taken learning support MATH 0097 or MATH 0099. More than two-thirds of the students at each location also indicated MATH 1111 College Algebra as their first college credit math course. In Swainsboro, 65 percent of student respondents either **strongly agreed** or **agreed** that they have experienced math anxiety. At EGCS, the combined responses were 60 percent affirmative to the math anxiety question. In Swainsboro, 51 percent of the students either **strongly agreed** or **agreed** that math anxiety kept them from earning the grades they wanted in their math classes. At EGCS, 45 percent of students answer likewise. Slightly more than a quarter of students at both locations either **strongly agreed** or **agreed** that math anxiety kept them from earning the grades they wanted in some non-math classes. In response to the statement that adopting Topic 1 for the College’s QEP would help them, 51 percent of Swainsboro students and 54 percent of EGCS students either **strongly agreed** or **agreed**. About one-quarter of students at both locations either **strongly disagreed** or **disagreed** with the statement and the remaining 21 percent **didn’t know**.

In response to the question of how Topic 1 could be improved, more than sixty student responses are listed in the appendix. Included among the student suggestions are more effective teaching, more tutoring opportunities, a slower pace, and smaller classes.

The problem of student math anxiety is most strongly felt among the twenty-seven staff/administrator respondents. Eighty-nine percent of respondents either **strongly agreed** or **agreed** that possessing inadequate math skills is becoming an increasingly serious problem for EGC students. Eighty-one percent either **strongly agreed** or **agreed** that EGC students expressed their math anxiety to them. In addition, 92 percent either **strongly agreed** or **agreed** that improving the math skills of EGC students would help the students develop their decision making skills. Finally, 100 percent of staff/administrator respondents either **strongly agreed** or **agreed** that adopting the math anxiety topic for the College’s QEP would help EGC students. However, two reservations were expressed by respondents in this group concerning the math anxiety topic in response to the question of how Topic 1 could be improved. One respondent felt that math anxiety may just be a symptom of under-prepared students who also lack adequate reading and writing skills. Another respondent expressed concern about placing all the responsibility for the QEP on the math faculty and asked how the Humanities and Social Science faculty could participate.
2.2 Topic 2 – Thinking and Communicating

Ninety percent of faculty either strongly agreed or agreed to the statement that being able to present a point of view effectively is a necessary skill for students to do well in their courses. While 67 percent of faculty either strongly agreed or agreed that students readily become engaged in learning the subject they teach, another 25 percent disagreed. Similarly, while 68 percent of faculty either strongly agreed or agreed that it was easy for students to understand the basic principles and approach to enquiry of the subjects they taught, another 25 percent disagreed. Seventy-three percent of faculty either strongly agreed or agreed that the subjects they taught posed ethical challenges that can be used to help students think critically about ethical choices. Finally, 68 percent of faculty either strongly agreed or agreed that adopting Topic 2 for the QEP plan would help their students learn the subjects they teach more effectively. However, 25 percent of faculty indicated that they did not have an opinion on this statement.

In response to the improvement question, faculty expressed both enthusiasm and skepticism toward Topic 2. One faculty member noted that critical thinking is significant from an interdisciplinary perspective, but another said Topic 2 was ambiguous and would lead to sloppy data collection. Another faculty respondent agreed that using ethical dilemma would be excellent for teaching critical thinking, but cautioned that this approach may encounter resistance in the community or among some faculty.

Both Swainsboro and EGCS students expressed considerable confidence in their abilities to weigh alternatives and the ethical impact of their actions, develop effective solutions to problems, and be tolerant of viewpoints different from their own. More than 80 percent either strongly agreed or agreed to statements affirming these abilities. Students also expressed strong confidence in their ability to communicate effectively with each other, with 79 percent of Swainsboro students and 81 percent of EGCS students either strongly agreeing or agreeing to this statement. In addition, students at both locations expressed strong confidence in being able to effectively communicate with their teachers and speak comfortably to groups, although at lower rates. About two-thirds of Swainsboro students and 60 percent of EGCS students responded positively to these statements. Responses as to whether this topic should be adopted for the College’s QEP were mixed. While more than half of students on both campuses thought that adoption of this topic would help them, 19 percent of Swainsboro students disagreed and another 20 percent didn’t know. At EGCS, 15 percent of students disagreed and another 17 percent didn’t know.

More than forty students responded to the Topic 2 improvement question. Many of the suggestions emphasized more class and group discussions and activities. One EGCS student suggested that a course to develop the skills addressed in Topic 2 be added to the curriculum.

Staff and administrator respondents expressed considerable confidence in the growth of our students since admission to the College, with 67 percent agreeing that students nearing graduation have significantly improved their communication skills and 70 percent agreeing that
these students have significantly improved their decision-making skills. As to whether these students have become more open to diverse opinions, 56 percent of staff and administrator respondents agreed, but another 19 percent disagreed and 19 percent indicated that they didn’t know. Similarly, 52 percent of these respondents agreed that students nearing graduation were much more sensitive to ethical considerations, but 15 percent disagreed and 30 percent indicated that they didn’t know. Finally, 100 percent of the staff and administrator respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that adopting Topic 2 would help EGC students.

In response to the Topic 2 improvement question, one staff/administrator suggested that a mandatory critical thinking skills class be added to the curriculum. Two other respondents in this group suggested putting more emphasis on effective communication through writing and speaking exercises.

2.3 Topic 3 – College Success

In response to the statement that students have a clear idea of how they need to perform to earn the grade they want, two-thirds of faculty either strongly agreed or agreed. However, the other one-third either strongly disagreed or disagreed. In response to whether their students have trouble taking tests, two-thirds of the faculty respondents agreed, but 20 percent disagreed. Interestingly, 61 percent either strongly agreed or agreed that their students had trouble completing assignments, but 36 percent disagreed. In response to whether their students complain about balancing their academic responsibilities with other commitments, 84 percent of faculty respondents either strongly agreed or agreed. Finally, 70 percent of faculty respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that adopting Topic 3 for the College’s QEP would help students more effectively learn the subjects they teach.

In response to the Topic 3 improvement question, one faculty member said that there should be clearly stated definitions of what constitutes an A-B-C-D or F grade. While some faculty members saw Topic 3 as key to ensuring student success, others voiced skepticism that expanding the student success class would be practical or beneficial to students.

Two-thirds of Swainsboro and 60 percent of EGCS student respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they had a clear idea of what to expect in college when they enrolled their first semester. Just over 50 percent of students at both locations either strongly agreed or agreed that they have trouble taking tests, while over a third at each location disagreed. Less than one-third of students at both locations indicated that they had trouble completing assignment, while more than two-thirds of students indicated they did not. About half of the students at both locations said they had trouble balancing their academic responsibilities with other responsibilities, while more than one-third said they did not. Three-fourths of Swainsboro students and more than two-thirds of EGCS students either strongly agreed or agreed that they had a clear idea of what they wanted to do after college. About Three-fourths of students at both locations either strongly agreed or agreed that they had a clear idea of how the knowledge and skills gained in college will be useful in pursuing their career choices. Finally, 60 percent of Swainsboro students and 66
percent of EGCS students either strongly agreed or agreed that adopting Topic 3 for the College’s QEP would help them. However, 20 percent of Swainsboro students and 15 percent of EGCS students didn’t know.

In response to the Topic 3 improvement question, some students also expressed skepticism about expanding Student Success and others made suggestions for making it more effective. One student suggested that a resource department be created, another suggested that upperclassmen serve as tutors/mentors and third student suggested that a counseling course be created so that students can talk about different life situations and how to balance work with school.

In response to the statement that new EGC students quickly learn to recognize and adjust well to differences between high school and college, 37 percent of staff and administrator respondents agreed, but 59 percent disagreed. Sixty-three percent of respondents also disagreed with the statement that most new EGC students place a priority on achieving success in college over their other commitments. The same percentage of respondents disagreed that most new EGC students quickly learn what they need to know to make good progress toward achieving their academic goals. Almost half of respondents agreed that most new EGC students quickly learn to work collaboratively with other students to perform a variety of college activities more effectively, but one-third of respondents disagreed. Finally, 81 percent of staff and administrator respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that adopting Topic 3 for the College’s QEP would help EGC students.

In response to the Topic 3 improvement question, one staff/administrator responded that issues related to student success should be addressed as soon as possible and suggested that learning communities be made mandatory. In contrast, another respondent in this group said that students must take responsibility for their work and learning.

2.4 Topic 4 – Diverse College Environment

Eighty-nine percent of faculty either strongly agreed or agreed that the teaching techniques they used match well with their students’ learning styles. Seventy-nine percent of faculty either strongly agreed or agreed that the class lecture is a very effective method of helping my students to learn course material. Seventy-six percent of faculty responded similarly to a statement on personal tutoring and 65 percent of faculty responded likewise to a statement on encouraging students to form study groups. In contrast, only 25 percent either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that their students found online tutoring to be a very effective method of learning course material. Another 39 percent of faculty indicated that they didn’t know in response to the online learning statement. Finally, 54 percent of faculty respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that adopting Topic 4 for the College’s QEP would help students more effectively learn the subjects they teach. Another 23 percent indicated they didn’t know.

Twelve faculty members responded to the Topic 4 improvement question. While some enthusiasm was expressed for Topic 4, several responses contained thoughtful reservations. One
respondent said that we should be student-centered but not to the point of jeopardizing the effective teaching styles of various faculty and that while we should explore what technology appeals to students, faculty should retain flexibility and choice. Another faculty member cautioned against using technology to support student learning handicaps. A third respondent noted that the ability to listen and to concentrate is a discrete skill that should be addressed by each discipline.

Over 80 percent of students in both Swainsboro and at EGCS indicated that they had a clear idea of what types of activities best helped them learn. More 60 percent of students at both locations either strongly agreed or agreed that class lectures, study groups, and studying alone were very effective methods of learning course material, although more agreement was expressed for study groups and studying alone than for lectures. More than 70 percent of all students also either strongly agreed or agreed that personal tutoring is a very effectively learning method. In contrast, students either strongly agreed or agreed in the range 34 to 37 percent that online tutoring was a very effective learning method. A range of 42 to 45 percent either strongly disagreed or disagreed that online tutoring was an effective learning method and about 20 percent didn’t know. Sixty-nine percent of Swainsboro students indicated that they either use computers study or complete assignments either daily or 3 or more times a week and 70 percent said that they enjoyed learning on a computer. At EGCS, 77 percent of students indicated that they either use computers study or complete assignments either daily or 3 or more times a week and 64 percent said that they enjoyed learning on the computer. Sixty percent of Swainsboro students and 62 percent of EGCS students either strongly agreed or agreed that adopting Topic 4 for the College’s QEP would help them.

In over forty responses to the Topic 4 improvement question, both students in Swainsboro and at EGCS expressed enthusiasm for using technology to enhance their learning experience. Some advocated the use of more technology and others asked that the technology in use be updated. Several students asked for more assistance in using computers. An EGCS student suggested that hard copy text books be replaced with e-books because e-books were cheaper, easier to search and navigate, and better for the environment. One Swainsboro student suggested that students be tested to determine their most effective learning pattern. A student at EGCS carried that suggestion a step further by asking that students with similar learning patterns be placed in the same classes. In contrast, one EGCS respondent said that students should adapt to the teaching styles of their professors.

In response to the statement that EGC students today have attitudes about college that are similar to the attitudes of students who attended college 10 years ago, 82 percent of staff and administrators either strongly disagreed or disagreed. The same percentage disagreed with the statement that students entering EGC today learn in much the same ways that students learned 10 years ago. In addition, 89 percent responded likewise to statement that EGC students gather and use information in much the same ways as students did 10 years ago. Eighty-nine percent of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that EGC students of differing
ages, ethnicities, genders, and income levels express diverse expectations about how best to achieve their academic goals. Finally, 74 percent of staff and administrator respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that adopting Topic 4 for the College’s QEP would help EGC students.

Among the staff and administrators, there was one response to the question as to how Topic 4 could be improved. The respondent challenged the implication in the topic statement that students know how to learn and have developed their own learning techniques. The respondent added that students should be taught to adapt to various learning environments because the world will not adapt to them.

2.5 Topic 5 – Respondent Suggestions

Listed below in tables 2 through 4 are selected topics suggested by EGC faculty, students and staff/administrators. Many more topics were suggested, but are not included below either because they were incompletely expressed and/or were not directly related to student learning. More extensive lists of topics are presented in the appendix.

Table 2: Faculty Suggested Topics

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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Additional Topics</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Approach</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F5-1</td>
<td>Skills transference</td>
<td>Learning is too compartmentalized and teaching is too focused on the final grade. Skills development is ignored by faculty and students.</td>
<td>Identify shared skills in Science, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Teach and practice these skills and monitor their transference and application in the other two fields.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5-2</td>
<td>Career planning</td>
<td>Students are lacking a purpose for pursuing a college education. They seem unaware of choices and educational requirements.</td>
<td>Students should carefully research careers identified as meeting their areas of strengths and interests. Research should include an on-the-job shadowing experience as well as an interview with someone in that career field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5-3</td>
<td>Reading skills</td>
<td>Poor reading skills play havoc with student performance.</td>
<td>More reading assignments, more vocabulary development, study guides that are truly study guides, and attention to cultural literacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5-4</td>
<td>College level math skills</td>
<td>Many students enter 2-year college grossly underprepared for college level math.</td>
<td>Revised the MATH 0097 course to include a lab period following class sessions in which students would complete their homework with the one-on-one help of successful math students acting as tutors. The success rate of the enriched MATH 0097 would be compared against that of MATH 0097 conducted in its conventional format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5-5</td>
<td>Learning vs. memorization</td>
<td>Students try to memorize material to pass tests, rather than actually learn it.</td>
<td>Focus tests on being able to apply material to real world issues. This causes students to learn the material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5-6</td>
<td>Leadership/life skills</td>
<td>Many students lack adequate leadership and self-management skills.</td>
<td>Develop a course that helps students develop leadership/self-management skills.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Table 3: Student Suggested Topics

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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Additional Topics</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S5-1</td>
<td>Publicize Course Requirements</td>
<td>As a freshman, you may not have any idea about teachers and work required for certain teachers. This could help decide what classes would be best for your schedule.</td>
<td>Have a Website you can visit or someone who will tell you all about the specific class and assignments that will be required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5-2</td>
<td>More science courses</td>
<td>There are not enough science courses for occupational and physical therapists, biology, etc… majors to complete the core curriculum at EGC.</td>
<td>There needs to be a greater variety of teachers to choose from.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5-3</td>
<td>More diverse health classes</td>
<td>This college has very few interesting health classes.</td>
<td>Create other kinds of health classes, such as Self-Defense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5-4</td>
<td>Larger materials budget for academics</td>
<td>Academic departments need larger budgets to help teachers choose materials.</td>
<td>Allow teachers to be given a budget they believe they need for materials they would use on a regular basis. Lower budgets force teachers to be less effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5-5</td>
<td>Test anxiety</td>
<td>Some students have test anxiety. They can do well with homework and class work, but when they get to the test in front of them, then a brick wall appears.</td>
<td>Offer workshops and counseling. Have teachers monitor students who make good grades on home and class work, but fail tests. Then have the teachers refer the students to get help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5-6</td>
<td>Provide More online classes</td>
<td>Many potential non-traditional cannot take traditional classes because of commitment to jobs and family.</td>
<td>Give non-traditional students priority in registering for online classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5-7</td>
<td>Having student teachers</td>
<td>People like the idea of students teaching students.</td>
<td>Have one student teach for each subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5-8</td>
<td>Help students who are hands-on</td>
<td>Some students cannot learn from lectures.</td>
<td>Do activities in class to help students understand and that show things in detail.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Staff/Administrator Suggested Topics

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<th>#</th>
<th>Additional Topics</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA5-1</td>
<td>Success of at-risk students</td>
<td>Severe lack of knowledge in tandem with poor learning skills, poor self-esteem, poor decision-making skills, and often poor attitudes toward education itself.</td>
<td>Most of these students did not develop good skills in high school and have no idea about the level of discipline required for college-level success. For these students, a special program would be helpful. It would bring them up to college-level work in math, English, history, reading, plus include cultural literacy instruction. Mandatory attendance would be required as would attendance to counseling and tutoring sessions. A more intensive approach is needed for these students. They need to know that the college wants them to succeed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA5-2</td>
<td>Promoting the importance of college education</td>
<td>Many students adopt or develop a lackadaisical attitude about applying themselves or about what college has to offer for their success. (They find it unappealing.)</td>
<td>Link college success promotion with some type of life success promotion to heighten the interest and determination of students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.0 Respondent Prioritization of Topics

Each group of respondents was asked at the end of the survey to prioritize the four topics presented and any fifth topic they suggested. Including the fifth topic in the prioritization exercise may have been a caused confusion among some respondents. In any case, the suggested fifth topic was generally given the lowest priority across all respondent groups. The four named topics are listed below.

- Topic 1: Math Anxiety
- Topic 2: Thinking and Communicating
- Topic 3: College Success
- Topic 4: Diverse College Environment

Among faculty, Topic 2 was given the highest priority by 36 percent of respondents. Topic 1: Math Anxiety was given the highest priority by 20 percent of respondents. Topic 3 was given the highest priority by 11 percent of the faculty and the second highest priority by 34 percent of the faculty. Among the four named topics, Topic 4 was the least popular topic among faculty, with 38 percent giving this topic a fourth level priority.

Both students in Swainsboro and at EGCS gave the highest priority to Topic 3, with 37 percent of Swainsboro students and 41 percent of EGCS students giving this topic the highest priority. For both student populations, Topic 1 was the next most popular topic, with 33 percent of Swainsboro students and 28 percent of EGCS students giving this topic the highest priority. Topic 2 was regarded as the second highest priority by 36 percent of Swainsboro students and 35
percent of EGCS students. Topic 4 received roughly even second through fourth priority ratings in the 21 to 25 percent range from both student populations.

Among staff and administrators, topics 1, 2 and 3 received similar highest priority and second highest priority ratings. Topic 1 was given the highest priority by 26 percent of the respondents. Both Topic 2 and Topic 3 were given the highest priority by 19 percent of the respondents. Topic 2 was given the second highest priority by another 26 percent of respondents, while Topic 1 was rated the second highest priority by 19 percent of respondents. Topic 3 was rated the second highest priority by 22 percent of respondents. Topic 4: Diverse College Environment scored the lowest rating, with 44 percent of staff and administrative respondents giving this topic fourth priority.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

A review of the survey results indicates both agreement and disagreement between groups concerning the four proposed QEP topics. Among the faculty, Topic 2 was clearly the most popular, with Topic 1 coming in a distant second. For students, Topic 3 was given the highest priority by the largest percentage of students, but Topic 1 had considerable support also. In addition, more than one-third of students at both locations gave Topic 2 the second highest priority. In the staff/administrator group, the priority ratings for topics 1, 2, and 3 ran closer together. Topic 4 garnered the least enthusiasm across all groups.

Another important consideration is the extent of the opinion differences within the groups toward the QEP topics. This can be seen in faculty responses toward Topic 1 and student responses toward topics 1, 2, and 3. Less than half of the faculty and only a slight majority of students agreed that Topic 1 would help students. Some faculty respondents expressed concern that a math anxiety project could encompass not just math classes, but other core curriculum classes. Others voiced concern that the QEP might focus solely on math courses. Although the response to Topic 3 was generally more positive among both faculty and students, concerns were raised by some faculty about the cost and effort involved in expanding the Student Success course to a year-long Freshman Experience program and some students made negative comments about the value of the Student Success course.

In its January 2009 position statement, *The Impact of Budget Reductions on Higher Education During a Time of Worldwide Economic Downturn*, the Executive Council of SACS Commission on Colleges stated in part:

> When rapid declines in resources diminish any institution's ability to fulfill its mission, administrators, trustees, and legislators have a joint responsibility for providing, safeguarding, and managing the resources of institutions under their charge and should understand the necessity of either replacing these resources or redefining the institution's educational programs and services. The Commission reaffirms its belief that all parties share in the responsibility for ensuring that
institutions of higher education have the ability to achieve their stated purposes; it expects each of its accredited institutions to manage its resources so that it can effectively maintain the quality of its programs and services while successfully addressing current and any redefined goals. Without this commitment, our institutions of higher learning and their programs are placed in jeopardy.

The COC position statement reinforces the commitment to using an institution’s QEP as a road map to improving the quality of student learning, irrespective of its economic environment. The College’s QEP topic should address a vital aspect of student learning, be fiscally sustainable, and be supported by those contributing to its realization.

**Recommendations**

Based on the discussion of the survey responses presented in this report, the following steps are recommended:

1. The creation of a Quality Enhancement Committee consisting of faculty, staff, students, foundation members, and alumni

2. A review by the Quality Enhancement Committee of the topics discussed in this report, including those suggested by survey respondents based on the criteria of impact on student learning, fiscal sustainability, and support of those implementing the QEP

3. Development of a revised list of QEP topics based on the criteria cited in Step 2

4. Selection of a QEP topic and presentation to the College’s stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, foundation members and alumni