

Academics with Attitude: Building the Foundation for Student Success

Quality Enhancement Plan

Kentucky State University

On-Site Review: (March 31 – April 2, 2009)

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**Submitted to the Commission on Colleges
Southern Association of College and Schools
in fulfillment of Core Requirement 2.12
for Reaffirmation of Accreditation**

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Academics with Attitude: Building the Foundation for Student Success (AWA) is a focused five-year Quality Enhancement Plan at Kentucky State University for academically at-risk students to foster attitudes and habits that lead to greater academic success. It is a plan designed to meet a pressing, well-documented need and fits KSU institutional mission. Both a land-grant and liberal studies institution, KSU is also one of the nation's 110 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). As such, KSU focuses on the traditional role of the HBCU in providing educational opportunities to under-represented and under-served populations. Over 80 percent of KSU's new freshmen require remediation in at least one traditional subject area: reading, writing, or mathematics; nearly half require substantial developmental education in all three. Through comprehensive assessment, evaluation, and group discussions, the University community determined that to improve student learning, it must transform the attitudes and habits of incoming students which hinder academic performance.

To thrive at the University, a student must have the proper attitude toward academics and will acquire it through the AWA program. A student with proper "attitude" understands the importance of punctuality, class attendance and timely completion of assignments; devotes a reasonable amount of time and effort to studying; and reads assignments and discusses ideas seriously with others, while exhibiting decorum and respect for opposing points of view. A student with "attitude" belongs to a community of learners who collectively seek to develop academic confidence through continuous improvement in their ability to read, write, and perform mathematical tasks. A student with "attitude" shows a commitment to complete college, demonstrates academic achievement, and views faculty, support staff, and administrators as reasonable, caring individuals who desire the success of students.

Through an emphasis on collaboration among faculty, academic and student support services, the QEP personalizes the college experience for the first-year students in need of extensive developmental coursework, personal growth and development, and acclimation to the academic environment. It promotes holistic student development into the second year as well while continuing to relate activities and services to classroom performance. This occurs through a series of interrelated strategies:

- the formation of learning communities, based upon cohorts of 15 students block-scheduled as a group for two-years of course work and who will live together in the residence halls
- an intrusive advising process woven into the developmental and gateway courses.
- a "team" of faculty and support staff assigned to each cohort of students
- a cycle of assessments of student attitudes and performance, initiated early in the semester, followed by rapid faculty-staff "team" interventions when problems are detected
- a developmental curriculum that integrates its subject matter with that of several "gateway" courses the students will later encounter
- A developmental curriculum that integrates innovative course design

Comprehensive assessments and feedback mechanisms provide evaluations of progress and success in achieving each of the QEP's educational goals and overall purpose. Topic selection, its development, and its endorsement involved an inclusive cross-section of the campus community. Such broad-based involvement will continue throughout the QEP's implementation from 2009 to 2014.

II. PROCESS USED TO DEVELOP THE QEP

Kentucky State University followed the requirement of the Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools that the process for choosing and developing the University's quality enhancement plan be broadly based and inclusive. Faculty, staff, students, and members of the Board of Regents have participated appropriately since the opening discussions about the QEP topic began in 2005. From that time to the completion of the QEP, the University engaged in a five-stage process:

(1) **Selection of SACS Liaisons.** The Provost selected a pair of University faculty in the spring of 2003 to serve as liaisons with the COC and who had the responsibility of leading the University community through two major workshops in 2005, one on January 10 and another on August 15, to identify possible topics for the QEP.

(2) **Formation of the Leadership Team and QEP Committees.** The President appointed a Leadership Team in 2006 to give oversight to the reaffirmation of accreditation. It, in turn, appointed a QEP Selection Committee, composed of faculty, staff, and students, to conduct research and guide the selection of a topic, and also appointed a QEP Committee, composed of faculty, staff, and students, charged with developing the chosen topic, consulting with various campus constituencies, and writing the proposal. Half its members also served on the QEP Selection Committee to provide continuity between the two groups.

(3) **Topic Selection.** The QEP Selection Committee, during the spring of 2007, developed the procedures for the selection of a topic and evaluated proposals in June and September. In conjunction with the QEP Committee, a topic was approved in November 2007.

(4) **Development of the QEP by the QEP Committee.** The QEP Committee worked on QEP development throughout the spring of 2008 and submitted a draft QEP to the Leadership Team and to Dr. Gerald Lord, our liaison with SACS, at the end of May for review and commentary. The suggestions were received in June, which the Committee used to refine the proposal. After receiving additional feedback by the Leadership Team to that revision, the QEP Committee produced the current version.

(5) **Endorsement.** A complete draft of the QEP was ratified in September 2008 by the KSU SACS Leadership Team. The Faculty Senate, the Staff Council, the Student Government Association, and the University Board of Regents have endorsed the final report.

STAGE 1: SACS Liaisons and Initial Topic Discussions

Kentucky State University began the process of selecting the topic for its Quality enhancement plan on January 10, 2005, during the Spring Opening Faculty/Professional

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Staff Conference. Each semester, the University holds an opening conference/institute to deliberate on issues of current importance to the University. Under the guidance of Drs. Patricia Pearson and Mark Shale, at that time the University's SACS co-liaisons, the faculty and staff of the University formed five breakout groups that met to discuss possible topics for a QEP. A follow-up session at the August 15, 2005, Fall Faculty/Professional Staff Conference, further refined these ideas. Dr. Shale met with the leaders of the Student Government Association (SGA) during the spring and fall, presented them with the results of the meetings of faculty and staff, and asked the Executive Committee of the SGA to comment on the proposals and seek input from the entire SGA membership. The SGA Executive Committee developed four topic proposals, three of which overlapped with the suggestions from faculty and staff: increasing student engagement with learning, strengthening the curriculum, and enhancing the campus academic climate. ([Link to SGA_QEP_Proposals.pdf](#)) The full SGA endorsed its suggested QEP topics at its November 28, 2005, meeting, which were passed along to the SACS co-liaisons.

Stage 2: Leadership Team and QEP Committees

During the spring of 2006, the President formed the University SACS Leadership Team. KSU received a grant from the Southern Educational Foundation (SEF) for preparing for the SACS reaffirmation of accreditation. KSU used part of the funds to further the process of selecting a QEP topic. During that period, Dr. Titi Ufomata, Associate Provost, took over the duties of the SACS liaison. In early spring of 2007, the KSU Leadership Team appointed the QEP Selection Committee, chaired by Dr. Shale, for the purpose of finalizing the process for the selection of the topic, and appointed the QEP Committee, which would have the responsibility of developing and writing the plan. Memberships on both committees consisted of faculty, staff, and students, with several members serving on both committees. The QEP Committee also included a member of the Frankfort community who had served as the Director of the Kentucky Arts Council.

Stage 3: Selection of the QEP Topic

The QEP Selection Committee, using as a guide the successful approach taken by the University of Central Florida in identifying the topic for its QEP, initiated a QEP proposal contest. It was a two-step process to further engage and encourage KSU faculty, staff, and students in the selection of a topic. For the first part of the process, the Committee drew up guidelines in early 2007 and announced in April a campus-wide "call" for short proposals of two pages outlining and justifying a QEP topic in accord with previous discussions. The request identified the six most common themes that had emerged from previous University discussions on the QEP (see section III: Identification of the Topic), with the addendum that a different topic could be proposed if it was adequately justified. Proposals could be submitted by faculty, staff, students, or through a collaborative effort. ([Link to QEP_Pre-Proposal_Request.pdf](#)) In the second step of the process, the Committee would select up to three proposals for development into more substantial 15-page "white papers," with \$1500 awarded to the author of each paper or to the collaborative group which produced it. ([Link to QEP_White_Paper_Let_revised.pdf](#)) The goal was to select an exceptional paper that could be passed along to the QEP Committee for development, and the paper's author

(or primary author for collaborators) as the logical candidate for chairperson of that committee. Instructions for the preparation of the white papers stated that each would be evaluated according to criteria that included:

- Significance and urgency of the topic for the University
- Scope of the plan in terms of which students would be affected and which other campus constituencies would be involved
- Assessments that would be included to demonstrated what students had learned
- Schedule for activities and initiatives
- Risk assessment of possible problems that could be encountered during the implementation of the plan
- Campus acceptance of the plan
- Resource requirements in terms of money, equipment, and personnel

As a precaution in the event that the Committee deemed no white paper suitable, the Associate Provost and the chairperson of the QEP Selection Committee agreed that several recent campus internal committee reports on the topic of improving education at KSU could be consulted by the Committee as aids in formulating a topic.

From the five proposals submitted, the QEP Selection Committee chose two in early June for development into white papers. ([Link to QEPSelectionCommittee_Minutes_6-14-2007.pdf](#)) Those were submitted to and evaluated by the Committee in September. They were worthy campus projects, but the Committee believed they would not achieve the widespread campus acceptance needed for a QEP. ([Link to QEPSelectionCommittee_Minutes_9-18-2007.pdf](#))

Given the unsuccessful effort to find a topic through the white papers, the QEP Selection Committee merged with the newly appointed QEP Committee later in September 2007 to reopen discussions on identifying a QEP topic. Every week for the remainder of the semester, the Committees met jointly, examining and discussing in particular (1) new proposals initiated by faculty and administrators, including one on the improvement of gateway courses (in composition, mathematics, and science), and another on student advising during important transition points in their college careers, and (2) several internal reports generated by other campus committees. Of particular importance were the *Developmental Education Committee Report, 2006*, the *Student Success and Retention Task Force Report, 2006*, the *KSU Liberal Studies Summer Institute (May 16-20, 2005) Official Record*, and the results of the *College Student Inventory (CSI)*. The findings and recommendations in those proposals and reports reaffirmed the concerns that emerged from discussions among faculty, staff, and students in 2005, and noted in the white papers that had been submitted. The joint committees agreed unanimously that the most suitable topic for KSU's QEP was *Academics with Attitude: Building the Foundation for Student Success*. On November

30, 2007, the topic was forwarded to the KSU SACS Leadership Team, which approved the topic for development. ([Link to QEP_Topic_Title_Proposal.pdf](#)) It was formally announced to the University community at the January, 2008, Faculty/Professional Staff Conference.

Stage 4: Development of the QEP

With the selection of the QEP topic, the QEP Selection Committee had completed its task and operations for the development of the QEP passed to the QEP Committee. It initiated a student art contest to design a logo for the QEP topic and met each week to discuss and draw up a structure to meet the student learning outcomes that accompanied the topic. With the approval of the President and Leadership team in May, 2008, the Committee developed a Pilot Project that was initiated at the start of the fall 2008 semester ([Link to QEP Committee Minutes_5-13-2008.pdf](#)). As a miniature version of the QEP, involving a cohort of 60 students who required remediation in reading, writing, and mathematics, and an equal number of similar students in a control group, the Pilot Project was designed to provide feedback to the University for ensuring the successful launch of the QEP at the start of the fall 2009 semester. On June 12 the President, members of the Leadership Team and the QEP Committee had a fruitful discussion with Dr. Gerald Lord, the University's liaison with the Commission on Colleges, to discuss the report. The QEP Committee submitted a revised report on June 3 to the President and Leadership Team, which was forwarded to the University Board of Regents later that month to keep them abreast of developments. In September the Associate Provost/KSU SACS Liaison, Dr. Titi Ufomata, distributed the draft report to faculty for feedback. The Chairperson of the QEP Committee, Dr. Mark Shale, sent copies to the Executive Committees of the Student Government Association and the Staff Senate Council. Feedback from constituent groups along with suggestions by the Leadership Team resulted in additional revisions to the plan. This included (1) moving the start date for the QEP from fall to summer with the University paying all costs for students enrolled in the summer section of the program each year; (2) beginning an enlarged pilot in summer 2009 to test the effect of the changes and compare them with the pilot that began in the fall of 2008. The full project start date was moved to summer 2009.

Stage 5: Campus Endorsement of the QEP

In September, 2008, the KSU Leadership Team circulated the plan to the faculty, staff, and students for suggestions and feedback. Those suggestions were given to the QEP Committee and incorporated into the current document. During that time the Faculty Senate recommended to KSU faculty that they support the principles of the QEP. At the beginning of 2009, the KSU Leadership Team, Faculty Senate, Student Government Association, Staff Council, and the University Board of Regents endorsed the final report.

III. IDENTIFICATION OF THE TOPIC

As the University community engaged in the process of identifying a topic for its Quality Enhancement Plan, from workshops involving faculty and staff, meetings with students, evaluations of QEP proposals, and evaluation of reviews conducted of the University's programs, a series of *interrelated issues* arose. These included

- low retention and graduation rates
- increasing numbers of new students requiring multiple developmental courses
- worrisome failure rates in developmental and "gateway" courses
- faculty concerns about poor student attitudes and excessive absenteeism from classes

KSU admits a significant proportion of students that could be considered "high risk" (composite ACT below 17, low high-school GPAs). The University has an admissions policy based upon ACT scores and high-school GPA that exceeds the state-required minimum, but as the state's only HBCU, it has long maintained the practice of accepting a larger proportion of at-risk students than other schools in the Commonwealth. More than 80 percent of KSU's entering freshmen require at least one remedial course, and as recently as 2002 and again in 2007, half its new freshman required remediation in all three traditional areas: mathematics, writing, and reading. In addition, as revealed by data collected from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the College Student Inventory (CSI), students who enter KSU have a significantly greater than average set of personal challenges they face involving finances, family care, disruptive home environments, and a lack of confidence in their academic ability. How best to distill the complex issues facing students into a manageable topic that could be the focus of a strategy to improve student learning was the challenge faced by the University community.

Initial Discussions

The first major discussions of possible topics for a QEP took place between January and August of 2005. The University's SACS co-liaisons led breakout workshops for the faculty and professional staff to brainstorm in their groups on topics they believed would promote student learning on campus. This initial session of workshops pointed to (1) enhancing the academic climate at the University, (2) improving the curriculum, and (3) enhancing student preparedness for college-level work. **(Link to QEP_Fac-Staff_Institute_S2005_Report.pdf)** Those results were passed along to the Student Government Association (SGA) for discussion, and its membership was instructed to draw up its own list of topics. **(Link to SGA_ExecComm_3-24_05.pdf)** A follow-up session of eight break-out groups at the August Faculty/Professional Staff Conference further refined these potential topics and added a fourth: the importance of improved student advising for student success. **(Link to Report_DevQEP_FACStaff_8-15-05.pdf)** Those refinements were also passed along to the SGA for discussion. **(Link to**

SGALeonardClemmons10-13-2005.pdf) At its November meeting, the SGA endorsed its own list of possible topics for a QEP and submitted them to the SACS co-liaisons. Their proposals focused upon (1) increasing student engagement in learning, (2) strengthening the curriculum, and (3) enhancing the campus academic climate. **(Link to SGA_QEP_Proposals.pdf)**

In 2006 University President Dr. Mary Sias appointed two committees that, although not intended to work on selecting a QEP, nevertheless provided much useful research and several recommendations in their reports that aided in the selection of a topic. These were the Developmental Education Committee, formed in February, and the Student Success and Retention Task Force, appointed at the beginning of the fall semester. Both committees were formed to address important educational issues and campus practices that affected student academic performance and persistence at the University. The specific findings and recommendations of those committees are discussed below.

QEP Selection Committee

As described in section II, the QEP Selection Committee organized a QEP proposal contest during the spring of 2007. Open to all faculty, staff, and students of KSU, the proposal-writing contest, the Committee believed, would help the University community identify a topic in light of the previous discussions. For the purposes of providing additional guidance to the writers of proposals, the Committee reviewed and reformulated the leading topics around six themes:

- Evaluate and strengthen curricula to better prepare students for graduate school and employment
- Improve the academic climate for students through raising University standards in course offerings and programs
- Improve student learning through better coordination between general education and the remedial program
- Raise student achievement through better advising (placing emphasis on the freshman year experience)
- Improve student learning through the development of shared common experiences
- Strengthen the general education program as a means to improving student learning

Writers of proposals were also encouraged to put forward a different theme if they believed it appropriate and could defend it.

The QEP committee received and evaluated five short proposals, submitted by seven faculty and staff members, in June:

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- Project Based Instruction
- Enhancing Student Engagement in Academics
- Enhancing Students Through Comprehensive Advising
- Writing Across the Curriculum
- Increasing Student Achievement and Retention by Technological Empowerment

The Committee had hoped for more submissions to provide a greater number of choices but selected two that it considered had the most merit for improving student learning within the context of the University. "Project Based Instruction" focused on improving student learning among the large number of developmental students at KSU through projects of interest to students. "Enhancing Students through Comprehensive Advising" sought to provide a significantly more coordinated and comprehensive system of advisory and mentor support for students at the University ([Link to QEP_White_Paper_Let_revised.pdf](#))

After reviewing the white papers in September, the Committee found that neither adequately fulfilled all the requirements stipulated for an acceptable plan and voted unanimously to forward no topic at that time to the Leadership Team. ([Link to QEPSelectionCommittee_Minutes_9-18-2007.pdf](#)) The Committee's recourse was to adopt the fallback plan of joining with the QEP Committee for further examination and discussion of (1) new proposals for QEPs submitted after the June deadline; (2) reports on educational issues developed by other campus committees; (3) internal and external program reviews; and (4) student surveys. These various sources, which were made available on the University Blackboard system, provided the joint committees with a wealth of data on which to base a decision for the QEP topic. The next section describes the Committees' findings.

Work of the Joint Committees and the Emergence of the Topic

In September the Committee received two proposals that helped shape its final deliberations on the choice of a QEP topic. The chairperson of Literature, Languages, and Philosophy, the largest division at KSU in terms of its developmental and core course offerings, suggested in the first proposal that the University consider enhancing student learning in both gateway and entry level developmental courses, since they were a natural fit and the efforts would be mutually supportive. Gateway classes are those lower-level courses taken by all (or nearly all) students that are considered essential for success in all majors. [[Link to GeorgeShields_SACS_SS2007.pdf](#)] Another proposal, originating from the office of the Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment, advocated creating a structure at the University that would aid students in moving from one important transition point in their collegiate careers to another, such as from developmental to regular university courses. [[Link to Roosevelt_QEP_Proposal.pdf](#)] It also linked well with one of the white papers the QEP Selection Committee had earlier considered, which emphasized a project to create

a much more effective system of student advising on campus. **[Link to Wilson&Stamper_WhitePaper_QEP.pdf]** The QEP Committee saw the possibility of formulating a topic that would link efforts to improve student learning in both developmental and gateway courses. The evidence in favor of this proved overwhelming.

The topic the Committee recommended and the University community approved for its QEP, "Academics with Attitude: Building the Foundation for Student Success," emerged from a context that is national, state, and local in importance: the growing numbers of students who are under-prepared for the demands of a university-level education. Colleges and universities across the nation have expanded developmental course work and programs to assist students in bringing their knowledge base and skill sets in mathematics, reading, and writing up to levels necessary for successful completion of post-secondary course work. For example, in 2004, 32 percent of ACT examinees in the US required remediation in English, 34 percent in mathematics, and 30 percent in reading. **(Link to DevelopmentalEducationUpdate_10-5-2006.pdf)** The National Center for Educational Statistics in *The Condition of Education 2004* reports that in the fall of 2000, the most recent year for which data is available, 76 percent of the Title IV degree-granting 2- and 4-year institutions that enrolled freshman offered at least one developmental reading, writing, or mathematics course. A higher proportion of institutions offered developmental courses in mathematics (71 percent) and writing (68 percent) than in reading (56 percent). Compared with private 4-year institutions, public 4-year institutions, such as KSU, were more likely to offer one or more developmental reading, writing, or mathematics courses (80 vs. 59 percent) **(Link to p. 2 of Remedial Coursetaking_National_2004.pdf)**

Students who take remedial classes often must spend more time in college than those who do not require it, and institutions have attempted to limit excessive graduation times. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, in fall 2000 about one-fourth (26 percent) of the institutions reported that there was a limit on the length of time a student may take developmental courses at their institutions. Time limits on remediation were set by institutional policy in 71 percent of these institutions, and by state policy or law in 24 percent of institutions with such limits. Institutions tended to rely on their traditional academic departments as the primary providers of developmental education. In fall 2000, a majority of institutions cited their traditional academic departments as the most frequent providers of developmental writing (70 percent), mathematics (72 percent), and reading courses (57 percent). **[Link to NationalCenterforEducationalStat_RemedialEd_2000.pdf]**

In the state of Kentucky, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) maintains oversight of college- and university-level education. During the fall of 2001, the CPE instituted a placement policy mandating that all students entering undergraduate programs at public institutions who receive a score of 17 or below on ACT subject exams in mathematics, English, or reading be placed in remedial course work or receive supplemental instruction. In 2004 the CPE provided a more comprehensive list of learning outcomes that high-school students must achieve to avoid placement in collegiate developmental classes and stipulated the minimal scores for placement in college-level mathematics courses up through the level of calculus. **(Link to Statewide Placement Policy 2004.pdf)** Beginning in the fall semester of 2009, the required minimum ACT scores will be raised to 19 in mathematics and 21 in reading. **(Link to DevelopmentalEducationUpdate_2008.pdf)** That increase will make

developmental education in colleges and universities across the state even more important.

In its 2008 *Developmental Education Update*, the CPE reported that 48% of recent Kentucky high school graduates required remediation in one or more subjects, and 54% of all students entering post-secondary institutions required the same. In 2004, 53% of Kentucky public college entrants were unprepared in one or more subjects. The percentage of students who were unprepared in mathematics increased from 41% in 2002 to 44% in 2004. Almost nine percent of the cohort required remediation in three or more subjects. These percentages all exceed the national averages cited above. The Council cites this change as due to an increase in the number of adult students and students with GEDs entering postsecondary education. During this period, the percentage of adult students with developmental needs increased from 80 percent to 90 percent and from 82 percent to 92 percent among Kentucky GED graduates. The effect of academic deficiencies on student collegiate success is striking: the CPE reports that under-prepared students (scoring 17 and below on one or more ACT subject exams) were twice as likely to drop out of college as prepared students. **(Link to [DevelopmentalEducationUpdate__10-5-2006.pdf](#))** Given the CPE goals in its *Double the Numbers Plan* to double the number of graduates from Kentucky's higher education system by the year 2020, the likelihood of the continuing need for developmental education at the State's colleges and universities is high. **(Link to [DoubletheNumbersPlan_11-15-2007.pdf](#))**

Within the higher education system of Kentucky, Kentucky State University, as the state's only HBCU, enrolls a significantly higher proportion of under-prepared students than the other institutions. Tables 1 and 2 show the most recently available comparative data.

Table 1: Under-Prepared Students by Institution: Incoming Classes of 2002 and 2004.
 (Modified from CPE *Developmental Education Update*, 2006, p. 4) ([Link to DevelopmentalEducationUpdate_p4_10-5-2006.pdf](#))

	2002 credential-seeking cohort with placement data	2004 credential-seeking cohort with placement data
	Percent Under-prepared	Percent Under-prepared
2-Year Public KCTCS	76	82.6
4-Year Public Eastern Kentucky University	47.9	47.3
Kentucky State University	85.3	80.7
Morehead State University	61.0	62.2
Murray State University	38.8	31.6
Northern Kentucky University	59.1	54.4
University of Kentucky	14.5	10.8
University of Louisville	23.1	19.3
Western Kentucky University	47.6	50.5

Table 2: Number of Subjects in which Students were Under-Prepared by Institution: Incoming Classes of 2002 and 2004. (Modified from CPE *Developmental Education Update*, 2006, p. 8.) ([Link to DevelopmentalEducationUpdate_p8_10-5-2006.pdf](#))

	2002 credential-seeking cohort with placement data			2004 credential-seeking cohort with placement data		
	Percentage of subjects in which students were under-prepared			Percentage of subjects in which students were under-prepared		
	One	Two	Three	One	Two	Three
2-Year Public KCTCS	26.3	26.3	23.9	29.9	26.7	26.4
4-Year Public Eastern Kentucky University	21.8	15.6	10.9	22.5	16.4	8.9
Kentucky State University	12.2	24.8	50.0	19.1	24.4	37.0
Morehead State University	26.7	17.8	18.0	24.5	19.7	18.2
Murray State University	20.1	11.8	7.1	20.4	7.8	3.5
Northern Kentucky University	24.6	18.2	18.0	23.4	19.4	13.8
University of Kentucky	11.0	3.6	0.5	9.5	1.7	0.3
University of Louisville	18.8	4.7	0.7	14.6	4.0	0.8
Western Kentucky University	21.0	13.1	14.0	20.5	14.5	16.2

As the tables show, 85.3 percent of Kentucky State University's 2002 credential-seeking cohort (with placement data) was under-prepared, and 50 percent required remediation in three subject areas. The 2004 cohort improved, with 80.7 percent requiring remediation and 37 percent in three subject areas. The figures for future cohorts will likely rise once the CPE's mandate to increase ACT scores for regular college admission goes into effect at the start of the fall 2009 term. Given the University's current admissions practices, the projection for students requiring remediation in the upcoming years is 90 percent of the incoming freshman class, with more than 50 percent them requiring developmental classes in the three areas of reading, writing, and mathematics.

[[Link to ConditionalAdmit_Projections.pdf](#)]

As Table 3 shows, the retention rate for students between the freshman to sophomore year has steadily declined, from 65 percent in 2002-2003 to 56% in 2005-2006, and the graduation rate has dropped from 43 percent to 31 percent. (**[Link to KSUfactbook2007_87_91.pdf](#)**)

Table 3: KSU Retention and Graduation Rates (KSU Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness: KSU Fact Book 2007, pp. 87, 91)

Retention Rate (%) Freshman to Sophomore		Graduation Rate (%) 6-Year Cohort	
		Entering Year	
2002 - 2003	65	1997	43
2003 - 2004	62	1998	40
2004 - 2005	59	1999	32
2005 - 2006	56	2000	31

All students at KSU, with the exception of those enrolled in the Whitney Young School of Honors, must complete a Liberal Studies General Core of 41 hours and a Liberal Studies Integrative Studies requirement of 12 hours. All freshmen who are degree-seeking students entering the University, or students who transfer to the University with 24 or fewer semester credit hours, also must take University Orientation (UNV 101, or MUS 103, or HON 103). (**[Link to Catalogue_2007-2008_pp23-25.pdf](#)**) Given that the great majority of freshman take at least one remedial-level course and more than half require two, most students enrolling in core classes have had remediation. Evidence shows that too many do not fare as well as they ought, receiving grades below C or withdrawing, especially in certain classes within the Core Requirements. The Joint QEP Committee refers to these as “gateway” classes, for they perform the function of a gate, keeping students who have not demonstrated mastery of knowledge or academic skills, or who lack attitudes conducive to learning, from progressing farther in their academic careers. These courses include

- ENG 101: English Composition I
- ENG 102: English Composition II
- MAT 111: Contemporary Mathematics
- MAT 115: College Algebra
- BIO 101: Life Science
- CHE 109: Chemistry in Context

Student academic performance in both developmental and gateway courses has been poor. Data from the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (Table 4) shows that many students (nearly half) in any given semester over the past four years have failed to complete their courses or received a grade below “C,” the minimum to meet University requirements for such classes.

Table 4: Percentages of Students Who Withdrew from Developmental and Gateway Courses or Received a Grade Below C (Source: KSU Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness). [Link to Grades_Dev&Gateway_1.pdf and Grades_Dev&Gateway_2.pdf]

Class	Fall 2004	Spring 2005	Fall 2005	Spring 2006	Fall 2006	Spring 2007	Fall 2007
ENG 088	NA	NA	37	37	34	57	49
ENG 089	NA	NA	38	45	40	60	51
ENG 099	NA	NA	30	32	38	42	44
ENG 101	42	53	42	42	46	43	42
ENG 102	47	35	37	38	46	46	44
ENG 103	51	48	57	35	53	51	43
MAT 095	NA	NA	47	46	50	53	61
MAT 097	NA	NA	53	45	43	51	55
MAT 111	48	45	48	52	61	54	53
MAT 115	37	58	59	48	61	53	59
BIO 101	43	48	24	42	39	44	39
CHE 109	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	40
Total	44	46	45	42	46	49	50

The courses in the list form the essential foundation for academic success at the University; if KSU hopes to improve student learning and retention and graduation rates, student performance in those classes must be addressed.

Data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Noel-Levitz College Student Inventory (CSI) provide useful information suggesting some of the reasons for poor student performance. Table 5 provides results from category 9 ("Time Usage") of NSSE, which indicates students' self-reporting of the number of hours they devote to academic work outside of time spent in class.

Table 5: Freshman "Time Usage"—preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other activities related to your academic program. (KSU Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2003, pp. 5-6 ; 2004, p. 5; 2007, p. 6) [Link to Kentucky State NSSE Means and Frequency Reports_2004-07.pdf]

About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing the following? 1 = 0 hrs/wk, 2 = 1-5 hrs/wk. 3 = 6-10 hrs/wk, 4 = 11-15 hrs/wk, 5 = 16-20 hrs/wk, 6 = 21-25 hrs/wk, 7 = 26-30 hrs/wk, 8 = more than 30 hrs/wk

YEAR	KSU	NATIONAL
2007	3.62	4.01
2004	3.18	4.00
2003	3.44	4.11

The results from the 2007 survey show that on average KSU students spent less than 11 - 15 hours per week studying. In 2003 and 2004, they devoted even less time. It has been a long accepted rule of thumb among faculty that a student should spend 2-3 hours preparing for class for *each* credit hour. A student carrying 15 hours should be spending at least 30 hours per week preparing for class. Our students, who are academically weaker than the national average, are spending only-half to one-third as much time as they need in order to improve academically.

Another indicator of insufficient student engagement with campus academic life is excessive absenteeism. Faculty report that it is the single greatest factor which contributes to poor academic performance. A random survey of attendance in developmental and gateway mathematics classes, for example, reveals that students who receive a grade below "C" usually have unexcused absences three to four times that set by University policy and published in the *KSU Catalogue*. [Link to [Catalogue_2007-2008_p47.pdf](#)] [Link to [Attendance_MAT095-115.pdf](#)]

Why students do not spend more time studying or have excessive absences has a complex answer. Not all of the reasons for students spending insufficient time on or in classes can necessarily be attributed to aversion to studying. The NSSE results reveal that KSU students, freshman and seniors, spend considerably more time than the average NSSE student in providing care for dependents who live with them (whether children, parents, an injured or sick spouse), in commuting to class, and working. Table 6 shows those results.

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Table 6: "Time Usage"--providing care for dependents, commuting to class, working for pay on campus, working for pay off campus (KSU Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2003, pp. 5-6; 2004, p. 5; 2007, p. 6) [Link to Kentucky State NSSE Means and Frequency Reports_2004-07.pdf]

About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing the following? 1 = 0 hrs/wk, 2 = 1-5 hrs/wk, 3 = 6-10 hrs/wk, 4 = 11-15 hrs/wk, 5 = 16-20 hrs/wk, 6 = 21-25 hrs/wk, 7 = 26-30 hrs/wk, 8 = more than 30 hrs/wk

YEAR	CATEGORY	KSU	NATIONAL
2007	Care for dependents	FY 2.03	FY 1.72
		SR 3.82	SR 2.38
	Commuting	FY 2.50	FY 2.25
		SR 2.52	SR 2.38
	Working for pay, campus	FY 1.90	FY 1.57
		SR 2.49	SR 1.84
	Working for pay, off campus	FY 2.76	FY 2.41
		SR 5.46	SR 3.79
2004	Care for dependents	FY 3.41	FY 3.41
		SR 3.95	SR 2.25
	Commuting	FY 2.89	FY 2.15
		SR 2.86	SR 2.30
	Working for pay, campus	FY 1.93	FY 1.63
		SR 1.89	SR 1.92
	Working for pay, off campus	FY 3.73	FY 2.27
		SR 3.74	SR 3.53
2003	Care for dependents	FY 2.91	FY 1.54
		SR 3.62	SR 2.24
	Commuting	FY 2.42	FY 2.13
		SR 2.91	SR 2.29
	Working for pay, campus	FY 2.36	FY 1.60
		SR 2.07	SR 1.89
	Working for pay, off campus	FY 3.80	FY 2.20
		SR 4.92	SR 3.56

Table 6 reveals that in caring for their dependents, KSU freshmen in 2003 scored 2.91 (6-10 hours/week) compared to the national average of 1.54 (about 2.5 hours/week) and seniors scored 3.62 (about 12 hours/week) compared to the national average of 2.24 (approximately 4 hours/week). In 2004 the discrepancy between KSU freshman and those nationally had evened out, but the disparity between KSU seniors and the national average for seniors was even greater. Although according to the 2007 data the disparity

lessened, KSU students still devote more time taking care of dependent family members than do their peers at other institutions. KSU students also scored higher in every other area that would take time away from their studies. Better advising and counseling of students may help some of them better adjust their personal schedules to achieve a better ratio of time spent on academics and time spent on other activities.

The *College Student Inventory* (CSI) is another helpful instrument in assessing factors that impact student performance. The CSI measures students' academic attitudes, interests and needs, and it provides students with information that can help them develop the skills necessary to get the most from their college experience. This assessment is completed by students enrolled in the University Orientation course (UNV 101), and has been completed by approximately 1100 KSU freshmen since the Fall 04 semester.

There are two versions of the CSI, and while they differ slightly, they both measure common factors within the following three major categories: (1) Academic Motivation, (2) General Coping, and (3) Receptivity to Support Services. Both forms have been used in UNV 101 courses. The CSI Form A (193 questions) was used between Fall 04 and Spring 07 semester, and over 700 students completed it. However, in an effort to increase the response rate, the more commonly used and shorter CSI Form B (100 questions) was adopted in Fall 2007, and this version has now been completed by over 300 freshmen at KSU. Each student's responses are presented in both graphic and written form on their individual *CSI Student Report*. This report presents their score for each factor as a percentage, and then compares these percentages to those of a larger sample of 93,000 college students across the U.S. who also completed the CSI during the summer and fall of 2007.

For all of the factors, the national norm is the 50th percentile, so higher scores (percentages above 50) indicate a higher than average level of each factor (whether the factor is viewed as positive or negative). For example, the "Desire to Finish College" factor represents a student's commitment to complete their college degree program – and is an indication of the value they place on a college education. Therefore, when a student has a score of 65.8 on the Desire to Finish College factor, it means he/she has a stronger commitment to finish college than 65.8% of the 93,000 other students at four-year colleges and universities who completed the CSI that same year.

The comprehensive *CSI Summary and Planning Reports* for Fall 2004 through Spring 2008 (received by the UNV 101 Coordinator) provide important summaries of the self-reported information shared by the KSU freshmen enrolled in the UNV 101 course. For evaluation purposes, the *CSI Summary and Planning Reports* for eight semesters have been combined to present the percentile scores for 20 factors, or scales, for the approximately 1,100 KSU freshmen who completed the CSI. However, only the factors with percentile scores that are well below or well above (plus or minus 10) the national norms for the CSI are included in Table 7, below.

The first data presented on the *CSI Summary and Planning Report* are the scores on four factors labeled "Summary Observations." These scores are derived from the students' responses on other CSI factors, or scales, combined with the demographic information students provide on the survey. The four factors are: (1) Dropout Proneness, (2) Predicted Academic Difficulty, (3) Educational Stress, and (4) Receptivity to Institutional Help. The "Summary Observations" factors are provided to help university staff members identify students who are in serious Educational Stress and in particular need of academic assistance. Each *Report* actually includes a list of students with a

Dropout Proneness score of 65 or higher who are identified as "Students with High Dropout Proneness." As indicated on Table 7, the average score for the 456 males at KSU who completed either version of the CSI between Fall 04 and Spring 08 is over 65 – which means that these young men have a greater risk of dropping out of college than 65% of the other young men who completed the CSI across the U.S. during that same period. (The scores for young women at KSU were near the national average of 50%, indicating no significant risk, and were not included in the table.) Not surprisingly, these young men also report greater Educational Stress than approximately 62% of similar young men across the nation

The good news is that this challenge might be mitigated by the KSU students' scores of about 63 on the fourth "Summary Observations" factor, Receptivity to Institutional Help, which is well above the national average. That these students have a greater interest in receiving help from the University than about 63% of similar students across the nation has positive implications. If (1) these students indeed have a strong interest in receiving help with their academic situations, and (2) the University provides sufficient and effective academic support programs to these students, some of them should take advantage of the support programs to improve their academic performance and continue toward graduation.

As indicated previously, there are several facets of the Academic Motivation category of the CSI. As indicated on Table 7, over a three-year period the KSU freshmen men's scores for the factors "Desire to Finish College" (30.9) are well below the national norm. That almost 70% of male students across the U.S. who completed the CSI expressed a stronger "commitment to complete a degree/program" (CSI's definition of this factor) as compared to the 456 men at KSU who completed the survey should be of great concern to the University. Furthermore, while the freshmen men and women had percentile scores well below the national norm in only two of the other Academic Motivation factors, most of the freshmen scores on the remaining factors are only in the 40s, which is still below the national norm of the 50th percentile, and this pattern holds whether the respondents were male or female. These scores reflect (1) the challenge facing University faculty and staff members to help students carefully examine their true motives for enrolling at the University, and (2) the impact that a low motivation level has on any student's ability to make steady and effective academic progress at the University.

The KSU men's average score of about 38 on the "Family Emotional Support" factor indicates that they feel less satisfaction with the communication that occurs within their families than about 62 percent of students nationwide. Therefore, these young men must attempt to navigate their first semester in college (a major life transition) while worrying about the stresses common to all families. Unfortunately, they must do this (1) without adequate communication systems with family members still at home, and (2) without the benefit of adequate social relationships within their new campus community.

The factor on which the scores of the 1100 KSU freshmen consistently exceeded the national norm is Receptivity to Personal Counseling. These students are more interested in receiving counseling in personal matters than about 63 percent of the 93,000 students nationwide who completed the CSI—with the men's scores exceeding those of the women. This implies that many of the young men and women who enter the University come with the realization that they have stressful issues and that someone

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might be able to help them.

On a final positive note, the 350 freshmen men and women who completed the CSI within the 2007-2008 academic year indicated a stronger interest in receiving help with their academic skills than 61 percent of similar students nationwide.

Table 7: Percentile Scores from CSI Summary and Planning Reports, Fall 2004 – Spring 2008 [Link to CSI_Data_Compilation.pdf]

	Females = 660		Males = 456		Total=1116	
	Form A 433	Form B 227	Form A 330	Form B 126	Form A 763	Form B 353
<u>Summary Observations</u>						
Dropout Proneness			65.8	67.8		
Educational Stress			61.4	66.8		
*Receptivity to Institutional Help		*64.8		*62.4		
<u>Academic Motivation</u>						
Desire to Finish College			33.7	30.9		
<u>Receptivity Scales</u>						
*Academic Assistance		*63.0				*61.5
Personal Counseling		*63.5	*66.3	*70.2	*60.7	*65.9

* Scores well above the national norms that indicate KSU students' **strengths**. The other scores indicate areas of concern. Scores near 50 are not considered significant and are omitted.

Corroborating evidence for the attitudinal problems indicated by the CSI is provided by the faculty who teach in gateway courses or in other Liberal Studies Core classes. Through the auspices of a Council on Post-Secondary Education grant, the University's Liberal Studies Core Committee (LSCC), which has oversight of the Liberal Studies Core curriculum, sponsored a five-day institute for 36 faculty to discuss at length (1) what actually goes on in each course of the Liberal Studies core, (2) what faculty have found works well in teaching the classes, and (3) the problems each has faced. The ultimate purpose was to determine both what has been succeeding and what can be done to improve the educational experience and success of students at KSU in the Liberal Studies core, and, by extension, in the rest of their academic pursuits at the University. This was the first such institute held at the University. The faculty who participated comprised the majority of those who teach in the liberal studies core curricula. (**Link to SummerInstituteFinalCompleteReport_pp1-2.pdf**). Each faculty member made a 45-minute presentation of the course/courses he or she teaches in the Liberal Studies core,

which was followed by a 15-minute period of discussion. The LSCC issued a 70-page report of the proceedings. The faculty reached consensus that poor student academic performance reflected a problem with students' attitudes toward university academic life. According to the summary section of the Official Report of the Institute,

A persistent theme throughout the week and the final day's discussion was the need to enhance a student academic culture at KSU. The faculty agreed that if this not done, it will undermine the educational mission of the University. A common complaint is the lack of motivation on the part of students and their "I don't care" attitude toward their classes. Too frequently students come to class without having read the material or having completed their assignments. Absenteeism from class is a chronic problem experienced widely on campus as is students continually coming to class late. When students miss classes, they are behind and serve . . . to slow down the class when they return. Students coming to class without having read their assignments is another common complaint. That such behaviors hurt their grades doesn't seem to be an incentive for them to improve. Not only is it frustrating for faculty to deal with these problems, it is frustrating for the better students who do want to learn.
(Link to SummerInstituteFinalCompleteReport_p4.pdf)

The faculty clearly saw the importance of the link between student attitudes and developmental and regular university education. The report called for greater University support for developmental education, stating that "The function of the remedial program is to prepare academically deficient students with the skills and habits they need to perform college-level work at an adequate level. Conditions at KSU are compromising that success and the remedial program needs attention" The faculty group recommended that developmental courses meet five hours per week rather than three, maintaining class size at no more than 15 students, and holding dialogue workshops between faculty teaching in developmental courses with those who do not. **(Link to SummerInstituteFinalCompleteReport_pp6-9.pdf)**

The report offered several other recommendations to redress problems of student attitudes and learning, among them:

- Improve the academic climate on campus through (1) better use of campus orientation sessions and the First Year Experience Program, (2) strengthening the content of UNV 101 (University Orientation) to promote a more serious work ethic, (3) common campus academic activities, (4) widespread use of the College Student Inventory to identify student-reported attitudes and needs, and (5) requiring conditionally admitted students to sign contract letters that would spell out the expectations the University has of them.
- Set maximum course enrollment in developmental writing classes to 15.
- Have the Liberal Studies Core Curriculum Committee, which oversees the core curricula of the University, take a leadership role in working with