New Realities. New Horizons.

2021 QM COMMUNITY IN REVIEW

QUALITY MATTERS
QM

qualitymatters.org

GROWING

BUILDING

EXPANDING

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPATION HIGHLIGHTS

632
Teaching Online: An Introduction to Online Delivery

8,300
Applying the Quality Matters Rubric (Higher Ed & K-12)

770
Introduction to Quality Matters

1,943
Improving Your Online Course

12,828
Attended Free Webinars

25,953
Participated in facilitated and assessed QM professional development

1,548
Designing Your Online Course
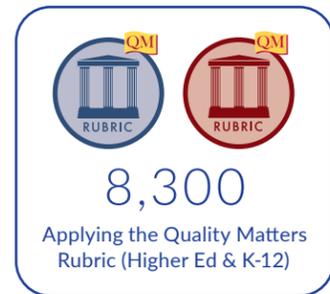
A Year of Adjusting, Growing and Changing

Over 2,500 years have passed since the Greek philosopher Heraclitus observed that the only constant in life is change. Yet, those words have never been more relevant.

The education landscape is changing.

Student needs are changing.

Workforce requirements are changing.

And we are faced with a choice — stay the course and embrace the status quo, or move forward boldly and innovate.

For the QM community, the choice is obvious. Despite being exhausted, the members of our community took a collective breath and rose to the challenge — adjusting, transforming and reimagining — to meet the torrent of change head-on. They are moving forward. Applying lessons learned. Sharing what works. And addressing barriers.

Mobility, equity, quality...globally

QM members across the globe have increased their focus on workforce-relevant curriculum. Alamo Colleges District, for example, introduced digital badges into their courses, providing their learners with a new way to demonstrate marketable skills. And during a July QM Success Story, the team at Midland College shared how they are embedding workforce development skills into their courses.

Institutions are also working to improve student mobility between academic institutions, alternative providers, work, and life. In fact, in recognition of the rigor of QM's professional development, three QM members — Louisiana State University, American College of Education and Ashland University — are now awarding graduate credit for certain QM workshops and courses.

There has been significant momentum for removing inequities in the pursuit and achievement of education. Several member institutions, including Virtual Arkansas, North Carolina Central University and Florida International University, shared their initiatives at 2021 QM conferences. From course design strategies to inter-institutional collaboration to student communities, our community is innovating every day to build, maintain, and support educational equity.

And it is all happening with an intentional and sustained focus on quality education for all students regardless of delivery modality.

continued

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For the QM community, the choice is obvious.

TEACHING ONLINE CERTIFICATE PAVES PATH OF COMMITMENT

In 2021, 995 participants — spanning both K-12 and higher education — completed the seven-workshop series and earned QM's Teaching Online Certificate. As Dr. Meagan Autry noted, "I care about providing high-quality online courses to students, and this achievement is the 'proof in the pudding' of that commitment!" And South Dakota's Sara Southwood shared her gratitude, posting on LinkedIn, "I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to learn, grow, reflect, and plan as a professional through this certification process."

Sara was one of the dozens of South Dakota educators who participated in the TOC last year. Other institutions with high participation included:

- College of Southern Nevada
- Colorado State University-Pueblo
- Illinois Central College
- Miami Dade College
- Northeastern Illinois
- Portland Community College
- Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania
- Southwest Texas Junior College
- Thomas Jefferson University

TOC

995
Teaching Online Certificate
(7 workshops)

OFFICIAL COURSE REVIEW ACTIVITY

1,292
Courses Certified

70
Courses Re-Certified

MEMBERS WITH 50+ CERTIFIED COURSES

1. Florida International University
2. Pearson Online & Blended Learning
3. Texas A & M International University
4. University of Southern Indiana

MEMBERSHIP ACTIVITY

129
Total New Institution Members

244
New Individual Members

91%
Renewal Rate
(Institutional Members)

> QM is also rising to the challenge as we work closely with our community to better understand their needs.

The numbers are impressive

Almost 1,300 courses earned the QM Certification Mark in 2021, which can positively impact the experience of hundreds of thousands of learners globally. More than 25,000 individuals participated in QM professional development, which created a significant ripple effect…over 98% of faculty who engage with our professional development find the information so valuable, that they implement what they learn in their face-to-face classes as well. And interest in higher ed Program Reviews continued to grow, which highlighted how institutions are moving their commitment to quality beyond the course level.

Beyond course design

But there is more to be done. Like our member institutions, Quality Matters recognizes that addressing change means moving beyond a singular focus on course design. Important as it is, course design is not enough to ensure a quality learning experience for all students. It's time to look more holistically at the learning experience we create for online students to ensure it is mission-aligned and meets student, course, program, and institutional goals.

That's why QM is also rising to the challenge as we work closely with our community to better understand their needs…to find out what's working and what isn't. And we're responding. We are now providing digital credentials for our professional development, with over 100,000 issued to date. We're collaborating with other organizations to provide free webinars on topics that are critical to our members, and we're improving tools and resources to better meet institutional and individual needs.

We are also expanding our efforts beyond the QM community. We are engaged with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education to align our work with institutional accreditation efforts. We continue to co-lead efforts around the National Standards for Quality Online Learning. And Executive Director Dr. Deb Adair is serving as Board President for the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education.

Change is constant, which means the work is never done. But one thing is absolutely certain: we can't go back. We must meet the changes that are happening all around us, we must continue to march forward…together. While the path to quality will always be customizable, it's only with a shared understanding of a common direction that we can work together at the scale necessary to address the changes we face.

CERTIFIED PEER REVIEWERS

3,560
with **851** certified in 2021

24%
certified in 2021

CERTIFIED MASTER REVIEWERS

712
with **130** certified in 2021

18%
certified in 2021

CERTIFIED FACILITATORS

743
with **134** certified in 2021

18%
certified in 2021

> QM is not a one-and-done procedure. We must constantly improve our content delivery assessments etc. as a commitment to the future of the educational process and our students.
>
> **JON POWELL**
> **FORT LEWIS COLLEGE**

> The professionalism of my review team yielded so many ways to improve my course. Inspired by them I decided to take the APPQMR course.
>
> **HOWARD FREDERICK**
> **PLYMOUTH STATE UNIVERSITY**

Member Momentum

From small steps to giant leaps, institutions across the globe took decisive action in 2021 to deliver on their online promise.

They became QM members. They engaged in professional development. They had courses reviewed… and so much more. All to meet the needs of their students, faculty and staff. While we wish every single accomplishment could be recognized, the members highlighted here provide a window into the remarkable work we see from our members every day.

Higher Education

HE

California State University System (CSU System)
QM-Certified Facilitators delivered 50 QM workshops for members of the CSU System, highlighting the System's commitment to supporting its faculty and staff. Topics included: Applying the Quality Matters Rubric, Improving Your Online Course, and Designing Your Online Course.

Cape Fear Community College (CFCC)
CFCC ramped up its commitment to quality with a significant investment in professional development. Faculty and staff participated in a variety of courses and workshops including, Applying the Quality Matters Rubric (APPQMR), Introduction to Quality Matters, Designing Your Blended Course, and Designing Your Online Course. A cohort also completed the TOC workshops. Two team members enrolled in the APPQMR Online Facilitator Certification so that CFCC can offer independent sessions of the APPQMR.

Central New Mexico Community College (CNM)
CNM was fully invested in course reviews — embarking on a project to have 100 courses officially reviewed. Thirty-two course reviews were completed in 2021 with plans to complete the rest in 2022.

College of Southern Nevada (CSN)
CSN engaged in a three-pronged approach to quality in 2021: attending the Quality in Action Conference, engaging in professional development, and using the Self-Review Tool. Twenty team members attended the conference while six cohorts (ranging from 15 to 20 participants each) took part in the Teaching Online Certificate (TOC) workshops. Twenty-five self-reviews were also conducted.

Digital Higher Education Consortium of Texas
Composed of 30 Texas-based higher ed institutions, the consortium delivered dozens of workshops to its members, reaching over 850 educators. The top three workshop choices: Applying the Quality Matters Rubric, Introduction to Quality Matters and Improving Your Online Course. Member Alamo Community Colleges District alone delivered 12 APPQMR workshops to 209 participants. And the consortium is not slowing down. More workshops are scheduled for 2022.

Florida International University (FIU)
FIU is leading the way with more than 320 QM-Certified courses — more than 50 of which were certified in 2021! The university recognizes each certified course with a shout-out on Twitter, celebrating its faculty's commitment to online course quality.

King Khalid University (KKU)
KKU in Saudi Arabia — our longest-standing member outside of North America (11+ years) — took home QM's inaugural Outstanding Impact by a Non-U.S. Higher Education Organization Award. The university was recognized for the significant strides it has made to offer quality digital learning. KKU currently has 25 QM-Certified courses — an additional 20 courses were previously certified — and nearly 900 faculty and staff members have participated in the Applying the Quality Matters workshop. In 2021 alone, nine independent sessions of the APPQMR were delivered to the KKU team.

Miami Dade College (MDC)
MDC went "all-in" on professional development! Between January and November, dozens of faculty and staff engaged in multiple QM workshops, including 16 sessions of Applying the Quality Matters Rubric. Team members also took part in TOC workshops, the Designing Your Blended Course workshop, and the New to Online Teaching series. The workshops support MDC's goal of building capacity for internal workshop facilitation and course reviews.

Portland Community College (PCC)
More than 400 faculty and staff from PCC took part in QM workshops in 2021. Participation was spread out over 26 sessions covering topics such as Improving Your Online Course, Teaching Online: An Introduction to Online Delivery, and Creating Presence in Your Online Course. More workshops are planned for 2022.

K-12 Education

K-12

Katy Independent School District (Katy ISD)
Katy ISD assembled the Essentials for Virtual Teaching course, which covers the components of the QM K-12 Rubric that are required to be included in all Katy ISD virtual courses. More than 1,800 staff members completed the course, which translates to impacting 84,000 students. The initiative resulted in a 25% increase in course completion, with many students noting the engagement and ease of navigation in their courses. And staff benefited by learning to speak a common language around course quality.

Low Country Education Consortium
New to QM in October 2021, Low Country is a consortium of eight affiliates in South Carolina with plans to actively engage in QM professional development. Their goal? To conduct Subscriber-Managed course reviews. Other professional development opportunities are also being explored in order to help the consortium members refine their online programs.

North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS)
Reaffirming its commitment to course quality, NCVPS successfully submitted more than 45 courses for review and certification. They now lead the K-12 community with 66 QM-Certified courses.

Pearson Online & Blended Learning
A QM member since 2013, Pearson continued to deliver on its online promise in 2021. This K-12 Publisher submitted more than 50 courses for review and earned the QM Certification Mark on such diverse offerings as Living Music, German and Personal Fitness.

> The [QM] Official Review provides an opportunity for faculty to reflect on their course through a learner perspective. From accessibility to learner engagement to assessments, the review used internationally-recognized Standards and best practices to examine critical course components related to the learner experience and ultimately learner success.
>
> DR. ANNA CATTERSON
> HEARTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ACHIEVEMENTS IN HIGHER ED PROGRAM DESIGN

In 2021, two institutions took their commitment to quality to the next level, achieving QM Exemplary Program status. This status is awarded when an institution earns individual QM Program Certifications in four key areas — Online Program Design, Online Teaching Support, Online Learner Support, and Online Learner Success — within three years.

A.T. Still University earned recognition in March 2021 after becoming the first institution to apply for all four QM Program Certifications at one time.

Another first was achieved in September 2021, when Chamberlain University's online RN to BSN program became the first RN to BSN program to earn QM's Exemplary Program status.

A.T. Still University and Chamberlain University join the University of Alaska Fairbanks as the only three institutions to earn this exclusive distinction. Fifteen other institutions have earned at least one individual program certification to date.

QM Quality Matters Exemplary Online Program 2021

ATSU | A.T. Still University

CHAMBERLAIN College of Nursing

These awards celebrate individuals and institutions that exemplify QM's focus on student success, demonstrate an unwavering commitment to high course quality, and use varied but valuable approaches to improving learner outcomes.

Outstanding Impact by an Individual in Higher Education:
Dr. Richard Espinosa, Austin Community College

Outstanding Impact by a K-12 Organization or Individual:
Graduation Alliance

Outstanding Impact by a Higher Education Organization:
Cleveland Community College

Outstanding Impact by a Non-U.S. Higher Education Organization Award: King Khalid University, KSA

Directors' Award for Exceptional Service to Quality Matters:
Barbara Frey, Point Park University and Stephen Kaufman, University of Akron
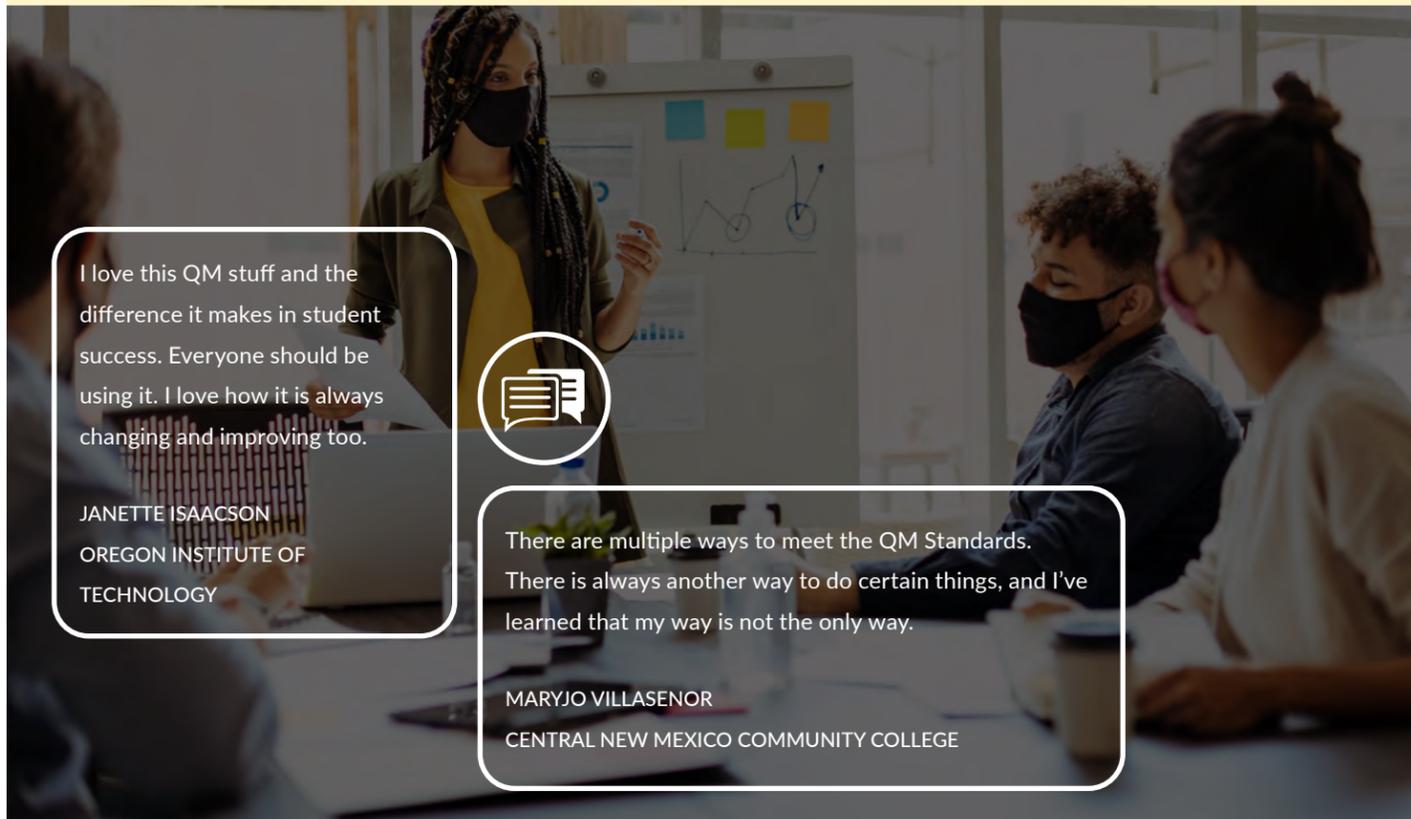
> I love this QM stuff and the difference it makes in student success. Everyone should be using it. I love how it is always changing and improving too.
>
> JANETTE ISAACSON
> OREGON INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

> There are multiple ways to meet the QM Standards. There is always another way to do certain things, and I've learned that my way is not the only way.
>
> MARYJO VILLASENOR
> CENTRAL NEW MEXICO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The Year in QM Research

Inquiring. Investigating. Informing.

Quality Matters was founded on research-supported best practices and research continues to drive our work today. In 2021, the QM research team and members of the QM community dove into several key topics, including accessibility, QM implementation, and the current state of online learning — all to support the efforts of our members and inform the services we provide to our community.

Flex Survey

"How are you using and adapting the QM Rubric?" That's the question our research team posed to QM Coordinators. The "Flex" survey was designed to help QM gain a better understanding of member activity and initiatives so we could provide updated tools and resources to meet the quality assurance needs of our members. One finding: 50% of respondents have adapted the QM Rubric in a unique way, including using it to develop or evaluate professional development.

Implementation Survey

We took an in-depth look at the people, policies and processes that drive QM implementation in a mixed-methods research project led by the QM research team in conjunction with several QM Research Colleagues. This exploratory study is currently available online and will be published in an upcoming special edition of the "American Journal of Distance Education." Highlights include: the impact of institutionally-supported goals for course design, the importance of choosing an experienced person as the implementation lead, and successful approaches to implementing Quality Matters.

AECT Award

QM's Dr. Kay Shattuck, Dr. Bethany Simunich, and Barbra Burch, along with QM Research Colleague Dr. Barb Altman from Texas A&M University-Central Texas, were recognized for their journal article, "Quality Assurance Implementation: How It Works." The article received the 2021 Association for Educational Communications & Technology (AECT) Systems Thinking and Change (STC) Division Outstanding Article Award. The authors were formally acknowledged at the AECT Convention in November.

CHLOE 6

Our joint survey with Eduventures Research — the Changing Landscape of Online Education (CHLOE) — was administered for the sixth time in 2021. The results, featured in "CHLOE 6: Online Learning Leaders Adapt for a Post-Pandemic World," demonstrate how institutions are reassessing their online learning priorities and shifting their focus to ed tech enhancements, faculty professional development and online quality. The report has been downloaded more than 1,900 times.

Digital Accessibility White Paper Series

The second and third white papers in the Digital Accessibility white paper series were released in 2021. The series expands on the findings from the 2019 accessibility survey conducted by Drs. Barbara Frey and Rae Mancilla. The second paper provides insight into course design and development tools. Key findings are:

• A significant increase in the use of captions over the past decade, with 60.8% of respondents reporting they use captions always or often

• The most common accessible course development practices are Alt text, color contrast and captioning

• A lack of institutional and/or faculty support for inclusivity and time are the biggest challenges faced by respondents

The third paper highlights professional development needs identified by survey participants. Other topics explored in the paper include how administrators can address common barriers to participation in digital accessibility training and what faculty can do to contribute to a meaningful accessibility training curriculum.

Impact & Outreach

The education landscape is changing and so are the needs of our community. To meet these evolving needs, QM is continuously improving — adding tools, providing resources and expanding opportunities to support member goals at every level.

Digital Credentials

QM rolled out digital credentials for select professional development courses and workshops as well as for QM-Certified roles. The credentials — issued via Credly — provide our community with an easy way to showcase and share the skills and competencies acquired as a result of their QM achievements.

To date, QM has issued over 110,000 credentials representing 34 courses, workshops and QM-Certified roles. Recipients are excited and actively share their credentials on Twitter and LinkedIn, including Cleveland State University's Sean McCormick who shared the digital credential he earned for QM's Peer Reviewer Course. Sean noted in his post, "Even though I'm a millennial who was reared on technology, there was always something I learned in the Quality Matters courses and reviews that helped mold me into a vastly improved course facilitator/educator and dispelled any feelings of imposter syndrome."

Quality Matters Instructional Designers Association (QM IDA)

It was another busy year for the QM IDA. The leadership team kicked things off with a Needs Assessment Survey to help inform future programming, including topics for Instructional Design Learning Exchange webinars and Twitter chats. The assessment also led to the implementation of a new idea — Coffee Talks. These informal Zoom conversations provide instructional designers (IDs) with a collaborative and interactive way to connect with their peers and discuss the latest developments and challenges in the field of instructional design.

The QM IDA also launched a new resource site for IDs. The site, hosted in Canvas, provides a space for IDs to:

• Connect with other IDs

• Share their knowledge, experience and resources

• Learn from each other in an asynchronous and sustained fashion

Curated resources are also available across six modules, including instructional design fundamentals, professionalism, and innovation and emerging trends.

QM Councils

QM's councils — QM K-12 Advisory Council, Quality Matters Academic Advisory Council, and QM International Strategy Council — all experienced growth in 2021, with several new members selected to each council. The members of these councils play a critical role in providing guidance and recommendations on QM strategies and initiatives. Councils are just another way members are bringing their expertise and insight to the table.

Webinars

Over 12,000 educators participated in QM's selection of free webinar offerings in 2021. From member success stories to research-focused topics to general online learning information, QM provided numerous free learning opportunities for the QM community. Some of the most popular topics included: "Principles and Best Practices for Using Visuals in Course Design" and "Professional Development for Digital Accessibility: A Needs Assessment."

Data Dashboards

To provide Quality Matters Coordinators (QMCs) with a clearer picture of their institution's quality assurance efforts, QM implemented data dashboards. Accessible in MyQM, the dashboards allow QMCs to:

• View QM professional development activity for selected workshops/courses along with date range and completion status categories

• View course review activity for Internal Reviews, QM-Managed and Subscriber-Managed Reviews based on selected dates and review status

• View data for QM Roles, including role application status for the role holders

The dashboards generate graphs that can be printed or exported, making data easily shareable.

Tips & Resources

Providing easy-to-consume resources for the community was at the forefront of several efforts. A free, printable PDF version of QM's Online Course Design Guide (HE and K-12) was made available for everyone, making it easier to share the guide. First developed in 2020, this guide provides a step-by-step approach to help align foundational course elements, promote engaged, active learning, and create connection through course organization. Specific steps to embed culturally responsive design are also included.

Course intro videos and choice boards were just two hot topics featured in K-12 resource emails. The emails, shared throughout the year, featured a "Timely Tips" PDF — providing K-12 educators with actionable ideas on the featured topic. Tips were provided for different time frames from five to 60 minutes so that teachers could implement the ideas no matter how much or how little time they had.

The free, community-led Accessibility & Usability Resource Site continued to grow with the addition of a new topic — Using Inclusive Teaching Practices to Build Meaningful Interaction and Engage Students in Online Learning. Modules of this topic help educators focus on inclusive design and pedagogical practices that incorporate and reflect the diversity that students bring to the online classroom. We also launched the K-12 Reviewer Resource site in 2021. The site provides K-12 Course Reviewers with a place to engage with other reviewers, access resources and lessons from the K-12 Reviewer Course, ask QM staff questions, and easily reference policies and procedures related to the Official Review process.

Credit for QM Courses & Workshops

In recognition of the important role QM professional development plays in building critical skills needed for success in the ed tech and education fields, three institutions are now offering credit for select QM professional development, including the Teaching Online Certificate. Louisiana State University is offering up to nine credits toward one of four eligible online degrees or graduate certificate programs offered by LSU Online. Both the American College of Education and Ashland University are offering credit toward graduate programs.

International

• Thirty-four institutions representing 18 different countries outside the U.S. joined QM in 2021. In all, international institutions accounted for 26% of all new member institutions.

NEW COUNTRIES		
7	India	Singapore
	Jamaica	Spain
	Kenya	Syria
	Kyrgyzstan	

• QM collaborated with Monterrey Tec in Mexico to generate an officially translated version of the QM Higher Ed Rubric which is now available to member institutions in Spanish-speaking countries. The following QM member institutions joined the commission to translate and validate the annotated Rubric:

» Chile — Instituto IACC, Instituto DUOC UC, Universidad Autónoma de Chile and Universidad de los Andes

» Colombia — Universidad EAFIT and Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia

» Dominican Republic — Universidad Iberoamericana

» México —Tecnológico de Monterrey and Universidad Autónoma del Noreste

» Puerto Rico — University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus

This collaboration is another impactful initiative taken to accommodate the diverse languages, cultures and pedagogical practices of our members in their QM implementations.

• QM continues to play an active role in the global education community. Dr. Deb Adair, QM Executive Director, was elected Board President of INQAAHE (see sidebar). Dr. Yaping Gao, Senior Academic Director of Member Services and Partnerships, is currently serving a second term representing the North American Region as a Focal Point on Quality for the ICDE Quality Network. Additionally, we are engaging with governing bodies and accrediting agencies such as the National eLearning Center in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

DR. DEB ADAIR ELECTED AS INQAAHE BOARD PRESIDENT

QM Executive Director Dr. Deb Adair. Deb was elected Board President for the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). INQAAHE's mission is to "promote and advance excellence in higher education through the support of an active international community of quality assurance agencies." In her inaugural address to INQAAHE members, Deb expressed her commitment to strengthening the organization and the network it represents as QA takes on a more critical and relevant role in higher education. Deb is INQAAHE's 8th Board President.

QM Conferences: Familiar Faces & New Ideas

"Great!" "Relevant!" "Engaging!" These were just some of the words participants used to describe QM's 2021 conferences.

QM Research Online Conference, February 9

The year of learning and networking kicked off in February with the QM Online Research Conference. This half-day virtual event featured presentations from some of today's leading experts in online learning research.

Participants engaged with the presenters — and each other — on topics such as effective use of course videos, the online student experience and perspective, QM implementation, and high-impact practices. Throughout the event, Twitter was flooded with comments, with many echoing Dr. Albert Schram's post that the conference featured "Great, insightful presentations…giving lots of food for thought and inspiration."

Quality in Action, April 8 & 9

The ongoing pandemic cast a spotlight on the need for professional development focused on online learning. QM answered with our inaugural Quality in Action Conference. Designed for those on the front lines of higher-ed online learning,

the conference's curated sessions provided actionable ideas that attendees could put into practice immediately.

For example, presenter Marsha Kershaw shared how setting expectations, consistent communication and personal feedback can all help increase teacher presence in the online classroom. These concrete ideas were greatly appreciated by those who participated. "I really enjoyed the two days. I absolutely learned things I can apply right away," shared Paula Cancro. Others, such as Joel Schleusner, agreed, " This was a great conference! The choice of topics in each [time slot] provided numerous opportunities to explore subjects that directly impact my job."

Presidents Summit on Leading Quality, June 30

Another first in 2021 — QM's Presidents Summit on Leading Quality. The event brought together senior academic leaders and leading experts in online education for an important discussion around the evolving landscape of education. Three key topics were explored:

- The System's Role in Creating Inclusive Learning

- Engaging and Rigorous Learning

- Rethinking Quality in a Competitive Landscape

To help engage others in this important conversation, a Summary Report for the event was drafted. The report can be used as a springboard for discussions on your own campus and for collaboration with peers at institutions in your area.

Q-Up for Digital Quality, October 15

A new event was also added for our K-12 community. The half-day professional development opportunity focused on strategies, actionable takeaways and practical tips to help drive student success in online and blended learning. Several organizations had multiple team members participate, including Lee's Summit R-7 Schools which sent 17 team members!

Throughout the event, participants used Padlet to share what they learned. Some of the top takeaways included the critical importance of equity and accessibility, the calming power of breathing, and the intention needed for relationship building. Get a feel for what participants experienced by viewing some of the event sessions.

QM Connect*LX*, October 18 & 29; November 3-5

Looking Forward. Transforming Now was the theme of QM's flagship conference in 2021. The goal was to provide the education community with the tools, resources and ideas needed to meet student needs in a rapidly changing educational landscape —a landscape that was impacted by both the ongoing pandemic and critical issues of accessibility and equity.

Keynote speaker Michelle Pacansky-Brock, Faculty Mentor for the California Community Colleges Virtual Campus, set the tone with an engaging and timely presentation on humanizing online learning. Michelle shared multiple strategies on how to develop human connections that can help students achieve their full potential and close equity gaps. One suggestion she had is to create a "getting to know you" survey — ask questions such as "What would you like me to call you?" and "What are your pronouns?".

That was just one of the countless actionable ideas shared throughout the event. Inspiration came from sessions such as "Solving the Mystery of Effective Online Group Projects," "Empowering our Students: Online Design Strategies to Promote Voice and Choice," and "Beyond Design: Supporting Faculty With Online Teaching Principles." Ideas were also exchanged in Gatherly during networking breaks, and in conversations with the conference's sponsors and exhibitors.

While Dr. Chuck Piscitello tweeted during the event, "Thank goodness for QM," we'd like to say, "Thank goodness for the QM community!" It is their ideas, experiences and insights that are making a difference every day, especially at QM ConnectLX. Over 450 educational professionals from 195 institutions attended the conference, tapping into the community's forward-thinking course design ideas and teaching practices to help transform their own online offerings.

INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION HIGHLIGHTS

The QM team took a virtual trip around the globe in 2021, delivering 37 presentations at more than 30 U.S. and international events, including the WCET annual meeting, OLC Accelerate, and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education Annual Conference — just to name a few.

Leading the Way
QM Senior Academic Director: Member Services & Partnerships Dr. Yaping Gao led the way with 20 presentations to colleagues in countries such as the Philippines, Sudan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and South Africa. Many of Dr. Gao's presentations focused on moving from emergency remote instruction to quality online education and digital learning. Implementing quality assurance at the course, program and institutional levels was another focus. One highlight: delivering a keynote at the Middle East Thought Leadership Forum in October.

Sharing Insights
Executive Director Dr. Deb Adair also found herself virtually globetrotting in 2021. From Mexico to Louisiana to Russia, Dr. Adair brought her extensive knowledge and formidable insight to multiple audiences…in multiple ways. She participated in panel discussions, delivered keynote addresses, conducted workshops,

and led interactive, informative sessions. Topics addressed by Dr. Adair included micro-credentials, best practices and leading quality online.

The National Standards for Quality Online Learning as well as course quality were prominently featured during presentations from the QM K-12 team. The team participated in several events last year, including the Digital Learning Annual Conference, delighting and informing audiences with sessions such as "We're Spillin' the Tea: QM Course Reviews Secrets Revealed" and "At the Pole: Position Your Course for Student Success."

Diving Into Research
Dr. Bethany Simunich, QM Director of Research and Innovation, helped disseminate the findings from the latest Changing Landscape of Online Education (CHLOE) survey at events such as the Instructional Technology Council Conference and OLC Accelerate. Other highlights include her participation in the AECT Summer Research Symposium where she discussed inclusive learning design and her involvement in the Ed Crunch panel on the synergy of research and design as well as the OLC panel "Repairing our reputation post-Covid: A conversation."

Moving Forward With Intention

Message from Dr. Deb Adair, QM Executive Director

A few years ago, in the pre-pandemic era, I co-authored a book chapter with QM's Founding Director of Research and Senior Advisor Dr. Kay Shattuck, who now serves as the Associate Editor of The American Journal of Distance Education. The book was The Business of Innovating Online and our chapter was "Ensuring Quality while Creating and Innovating." In it, we looked through the lens of change management theory to discuss how the development and growth of an internal quality assurance (QA) process could actually support and enhance an innovation — online learning in this case.

The upshot is a call for the recalibration of processes to make traditional quality criteria relevant for online learning innovation. That recalibration requires: 1) the use of evidence of outcomes in the continuous improvement cycle at the heart of any robust QA process; and 2) a mature and embedded QA process that can "evolve innovations and grow them into actual, sustained institutional change."

Whether or not one considers online education today as an "innovation," online platforms are increasingly supporting experimentation in educational models and providers. Moving forward, as we explore these trends, we see that the way quality is defined, improved, and/or assured varies according to who is responsible for it. Where these innovations connect to an academic pathway, the primary responsibility for quality rests with the academic institution. That is why last summer we convened the Quality Matters Presidents Summit on Leading Quality — to robustly discuss the quality of student learning and how to improve it, which is QM's mission.

These conversations, and a recommitment to our vision, are defining the road ahead for QM — a road to design with intentionality for digital education, including the process to assure quality. As our member institutions will be increasingly involved in the work of curating, connecting, and contextualizing learning experiences for their students, they will need quality assurance processes. Whether they need a scalable way to evaluate prior learning and/or recognize credentials issued by other providers, to recognize and connect learning experiences outside of their primary curriculum and/or provided by other institutions, or to evaluate if their own intentional design for student learning experiences is achieving desired outcomes, institutions will need intentionally-designed QA processes for this work.

Regardless of the education model, technology, delivery modality, and structures, the process for assuring quality is fundamentally the same. QM's Continuum of Excellence in Quality Assurance (CEQA) model lays out the core elements of this process:

1. *Identifying appropriate standards, metrics, or goals*

2. *Creating a structured process for periodic review*

3. *Identifying deficiencies and rectifying them in a continuous improvement cycle*

4. *Benchmarking the progress against institutional goals and relevant external references*

5. *Institutionalizing the process in ways that embed the process within the institutional culture*

Creating this culture of quality is needed to sustain and adapt to innovation in education. In her recent editorial, Dr. Shattuck reflected on pandemic-hastened remote learning that relied on classroom pedagogy and noted that educators with expertise in distance education " ... have a renewed urgency to share" that expertise and challenged us to improve education for all learners.

As we look forward to 2022 and beyond, QM's focus will be on customizing quality assurance processes to support the intentional design of learning experiences. We embrace the challenge as we partner with our members to improve the quality of online education and student learning.

> I am so happy that I received the opportunity to take a QM course this summer and then participate in this formal review process. ... I have learned so much about how to create a truly effective and student-centered online course and received wonderful suggestions from my QM reviewer.
>
> PAMELA REGAN
> CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY – LOS ANGELES

1500+ QM MEMBER INSTITUTIONS/ORGANIZATIONS

As of January, 2022

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COLOMBIA
CHILE
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UNITED KINGDOM
FRANCE
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SOUTH AFRICA
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QM STAFF ACROSS THE USA

Quality Matters is a non-profit organization based in Maryland whose employees work virtually from points across the United States.

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QM's Board of Directors is dedicated to providing the guidance and support that will stimulate the further expansion of services from Quality Matters, its reach and influence. In partnership with QM staff, its aim is to build a world-class organization.

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Quality Matters (QM) is the global organization leading quality assurance in online and innovative digital teaching and learning environments. It provides a scalable quality assurance system for online and blended learning used within and across organizations. When you see QM Certification Marks on courses or programs, it means they have met QM Course Design Standards or QM Program Review criteria in a rigorous review process.