And Then There Was Light: Identifying & Filling Gaps in Online Student Services

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Session Outcomes

1. Explain why Alamo Colleges pursued the Quality Matters (QM) Online Learner Support Candidacy+ Certification.
2. Summarize of the QM Online Learner Support Certification.
3. Review the benefits of the QM Candidacy+ Certification for student and college.
4. Develop a Request for Participation for each college
6. Identify solutions found to close the gap of access to online support services.
7. Discuss challenges and lessons learned.
QM Program Certification & Candidacy

Outcome #1

Why Pursue QM Certification?
Persistence Rates

**Outcome 1**

Why Pursue QM Certification

### Fall-to-Fall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2014-2015</th>
<th>Fall 2015-2016</th>
<th>Fall 2016-2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some online</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No online</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
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</table>

### Fall-to-Spring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2014-Spring 2015</th>
<th>Fall 2015-Spring 2016</th>
<th>Fall 2016-Spring 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>60.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some online</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No online</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>76.0%</td>
<td>78.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Connection Between Persistence, Student Support Services and Lack of Access

According to LaPadula (2003) students who engage in student support services tend to be more successful in persisting in and graduating from college than those who do not.

Bailey (2005) found that if institutions are to improve persistence, they must focus on the factors that distance education student’s face.

Britto and Rush (2013) identified six factors that negatively influenced student retention & persistence were: a large course load, a lack of experience in higher education, a lack of experience with online courses, busy lives outside of coursework, a young age, and a lack of access to technology and computers.

Closing the gap of access to technology
Outcome #2

Summary of Online Learner Support Certification
Online Learner Support Candidacy+
Certification

Candidacy provides a structured and guided way for institutions to prepare for a program review, which leads to a QM Certification in Online Learner Support.
## Criterion 1

### Evidence to Submit

1. A list of links to the listed services (and others that may be relevant),
2. An explanation of how each service supports the online learner and promotes learner success, and
3. A plan to address any identified gaps in service.

### An effective response to #2 includes a brief statement from each support service regarding its goals and services for the online learner and how it meets them.

### Criteria

1. Direct and indirect support for online learners should include remote access to the following services:

   - Orientation to online study
   - Technical support
   - Academic advising
   - Proctoring and student authentication
   - Tutoring
   - Grade appeals
   - Remote library access
   - Accessibility services
   - Records and registration
   - Financial Aid services
   - Billing
   - Institutional and student policies
## Criterion 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Evidence to Submit</th>
<th>Annotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. A robust process to collect, distribute, and use learner feedback to inform and improve learner support efforts.</td>
<td>Provide</td>
<td>It should not be assumed that raw data speak for themselves. Analysis and interpretation of the data are necessary to determine the effectiveness of support services and to pinpoint areas for improvement. A Data Analysis Cover Sheet is provided for this purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. A description of data collection, distribution, and feedback mechanisms to improve learner support efforts;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Representative survey data addressing learner satisfaction with online campus services over the past three years; and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Documentation of any changes in policy, organization, and resources that have been influenced by learner feedback.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outcome #3

Benefits of the Program Candidacy + Certification
Student Benefits

• Program reviews help ensure that students have access to essential academic resources and support services in an online learning environment.

• These reviews provide further evidence to current students, board members, and accreditors that the Alamo Colleges are committed to continuous quality improvement for online learners.

College Benefits

• The review process will identify, strengths, challenges, and opportunities in serving online learners.

• The certification would add value to the Distance Learning area of the fifth year accreditation reports.
Outcome #4

Develop an Request for Participation for each college
Invitation for Colleges to Participate

Your Invited!
Identify Stakeholder/Roles

**Quality Assurance (QA) Team:** Group of college experts from student success and academic success who collect, review and create planning processes to address any identified gaps and solutions to fill the gaps.

**Program Liaison:** College representative who will upload artifacts to the QM repository, which are collected from QAT and complete any supplemental documents on behalf of their college. *(role reserved for a Dean)*

**Certification Coach (CC):** An Alamo Colleges Online representative who will assist each college by providing them with clarification on requirements, host round table discussions, deliver deadline reminders, celebrate victories and share learned experiences.
Role of Quality Assurance Team (QAT)

- Collect and review initial data and additional data
- Make recommendations
- Explain rationales
- Offer suggestions for improvements
Role of Program Liaison

- Prepares data reports
- Provides initial data and additional data
- Answers questions during the QM review
- May challenge/decide to accept the initial decisions
- Make amendments, if needed
Role of Certification Coach

- Provides clarification on criterion in each phase
- Submits data reports to QM
- Send reminders to PL regarding deadline(s)
- Proof data reports
- Conducts a internal mock review with PL in preparation for the submission of the comprehensive data report
- Provides guidance in QA Team meeting, if needed
Certification Criteria Documents

Check each criterion to determine the type of evidence required

1. **Annotated Program Criteria** provides
   - Description of the Criterion
   - Evidence to submit for each Criterion
   - Annotation examples

2. The **Program Candidacy** provides
   - A candidacy chart broken into three phases (each phase represents a year).
   - Each phase highlights criterion and activities used to collect evidence for required data reports

The **Annotated Program Criteria** should be used in conjunction with the **Program Candidacy** chart by phase document.
Annotated Program Criteria

Outcome 4: Request for Participation

Online Learner Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Evidence to Submit</th>
<th>Annotations</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
<th>Additional Evidence and Reforms Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Direct and indirect support for online learners should include remote access to the following services:</td>
<td>Provide 1) A list of links to the listed services (and others that may be relevant), 2) An explanation of how each service supports the online learner and promotes learner success, and 3) A plan to address any identified gaps in service.</td>
<td>An effective response to #2 includes a brief statement from each support service regarding its goals and services for the online learner and how it meets them.</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Program Candidacy Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1/Year 1</th>
<th>Concurrent Target Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criterion 1 – remote access to services</strong></td>
<td>TA 1 – Collect and review statements of commitment to serving online learners and any supporting policies and documents explaining how online learners are supported by each of the following units or functions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Orientation to online study</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Technical support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Academic advising</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Proctoring and student authentication</td>
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<td>• Remote library access</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Financial aid services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Billing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Institutional and student policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TA 2 – Review statements for thoroughness and consistency and recommend any needed changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TA 3 – Develop or describe any existing planning process to address any gaps or deficiencies in learner support services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learner Support Improvement Plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Criterion 2 – use of learner feedback | TA 1 – Document the learner feedback data that is collected on the support of online learners for each of the following |

Other relevant information: |
Data Report & Narratives

Alamo Colleges District
Online Learner Support

Criterion Component: Phase 1/ Criterion 1 - Remote Access to Services

TA 1 – Collect and review statements of commitment to serving online learners and any supporting policies and documents explaining how online learners are supported by each of the following units or functions:

- Orientation to online study
- Technical support
- Academic advising
- Proctoring and student authentication
- Tutoring
- Grade appeals
- Remote library access
- Accessibility services
- Records and registration
- Financial aid services
- Billing
- Institutional and student policies

Narrative

Evidence

Access Information for Alamo Share to view internal data.
(Login credentials will be provided upon provided by Program Liaison)

TA 2 – Review statements for thoroughness and consistency and recommend any needed changes.

TA 3 – Develop or describe any existing planning process to address any gaps or deficiencies in learner support services.
QA Team Time Commitments

Based on Best Practices from University of North Carolina at Charlotte

• Bi-weekly one hour meetings during the first semester of the QM Program Candidacy

• Weekly one hour meetings the semester you submit your evidence to QM for the certification

• Offer meeting in two formats: face-to-face & via web-conference
Mock reviews are designed to simulate the process that represents the actual QM certification program review for online learner support.

The purpose is to identify areas for strengthening the aims, evidence, methods, and packaging the final draft to be successful.
Cloud Storage

Based on Best Practices from University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Artifacts associated with the QM Online Learner Candidacy+ Certification will be stored in Microsoft OneDrive organized by:

• College/Phase#/Criteria/Task Activity
QM Program Certification & Candidacy

**Outcome #5**

*New Best Practices: Certification*

*Pathway Tools*
Certification Pathway Tools

1. **Online Learner Support Swimlane Diagram.** A visual representation distinguishing each stakeholder's responsibilities of processes and sub-processes.

2. **Learner Feedback Rubric.** Determines the level of progress units made in collecting, analyzing, and describing ways learning feedback is used to improve processes, policies, or delivery of services each year.

3. **Remote Access to Services Rubric.** Determines the level of progress student support units made to develop and promote statements of commitment to online students that address how remote services are provided and how services are accessed at a distance.
Certification Pathway Tools

4. **Online Learner Support Pathway Kick-off Orientation.** A meeting to 1) discuss the Candidacy + Program Review pathway to Program Certification; 2) review the benefits of the pathway to students and the college; 3) develop action steps to meet the pathway timeline.

5. **College Quality Assurance Team Milestone Chart.** Provides a snapshot of deliverables tied to each milestone along with a checkmark to recognize the completion of the milestones.

6. **Remote Access to Services & Learner Feedback Evaluation Form.** Guides units towards the identification of gaps in access and support of remote student services through salient questions prompt that align to unit goals to support online students.
7. **Mock-Review Team Kick-Off Orientation.** A meeting to 1) discuss the Internal Mock-Review Process; 2) review the benefits of mock-review to the college; 3) develop action steps to meet the mock-review timeline.

8. **Online Learner Support Candidacy Progress Report.** A quantitative summary of artifacts produced and works completed at the halfway point of the pathway in the form of an infographic.

9. **Online Learner Support Candidacy In-Flight Status (Per Phase).** A pictorial that captures the percentage of completion in each of the three phases in addition to the final steps in the certification pathway process.

10. **Unit Learner Feedback Survey Target Dates.** A semester development timeline for student experience surveys.
## Outcome 4: Request for Participation

### 12-Month Accelerated Timeline

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>QA Team Meeting</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 1, criteria 1 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 2, criteria 2 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 3, criteria 2 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 4, criteria 1 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 4, criteria 2 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 5, criteria 1 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 5, criteria 2 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 6, criteria 1 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 6, criteria 2 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 7, criteria 1 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 7, criteria 2 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QA Team Meeting</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Complete phase 6, criteria 1 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 6, criteria 2 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 7, criteria 1 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 7, criteria 2 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QA Team Meeting</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Complete phase 3, criteria 2 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 4, criteria 1 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Complete phase 5, criteria 1 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 5, criteria 2 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 6, criteria 1 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 6, criteria 2 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 7, criteria 1 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 7, criteria 2 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>QA Team Meeting</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Complete phase 7, criteria 1 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete phase 7, criteria 2 of Targeted Activity (TA)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Best Practice:**
- **QA Team Meeting:** Mock Review in Progress
- **Outcome 4:** Baseline feedback is being reviewed by the other QA Teams (see their respective timelines for more details)
QM Program Certification & Candidacy

**Outcome #6**

Results from Online Learner Support Certification
**Outcome 6**

Results from Online Learner Support Certification

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**Solutions to Close Gap of Access**

- **Development of an online one-stop-shop of Academic & Support Services**

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**San Antonio College**

**Academic Support**

- Admissions & Aid
- Advising
- Bookstore
- Course Catalog
- Distance Learning
- Graduation
- Library
- Records and Transcripts
- SAC Cares
- Tutoring Services

**Student Support**

- Assessment Center
- Business Office/Bursar
- Computer Labs
- Counseling
- da|ABILITY Support Services
- Dreamers (DACA)
- IT Services
- International Students
- Mega Computer Lab
- Reverse Transfer
- Senior Citizens
- Sports and Recreation
- Student Advocacy Center
- Transfer & Career Center
- Veterans Affairs
- Women & Non-traditional Students

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**Advising**

Certified Advisors play a vital role in the educational endeavors of students by providing a variety of advising services at key points in their academic journey. Many of these services are available via email, telephone, face-to-face contact, and online via Zoom Appointment. In addition, extended hours and weekend hours are available. These advisors provide comprehensive academic and career advising along with coaching students through academic recovery concerns such as probation and dismissal. The Advising department supports the mission of the college by proactively engaging with students to both support and facilitate optimal learning and successful attainment of their educational goals.
Solutions to Close Gap of Access

Development of an **online Support Service Experience** survey

**ALAMO COLLEGES DISTRICT**
San Antonio College

**ALAMO COLLEGES DISTRICT**
St. Philip’s College
San Antonio College Receives QM Online Learner Support Certification
QM Program Certification & Candidacy

Outcome #7

Challenges and Lessons Learned
Program Liaison Perspective

Invest on tacos- it works!

Provide guidance on assessment and data analysis
  • We as a group selected the PDCA framework

Build momentum
  • The committee will continue to meet once a semester to share information/best practices for online learners

Provide timely feedback on information collected
  • This really helped increase the quality of the work

Agree on a chart/tables format
  • It takes a lot of time to format/redo charts

Keep team informed about process and progress

Be very open and honest about the gaps in the narrative!!
  • This is a continuous improvement process, it doesn’t have to be perfect! The reviewers appreciated this.
Program Liaison Perspective

Challenges #1:
• Two hour QA Team: overkill; too long; certain area monopolized most of the time.

Lessons Learned #1:
• One-on-One (15 min) meeting with each area was beneficial and improved the quality of work.

Challenges #2:
• Our district had oversight over two of the twelve areas. So the ability to make decisions of these two area followed a different process pace then the other ten.

Lessons Learned #2:
• Have the right people seated at the table or the right contact connected to the discussion.
Session Activity

1. Find a group
2. In your group identify
   a) strengths and opportunities in online learner support areas, at your institution and ways your institution may support online learners.
3. Share with the group 1 strength, opportunity and support for online learners.

An example of strengths & opportunity identified by Alamo Colleges:

**Strengths** - we already provided support services but we could not determine if ALL support services were accessible to online learners

**Opportunity** - closed the gap of lack of access to online learner support services.

**How we promoted and supported online learners** - created a online one-stop shop of Academic and Support Services.
References


Thank you.