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in
FOUR

START SMART. FINISH STRONG.

2023 SMU IN FOUR YEAR TWO ANNUAL REPORT

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Introduction

SMU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), branded **SMU in Four**, is designed to support the institutional goal of improving the University's ability to recruit, retain and graduate academically- and creatively-gifted undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds. The QEP seeks to improve the first-year retention rate from 91% to 94% and the four-year graduation rate from 73% to 80%, all within five years – 2020 to 2025. We also seek to improve retention and graduation rates among racially and ethnically diverse student populations, first-generation students, and Pell-eligible students. SMU has taken a research-based approach to improving student retention and this has led us to focus on student progress toward degree completion, which is the most essential measure of student academic success.

By improving the undergraduate learning environment and reducing equity gaps, we believe that we can improve retention and graduation rates by prioritizing our three pillars of academic advising, early alert, and first-year and gateway courses. The Early Alert Pillar improves the collection of early and midterm progress report data from faculty to support interventions that promote student success. Through this process, students and faculty develop an increased understanding of the resources available to students who fall behind academically. The Advising Pillar implements improvements to academic advising through the integration of targeted technological solutions and strategic changes to academic policies. It also empowers advisors to meet with at-risk students for additional guidance and support. This pillar relies on changes to the advising experience to encourage students to view their assigned advisors as important campus resources and as people who care about them and are invested in their success. The First-Year and Gateway Courses Pillar improves the design and instruction in first-year and gateway courses to promote student engagement and success and reduce any unintended equity gaps. It also seeks to expand the faculty's understanding of research-based best practices to foster student engagement in class.

This report provides an overview of the year-two progress made during the 2022 – 2023 academic year of SMU in Four's three essential pillars.

Early Alert Pillar

The Early Alert pillar is charged with improving early and midterm progress report data collection to support student interventions to promote student success. During the 2022 – 2023 academic year, initiatives for this pillar were co-led by Dr. Sue Bierman, Executive Director of Student Academic Success Programs, Audryanna Reed, Associate Director of High-Impact Practices, and Dr. Lauren O'Brien, Student Success and Retention. Listed below are the current pillar initiatives, progress during year-two and recommendations for year-three plans.

Pillar Initiatives

The focus of the Early Alert Pillar was broadly addressed within a larger group, the Early Alter Pillar Committee, compiling the initial Quality Enhancement Plan. The pillar committee specified specific initiatives to be addressed in year one, with representation from the faculty, student affairs, and academic affairs areas. These initiatives were as follows:

1. Improve the reporting of early and midterm progress report data by faculty to support student interventions to promote student success. Emphasize to faculty the importance of providing students with early and midterm feedback to increase the chances of student success in the course.
2. Improve the distribution of the Early Progress Reports (EPR) and Midterm Progress Reports (MPR) data to academic advisors and campus staff, providing comprehensive support to students. Increase student and faculty awareness of resources available to students who earn deficient grades.
3. Utilize the partnership between **Residence Life and Student Housing (RLSH)** and academic affairs early in the semester to promote services and encourage responses to reports indicating deficiencies.
4. Determine the effectiveness of current outreach methods. Ultimately, "Are our current practices making a difference?"

Year-Two Progress

Early and Mid-Term Reporting

1. The pillar recorded a faculty-led video clip demonstrating the importance of submitting EPRs and MPRs and the outreach impact across campus, as well as a handout presenting a visual flow of outreach post EPR/MPR submission.

2. Observed a 15% increase in the number of students with all MPR grades reported from fall to spring semester.

3. By the spring semester, approximately 85% of early and midterm grades were reported by faculty with significant differences by college. Faculty in Cox and Meadows continue to lag behind faculty in Dedman and Simmons.

4. We examined the EPR and MPR data to determine if first-generation, Pell recipients, minority and first-year students were more likely than their comparison group to have at least one deficiency. We found that these groups were more likely to have at least one deficiency in the fall and spring.

Table 1: Early Alert Outcomes for Student Groups

% of Students in Cohort that had no deficiencies.	% of Students in comparison group that had no deficiencies.	Results from a two-proportion Z test.
EPR 68.2% Pell Students	EPR 78.4% Not Pell Students	Significantly fewer Pell students had no deficiencies on EPR than the comparison (p-value < 0.0001)
MPR 68.3% Pell Students	MPR 77.9% Not Pell Students	Significantly fewer Pell students had no deficiencies on MPR than the comparison (p-value < 0.0001)
EPR 67.1% FGEN students	EPR 77.1% Not FGEN Students	Significantly fewer FGEN students had no deficiencies on EPR than the comparison (p-value < 0.0001
MPR 68.7% FGEN students	MPR 77.2% Not FGEN Students	Significantly fewer FGEN students had no deficiencies on MPR than the comparison (p-value < 0.0001
EPR 71.4% MNRTY* Students	EPR 79.9% Not MNRTY Students	Significantly fewer MNRTY* students had no deficiencies on EPR than the comparison group (p-value < 0.0001)
MPR 70.4% MNRTY* Students	MPR 79.8% Not MNRTY Students	Significantly fewer MNRTY* students had no deficiencies on MPR than the comparison group (p-value < 0.0001)
EPR 73.3% FYR 1224-1227 Students	EPR 78.3% Not current first years	Significantly fewer current first years had no deficiencies on EPR than more advanced students (p-value < 0.0001)
MPR 74.5% FYR 1224-1227 Students	MPR 77.4% Not current first years	Significantly fewer current first years had no deficiencies on MPR than more advanced students (p-value = 0.015)

* Minority defined as "students who list Black or African American, Asian, Hispanic, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander as their ethnicity

Early and Mid-Term Outreach

1. Trained Residential Community Directors and Faculty-in-Residence members on EPR outreach to residential students with 3+ deficiencies and appropriate on-campus resource referrals.

2. Contacted all groups on campus who outreach to students with deficiencies to gather information to determine best practice recommendations for outreach. Preliminary responses indicate that this requires further university evaluation of outreach standards and support from university leadership, as well as infrastructure and technology needs to track student interactions across campus.

3. Simultaneously, peer and aspirant institutions were contacted to determine best practices related to early and midterm progress report outreach. Conversations and interviews decided that peer and aspirant institutions primarily concentrate efforts and outreach around mid-semester grades. If there is any early alert outreach, it is related to attendance only. Additionally, advisors served as the primary point of contact for most academic concerns related to mid-semester progress reports.

4. Reviewed data for the fall semester to determine if current outreach efforts (e.g., EPR, MPR, Micro-Assessment) are effective via service usage assessment. After EPRs, students with deficiencies demonstrated less service usage in the A-LEC; however, after MPRs, students with deficits showed more A-LEC service usage (see Appendix 1 for details).

Mid-Semester Check-In Results

1. Rebranded micro-assessment to newly titled "Mid-Semester Check-in." The rebrand centers on a "flight" theme in which random participants are selected to win gift cards from Southwest Airlines and residential buildings with the highest completion rate could win dinner. Participation increased to 12.76% of the entire student population, from 11% respondents in spring 2022 to 12% respondents in fall 2022.

2. The spring mid-semester check-in report segmented data by particular groups to better identify and evaluate potential equity gaps. Identified groups included: First-generation, Pell-eligible cohort, and international students, followed by classification and ethnicity groups.
   a. There is a significant correlation between response on the "check-in" and if the person enrolls the next semester at SMU for responses in fall 2022 (p-value = 0.0005) and spring 2023 (p-value < 0.0001).

Fall 2022 Check-in and Enrollment for spring 2023	no	yes	%retained
Excellent	2	89	97.80%
Average	3	65	95.59%
Good	1	132	99.25%
Poor	2	52	96.30%
Terrible	1	10	90.91%

Spring 2023 Check-in and Enrollment for all 2023	no	yes	%retained
Excellent	0	63	100.00%
Average	4	84	95.45%
Good	2	115	98.29%
Poor	1	31	96.88%
Terrible	2	7	77.78%

Understanding the Effect on Academic Alerts on Retention

1. When reviewing EPR/MPR and DFW grades (letter grades of a D, F, or withdrawal) as they relate to retention for students entering fall 2022, we found that the percentage of DFW grades received in the fall is a significant predictor of retention the following semester (fall to spring). The higher the percentage of DFW grades, the less likely the student will return to SMU. This is true for both fall to spring (first semester retention) and then spring to the following fall (first-year retention). However, the percent of deficient grades on EPR's and MPR's did not significantly affect the retention for students during fall to spring semester.

Tables 4: Relationship Between Courses with D,F, W and Retention

Number of classes with DFW in fall 22 assuming enrollment in 5 courses	Probability of returning to SMU for spring 23
0 courses	0.980
1 course	0.956
2 courses	0.906
3 courses	0.809
4 courses	0.650
5 courses	0.551

Tables 5: Relationship Between Courses with NR's and Retention

Number of classes with DFW in spring 23 assuming enrollment in 5 courses and 2 NR's	Probability of returning to SMU for fall 23
0 courses	0.978
1 course	0.957
2 courses	0.919
3 courses	0.851
4 courses	0.743
5 courses	0.594

2. The higher the percentage of Not Reports (NR) students receive on their spring MPR, the more likely they will return to SMU. This may be explained by a relationship between grades and Not Reports. The effect size of the final grades on retention is about twice that of the NR on spring MPRs, and DFW percentage has more effect on retention than NR on MPRs.

Table 6: Relationship Between Courses with NR and Retention

Number of classes with NR in spring 23 assuming enrollment in 5 courses and 2 DFW's	Probability of returning to SMU for fall 23
0 courses	0.850
1 course	0.889
2 courses	0.919
3 courses	0.941
4 courses	0.958
5 courses	0.970

Year-Two Recommendations

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of three different reporting times in the semester:
    a. Consider restructuring early progress reporting to give attendance-only feedback during week three or four of the semester starting fall 2024.
    b. Change mid-term progress reporting and mid-semester check-in dates to be distributed earlier in the semester to allow time for student behavior change and knowledgeable decision-making, to increase time for turnaround starting fall 2024.
    c. Increase notification in Parent/Family newsletters about EPR/MPR availability to encourage family discussion and support starting fall 2023.
2. Draft and send automated messaging to students with two or more deficiencies on behalf of

the academic schools.

    a. Pre-majors would have outreach from University Advising Center/assigned pre-major advisor. Declared majors will have outreach from major advisors/records offices.

    b. Schools/advisors would be expected to track communication resulting from successful outreach.

3. Develop a process for faculty to receive notification or verification that all EPR/MPR submissions were successful.

    a. If the process exists, provide additional training for faculty.

Year-Three Plans

In year three, the Early Alert Pillar intends to:

1. Enhance initial EPR/MPR notifications from Registrar's Office (RO) starting fall 2023.

    a. Collaborate with Registrar's Office to communicate that early and mid-term progress reports are available via HighPoint. This will allow us to track the rates at which students open EPR/MPR communication. Include links to advisors, professors, and support services to track which links students click on.

    b. Automatic notices sent from RO to students with deficiencies will include messaging about seeing a faculty member who designated a problem and the Student's advisor.

2. During fall 2023, facilitate focus groups inclusive of staff who outreach to students with deficient grades to assess specifically:

    a. Recommendations and feedback on groups that they are assigned to outreach.

    b. Outreach and follow-up conversations that happen with students.

    c. Standard templates to be used for all student outreach.

    d. Evaluate the role of faculty and professional advisors in student outreach.

    e. Discuss the ways that established relationships between faculty/staff and students impact early alert outreach and student's propensity to respond.

    f. Create a coordinated flow of outreach—primary outreach group vs. additional support group (additional support--Scholar group directors, ISSS, ADSA, RCD, FiR, etc.).

3. During spring 2024, facilitate focus groups inclusive of the student population with students from Honors, Scholars, and RLSH student leadership programs to assess specifically:

    a. From whom students prefer to receive outreach.

    b. Preferred type of outreach (e.g., email, text, phone call).

    c. The language used in EPR/MPR communications and its impact on student

perception, particularly "deficiency."

- d. The ways that established relationships between faculty/staff and students impact early alert outreach and student's propensity to respond.
- e. Likelihood of transparently responding to mid-semester check-in if students know that staff will follow up with them.
- f. Value of "kudos" or praise from professors.
- g. To address and identify potential equity gaps; the students invited to participate in the focus groups will be a representative sample of the student body.

4. During spring 2024, determine future needs of maintaining data and responsible parties for:
   - a. Library workshop data.
   - b. EPR/MPR/Final Grades.
     - i. Canvas grades for "W".
     - ii. Improvement from EPR to MPR.
   - c. EPR/MPR deficiencies/DFW rates for first-year students vs. first semester and first-year retention.

5. During spring 2024, host a series of meetings about outreach automation, particularly for large groups.
   - a. Strongly recommend developing "kudos" for those with no deficiencies, being mindful of various scholarship/merit requirements.
   - b. Strongly recommend developing kudos for those who show positive change from EPR to MPR.

Advising Pillar

The Advising Pillar is charged with implementing changes to the advising experience so that students view their assigned advisors as essential resources on campus, and as people who care about their situation. During the 2022 – 2023 academic year, these initiatives were led by Josh Beaty, Director of Student and Advisor Training. Listed below are the current pillar initiatives, year-two progress and recommendations, and year-three plans.

Pillar Initiatives

SMU in Four focuses on bridging SMU's gaps in advising in several ways: technological tools, policy changes, and enabling advisors to be a more comprehensive resource to students. The student experience of advising varies greatly – by school, department, and even advisor. This pillar has sought to:

1. Identify the challenges that advisors and students face that prevent timely communications, meetings, and enrollment, hamper retention and graduation efforts.
2. Utilize technology to automate rote processes, connect faculty advisors to students, and share information among advisors.
3. Standardize processes and policies across schools and departments to manage undergraduate student advising expectations and experiences more effectively.

Year-Two Progress

The most significant progress made by the Advising Pillar centered on a change outside the pillar – the rollout of the Degree Planner tool in my.SMU. A subcommittee of advisors and degree counselors within the Advising Pillar discussed integrating the tool into existing advising workflows. A set of recommendations emerged (see "Year-Two Recommendations" summary below). Advisors and department chairs were asked to provide feedback on how they will use Degree Planner through a survey, and Year-Three will serve as a pilot for broader integration of the tool into pre- and declared-major advising.

The implementation of Degree Planner revealed the disconnect within the undergraduate learning environment when students transition from pre-major to declared major. To meet the expectation of Degree Planner completion for all declared majors, the Advising Pillar sought to communicate the major

declaration process more clearly by:

1. Pre-major advisors used school-specific templates to inform students of the declaration and the resources available in their new school.
2. School-specific email communications to students were created and tested this year and will be implemented more widely next year.
3. The University Advising Center (UAC) plans a pilot presentation for newly declared Economics majors, a collaboration between the UAC and the Economics advisor, Alyssa Wong. The presentation will remind students of important resources (such as Degree Planner or the use of petitions) as well as major requirement considerations. These presentations could be expanded to other large departments (Psychology, Journalism, etc.) if successful.

Finally, last year's survey results of faculty advisors demonstrated a strong sentiment toward making changes to declared major advising. This year, a small group of advisors explored different advising structures from peers, aspirants, and interesting outliers. The findings include:

1. SMU employs a "shared structure" of advising with a "split model" – where faculty advise many, but not all, students.
2. Universities like Emory, Tufts, Tulane, and Georgetown have successfully combined their split with a supplementary model, in which professional advisors not only advise a subset of students (like pre-majors at SMU) but also support faculty advisors.
3. SMU's advising model should be assessed on clarity for students, accessibility to students, advisor preparation, and communication and collaboration among advisors and academic support offices.

This benchmarking study was presented to the Faculty Steering Committee in April 2022 for additional feedback, and the lessons learned will inform plans for the third year (see below).

Year-Two Recommendations

The benchmarking research suggests that although SMU's split advising model was not uncommon, other schools offered enhanced supplementary support for faculty advisors. The most drastic recommendation would call for a transition to professional advisors for declared majors, freeing faculty to serve more as mentors to their students. At this time, though, incremental change appears to be the more realistic path. One recommendation to emerge from the benchmarking study is a centralized advising office that could better support faculty advisors and make advising more uniform across

schools. To standardize advising across the campus, for example, schools would agree to memoranda of understanding with the central advising office defining the expected duties of faculty advisors, degree counselors, and other supplemental advising roles.

A more precise definition of roles across the University – what are the expectations of an advisor role? – and required processes would provide clarity for faculty, staff, and students. In the first year, the "Advisor Training" Canvas course provided more standardized training for advisors so everyone could access the same information. Similarly, a more formalized set of expectations for the advising role could improve advising quality in future years. Advising becomes a secondary or tertiary priority to many faculty advisors partly due to time constraints and because the role has little structure or accountability. The voluntary nature of faculty advising (even if provided with minor compensation) leads to low participation in new shared centralized initiatives like using LibCal scheduling site, Advising Notes, EPR/MPR outreach, etc. A faculty advisor began using Advising Notes until another advisor in her department told her, "Why? No one else is." She remarked that faculty would not adopt these tools or practices unless held accountable. A discrete set of expectations could also benefit advisors, mainly if minimum and maximum expectations are established so that faculty can be assured that advising does not overtake their primary responsibilities. A committee comprised of associate deans, department chairs, faculty advisors, and administrative staff could determine how best to define and monitor advisor performance. This conversation will continue within the SMU in Four School Implementation Teams for Year-Three.

The Degree Planner subcommittee's recommendations for integrating Degree Planner into pre-major and declared major advising will necessitate some increased advisor use of Advising Notes and other tools. These recommendations include:

1. For pre-major students, emphasis will be placed on making students comfortable with using Degree Planner through advisor conversations and Office of General Education workshops. Pre-major students will be encouraged to explore what-if plans and enter courses up to their major declaration, often 1 – 3 semesters of planning.
2. Declared majors will be asked to use and discuss their Degree Planner at this first meeting with their new academic advisor. Plus, declared majors will be asked to plan through their graduation.
3. The OGE office working with the Peer Academic Leaders program will offer major-specific workshops to remind students how to use Degree Planner.
4. Departments will be provided with a list of students who still have a Degree Planner "To Do" so that advisors, department coordinators, or degree counselors can reach out to students.

5. The committee understands this process does not guarantee that students who have cleared the "To Do" have completed Degree Planner. This process can be a pilot to test what percentage of students with removed to-do tasks complete a degree path.

Year-Three Plans

In year three, the Advising Pillar intends to:

1. Renew the effort for widespread use of Advising Notes among faculty advisors.
   a. In July, an Advising Note subcommittee will analyze current permissions and participation in Advising Notes.
   b. In August, the subcommittee will reach out to department chairs and assistant deans, urging Notes permission requests for advisors still without permission.
   c. In September and October, the subcommittee will contact individual advisors to promote the benefits of Notes to students, advisors, and academic support offices. These interactions can troubleshoot advisors' issues with Notes and answer any questions.
   d. In late November and early December, the subcommittee will analyze the use of Advising Notes during the fall enrollment period.
   e. This process will repeat in spring, with new outreach in January and February for all those advisors still not using Notes (or still without permission).
   f. The goal will be to have 35% of advisors actively viewing and creating Notes by December 2023 and 60% by May 2024.
2. Provide advisors with resources to increase communication with students.
   a. A communication calendar will be complete by July 2023, with distribution to advisors in August.
   b. The calendar will link to email templates for the various forms of outreach throughout the year – welcome to students in September and January, invitations to advising in October and March, enrollment reminders in November and April, end-of-semester congratulations in December and May, and any other possible communications, such as reminders about Degree Planner (see below).
   c. The EPR/MPR outreach process for declared students varies by school, which is an opportunity for collaboration with the Early Alert pillar. The two pillars can work with school records' offices to ensure advisors and/or degree counselors are contacting students with concerns.
3. Help advisors and students integrate Degree Planner into the advising workflow.
   a. In September, the expectation for degree path completion will be communicated to

advisors. Due to the Degree Planner task added to students' dashboards and the Degree Planner student workshops, advisor-student conversations about Degree Planner should increase, especially among newly declared majors.

b. To ritualize the use of Degree Planner within the undergraduate student population, a new week-long program will be offered before enrollment appointments begin (October/March). This semesterly offer, tentatively branded as Success Fest, will accompany a semesterly deadline to update Degree Planner.

c. Advisors will be told to use the Degree Planner subcategory in Notes to record conversations approving students' paths.

d. In December and May, the Advising Pillar and Office of General Education will query the Degree Planner subcategory in Notes to track the frequency of these conversations. The query could be compared to Degree Planner's own reporting data to assess the quality of these conversations (e.g., are students with a Degree Planner note more likely to have a complete path?).

e. In summer 2024, Degree Planner will be assessed to determine what accountability mechanisms will be necessary to ensure path completion among students. The summer 2023 survey of department advisors and chairs will also guide these decisions.

4. In spring 2024, a new advisor survey will help the pillar evaluate the year's progress and identify any needs for the 2024-2025 year.

a. The survey will ask advisors about the frequency of their use of advising tools like Advising Notes, LibCal, and Degree Planner and reasons for their infrequent use of these tools.

b. Another area of emphasis for the survey are advisors' interactions with students, both meetings and email correspondences. These questions intend to gather advisors' thoughts on how to make these interactions more frequent and substantive.

c. Finally, the survey will explore advisors' reflections on their advising role and how best to support and standardize the associated duties of a faculty advisor.

First-Year and Gateway Courses Pillar

The First-Year and Gateway Courses Pillar is charged with improving the design and instruction in first-year and gateway courses to promote student engagement and success and reduce any potential unintended equity gaps. During the 2022 – 2023 academic year, these initiatives were led by Dr. Paige Ware, Associate Provost for Faculty Success. Listed below are the current pillar initiatives, year-two progress, and year-three plans.

Pillar Initiatives

Three initiatives are at the heart of this pillar: Course Redesign, Student Engagement Institute, and the **Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)**, the faculty counterpart to the NSSE survey used to inform Advising initiatives. The current initiatives are as follows:

Course Redesign

Course Redesign focuses on improving our large introductory courses' design and wrap-around supports to support student success. Specifically, to identify courses poised for redesign, DFW rates are reviewed, with particular attention to potential equity gaps across student groups (e.g., first-generation, Pell-eligible, and racial), and levels of first-year enrollment. Support is then provided to designated departmental faculty to identify improvement areas and develop materials, assignments, tutorials, etc. to augment where data indicates student supports are needed.

Student Engagement & Inclusion Institute (SEI)

The Student Engagement & Inclusion Institute (SEI) is a workshop-based initiative housed within the **Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE)**, designed to support faculty in the generation and implementation of-- ideas for successful pedagogical approaches for first-year courses that support greater student engagement and success, with a goal of reducing overall DFW rates in first-year and gateway courses.

Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)

Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) was administered during the first year of the SMU in Four implementation. This information provided a useful baseline of information about the faculty views of student engagement and areas of improvement. Using this baseline analysis and data from the

spring 2022 Student Engagement and Inclusion Institute, we determined a set of more proximal measures of faculty attention to student engagement. Therefore, instead of continuing with the FSSE, we have developed the "Faculty-in-Four Analysis" that provides a term-by-term report to faculty leadership listing faculty who address four key pillars of increasing student engagement: 1) ordering books in a timely fashion; 2) using Canvas to provide updated grades/assignments; 3) submitting progress reports; and 4) timely submission of final grades.

Year-Two Progress

1. Continued conversations and support for Year-One Course Redesign participant, the Economics Department.
2. Launched a Year-Two, two-year Course Redesign initiative with the Chemistry Department, led by Elfi Kraka, Department Chair of Chemistry and Brian Zoltowski, Professor of Chemistry.
   a. Objectives of Chemistry Course Redesign included:
      i. Obtain data from students to allow for the design of data-driven initiatives to improve undergraduate education in the general chemistry series and to provide a more rigorous base of knowledge regarding previous anecdotal and formal complaints regarding the curricula.
      ii. Develop improved resources and procedures to aid in advising students to enroll in a preparatory chemistry course (e.g. CHEM1302), with the aim of improving student success in the CHEM1303/1304 series by ensuring that all students regardless of prior training have an equitable base knowledge required for general chemistry.
      iii. Create a uniform platform for CHEM1303/1304 with the purpose of maintaining a uniform and equitable educational experience and success rates across all sections.
      iv. Develop a platform that can improve student success via an increase in class engagement and instruction.
      v. Develop assessment tools to track student success across all sections to verify equity in student outcomes.
   b. A comprehensive report on the tremendous progress of first year of the Chemistry department's work is available in **SMU in Four Chemistry Course Redesign Progress Report**.
3. CTE hosted the second iteration of the Student Engagement & Inclusion Institute in May of 2023 at the Dallas Arboretum which focused on student engagement and inclusivity in large

first-year courses at SMU. This SEI was developed as a lead-in for the Year-Three implementation of course redesign with the theme of Pedagogical Improvements to Large Courses. Using the same approach as before (I.e., identifying specific courses that have high DFW rates), we determined that the approach would be to focus on a cross-disciplinary set of courses that shared common traits of serving large numbers of first-year students.

    a. The 12 faculty participating were provided with stipends in an agreement to participate in a year-long effort (AY 23-24) to improve the experiences of students in their large courses:

        i. Full participation in the Faculty-in-Four analysis describe above.

        ii. Six monthly pedagogical discussions as part of iterative improvement during the academic year, including sessions focused on data review.

        iii. Small-group accountability partners, in which all participants identify three strategies from a core text (*Inclusive Teaching: Strategies for Promoting Equity in the College Classroom,* by Kelly A. Hogan, and Viji Sathy, published in 2022) that they agree to implement across the year.

    b. The Year-Three focus on Pedagogical Improvements to Large Courses will be monitored through faculty participation in the above domains and a pre/post data review of DFW rates in the courses specified across the cross-disciplinary group of 12 faculty participants.

Year-Three Plans

1. Support and track progress of Year-Three Pedagogical Improvements to Large Courses cohort:
   a. Host monthly pedagogical discussions.
   b. Provide term-by-term data reports of faculty participation in Faculty-in-Four requirements.
   c. Identify and track use of inclusive teaching pedagogical agreements by small groups.
   d. Report on DFW rates at end of Year-Three.
2. Continue with the second year of the Chemistry course redesign objectives following the below timeline:
   a. Summer 2023
       i. Finalizing a common syllabi and course schedule for 1303.
       ii. Writing of uniform exams for 1303 and 1304 for the upcoming calendar year.
       iii. Continue to work on completing comprehensive test banks.
       iv. Revise Chem 1302 exam and lab schedule to account for the new, extended

Chem 1303 - 1302 swap date. The swap date was pushed later to accommodate the Chem 1303 standardized exam policy that will be implemented in fall 2023.

b. Fall 2023

    i. A Director of Undergraduate Curriculum will be appointed to oversee the first-year courses (Brian Zoltowski). In future years, it is a goal to expand this role to two people to cover first- and second-year general education courses.

    ii. Implementation of a uniform syllabi and grading procedure for all 1303 sections.

    iii. Implementation of a common exam, at a common time period for all 1303 sections.

    iv. Training of General Chemistry specific TAs to assist with office hours, coordinating the uniform exam, and grading of the uniform exam across all 1303 sections.

    v. Collection of assessment data embedded in major exams to evaluate the effectiveness of different teaching strategies on core learning goals.

    vi. Implementation of a new placement exam.

    vii. Implementation of additional sections of 1302 with a revised advising process to encourage additional students to take 1302.

    viii. Completion of a department wide test bank for 1303 and 1304.

    ix. Collection of assessment data from students regarding changes in curriculum and to compare results to data collected in spring 2023.

    x. Development of an online 1304 course.

c. Winter 2023-24

    i. The recently developed 1303 online course will be offered to allow students who took 1302 to remain on track with their peers.

    ii. Completion of a common syllabi and exams for 1304.

d. Spring 2024

    i. Implementation of a uniform syllabi and grading procedure for all 1304 sections.

    ii. Implementation of a common exam, at a common time period for all 1304 sections.

    iii. Training of General Chemistry specific TAs to assist with office hours, coordinating the uniform exam, and grading of the uniform exam across all 1304 sections.

    iv. Collection of assessment data embedded in major exams to evaluate the

effectiveness of different teaching strategies on core learning goals.

     v. Completion of a department wide test bank for 1303 and 1304.

     vi. Collection of assessment data from students regarding changes in curriculum and to compare results to data collected in spring 2023.

     vii. Completion of a two-year report on the redesign efforts.

3. Launch Year-Three Course Redesign work with an estimated 20 courses that satisfy the Critical Reasoning Foundation requirement of SMU's Common Curriculum (e.g., general education requirement).

    a. Designated faculty within the five schools will work with the SMU in Four team to build a Critical Reasoning (CR) component in courses that the Deans help their chairs identify. Faculty representing those teaching these courses will participate in the SMU in Four "Course Re-design" program and receive compensation for their efforts.

    b. Their deans should identify these faculty no later than September 15, 2023. Anticipated time commitment for these faculty is bi-weekly check-ins and asynchronous work to be concluded by December 15, 2023.

    c. The culminating deliverable will be a course syllabus that integrates CR into the course for review by Council on General Education.

4. To reinforce continuity across pillar objectives, the instructors of the courses of focus for the CR Course Redesign will serve as the invited participants to the Year-Three Student Engagement Institute.

    a. All faculty who plan to teach the redesigned courses during AY 2024-2025 will be invited and expected to participate in a two-day retreat in May 2024 at the Dallas Arboretum.

    b. The anticipated time commitment for the faculty is approximately two six-hour workshop-based days.

    c. The culminating deliverable will be faculty preparedness to teach the CR component beginning fall 2024.

SMU in Four Support Team Highlights

Technology Team

The technology team is pleased to have completed the deployment of the suite of products that culminated in the Degree Planner tool. Specifically, the suite includes a modernized interface to the student information system (my.SMU), a visual schedule builder, and a secure message center. The suite of products builds a lifecycle to help students plan their academic journey.

- The modern interface supports mobile devices.
- The degree plan informs students which semester a course should be taken.
- Visual schedule builder helps students plan the courses within a semester.
- The secure message center has proven to be a solid call to action for students compared to email.

In the coming year, the technology team will explore new releases of the HighPoint Degree Planner to improve speed and experience for students.

The technology team continues to explore the array of datasets that may be valuable for course planning, student retention, throughput, early warning, and time to degree. Potential future datasets include recreation center usage, learning management logins, and student group participation.

The technology team will deploy a Canvas grade upload tool into my.SMU to simplify the process of EPR/MPR and final grades. The first iteration of this tool allows for a faculty member to export grades from Canvas and then initiate a process in my.SMU to upload the grades into the grade roster.

Steering Committees

Faculty Steering Committee

The Faculty Steering Committee, consisting of 14 full-time faculty members from across undergraduate schools, met three times each semester to offer faculty perspective and guidance towards pillar efforts. Leads and team members from each of SMU in Four's three pillars were invited once a term to share their progress and receive feedback towards their respective goals. The following topics were discussed during Year-Two:

Early Alert Pillar

1. Opportunities and ideas to increase faculty participation in EPRs and MPRs.
2. Student Success referral options and opportunities to close the loop with students needing wrap-around services.
3. Benchmarking on peer and aspirant efforts related to Early Alert.

Advising

1. Strategies to engage, communicate, and train faculty major advisors.
2. Advising Note adoption barriers and successes.
3. Revisiting the structure of advising at SMU.
4. Degree Planner roll-out and adoption.

First-Year & Gateway Courses

1. Showcase of Economics and Chemistry Course Redesign Efforts.
2. Revised plan and format for the Student Engagement & Inclusion Institute.

Given the success and benefits afforded by the format of the Faculty Steering Committee meetings in Year-Two. A similar format will be followed for Year-Three.

Student Steering Committee

Throughout year two, the mission of the Student Advisory Committee remained the same: to ensure that both student needs and areas for improvement are identified, acknowledged, and prioritized when creating new policies, procedures, and expectations across all levels of university decision-making. This year, we created sub-committees to tackle various projects with university-wide implications and impact.

In fall 2022, students were invited to join one of three sub-committees: HighPoint Degree Planner, SMU in Four Marketing & Awareness, or General Education Catalog. While the Fall 2022 team was focused on collecting feedback and building an understanding of various resources and initiatives, the spring 2023 team worked to operationalize these findings by creating new resources, suggesting concrete changes and reaching out to the SMU community.

HighPoint Degree Planner

To aid undergraduate Common Curriculum students in their progress toward degree, the SMU in Four Technology Team is developing a new tool called HighPoint Degree Planner within my.SMU. This tool will help students and advisors develop and sequence a personalized path to on-time graduation. HighPoint Degree Planner will benefit students and advisors and aid academic departments in data-driven course scheduling and seat capacity planning. The new tool will launch to students on the Common Curriculum in November 2022. This project team will aid with testing, user experience feedback, training and marketing resources development, and advise the Technology Team related to the tool.

Highlights from the group included:

- The after-action report from the Degree Planner adoption campaign, resulting in over 1,400 students using the tool in the first semester, is included in the appendix.
- Plus, survey results reflecting the user experience in the first semester and identified strengths and areas of improvement, are also within the appendix.
- After testing the tool and identifying common issues, this group worked to create a video explaining various hidden features and quick tips for getting the most out of HighPoint Degree Planner.

SMU in Four Marketing & Awareness

Using data produced by the initiative, this project team will suggest and develop marketing and communication strategies to address common pitfalls with progress toward degree. For instance, general marketing about enrollment times, completing the Second Language Requirement in the first two semesters, positive nudges during progress toward degree, recommending updates to websites and educational materials for student clarity, etc.

Highlights from the group included:

- Utilizing findings from interviews with students, faculty, and staff, the committee employed a design process to redevelop the **SMU in Four website** (smu.edu/smuinfour). The update, reflects resources presented by year one through year four on the Hilltop.
- New brochures and standard PowerPoint templates were created to engage students with the initiative. This presentation discussed mechanisms developed to support students and

helped raise awareness of the common pitfalls that hinder timely progress toward degree.

General Education Catalog

The SMU Common Curriculum is a general education framework that prepares students to be lifelong learners in a rapidly changing, interconnected world. The Common Curriculum is the 21st century reboot of classical university education, challenging students to know the past, understand the present, and build the future. The catalog group will help recommend updates to the SMU catalog to improve student understanding and clarity of general education and Proficiencies and Experiences (P&E) requirements. They will also recommend updates to educational and marketing materials to aid clarity.

Highlights from the group included:

- Based on student feedback, focus was placed on recommending updates to the SMU catalog to improve student understanding and clarity of general education and P&E requirements. Students began by reviewing the Common Curriculum website and noting areas where there was a lack of transparency or a need for clarification. These changes were then implemented across the website.
- Students continued this project in spring 2023 by collecting quotes to add to each of the requirements pages. They created a survey and distributed the survey to students across campus. The team was able to collect quotes for every one of the Common Curriculum requirements. Students then selected the top sections and submitted them to Dustin Grabsch.
- In addition to improving clarity and content on the Common Curriculum website, students also helped proofread and edit the General Education section of the SMU Course Catalog. These edits were made before the updated General Education description was uploaded to the course catalog.

SMU Peer Academic Leaders (PALS)

After two years of working with the SMU in Four Student Steering Committee we have determined the best way to understand the student experience and to effect change is to expand and invest in the SMU PALS program previously operated as a collaboration between the UAC and RLSH.

Year Two: Progress towards SMU in Four Outcomes

The SMU-in-Four team is proud of the progress made in Year 2 within all three pillars towards our overall goals to improve first year retention and four-year graduation rates.

Our QEP seeks to (1) improve the first-year retention rate from 91% to 94% and the (2) four-year graduation rate from 73% to 80%, all within five years – 2020 to 2025. We also seek to improve retention and graduation rates among racially and ethnically diverse student populations, first-generation students, and Pell-eligible students. We present our progress towards outcomes for each goal.

Of note as we enter year three, we recognize this will be the mid-point of the Quality Enhancement Plan timeline. Therefore, we will shift our focus from laying the ground work of our initiatives and establishing baseline metrics towards solidifying business processes and embedding these student success efforts in their permeant administrative homes.

Goal 1: First-Year Retention Rate

In Year 2, overall, first-year retention modestly declined with the more substantial declines among Hispanic and First-Generation students. On the other hand, we achieved substantial improvements in first-year retention among our Pell cohort from and outside of Texas.

Figure 1. First-Year Retention Rates for Entering Cohorts 2020-2022 and Sub-cohorts of Pell Recipients and First Generation
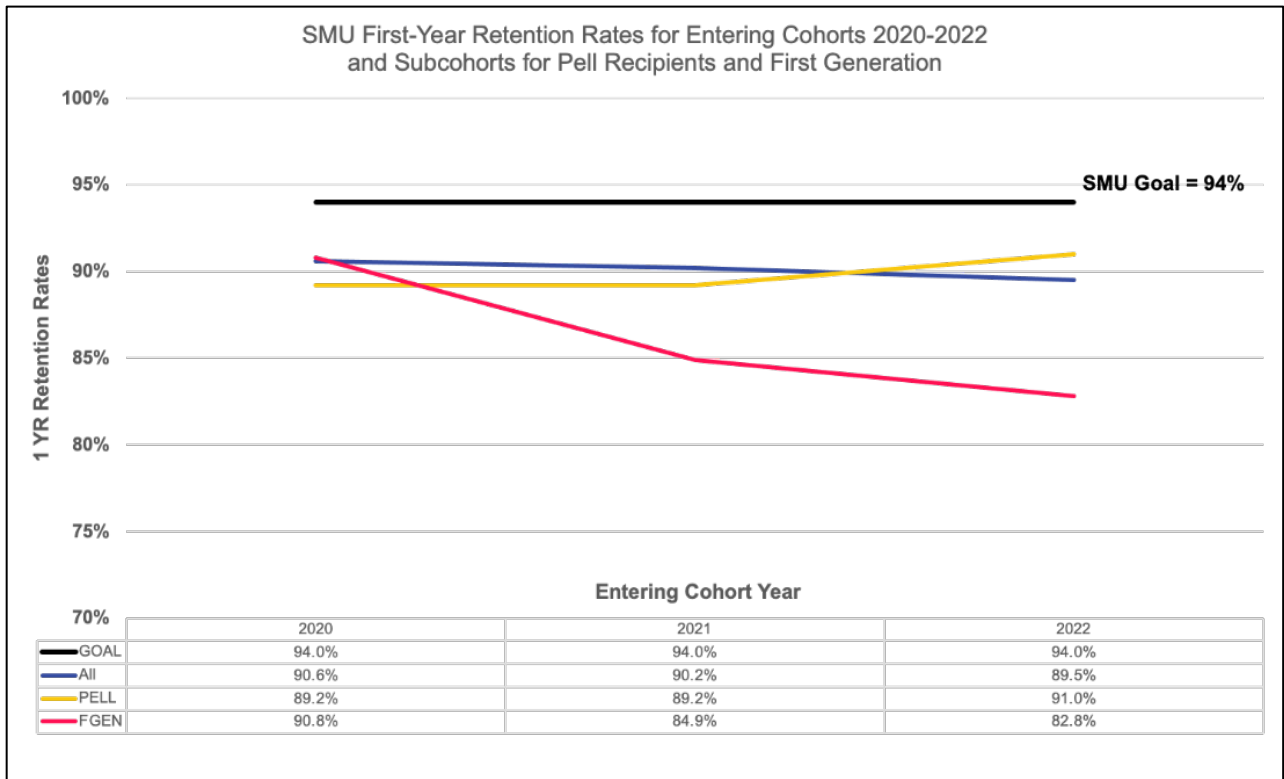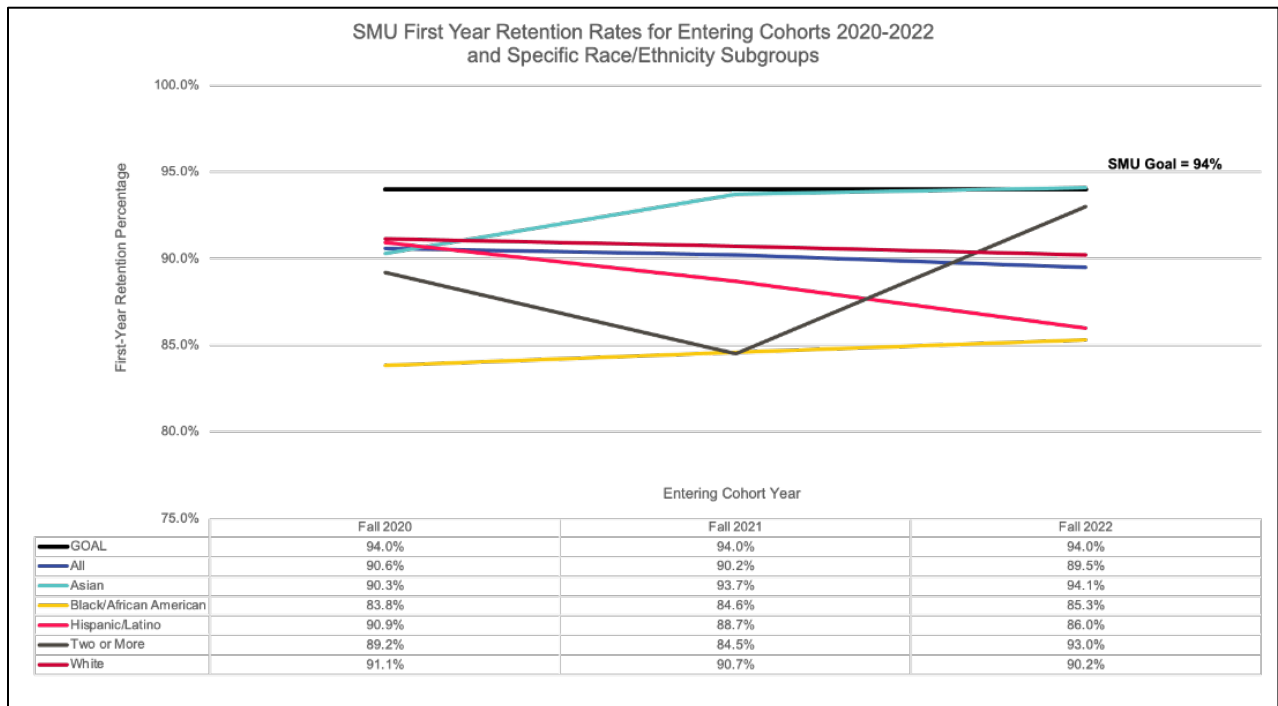

SMU First-Year Retention Rates for Entering Cohorts 2020-2022 and Subcohorts for Pell Recipients and First Generation

SMU Goal = 94%

Entering Cohort Year	2020	2021	2022
GOAL	94.0%	94.0%	94.0%
All	90.6%	90.2%	89.5%
PELL	89.2%	89.2%	91.0%
FGEN	90.8%	84.9%	82.8%

Figure 2. First-Year Retention Rates for Entering Cohorts 2020-2022 and Specific Race/Ethnicity Subgroups

SMU First Year Retention Rates for Entering Cohorts 2020-2022 and Specific Race/Ethnicity Subgroups

SMU Goal = 94%

Entering Cohort Year	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
GOAL	94.0%	94.0%	94.0%
All	90.6%	90.2%	89.5%
Asian	90.3%	93.7%	94.1%
Black/African American	83.8%	84.6%	85.3%
Hispanic/Latino	90.9%	88.7%	86.0%
Two or More	89.2%	84.5%	93.0%
White	91.1%	90.7%	90.2%

As we enter year three, we will prioritize our attention on First-Generation and Hispanic students in their first year on campus. We continue to see how these two student populations decline and/or are not improving in their first-year retention.

As we discussed above, we attribute this slight decline of first-year retention due to challenges our Pillars encountered in year 2. We have summarized these challenges below.

Early Alert

- Faculty submissions of Early and Mid-Term Progress Reports were low; limiting the opportunity to raise student awareness of academic performance and the university's ability to offer interventions.
- Struggled with the fidelity of follow up with students who received two or more deficiencies due to lack of accountability.
- Social and belonging factors remain high for student departures during or immediately after the first year at SMU. Desire to create a mechanism to capture student self-report of belonging as a component of the early alert mechanisms.

Advising Pillar

- First year students struggled with adoption of new Degree Planner tool.
- Adoption and use of Advising Notes did not always permit a good view of the student-advisor interaction in the first year. Efforts to ensure use of Advising Notes will remain a focus.

First-Year and Gateway

- Limited support and communication with Economics occurred after the completion of Course Redesign in Year 1.
- Chemistry laid the groundwork for improvements in DFW rates last year; however, additional work is needed this year to implement and measure intended changes.
- Faculty buy-in to Faculty-In-Four expectations continues to be a challenge.
- Lack formal structure of the Student Engagement Institute after the initial kick-off in May.

Goal 2: Four-Year Graduation Rate

Four-year graduation rates remained steady at 76.2% which is an accomplishment given the disruption presented by COVID-19 to this graduating class. We further closed the gaps in four-year graduation rates

among Pell and First-Generation students. However, additional work is needed to bring the sub-cohort graduation rates up to the 74% goal.

Figure 3. Four-Year Graduation Rates for Entering Cohorts 2017 – 2019 and Subcohorts for Pell Recipients and First Generation

SMU Four-Year Graduation Rates for Entering Cohorts 2017-2019 and Subcohorts for Pell Recipients and First Generation

	2017	2018	2019
GOAL	74.0%	74.0%	74.0%
All	76.2%	76.1%	76.2%
PELL	73.6%	65.9%	69.8%
FGEN	74.5%	64.8%	66.1%
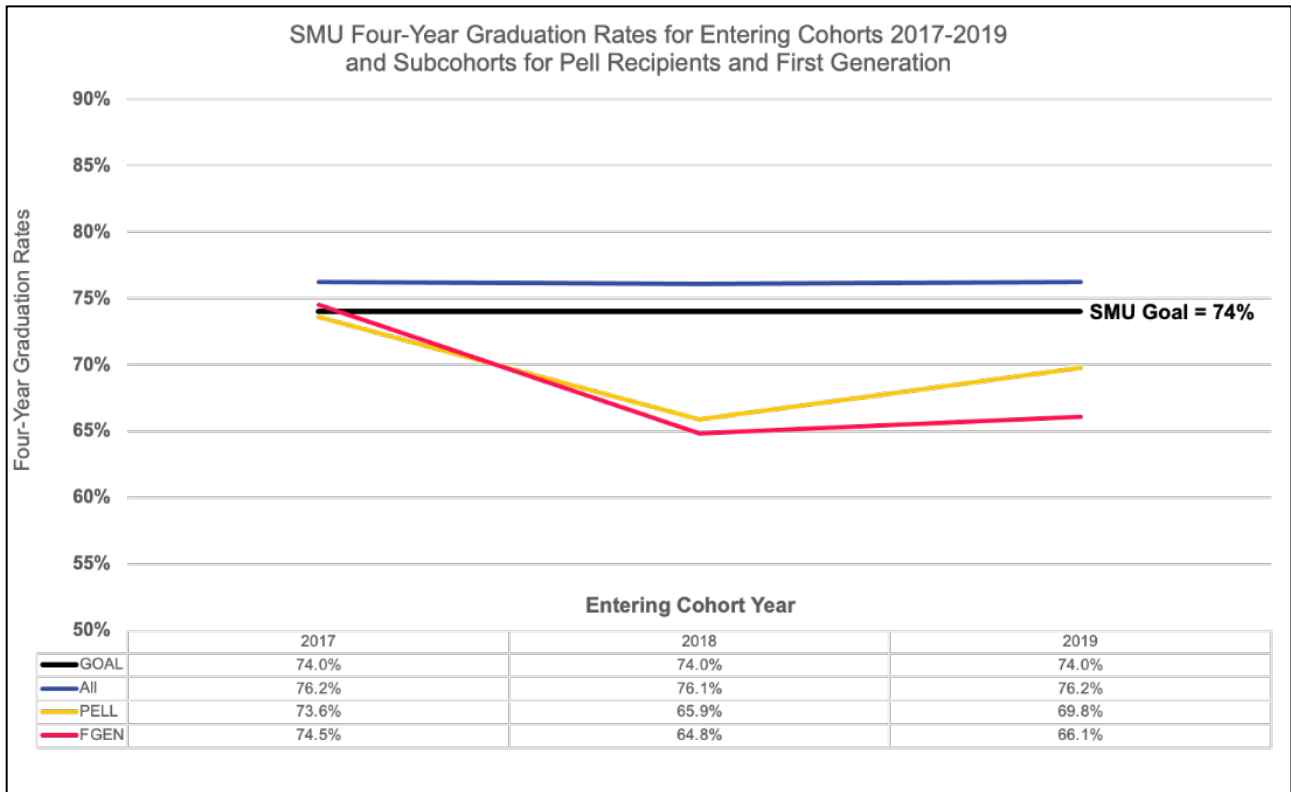
As we discussed above, we attribute the four-year graduation rate stagnation due to challenges our Pillars encountered in year 2. We have summarized these challenges below.

Early Alert

- Early Alert tends to be more of a use for first years. Data collected to help students in their progress toward degree and can be valuable to students who are considering dropping classes/credit hours - which may delay graduation.
- Social and belonging factors remain high for student departures of underrepresented students later in their academic journey (3rd or 4th year). Desire to create a mechanism to capture student self-report of belonging as a component of the early alert mechanisms.

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Advising Pillar

- The University Advising Center handoff to Faculty/Declared Advising remained a struggle. Students may not have been aware of advisor changes.
- Adoption and use of Advising Notes did not always permit a good view of the student-advisor interaction in the later years. Anecdotally, issues related to permissions and access to Advising Notes was a barrier and the faculty's understanding of their importance.
- Adoption of the use of Degree Planner by continuing students was a struggle. Degree Planner also began to raise the issue that Expected Graduation needs to be updated in my.SMU when anticipated term changes.

First-Year and Gateway

- Limited use of data to understand the impact of course redesign on Pell-eligibility and first-generation sub-cohorts specifically.
- Lack of accountability on Student Engagement Institute participants after initial kick-off meeting in May.

Opportunities to Improve Outcomes in Year Three

Finally, our outcomes suggest a number of opportunities in year three of the Quality Enhancement Plan.

Early Alert Pillar Year-Three Opportunities

Early Alert Institutional Reports

Utilizing the data collected on early alert usage by students, the fidelity of interventions on students with DFW and the impact on student outcomes, we can search for equity gaps that, if addressed, would better ensure all students receive support.

Early Alert Student Self Reports

Add questions about students' sense of belonging in the Early Alert Student Self-report while assessing both the utility and validity of students' self-reporting on their academic performance as a means to identify equity gaps.

Multivariate Predictive Modeling

Expand our current multivariate predictive model to include additional data regarding student engagement and expand the demographic student data collection (i.e. race, first-generation).

Advising Pillar Year-Three Opportunities

Strengthen Coordinated Advising

Strengthen the centralization of advising resources and standardization of advising practices to craft a more seamless and user-friendly experience for students.

Improve Advisor Adoption of Tools

Improve the adoption of existing tools like the Advising Resources Canvas course, LibCal, Advising Notes, and Degree Planner by advisors. These tools lie at the center of our QEP plans and require broader, and deeper, adoption across campus.

Improve Student Adoption of Tools

Coordinate and standardize the use of new student tools such as Schedule Builder and Degree Planner by undergraduate students so that they will have more knowledge and control around their graduation plans.

First Year and Gateway Courses Pillar Year-Three Opportunities

Continue Course-Redesign Interments

Continue to improve the continuity of support and accountability for redesigned courses to promote students' success both in their chosen majors and in the Common Curriculum.

Align work across Pillar Initiatives

Integrate course redesign participants into the Student Engagement Institute so that our cross-discipline initiatives work together toward the same goals.

Explore Accountability Measures

Utilize data collection measures to better understand faculty efforts toward the Faculty-in-Four sub-initiative for SMU-in-Four.

Integrate sub-cohort specific data

Integrate a sub-cohort specific data review into the Course Redesign and Student Engagement Institute Kick-off.

Call to Action

We invite all members of the SMU community to support student success on the Hilltop. Below we have identified ways every member of our community can support our Quality Enhancement Plan.

Faculty-in-Four SMU in Four

Faculty-in-Four is part of the SMU in Four initiative that outlines the four key steps that faculty can take to support their students. The four steps are: 1) Make sure your students can show up on the first day of class prepared with their materials. Submit your textbooks and materials at the **SMU bookstore portal** (AIP). 2) Help your students manage their assignments and due dates and keep them updated on SMU resources. Set up your course details inside **Canvas and Simple Syllabus**. 3) Ensure that wraparound support teams know which students need direct outreach to provide help in maintaining their academic progress. Keep your **Canvas gradebook** up to date and **submit progress reports** at the 6- and 10-week marks (EPR/MPR). 4) Provide students with clean academic records for degree completion, retention efforts, and on-time enrollment options. **Enter final grades** on time.

Retention Alert

A way for faculty/staff and parents/families to share information about undergraduate students who may want to leave SMU is the new Retention Alert Tool. This tool allows student support personnel from Student Success and Retention (SSR) to attempt intervention with students at risk. You can submit a Retention Alert online at **smu.edu/retentionalert**.

Advising Notes

Advisors need faculty members assistance in communicating retention concerns about SMU undergraduate students through Advising Notes. Advising Notes is a digital tool that can record notes about individual students academic progress and concerns. To use Advising Notes simply navigate to my.SMU and click on Advising Notes. Click "Create a Note" and under "Category", select "Student Considers Leaving SMU". Choose the most appropriate "Subcategory" and provide a brief description.

Rosters

The Quality Enhancement Plan requires a diverse cross-section of our campus community to animate our goals. We would like to recognize our rostered members who advanced our work in year two and highlight our new roster of members to continue our momentum in year three.

Year-Two Roster

SMU in Four Committee	Name
Advising Pillar	Josh Beaty
Advising Pillar	Prisna Virasin
Advising Pillar	Barbara Mohrle
Advising Pillar	Ellen Richmond
Advising Pillar	Meghan Budig
Advising Pillar	Janet Stephens
Advising Pillar	John Georges
Advising Pillar	Megan Murphy
Advising Pillar	John Easton
Advising Pillar	Randall Griffin
Advising Pillar	Scott Norris
Advising Pillar	Larry Winnie
Assessment Team	Yan Cooksey

Assessment Team	Adam Cebulski
Assessment Team	Caroline Kirschner
Assessment Team	
Early Alert Pillar	Sue Bierman
Early Alert Pillar	Adreana Julander
Early Alert Pillar	Cori Middleton
Early Alert Pillar	Lauren O'Brien
Early Alert Pillar	Jennifer Post
Early Alert Pillar	Melissa Stanford
Early Alert Pillar	Audryanna Reed
Faculty Steering Committee	Greg Sommers
Faculty Steering Committee/Early Alert	Don Vandewalle
Faculty Steering Committee/Early Alert	Stephanie Amsel
Faculty Steering Committee	Libby Russ
Faculty Steering Committee/Early Alert	Brandi Stigler
Faculty Steering Committee/Advising	Larry Winnie
Faculty Steering Committee/FY Courses	Brian Zoltowski
Faculty Steering Committee/Advising	Randall Griffin
Faculty Steering Committee	Sid Muralidharan
Faculty Steering Committee/Advising	Megan Murphy
Faculty Steering Committee	Ginger Alford
First Year Courses	Jonathan McMichael
First Year Courses	Addy Tolliver
First Year Courses	Faye Walter
Implementation Teams	Jim Bryan
Implementation Teams	Tom Carr
Implementation Teams	John Georges
Implementation Teams	Renee McDonald
Implementation Teams	Jie Sun
Implementation Teams	Kelyn Rola
Implementation Teams	Dick Barr
Implementation Teams	Elena Borzova
Implementation Teams	Jim Dees
Implementation Teams	Misti Compton
Implementation Teams	John Easton
Implementation Teams	Ginger Alford
Implementation Teams	Kathy Hubbard
Implementation Teams	Duncan MacFarlane
Implementation Teams	Volkan Otugen

Implementation Teams	Behrouz Peikari
Implementation Teams	Dinesh Rajan
Implementation Teams	Sheila Williams
Implementation Teams	David Willis
Implementation Teams	David Sedman
Implementation Teams	Gretchen Smith
Implementation Teams	Corinna Nash-Wnuk
Implementation Teams	Tim Jacobbe
Implementation Teams	Scott Davis
Implementation Teams	Marilyn Swanson
Strategy Team	Molly Ellis
Strategy Team	Dustin Grabsch
Strategy Team	Curt Herridge
Strategy Team	Sheri Kunovich
Strategy Team	Peter Moore
Strategy Team	Dayna Oscherwitz
Strategy Team	Paige Ware
Technology Team	Susan Flanagin
Technology Team	Bobby Lothringer
Technology Team	Cassidy Porter
Technology Team	Michael Rossi

Year-Three Roster

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Appendix

Table 7: EPR/MPR analysis of A-LEC usage in fall 2022

Comparison	Interpretation (odds interpretation)
Midterm – Pre-EPR using all 2,400 students	The higher deficiency group is 0.239 times as likely to have a positive change than the lower deficiency group
Post-MPR – Midterm using all 2,400 students	The higher deficiency group is 2.05 times more likely to have a positive change than the lower deficiency group
Midterm – Pre-EPR using 708 students	The higher deficiency group is 0.343 times as likely to have a positive change than the lower deficiency group
Post-MPR – Midterm using 708 students	The higher deficiency group is 1.50 times more likely to have a positive change than the lower deficiency group
Midterm – Pre-EPR using first years out of 708	The higher deficiency group is 0.341 times as likely to have a positive change than the lower deficiency group
Post-MPR – Midterm using first years out of 708	The higher deficiency group is 1.51 times more likely to have a positive change than the lower deficiency group
Midterm – Pre-EPR using those out of the 708 that were not first-years	The higher deficiency group is 0.342 times as likely to have a positive change than the lower deficiency group
Post-MPR – Midterm using those out of the 708 that were not first-years	The higher deficiency group is 1.44 times more likely to have a positive change than the lower deficiency group

During fall semester, 708 students that came at least once to the A-LEC (out of 2,400) and tutoring, writing center, academic workshops, and academic counseling contacts were included in the 708.

Reports

Year-Three PowerPoint

SMU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is the University's comprehensive approach to improving SMU's retention and four-year graduation rates. To this end, our QEP advances student academic success through its essential form: progress toward a degree. On October 12, 2023, the SMU in Four team shared this document to provide updates on early alert mechanisms, undergraduate academic advising, technology enhancements, and gateway and introductory courses. Student retention and graduation numbers were also shared along with goals for year three of the five-year initiative. **View the presentation slide deck**

Department of Economics Reports

During SMU in Four's first year, the Department of Economics participated in the Course Redesign as part of First-Year & Gateway Course Pillar. Their year-long work culminated in two comprehensive, inquiry-based reports (one in fall 2021, one in summer 2022), with detailed recommendations based on extensive discussions with departmental faculty. **View fall 2021 report. View summer 2022 report.**

SMU in Four Chemistry Redesign: First Year Report

During the spring 2022 semester, the Department of Chemistry was charged to review their first-year chemistry courses towards the goals of improving student success and retention as well as establishing a learner-based platform that ensured equity in student experiences. At that time, a committee was established and charged to develop a course-redesign platform for SMU's first-year chemistry series. The

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committee organized listening sessions involving all faculty and staff stakeholders involved in the General Chemistry Curriculum. As a result of these meetings, and in conjunction with SMU in Four stakeholders, areas of concern were identified and objectives to address these concerns were established to aid in the committee's overall goal of improved student retention. **Read the first-year report**.

Degree Planner After-Action Report

The Degree Planner in the my.SMU Student Dashboard is a powerful tool that can provide students with a personalized, pre-populated degree plan to help on their journey to graduation. This tool proposes a sequence of courses that will fulfill degree requirements and can be adjusted regularly to fit students' future plans. The goal was to have 75% of students on the Common Curriculum (5,348 students total) complete their degree planner this year. Due to early technical difficulties with the new Degree Planner tool, the participation goal has been revised to 1,000 students. New initiatives, such as unified marketing, were instituted to assist with goal attainment. **Read the after-action report here.**

Student Engagement & Inclusion Institute (SEI)

The Student Engagement & Inclusion Institute (SEI) is a workshop-based initiative housed within the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), designed to support faculty in the generation and implementation of ideas for successful pedagogical approaches for first-year courses that support greater student engagement and success, with a goal of reducing overall DFW rates in first-year and gateway courses.

CTE hosted the second iteration of the Student Engagement & Inclusion Institute in May of 2023 at the Dallas Arboretum which focused on student engagement and inclusivity in large first-year courses at SMU. This SEI was developed as a lead-in for the Year-Three implementation of course redesign with the theme of Pedagogical Improvements to Large Courses. Using the same approach as in the first year (i.e., identifying specific courses that have high DFW rates), it was determined that our focus should be on a cross-disciplinary set of courses that share common traits of serving large numbers of first-year students.

Change to Academic Calendar to Align Pass/Fail Declaration Date with Course Drop Date

The pass/fail declaration deadline, which has typically been aligned with the deadline to drop a course without academic record, was moved later into the semester to align with the deadline to withdraw from classes and/or the University. As we move into future semesters, we plan on keeping the pass/fail declaration deadline in the later part of the semester. By changing this policy, we hope to provide students with academic continuity alternatives other than simply withdrawing from a course. Read **more about this change here**.

EPR/MPR First-Yeat Retention Annual Report Year Two

Results of EPRs and MPRs from first-year students who started in the summer and fall of 2022 (1,645 students total) were included in the report's study to understand if EPRs and MPRs affected student retention to the spring semester as well as into the following fall semester. **Read the report**.

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