

# SIX+SIX

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## PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

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**Ranger College Quality Enhancement Plan**

2022

# Ranger College Quality Enhancement Plan

## Contents

Ranger College Quality Enhancement Plan.....	i
Part I: Summary and Overview.....	1
The 6+6 Experience .....	2
Summary of Evidence.....	3
Organizational Support Network .....	4
Summary of Planning Activities.....	5
Part II: Process Used to Identify the QEP.....	7
Quantitative Research .....	8
Qualitative Research .....	12
Barriers.....	17
SWOT Analysis .....	19
Part III: Best Practices .....	20
Active Advising .....	20
Summary of Active Advising .....	24
Strategic Enrollment Management .....	24
Summary of Student Enrollment Management.....	30
Holistic Support Services – A Miniature Case Study.....	31
Summary of Literature Review.....	34

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Bringing it All Together.....	34
Part IV: Objectives, Measures, and Outcomes .....	37
Action 1 Details .....	37
Action 2 Details .....	39
Action 3 Details .....	40
Action 4 Details .....	42
Actions 1 to 4 Outcomes: Bringing it All Together.....	44
Action 5 Details .....	45
Part V: Timeline and Implementation.....	47
Action 1: Implementing Guided Pathways.....	49
Action 2: Implementing Cross-training .....	50
Action 3: Implementing Active Advising and Wraparound Services .....	52
Action 4: Implementing an Early Alert System.....	54
Action 5: Implementing a Student Information System .....	56
Success Through Teamwork.....	57
Part VI: Budget and Resources .....	58
Human Capital .....	58
Financial Capital .....	58
Hispanic Serving Institution .....	59
Part VII: Assessment.....	61

---

Assessment of Target Courses .....	62
Assessment of Retention.....	63
Assessment of Completion .....	63
Assessment of CCSSE and SENSE Data.....	64
Assessment of Internal Survey Data .....	64
Assessment of the Actions .....	64
Evaluating the Assessment Process .....	65
Assessment Timeline .....	66
Part VIII: Conclusion.....	67
Appendix.....	68
Appendix A: Strategic Plan Assessments 2020-2021.....	68
Appendix B: March 2022 Focus Group Report.....	70
Appendix C: Internal Topic Survey .....	76
References.....	82

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## Part I: Summary and Overview

Ranger College welcomes the opportunity to pursue a new Quality Enhancement Plan. Since the college's previous successful QEP in 2011, we as a campus community have enjoyed expansion and growth:

- Enrollment increased almost 25%.
- Partnerships with dual-credit entities have increased by 27%.
- A \$10 million bond added new buildings and infrastructure to the Ranger campus.
- New programs have begun, such as EMT training, drone technology, automotive technician, and childcare.

Early discussions of a potential QEP topic suggested many possibilities to address areas of perceived need, such as reading skills or ESL courses, but an examination of the data and diverse input from the college community eventually indicated a much different path was more appropriate. Our rise in student population, our increasing number of partnerships with area Independent School Districts, and our growing campuses in neighboring counties eventually resulted in a QEP more suitably matched to our academic community. Our QEP, **6+6 = Pathway to Success**, addresses the needs of our highly diverse and geographically separated campuses:

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*The focus of the QEP is to increase student success by reinventing the outreach, onboarding, and advising experience.*

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Ultimately, **6+6 = Pathway to Success** intends to fulfill two objectives:

**Objective 1:** Remove identified barriers to student success.

**Objective 2:** Increase retention and graduation rates.

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These two objectives are refined in [Part IV](#) of this document, using actions drawn directly from learning assessment data and the strategic plan. Research indicates that meeting these objectives will improve student results across a variety of metrics.

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*Throughout this document, the gender-neutral pronoun “they” is used as a replacement for the traditional but less-inclusive “he/she,” as per APA guidelines.*

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Educators at all levels measure their success by the degree to which learning occurs in their classrooms. With this in mind, the various subcommittees charged with examining portions of the QEP were encouraged to frequently ask themselves, “How will this improve student success?” **6+6 = Pathway to Success** is specifically designed to answer that question.

### **The 6+6 Experience**

From the moment a potential student applies to Ranger College to the completion of their first semester, they are confronted with numerous obstacles that prevent a smooth transition to the second semester. These obstacles can take many forms:

- The student suffers from resource shortages.
- The student lacks knowledge of the process.
- The student is academically unprepared.
- The college’s messaging is inconsistent or unclear.
- The college’s communications and outreach are incorrectly targeted.
- Multiple college offices require paperwork from each student.
- Academic advising is infrequent or inaccurate.
- No early alert system to flag at-risk students

These problem areas challenge the incoming student and the first-semester student. For the purposes of this QEP, this period will be known as “**6+6**,” representing six months before the student first sets foot on campus to six months after their first day of class.

## Summary of Evidence

<b>Table 1: Evaluative Framework</b>		
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Link to Document Section Detailing Evidence</b>
<p><b>Topic</b></p> <p>A topic identified through an ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes</p>	<p>The topic-selection process involved every aspect of the campus community. Surveyed groups and committees were represented by all stakeholders. Committee members studied potential topics based on the college's needs and the topic's ability to have a long-lasting impact on student learning. The committee gathered data from these constituencies and identified the final topic based on the results.</p>	<p><a href="#">Part II</a></p>
<p><b>Broad-based support</b></p> <p>Broad-based support of institutional constituencies</p>	<p>The teams charged with implementing the actions of the QEP drew upon the expertise found in all sectors of the campus community, from vice presidents and Board members to students and faculty members. The goals will not be possible without the engagement of everyone involved with the college, with an emphasis on frequent communication.</p>	<p><a href="#">Part II</a></p> <p><a href="#">Part IV</a></p> <p><a href="#">Part VII</a></p>
<p><b>Focus</b></p> <p>Focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success</p>	<p>Success in enrollment, retention, and completion directly serves the institution's mission by creating a more progressive and student-centered experience. All baseline data have been analyzed and explained. Clear target numbers have been set in order to gauge the program's success.</p>	<p><a href="#">Part IV</a></p>
<p><b>Resources</b></p> <p>Commits resources to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP</p>	<p>The QEP has committed sufficient financial funds to provide for all proposed actions. Personnel resources are clearly defined. Both resource types can be adjusted if indicated by the assessment data.</p>	<p><a href="#">Part VI</a></p>
<p><b>Assessment</b></p> <p>A plan to assess the achievement</p>	<p>The actions are specific and measurable, using objective target numbers. Assessment of student success will be a continuous cycle with required reporting periods by team leaders. Assessment is both formative and summative, following a defined timeline.</p>	<p><a href="#">Part VII</a></p>

## Organizational Support Network

Though the QEP committee represents all parties involved with the college, it could not operate without the support of other entities. Together these separate services form a QEP network.





## Summary of Planning Activities

A final QEP committee was formed in early summer 2020, charged with taking the initial findings and gathering further data so that a potential QEP topic might come into sharper focus.

Lance Hawvermale, co-chair	Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts
Dayna Prochaska, co-chair	Vice President of Instruction
Lindy Matthews	Vice President of Administrative Services
Ahmy Arca	Vice President of Student Services
Debbie Karl	Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness/Accreditation
Gaylyn Mendoza	Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer
Glenn Paul	Director of Information Technology
John Slaughter	Director of Institutional Research
Jim Cockburn	Director of Student Support Services
Vicki Calfa	Faculty member
Sarah Alapic	Faculty member
Joanna Spangler	Faculty member
Ashleigh Medina	Faculty member
Haylee Bush	Student, dual-credit high school, Phi Theta Kappa officer
Kayla Smith	Student, traditional, Phi Theta Kappa member

The background of these diverse committee members is very important if one is to achieve a comprehensive view of the student journey at Ranger College. The QEP process effectively began with the formation of that committee and continued throughout the 2021-22 academic year. The committee consisted of students, instructors, directors, and administrators.

President appointed new QEP Co-directors	Spring 2020
QEP committee formed	Summer 2020
Committee administered faculty and student QEP Topic Survey	Fall 2020
Reviewed QEP Topic Survey results and assessment data and narrowed topic results	Fall 2020
Attended SACSCOC (virtual) Annual Conference	Winter 2020
Conducted qualitative interviews	Winter 2020
Adopted the QEP “broad topic” of redefining the student experience to increase success metrics	January 2020
Board of Regents approved broad topic	January 11, 2021
Began process of defining focus with supporting goals	Spring 2021
Researched best practices and current literature	Spring 2021

Defined QEP outcomes and began planning timeframe	Spring 2021
Attended one-day Jenzabar ONE overview	July 2021
Attended two-day Jenzabar ONE full demo	July 2021
Baseline/target outcomes established	Summer 2021
Began writing the QEP document and collecting data	Summer 2021
Crafted initial QEP budget	Fall 2021
Budget approved by president	November 1, 2021
Budget approved by the Board of Regents	November 16, 2021
Attended SACSCOC (virtual) Annual Conference	December 2021
New college president assumed duties	January 2022
Conducted student focus groups regarding wraparound services	March 2022
Commissioned professional logo designs	April 2022
Completed first draft of QEP document	May 2022
Prepared for fall roll-out	Summer 2022

This intensive planning stage could not have been completed without the full support of the college leadership and the Board of Regents. The work that began under the former college president continued seamlessly when the new president assumed the role and immediately made assessment and reaccreditation one of his foremost priorities.

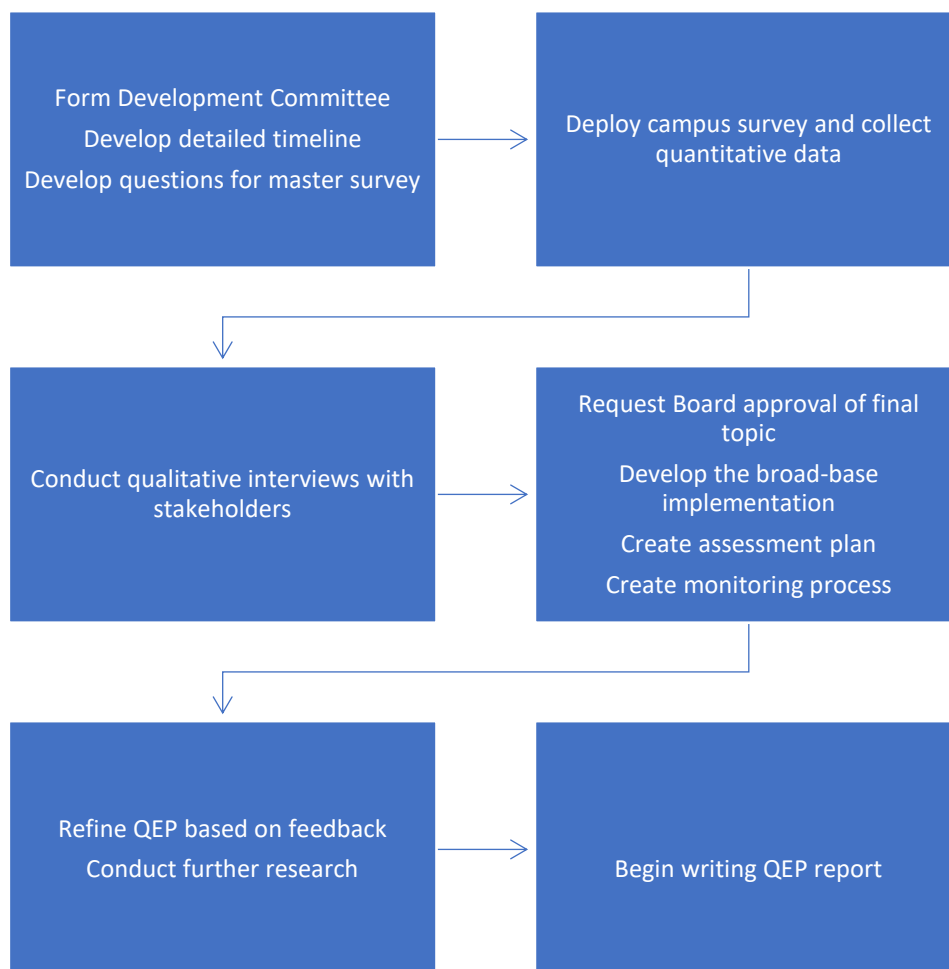
### **The Honey Bun**

That new president, Mr. Derrick Worrels, was especially drawn to the part of the QEP that involves wraparound services to help students overcome life barriers that prevent them from succeeding in college. Mr. Worrels shared with the QEP committee a personal testimony:

“One day when I was working in student services, I saw a student crouched beside a vending machine, with her arm up inside of it, trying to remove a honey bun without paying for it. I cleared my throat to get her attention. She scrambled to her feet, embarrassed, and immediately apologized. I asked her what she was doing. She said she had money only for one good meal that day, so she was saving the money for dinner. In the meantime, she was hungry. I can still see her face when I retell this story. We are a community college. Students like her are part of our community. We need to do everything we can to help them, not just in academics, but in life.”

## Part II: Process Used to Identify the QEP

The journey to **6+6 = Pathway to Success** began in the summer of 2020 with an initial meeting of an potential pool of QEP committee team members. From there, a formal committee was established. Based on early discussions, suggested QEP topics included an English as a Second Language (ESL) a program, improved student attendance, student engagement, or a redesign of the onboarding and retention processes. Whatever path was finally selected, the committee members agreed that both quantitative and qualitative research were needed in order to gain a complete understanding of the student experience and to tie the QEP's directives to the college's strategic plan. Later meetings established a roadmap of initial QEP milestones:



### ***Quantitative Research***

The quantitative research conducted to narrow the QEP topic was comprised of current data compiled from multiple sources:

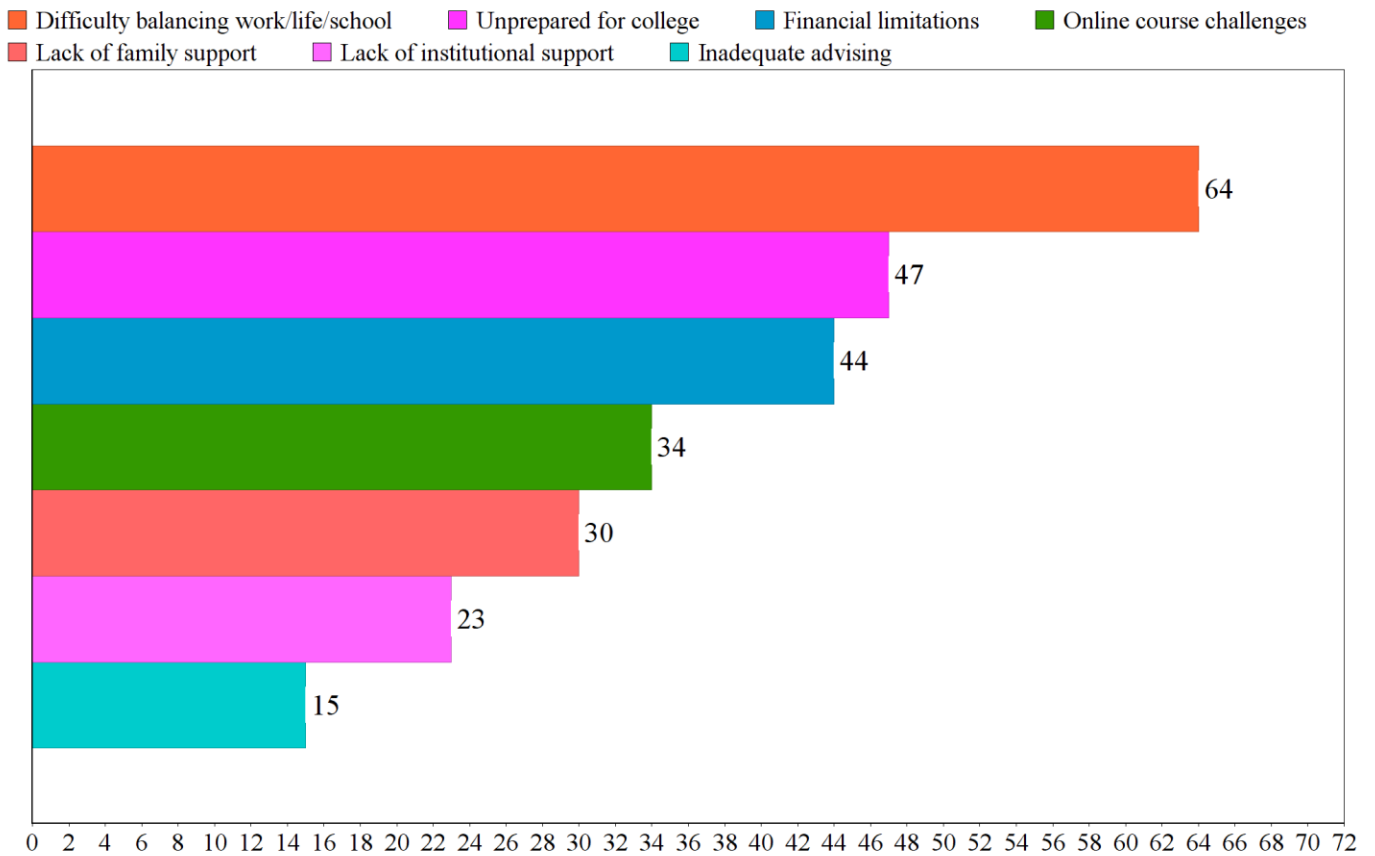
- Survey developed in-house and deployed to all stakeholders
- Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS)
- Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE)
- Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)

<b>Table 4: Retention</b>	
<b>All Ranger student groups</b>	<b>Fall-to-fall Retention Rate</b>
2017	38.1%
2018	38.4%
2019	38.4%
2020	35.9%
<b>Strategic Plan 2020 Goal</b>	<b>43.1%</b>

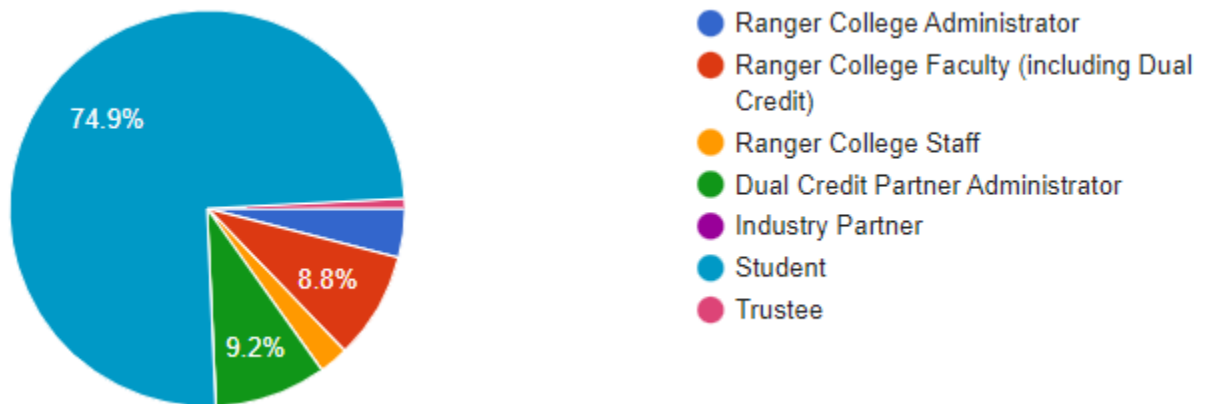
<b>Table 5: Completion within 3 Years</b>		
	<b>Graduation Rate</b>	<b>National Community College Rate</b>
Hispanic	36%	31.6%
White	33%	36%
Black	20%	28.5%

**Analysis of Tables 4 and 5:** Ranger College has not met the goals outlined in the strategic plan. Steps should be taken to address this shortcoming, as too many first-time, full-time students are not returning the following fall semester. This will also inform the direction of the literature review, which will focus on enrollment management and improved advising techniques. A sizable achievement gap exists in the graduation rates of Black students at Ranger, who trail white students and the national average. As will be discussed in [Part III](#), strategies exist for closing these gaps.

Table 6: Barriers to Student Success



**Analysis of Table 6:** This information was taken from a survey distributed across the campus community. The following stakeholder groups were represented:



The data of Table 6 reveal the primary obstacles that prevent students from achieving their initial goals, as reported by all constituent types. The largest factor is the student's inability to balance academic life with work and family, followed by unpreparedness and lack of financial resources. Many of these contributing factors, such as inadequate advising and lack of student support, represent barriers that the QEP seeks to address and ultimately remove.

That survey also revealed the following:

1. Only 35% of students answered "agree" or "strongly agree" when asked if they had received adequate orientation.
2. Less than half of faculty surveyed (45%) reported that they had received adequate training in student engagement practices.
3. Less than half of all respondents (44%) believed that Ranger College used effective procedures to identify struggling or at-risk students.
4. Only 47% of students said that they felt like an important part of the campus community.

Overall, the survey indicated that Ranger College needs to provide additional services, revise its advising model, and give instructors and staff additional tools to engage with students and to promote their success. These understandings shaped the direction of the literature review later in this document. A copy of the original survey is included in the [Appendix](#).

<b>Table 7: Student Engagement</b>			
	<b>Ranger</b>	<b>Small College Average</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Early Connection	47.5%	59.2%	-11.7
Academic and Social Support Network	47.4%	52.6%	-5.2
Clear Academic Plan and Pathway	52.8%	55.7%	-2.9
Track to College Readiness	50.8%	51.8%	-1
High Student Expectations	50.0%	49.7%	+0.3

**Analysis of Table 7:** According to CCSSE and SENSE results, though students arrive at the college with expectations, they are not being fully engaged by the staff and faculty. They do not have an adequate support network and do not feel as if they are being prepared for the next step in their journey.

A deeper dive into the data revealed ways in the which Ranger College was failing to meet identified student needs during the first semester:

1. Only one-third of students agreed with this statement: "A college staff member talked with me about my commitments outside of school (work, children, dependents, etc.)"
2. Only half of students believed that "the college provided me with adequate information about financial assistance."
3. Barely one-third of students reported that "a college staff member helped me determine whether I qualified for financial assistance."

The lack of financial aid knowledge is particularly troubling. Colleges like Ranger need to streamline the process and provide all front-line staff with up-to-date knowledge, so that students can receive proper instructions and advice when making decisions about paying for college. Even the financial aid award letter itself can be confusing. A 2018 study by Burd et al analyzed the award letters of over 500 different colleges:

- The colleges used 136 unique terms for an unsubsidized loan, and of those, 24 did not use the word "loan" at all—even though the item was, indeed, a loan.
  - As many as 70% of the letters failed to explain the difference between a loan, a scholarship, a grant, and work study.
  - Sixty percent did not provide a summary of how much the student would need to pay in order to attend.
-

- Of the 40% that did calculate final cost, the colleges used 23 different ways to arrive at that number.

That award letter is only a single piece in a multi-piece process that begins with the student's application for admissions and ends on the first day of class. Many other student barriers exist. Again, these data points helped guide the course of the literature review found later in this document, [Part III: Best Practices](#).

Ranger College must find a way to assess student needs—including those needs that have nothing to do with academics—and then provide consistent and frequent advising to keep them engaged and fully on the path to completion. Additionally, students indicate a need for complete financial aid information.

**Cross-referencing with the Strategic Plan:** Framing these data points against Ranger's strategic plan continues to bring a QEP topic into sharper focus, as the college's published goals include increasing fall-to-fall retention rates and improving graduation and completion rates, among other things. For example, strategic plan objective 2.1.1 is a mandate to "increase retention through initiatives aimed at student success." **6+6 = Pathway to Success** will be one of those initiatives. Various objectives of the strategic plan are linked to specific actions of the QEP, as detailed in [Part IV](#).

### ***Qualitative Research***

No amount of data can tell the entire story. In order to gain a complete contextual understanding of the student experience, the QEP research team performed extensive qualitative research in the form of interviews with key personnel, based on what was unearthed in the data. Each interviewee represented a key decision-maker in the student's 6+6 journey; each directed an office responsible for at least one component of the onboarding procedure:



- Registrar
- Director of Testing
- Lead Advisor and Counselor at Erath Center
- Director of Financial Aid
- Lead Advisor and Counselor at Ranger Campus
- Vice President of Student Services
- Bursar

The interviews successfully identified multiple points of weakness in the student's circuitous path to his or her second semester. Each interviewee was asked to respond to three prompts:

1. Describe the student onboarding process as you see it, from the time of application to the first day of class.
2. Regarding your office specifically, what type of problems do students normally encounter when trying to complete that part of the process?
3. If you could change any one thing about the process, what would you do?

### **Office of the Registrar**

This interview was conducted with the Dean of Enrollment Management, who oversees three full-time employees in the Registrar's Office. The dean provided several interesting figures:

Of the 2460 unduplicated applications received for the fall 2020 or spring 2021 semesters, 45% of those applicants did not go on to become Ranger College students.

- Of that 45%, 80% were traditional-age students (age 18 to 25)
  - 76% were white
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- 13% were Latinx
- 8% were African American

These are numbers that no one at Ranger has explored before this process began. The Dean remarked that no one had ever asked to see that data, and he himself was surprised by the numbers. That 45% number should become a metric that the college seeks to reduce in a realignment of the 6+6 system.

When asked what part of the 6+6 experience he would change, the Dean said, “In the perfect world, I’d combine my office [Admissions] with an Advising office to help make the process smoother for students” (R. Culverhouse, personal communication, February 4, 2021).

### **Director of Testing**

The second interview was conducted with the Director of Testing, who at the time also served as the Athletic Director. The Director has no staff but administers all testing details for all Ranger-based students single-handedly. Regarding 6+6, the Director said, “There are so many components and so many people in the chain that it’s like a line of dominos. When one office hits a snag, that topples a domino that affects every other office in the process” (S. Feaster, personal communication, February 3, 2021). TSI assessment scores are not automatically populated in Jenzabar PX, the college’s student management program. Those scores must be manually entered after a student tests and before they are permitted to register for class. When asked what change he would make if the sky was the limit, the testing Director said simply, “I would remove some of the dominos.”

### **Lead Advisor at Erath County**

The next interview was held with the Lead Advisor at the Erath County Center in Stephenville. Unlike the Ranger campus, where the students are dormitory residents, the Erath

students are all commuters and frequently non-traditional students. The Lead Advisor also serves as Associate Vice President of the Center, in charge of all administration and scheduling matters at the Stephenville campus. She explained that part of the challenge in enrolling students was the constant mailing of paperwork between Stephenville and the Admissions office in Ranger. Students face delays because one campus is waiting to receive a hardcopy form from another. "We get a lot of calls from students to check on whether or not we have received certain forms," she replied when asked about problem areas. "We need a system that can automatically send an email or even a text to the students to let them know what we've received and what still needs to be submitted" (S. Worrels, personal communication, February 8, 2021).

### **Director of Financial Aid**

The next interview in the series was held with the Director of Financial Aid. The main challenge facing the Financial Aid staff is the lack of trained representatives at the satellite campuses in Stephenville and Early. Because no staff member at those locations has a deep understanding of the aid process and required paperwork, the Director's small staff of two assistants spends time every day trying to remotely assist those campuses with matters that would be more effectively completed in person. Compounding the problem is the fact that all students "have to print and fill out hardcopies" because "we've been trying to get Adobe Sign or some kind of cloud-based service, but it hasn't worked out" (D. Hilton, personal communication, March 24, 2021).

The following explanation from the Director is included in its entirety because it illustrates clearly the kind of very basic problem that confronts staff on a daily basis:

Somewhere around 2015 or 2016, Ranger College contracted with a company called Docubase for an imaging storing system. It would allow the Registrar's office, the

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Financial Aid office, and the Business office to scan documents that were received and to store them in electronic files. I think the Registrar's office was using the system at first to try and scan all the old files, starting with the 1926 transcripts and moving forward. We were given a used scanner to use by Docubase, one they had used for a couple of years at conferences for demo purposes, but it never worked very well. Then the scanner given to us quit working. We have been requesting scanners for the past several years, but still have not purchased them. In October of 2019, after we moved to the new building, our IT department said that with our contract for the printers, we could get scanners from the same vendor. A time was set for November 15, 2019 that they would come with the scanners to set up in the office. They still have not come (D. Hilton, personal communication, March 24, 2021).

### **Lead Advisor at the Ranger Campus**

The subject of the fifth interview, the Lead Advisor at the Ranger campus, performs a very similar role to his counterpart at Erath County. In his experience, the college has suffered due to the unusually high turnover rate among those in charge of the academic experience. In the last ten years, Ranger has had five different Vice Presidents of Instruction, and all five have “pushed the reset button” on different parts of the 6+6 experience:

For example, we have no early alert system for at-risk students. Past VPIs have tried mandatory tutorials, a learning lab, a skills center, Excel spreadsheets—there was even a semester when I went from one dorm room to the next to find students who were failing because we don't have a system in place that allows automatic alerts (G. Lewis, personal communication, March 24, 2021).

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When asked what one thing he would change if money were no object, the Advisor said, “I would change PX [the college’s student management database] with something that has much more efficient processes and an ability to automate tasks to free people to do other activities related to the process” (G. Lewis, personal communication, March 24, 2021).

### **Bursar**

The Bursar has a direct view of a fundamental part of the student experience. The Bursar identified multiple weaknesses in the current system:

1. Though the student housing application is online, there is no online means of paying the application fee. All of that must be done over the phone. Because the Bursar’s office consists of only one person, the phone line is often tied up.

2. Until a student has been issued a student ID number, the Bursar is forced to maintain two separate payment accounts for each student. Moving money and information between those two accounts “is like performing five extra steps” (E. Cherry, personal communication, 2022).

3. All bills are sent on paper via the postal service. “Hundreds” of these are returned each year due to incorrect addresses. The bill also changes as classes are dropped or added, so the paper bill is “rarely” accurate.

4. Students have no way of easily seeing all of their payment information and paying for it instantly. They must call with their credit card number or deliver a physical check.

### **Barriers**

Based on these surveys, interviews, and observations, the QEP committee recognized several common barriers to a more successful 6+6 experience.

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**Barrier 1: Lack of Frequent Advising and Early Alert Systems**

Advising duties at Ranger College are primarily performed by faculty. The lead advisors at Erath and Ranger also serve as administrators, instructors, and counselors. There are 2300 students but no full-time advisor. The college is unable to provide the kind of high-frequency advising necessary to retaining students, as will be discussed in the literature review found in [Part III](#). To compound the matter, the college for years has been without any kind of early alert system to serve as a safety net for struggling students.

**Barrier 2: Lack of Cross-Training**

The faculty advisors have no training in financial aid guidelines. The Admissions office staff have limited knowledge of course curriculum. Overall, each individual who interacts with a student during their 6+6 journey is responsible for only one very specific piece of that journey. Students require multiple points of contact in order to complete any one task, and these continuous obstacles can be discouraging.

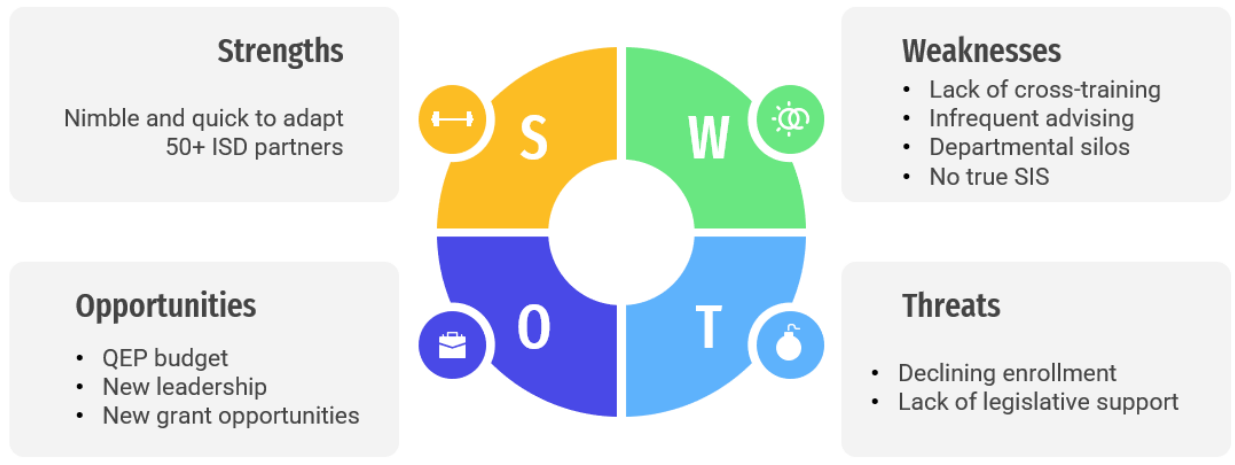
**Barrier 3: Disconnected Services**

Ranger College lacks a network of shared information. The databases and records of the Financial Aid office are not linked to those of the Admissions office. Advisors cannot view a student's scholarship package. The offices at the college's satellite campus must rely on the delivery of hardcopy mail in order to perform many basic functions. The Bursar cannot accept payments online. Ranger College does not have any system of "enterprise resource management," also known as a student information system, or SIS. The college offices exist in silos created by the lack of an SIS system. A robust, college-wide SIS would allow students, faculty, and staff to interact with the same data simultaneously, to make changes in real time, and to communicate almost instantaneously.

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## SWOT Analysis

Based on these quantitative and qualitative findings, the QEP committee distilled the results of a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analysis to provide a visual representation of the college’s position moving forward.



Having amassed all of this information from a variety of sources, the committee defined the parameters of a comprehensive review of best practices.



### Part III: Best Practices

Based on the findings in the quantitative research, the interview process, and the SWOT analysis, the QEP committee chose to explore three areas in which overlapping services seem mostly likely to help to create the 6+6 student experience: (1) advising (2) student enrollment management, and (3) support services. The purpose of this literature review is to provide an overview of current research and best practices in those fields. It will illuminate themes that will lead to possible paths to success by examining the literature of the primary factors affecting the student's 6+6 experience.

#### Active Advising

Any college that reimagines its approach to student services must invest in human capital and be willing to disrupt stagnant advising practices. This idea is not revolutionary or new. As Dr. Richard Light pointed out over 20 years ago, "Good advising is the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience" (Light, 2001, p. 81). Dr. Light is the Carl H. Pforzheimer professor of teaching and learning at Harvard. His seminal work, *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds*, is one of Harvard's three best-selling books of all time, and it won the Stone Award for best book of the year on education. While researching the manuscript, Dr. Light visited over 90 colleges and interviewed countless students, faculty, and staff. In his estimation, "good academic advising ranks number one" (p. 84) of all possible influences on the life of a college student.

A year later, Heisserer and Parette (2002) further explored this notion as it relates to what Glennen and Baxley (1985) and Earl (1988)

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*Theme: Effective advising depends on relationship-building.*

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termed "intrusive advising" and argued that students are more likely to meet benchmarks across



a variety of metrics if they feel that someone in the college community cares about them and has invested time in their success. That "someone" plays a considerable role in the student's tenure at the institution. Thomas and Minton (2004) pointed out that clear boundaries are still important, but the effective advisor is able to establish those boundaries while still creating a relationship that is built on mutual trust and genuine care. This type of advisor proactively contacts students and assesses their needs in order to provide customized service and timely intervention. Varney (2007) likened intrusive advising to a “pre-emptive strike” taken by active advisors before students reach critical points on their academic path.

A milestone on the way to this “high-touch” advising practice was the Appreciative Advising model of Bloom et al (2008). The authors outlined six phases of the process: disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver, and don't settle.

1. Disarm. A welcoming environment creates a strong first impression.
2. Discover. Open-ended questions and active listening provide students opportunities to explore strengths and ideas.
3. Dream. Developing a visual map of student goals allows them to see and achieve benchmarks along the way.
4. Design. A strategy for success provides the student and the advisor with shared access to a complete plan.
5. Deliver. Both parties have a stake in the strategy and commit to achieving it.
6. Don't settle. Constant encouragement inspires the student throughout their time at the college—and possibly beyond.

This type of advisor is cross-trained as a relationship-builder, as specialized skills are required to assist a student along a multi-staged experience. Conklin (2009) cast such an advisor

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in the role of a “life coach,” and Fowler and Boylan (2010) underscored the importance of "frequent and relevant contact" between these coach/advisors and students.

In 2012, at least two studies used the increasingly popular term of "intrusive advising" when discussing the need for proactive guidance

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*Theme: High-touch advising produces positive measurable results.*

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to keep students on the path to academic success. A report titled "A Matter of Degrees," published by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCSSE), explored how a more hands-on approach at various institutions led to marked improvements at getting students to complete their first year of college—and those students "have a nearly 90% likelihood of graduating on time (within three years)" (p. 28). Continuing that theme, Varney (2012) highlighted several characteristics of this high-frequency, hands-on advising:

- intervening to enhance student motivation
- strategizing to show interest and involvement with students
- advising designed to increase the probability of student success
- working to educate students on all options
- approaching students before situations develop

Karp (2013) stressed the importance of a holistic approach to meeting these goals, noting that fragmented student services do not provide the framework necessary for a student to understand the connections between their home life, their academic life, and their future life in the labor market. Multiple offices and disconnected programs must give way to a centralized, target-oriented core. Also bearing consideration is the fact that at-risk students are less likely to seek out academic assistance. Murray and Tuck (2014) underscored the importance of a high-

frequency advising strategy to help mitigate the factors impacting these at-risk students, demonstrating that it led to increased student retention and degree completion.

Thimblin (2015) suggested that students need to have the advising brought to them directly through classroom visits, early alert systems, frequent check-ins, and targeted orientation programs. These activities help establish a safety net around the student. The students are not on their own; someone is there to help them every step of the way. The intrusive advisor knows those steps before the student walks them, as “proactive and meaningful engagement with students allows advisors to anticipate student concerns” (Sutton, 2016).

In the traditional advising model, contact between advisor and student is infrequent (Fosnacht et al, 2017), with only one or two meetings each academic session. Regular and meaningful meetings are one of the traits of the nontraditional model—whether that is known as intrusive, high-frequency, or high-touch. The exact traits of this model were enumerated best by Rowh (2018):

1. Robust technology. Effective advising depends on data analytics.
2. Early intervention. Advisors make contact before the student is at risk.
3. External support. Holistic services provide solutions to off-campus challenges.
4. Careful communication. Intrusive advising doesn't need to be literally intrusive.
5. Campus-wide buy-in. This level of advising is not owned by the advising office.

Mu and Fosnacht (2019) drew data from 156 institutions to chart positive relationships between advising frequency and student performance. The authors defined intrusive advising as a model in which contact is initiated by the advisor rather than by the student, usually at pre-defined junctures in the student's academic career.

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Nowhere are these ideas expressed more boldly than at Amarillo College, perhaps the only college where "love" is built into the institution's mission and vision. Constructed on a "culture of care," Amarillo College (AC) personalizes each student's journey. Extensive surveys of AC students revealed that "the top ten barriers to classroom success had nothing to do with the classroom" (Lowery-Hart, 2020). AC meets those needs by applying its unusual institutional values: Fun, Innovation, Family, Yes, and Wow!

Innovative values like those adopted by Amarillo College help advisors succeed because they are driven not only to place students in the proper classes of a particular degree plan, but also because they provide students with "skills that increase their autonomy and confidence in their academic abilities" (Virtue et al., 2021, p. 213).

### ***Summary of Active Advising***

Active student advising, though it goes by many names, represents a fundamental shift in how colleges view their students—no longer as customers but instead as partners along a shared education path. Personal relationships generate wins for both sides; the student completes the academic cycle, and the college benefits from that in many ways. This type of advising requires a heavy financial and time investment that may not be feasible for colleges with limited resources. However, the return on that investment is almost always remarkable.

### **Strategic Enrollment Management**

"The radical underlying commitment of enrollment management is its unswerving focus on the longitudinal care and comprehensive education of students" (Keller, 1991, p. 3). The idea of "longitudinal care" links strategic enrollment management directly to intrusive advising. Since its inception in the early 1970s, strategic enrollment management (SEM) has been defined

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as a process that uses analytics to align the offices recruiting, registration, advising, and financial aid in order to increase enrollment and improve student success.

Propelled by numerous pieces of federal legislation aimed at expanding college access through equity provisions and student aid, college enrollment from 1960 to 1970 grew by over 120% (Coomes, 2000). This led to a relatively new field of study: student persistence and retention. Astin (1972) was one of the first to examine the idea through data in a study aptly named “College Dropouts.” Building on this, Tinto (1975) suggested that all students enter college with (a) pre-existing attributes (family, obligations, educational background) and (b) expectations of the college experience. Tinto examined how those expectations were impacted by both formal and informal college experiences. The results of these interactions influenced the student’s decision to remain in college or withdraw. Studies like this form the historical foundation of SEM. The term itself was coined in the late 1970s as institutions such as Boston College and Carnegie-Mellon created new offices specifically charged with developing far-ranging systems to interpret student data and respond to it accordingly (Hossler, 1996).

Formal definitions of SEM were offered by Kreutner and Godfrey (1981), Kemerer et al (1982), and Hossler (1984). In general, these definitions agree that SEM increases student headcount and improves semester-to-semester completion rates by synchronizing the efforts of several traditionally disconnected services:

- marketing and recruiting
  - orientation programs
  - financial aid
  - advising
  - tutoring
-

- institutional research
- student services

An effective SEM initiative depends on the constant collection of data by all departments across campus and a coordinating utilization of those data. SEM examines trends (enrollment, demographics, occupations), constraints (money, staffing), and competition (colleges, industry), then directs recruitment strategies accordingly. The SEM approach is successful only if driven by extensive market research, intensive internal data analysis, and interviews with a wide array of stakeholders.

Ingersoll (1988) constructed a matrix in which institution-side variables such as instruction time, service costs, and facility expenses were compared against student-side variables such as drop rates, student loans, and scheduling. With models like this as a guide, colleges increased money spent on student services by 39% by the late 1980s (Wagener & Lazerson, 1995). At the end of an assessment cycle, SEM-forward institutions can begin to visualize the impact this increased attention has on academic programs and even pinpoint specific actions, such as curriculum planning and syllabi redesign, which in turn can increase faculty buy-in and collaboration (Stevenson, 1996).

Peters and Keihn (1997) conducted a case study of the University of Wisconsin's multi-year

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*Theme: Decentralizing offices leads to coherent, longitudinal services that produce results.*

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SEM initiative and directly connected several positive outcomes to those efforts. Monetary support per student (inflation-adjusted) increased from \$2600 to \$3000, while the gap between state and national support per student decreased from \$1200 to \$0. Likewise, student-faculty ratio improved from 19:1 to 17:1. In cases like this, SEM directs money to increase enrollment

and provide for more comprehensive student support. Because the strategy attacks the enrollment issue on multiple fronts, the college's chances of closing achievement gaps are improved. SEM ensures that the institution's marketing team has access to the same data as the registrar's office and the financial aid office. Money can be deployed in concert rather than in compartmentalized bursts, so that a uniform plan is no longer the exclusive responsibility of a single office but is now driven by diverse experts from across campus. Kalsbeek (2001) referred to this as “de-jobbing,” or shifting from silos and rigid structure to a more fluid model in which responsibilities depend on the need of a shared outcome rather than on departmental loyalties.

Black (2004) pointed out that SEM is, at its core, a type of relationship management. It has to be more than simply market analysis and service optimization. To effect meaningful change in “increasingly diverse segments of the student population,” SEM must “reach farther and deeper within an institution than it has to date” (Black, 2004, p. 39). Those relationships depend on a personalized or tailored approach to each unique student group. One key component of SEM is an emphasis on personalized orientation programs or on outreach specific to key groups. Freshman orientation events are not one-size-fits-all. Retaining students into their second semester depends, in part, on engaging them during their *first* semester, so it's important that the needs and expectations of African American students and Hispanic students, and traditional and nontraditional students, are seen as distinct and addressed very early in the academic journey. All activities and outreach can be redesigned with particular populations in mind. Bontrager (2004) outlined the goals of such a customized enrollment management plan:

- establish clear goals for the number and types of students needed to fulfill the institutional mission
  - determine, achieve, and maintain optimum enrollment
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- generate added net revenue for the institution
- increase process and organizational efficiency
- improve service levels to all stakeholders
- create a data-rich environment to inform decisions and evaluate strategies
- build and strengthen linkages with functions and activities across the campus

A case study by Antons and Maltz

(2006) focused on SEM's dependence on data

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*Theme: No SEM effort succeeds without data.*

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mining. Their model correctly predicted the success rate of the majority of the students in the study based on factors such as high school GPA, minority status, financial aid awards, and geography. Drawing on that data, SEM staff were able to adjust and customize financial aid packages to deliver the desired enrollment numbers and success rates. This complex level of analytic application isn't possible without a robust institutional research (IR) component.

Anderson (2008) stressed the need for IR offices, when working in concert with others as part of a SEM initiative, to provide data that are more than just numeric points on a graph. Each data group has a backstory. It's not enough to know that 61% of students are female and 39% are male. To meet SEM's objectives, the "why" behind that disparity must be brought into focus. Once an institution is able to start identifying its "whys," it can begin to tell its unique story, and that story is what perpetuates student enrollment. As entrepreneur Simon Sinek (2009) has said, "People don't buy *what* you do, they buy *why* you do it."

Dennis (2012) envisioned the next level of SEM as Anticipatory Enrollment Management, or AEM. Because of the rise of social media and the enormous amount of data it produces, it is now possible to track trends and prepare for new student groups before they arrive or to counteract enrollment downturns before they occur. Again, this level of advance response



requires a great attention to analytical detail and a certain knack for forecasting based on observable tendencies.

However, a knack for interpreting data is not enough. Leadership plays a significant role in the effectiveness of any long-term SEM

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*Theme: SEM's success depends on effective leadership from the top.*

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project. Flanigan (2016) demonstrated that the role of the college president or CEO directly affects the ability of a SEM initiative to succeed; that leader's behavior can positively or negatively alter the results. The CEO is the key player in changing a college's culture and in encouraging its often reluctant faculty and staff to embrace change. Dr. Diane Walleser, Vice President for Enrollment Management at Manhattan Community College, likens this reluctance to Peasant Theory (2018) when she describes her experience of introducing substantial SEM changes at her institution. Most front-line college employees do not believe they have the power to enact change, and they prefer a default position that is static and waiting for instruction. At best, they are open to change but unaware of their role in it. At worst, they live in denial and actively resist change. The CEO's task, then, is to understand this mode of thinking and be equipped to deal with what Rothwell et al (2015) called "change management." The ability to coax an organization into substantial transformation is especially important when dealing with the common criticisms of a SEM rollout, as chronicled by Smith et al (2020): too many meetings, too expensive, too protracted, too time-intensive. The authors underscored the importance of a thoughtful change management strategy for any college president considering a SEM deployment. Faculty are key to this process, playing an important role in any successful enrollment management program and its ongoing productivity. Smith (2007) argues that faculty members should be included in the planning from day one, as they "are surprised when they

learn how data driven strategic enrollment management actually is, or is intended to be. When engaged, these faculty members often become SEM ambassadors within the institution's academic environment" (Smith, 2007, p. 40).

Perhaps due to the pandemic and its effects on college enrollment, 2021 saw many publications in SEM studies. College administrators, recruiters, and admissions officers are currently living in a time when “comparing year-over-year data [is] not as useful when the climate has shifted” (Hutton, 2021, p. 24). Historic data is not as predictive as it was pre-pandemic. Colleges are now depending on such innovations as short surveys sent via text message to the study body, hoping to collect enough real-time data to make informed decisions about revenue and how best to meet stakeholder needs. Many institutions have had to completely reimagine their existing SEM efforts in response to marketplace uncertainties. In 2019, Missouri State University began to phase in a bold new SEM initiative, investing heavily to ensure future growth based on data trends. But in 2020, the university “transitioned into crisis mode” and put SEM entirely on hold. MSU is currently in the process of introducing a highly modified SEM, one built around the “fluidity challenges” of a post-pandemic environment (Hornberger, 2021). For the foreseeable future, SEM efforts are depending on innovation and trial-and-error to offer a course correction until the student marketplace returns to more predictable patterns.

### ***Summary of Student Enrollment Management***

Strategic enrollment management is, in many ways, the sum of its parts. SEM involves cracking open departments and combining efforts from previously partitioned units. A concentrated effort that has a complete grasp of its institution’s data can successfully predict patterns of student behavior. This, in turn, increases enrollment as a result of more refined

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targeting, marketing, recruiting, and advising. SEM is a powerful tool for those colleges able to restructure outdated paradigms and garner stakeholder support.

### **Holistic Support Services – A Miniature Case Study**

Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, president of Amarillo College, went undercover as a homeless person to experience the struggles that his most at-risk students face. He slept in a sleeping bag on the ground. He ate his meager meals in a community shelter and scavenged for hygiene items in refuse bins. Two days later, drained and defeated and lying flat on his back in the grass, Dr. Lowery-Hart realized, “Just having a food pantry like we do [at Amarillo College] isn’t enough. It isn’t enough, we’re not doing enough, we have to do more” (Bombardieri, 2018). That “more” transformed into one of the country’s most progressive, daring support networks for community college students. Known as the No Excuses Poverty Initiative, it sets out to achieve what many believe unattainable: leveling the playing field for financially disadvantaged students and helping them succeed at the same rate as other peer groups.

As many as 54% of students surveyed at AC had experienced some form of food insecurity, and 11% reported being homeless within the prior year. Other alarming figures included 28% who had failed to fully pay utility bills and 12% who had moved in with friends or family due to financial challenges (Goldrick-Rab & Cady, 2018). In the past, these students would have received significant needs-based assistance from the Department of Education. But federal aid is no longer enough. In 1975, the average Pell grant covered 79% of a student’s college expenses. By 2017, the average Pell award provided for only 29% of a student’s expenses (Protopsaltis & Parrott, 2017).

Dr. Martha Parham, Senior Vice President of Public Relations at the American Association of Community Colleges, highlighted how the pandemic only increased the gulf

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between those who struggle with poverty and those more safely on the other side. "Those students," Dr. Parham said, "may not have the literal or the figurative bandwidth to engage with classes online." Real-world students—those who are not necessarily 19-year-old suburban white males—have needs that go far beyond paying tuition. Their route to a degree happens while they're working and raising children. Dr. Parham very powerfully and simply stated it: "Education is not linear for them" (Parham, 2021). A 2019 Pew study found that 20% of dependent students—those living with their parents—lived below the poverty line, and as many as 42% of independent students suffered from poverty (Fry & Cilluffo, 2019). Those numbers are almost twice those of 20 years ago.

These community college students need what is now known as "wraparound" services. Anything that presents an off-campus or non-curricular barrier to student success falls into this category of need. Overcoming these obstacles means that colleges must consider providing non-academic support in several areas not historically the purview of the institution:

- free or low-cost child care
- mental health services
- food pantries
- stipends for gas
- assistance with utility bills

Though community colleges are more likely than four-year universities to enroll at-risk students, they receive less state and federal funding to meet those students' needs. While total investments per student at a university is around \$14,000 per year, the amount spent annually on ensuring a community college student's success is \$10,000 (Dembicki, 2019). Any college hoping to make up for this difference will need to take creative countermeasures. At Amarillo

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College, support staff in the fall 2017 semester alone contacted over 800 students who had at least one dependent and an income under \$19,600 to ensure that everyone was aware of the services available to them. That bears repeating: every single student in that particular at-risk category was personally contacted by someone at AC and made aware of the free support they could receive so that they could continue to attend class. The heart of AC’s campaign is the Advocacy and Resource Center, or ARC, which not only provides students with wraparound services but also connects those students to further assistance with over 60 nonprofit, community, and state programs. ARC has paid for temporary housing when students had no homes; it has given them laptops; it has literally put food on many tables. Operating under ARC’s Colleague is a campus-supported legal aid center, counseling center, employment center, and childcare center. These efforts pay real dividends. Students taking advantage of ARC’s wraparound services have a 36% higher retention rate than do students who do not make use of what ARC offers (Crowley, n.d.).

Because of these efforts, AC was recognized in the summer of 2021 as a “high-impact” institution and was awarded \$15 million by philanthropist MacKenzie Scott. That same year, the college won the Aspen Institute’s prestigious Rising Star Award (Wyatt, 2021).

Amarillo College is not the only place of transformation. One Million Degrees (OMD) is a nonprofit in Chicago that provides wraparound services to community college students. A randomized trial conducted by the University of Chicago’s Poverty Lab found that OMD’s work “substantially” improves enrollment, retention, and graduation. Participating in OMD’s program increased a student’s odds of earning a degree in three years by 18% (Weissman, 2021).

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*Theme: The most progressive community colleges package a degree plan with a poverty plan.*

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### *Summary of Literature Review*

With a commitment to solving students' non-academic problems with creativity and care, a college can markedly improve retention, performance, and completion in its most at-risk populations. This cannot happen without innovation and dedication at the CEO level, nor can it happen without sufficient funding. Further, there is no magic bullet that can demolish all poverty-based barriers for students at every campus. Each setting is unique. Only by drawing upon data and understanding student real-life needs can a college begin to embark on such a wholesale transformation.

### **Bringing it All Together**

A community college student's 6+6 experience includes the six months prior to their first day of class and the six months after the beginning of their freshman semester. From the moment they submit their initial application, a well-designed SEM program can ensure a seamless process. Predictive modeling has anticipated the student's application and allows for a rapid and targeted response. A SEM initiative like this functions most efficiently if the college uses a modern student information system (SIS) to facilitate communication not only between the student and the admissions office, but also among all departments involved in the process. Examples of a robust SIS are the commercial products Jenzabar ONE and Ellucian Colleague. These cloud-based services automate much of the process and facilitate collaboration.

The three fields explored in this literature review—advising, SEM, and holistic services—depend upon a revamped and streamlined interdepartmental communication network. This almost always requires adequate cross-training for employees, so that financial aid staff can correctly answer student questions regarding admissions, and advisors possess knowledge of financial aid requirements. Dr. Jenni Cardenas, Vice President of Student Services at Central

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Arizona College (CAC) reported that CAC suffered from highly compartmentalized offices, and these silos prevented ready communication, which in turn resulted in common student complaints and excessive “melt”—or students who apply to the college but do not end up registering for a class. The most dramatic change that CAC made to its 6+6 program was to cross-train all front-line employees, so that the staff in admissions understood the basics of financial aid, and advisors had a firm understanding of the registration process and student loans. Everyone who dealt face-to-face with students was trained in multiple disciplines. This decreased student wait time and student melt. Dr. Cardenas’s team implemented this change after a series of inter-office meetings revealed a student’s path to registration was not in fact a straight line, as everyone had assumed:

We created a visual aid of the typical student journey, which we had always viewed as a straight progression between various points. But instead, we ended up with a spider’s web of ‘if/then’ decisions for the student. The visual made it very apparent. This was not the student’s problem. This was *our* problem (Cardenas, 2021).

In addition to cross-training employees, Central Arizona College invested CARES funds in a call-

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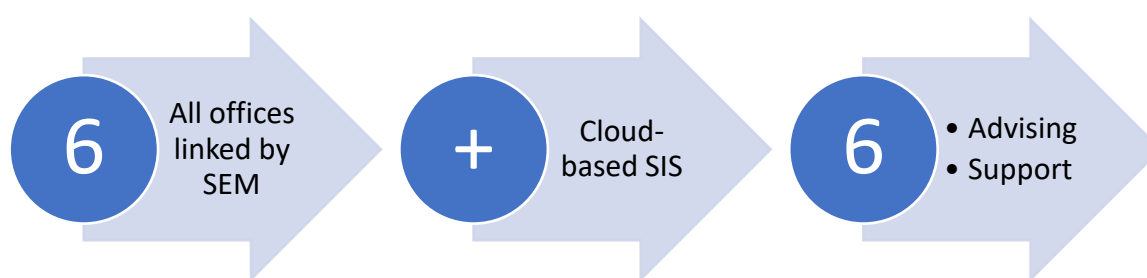
*Theme: Cross-training is essential in coordinating reimagined advising, SEM, and student support activities.*

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center service called Talkdesk. By using Talkdesk, the college was able to free up staff from the responsibility of fielding routine telephone inquiries. Calls were forwarded to those staff members only if the question couldn’t be answered by a trained Talkdesk agent. This two-pronged approach—cross-training and Talkdesk—allowed Dr. Cardenas and her institution to positively impact the student experience and increase retention.

Also known as “interprofessionalism,” cross-training not only improves collaboration and institutional efficiency, it increases employee motivation and job satisfaction (Bleich, 2018).

Tim Brown, CEO of international design firm IDEO, coined the term “T-shaped” to describe an employee who is cross-trained: the horizontal line of the T is that person’s primary job function, while the vertical line represents two areas of “de-jobbing,” in which that person is able to engage in other parts of the operation with knowledge and skill (Hansen, 2010).



After the student arrives on campus, intrusive advising and holistic support services ensure that they have the best chance of completing that first semester and continuing on to the second. North Arkansas Community College enjoyed a 10% increase in student retention within two years of implementing a personalized and "caring" advising strategy, and at Clark College "students who have intensive and integrated interactions with student services are much more likely to persist from term to term" (Achieving the Dream, 2018). The system works. Getting that system into place—and harnessing campus-wide support for transformational change—remains the challenge for Ranger College.



## Part IV: Objectives, Measures, and Outcomes

The tables in this section depict each action being taken to meet the QEP’s two objectives, based on all research and the reviews of best practices.

**Objective 1:** Remove identified barriers to student success.

**Objective 2:** Increase retention and graduation rates.

The tables note specific outcomes for each objective, as well as their relationship to assessment, budget, responsible parties, and other elements.

These tables refer frequently to the summary of the [Strategic Plan](#) in the [Appendix](#).

**Table 8: Action 1 – Integrate Guided Pathways into all student-related operations.**

Action	Type of Assessment		Target	Assessment	Supports Strategic Plan Section(s)	Persons Responsible	Budget Implications
	Form./ Summ.	Direct/ Indirect					
<b>Action 1a</b> Provide training to all college personnel in Guided Pathways	F	I	100% personnel trained	Number of personnel who received training	2.1 2.3 3.3	VP of Instruction  Deans	None
<b>Action 1b</b> Update advising materials, degree plans, college catalog, website to align with Guided Pathways	S	D	100% revised materials published in all relevant places	Number of items revised	2.1 2.3 2.5	VP of Instruction  Deans  Lead Advisor	None

### Action 1 Details

#### 1a. Provide training to all college personnel in Guided Pathways.

Prior to the QEP, Ranger College had partially implemented the Guided Pathways model, which is a nationwide initiative designed to create more college graduates in the following ways:

- Improve communication with counselors at high schools.
- Connect high school “endorsements” directly to Ranger College degree plans.

- Advise students on course registration with emphasis on their career choice.
- Ensure that students avoid taking electives that do not apply to their degree.
- Remove barriers to success in all aspects of the student experience.
- Provide professional development to improve customer service.

Ranger has only partially integrated Pathways into the college’s operations. The college stands at what is known as “cadre 2,” meaning it has implemented many but not all of the strategies of Pathways. Under the QEP, the college will dedicate resources to move to cadre 3, which ensures that students remain on the correct path throughout their college career.

**1b. Update advising materials, degree plans, college catalog, and website, to align with Guided Pathways.**

The college’s degree plans are aligned in such a way that a student is able to remain on their chosen Pathway. However, other onboarding- and advising-related materials have not been updated to reflect an emphasis on Pathways. As was documented in the literature review of [Part III](#), a uniform experience and consistent communication improve a student’s chances of completion. Every year, the course catalog is updated. Likewise, the college’s website undergoes frequent updates. Those items will now be revised with an emphasis on a constant and reliable message.

**Table 9: Action 2 – Provide cross-training to all front-line student support staff and advisors.**

Action	Type of Assessment		Target	Assessment	Supports Strategic Plan Section(s)	Persons Responsible	Budget Implications
	Form./ Summ.	Direct/ Indirect					
<b>Action 2a</b> Dedicate existing professional development days to train advisors and admissions staff in	F	I	100% personnel trained	Number of personnel who received training	2.1 2.5 3.3	Lead Advisor  Staff of Financial Aid and Admissions	None



<b>Action 3a</b> Identify needed wraparound services for different campuses and student populations.	S	D	Survey developed and deployed	Survey results received and data analyzed	2.5 2.6 9.1 9.3 9.4	VP of Administration  Director of Marketing	None
<b>Action 3b</b> Identify possible donors, service-providers, locations, and partnerships.	S	D	Annotated list of at least 50 entities in college service area	Number of entities identified	9.1 9.3 9.4	VP of Administration  Director of Marketing  VP of Student Services	None
<b>Action 3c</b> Train personnel on active advising principles and resource. Revise Advising Handbook	F	I	100% personnel trained	Number of personnel who received training	2.5 2.6 3.3	Lead Advisor	None
<b>Action 3d</b> Establish a food and clothing pantry. Create QR code reporting system.	S	D	Basic needs pantry staffed and operational	Basic needs pantry status	9.1 9.3 9.4	VP of Administration  Director of Marketing	\$10,000 per year

## Action 3 Details

### 3a. Identify needed wraparound services for different campuses and student populations.

This quote from [Part III](#) bears repeating: A survey at Amarillo College revealed that “*the top ten barriers to classroom success had nothing to do with the classroom.*” **6+6 =**

**Pathway to Success** intends to provide the optimal onboarding, outreach, and advising experience for students. It must, then, focus part of its energy on meeting students where they’re at and confronting the real-world problems that hold them back.



<b>Action 4a</b> Finalize transition from Blackboard to Canvas and enable Attendance as a default feature for all instructors.	S	D	Full conversion; all features enabled	Number of instructors able to access all features	8.1	LMS Specialist	None
<b>Action 4b</b> Formalize early-alert guidelines.	S	D	New guidelines published in student and faculty handbooks	Status of publications	8.1	VP of Instruction Lead Advisor	None
<b>Action 4c</b> Train personnel	F	I	100% of advisors receive new training	Number of personnel who received training	3.3 8.1	LMS Specialist	None
<b>Action 4d</b> Communicate with students through a new syllabi-management system.	S	D	New management system is installed into LMS	Number of faculty reporting use of new system	2.1 8.1	Deans All instructors	\$9900 year 1; \$4900 per year 2+

## Action 4 Details

### 4a. Finalize transition from Blackboard to Canvas and enable Attendance as a default feature for all instructors.

Ranger College has no early-alert policy and no formal system to report student absences. Regular class attendance is critical to a student's success. Instructors are not currently expected to report excessive absences; instead, any reporting is left to each individual instructor, and the method of that reporting is not outlined. The QEP will introduce three major technology tools to assist in these efforts, through migration to the Canvas LMS and a robust student information system (SIS), augmented by syllabus-management software.

### 4b. Formalize early-alert guidelines.

Before the QEP, attendance policies were the purview of each instructor. If a student was failing, the instructor could, at their discretion, contact a coach or an advisor. The experience varied greatly from one course to the next. Students failing algebra might be contacted by a

concerned instructor, while a student failing history never received a single email notification about their excessive absences. After the QEP, standards will be determined and used universally. All instructors will be required to follow the same guidelines, and they will have new tools to communicate with the student, coaches, and advisors. The guidelines will appear in the Faculty Handbook, the Student Handbook, the course syllabi, and on the website. A faculty member's annual performance evaluation will note whether or not they are using the alert system as required.

#### **4c. Train personnel.**

All instructors, advisors, and coaches will receive training as part of the college's routine professional development days. This training will include a "how to" program for all facets of the early-alert initiative.

#### **4d. Communicate with students through a new syllabi-management system.**

Ranger College will purchase a management tool to standardize all syllabi and allow for universal updates and rapid communication. Students currently have no "safety net" that provides a timely intervention in cases of low grades or absences. Students at most other institutions enjoy a service that warns them if they reach certain points in their achievement level in each course. An early alert program, clearly communicated in the syllabus and vocally endorsed by instructors, will help at-risk students before it's too late. Making this possible in the most efficient manner requires syllabus-management software. During the course of developing the QEP, college representatives attended demonstrations from Simple Syllabus and Concourse Syllabus. One of those products will streamline communication and contribute to the success not only of the early-alert system but also to full implementation of Guided Pathways. Currently faculty members have no rules for where a syllabus should appear within their Blackboard or

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what it should contain. Details are thus very difficult for students to locate with efficiency. A task that should be simple—such as finding an instructor’s office hours—are currently inconsistent. Sometimes the sought-after information is not even located in the syllabus. Though deans and division chairs ask for consistency, that is not always the case. Syllabus-management software solves this problem entirely, as a master template ensures that students find exactly the details they need in exactly the same place, regardless of their instructor.

### **Actions 1 to 4 Outcomes: Bringing it All Together**

The combined effect of these actions is the creation of a more streamlined and targeted 6+6 experience, resulting in improved student performance across the board.

<b>Table 12: Expected Outcomes of Combined Actions</b>	
<b>Target</b>	<b>Measurement Instrument</b>
“Early connection” improves by at least 11.7% to equal small college average	CCSSE and/or SENSE
“Academic and social support network” improves by at least 5.2% to equal small college average	CCSSE and/or SENSE
“Clear academic plan and pathway” improves by at least 2.9% to equal small college average	CCSSE and/or SENSE
“Students receiving adequate orientation” improves by 10%	Internal survey
Faculty “receiving adequate training in student engagement practices” improves by 10%	Internal survey
“Effective procedures used to identify at-risk students” improves by 10%	Internal survey
Increase student passing rates by 10% in targeted courses (see Part V)	Registrar’s data
Decrease student drop rates by 10% in targeted courses (see Part V)	Registrar’s data
Increase overall retention and completion rates of all students to national average	Registrar’s data

The internal survey will be redeployed and the Registrar’s data reviewed in line with the cycles of the SENSE and CCSSE surveys, the next round of which is to be conducted in fall 2023. The exact implementation timeline for each action is discussed in [Part V](#).



Supporting these efforts and eventually providing the backbone to all campus infrastructure is a new student information system. Ranger College will upgrade the college's outdated and limited Jenzabar PX to a cloud-based, comprehensive SIS such as Jenzabar ONE or Ellucian Colleague. The antiquated PX was developed in the 1970s and “is moving toward being decommissioned at some point” (Oklahoma Information Technology Officers, 2015, p. 2).

**Table 13: Action 5 – Upgrade to a modern Student Information System (SIS)**

Action	Type of Assessment		Target	Assessment	Supports Strategic Plan Section(s)	Persons Responsible	Budget Implications
	Form./Summ.	Direct/Indirect					
<b>Action 5</b> Upgrade to a modern, cloud-based SIS such as Jenzabar ONE or Ellucian Colleague.	S	D	Jenzabar ONE or Ellucian Colleague is selected in summer 2022, with data conversation and implementation beginning in spring 2023 and full integration by fall 2024.	Contract signed with SIS provider	1 2.1 2.6 2.9 3.1 7.1 8.1 8.2	VP of IT  IT Department  Registrar	Considerable. This item was approved by the Board as a cornerstone of the QEP.

## Action 5 Details

A state-of-the-art SIS connects all departments, from advising to financial aid to the bursar, so that all employees and all students interface with the same system for all actions. Multiple barriers are removed, as communication is streamlined, documents are presented and updated digitally in real time, and students have instant access to grades, scholarship packages, and degree plans. Currently with PX, none of that is possible.

Further, a modern SIS will auto-generate responses when students submit initial applications to the college, including notifications of required documents. Through SMS messaging—rather than via phone or email—students can be contacted quickly regarding the

onboarding process. This greatly impacts the “melt” attrition rate explored previously in this document and smooths a student’s path to the first day of class.

As part of the QEP development process, the college community attended multi-day, in-depth demonstrations of possible SIS options. Further details are found in the next section of this document, which details how this SIS and all other actions will be deployed.

## Part V: Timeline and Implementation

A firm timeline and visual map of the implementation process is necessary in order for **6+6 = Pathway to Success** to achieve its goals. Not only does a well-conceived and obtainable timeline facilitate communication, but it also helps curtail what Carey et al (2019) referred to as “policy drift,” which can occur when an institution fails to stay true to the original objectives of long-term plans. Beginning on the next page is a map of the multi-year plan to implement all aspects of the QEP. Not all actions begin at the same time, but follow a logical progression so that the initial phases serve as the foundation upon which later phases may be built.

### **Phase 0: Pre-planning and other linked projects**

Before the QEP process began, other technology-based changes were already underway that provided a necessary backbone for the initiative.

**Hardcopy to OER:** Ranger College migrated from traditional hardcopy textbooks to open-source educational resources, or OER.

*How this helps the QEP:* Not only have OER textbooks saved Ranger students approximately \$342,000 in the 2021 school year, the books are available on day one of class, embedded in all Canvas courses. This reduces many barriers presented by traditional texts.

**Blackboard to Canvas:** The college academic leaders determined that Canvas was a more modern and student-friendly learning management system (LMS) than Blackboard.

*How this helps the QEP:* The Canvas interface is more recognizable to students, is easier to navigate, and facilitates more efficient communication among users.

**ITV to Zoom:** All old Tandberg ITV units have been replaced with Zoom rooms.

*How this helps the QEP:* Because of the flexibility of the Zoom system, advisors can now meet with students remotely. Ranger uses Zoom for more than delivering course content.

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## Action 1: Implementing Guided Pathways

So far in Ranger College's journey to become a Guided Pathways institution, training has been limited to advisors and a handful of administrators. The 6+6 model opens up that training to everyone, including front-line office staff and faculty members. All campus employees have a part to play if the initiative is to succeed.

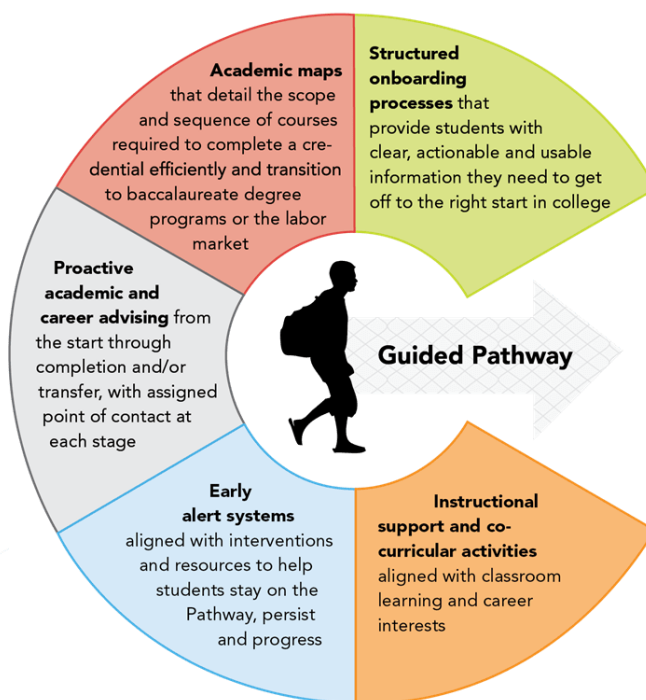


Image credit: [Completion by Design](#)

### 1a. Provide training to all college personnel in Guided Pathways

The Vice President of Instruction (VPI) will lead a newly redesigned program during professional development every August. Attendance at these workshops will be required of all employees, regardless of their job description. Only when the entire institution shares responsibility will the program be able to work at its maximum efficiency. K-12 counselors from the college's dual-credit partner schools will also be invited to attend.

### **1b. Update advising materials, degree plans, college catalog, website, etc. to align with Guided Pathways**

Currently these materials stand alone, with little or no cross-referencing among them. There is no consistency that links these publications through a common theme of Guided Pathways. The VPI will oversee a complete review and report results in several areas:

1. Branding will be consistent so that all documents share a common look.
2. A new emphasis will be placed on establishing an academic pathway, so that students continue the “endorsement” they selected in high school; those endorsements will be reflected in the revised publications.
3. A new feature on the website, made possible by a new student information system, will allow students to follow an interactive pathway so they can see every step of the process and understand the requirements of each phase of the journey.

### **Action 2: Implementing Cross-training**

As discussed in [Part III](#), Central Arizona College demonstrated positive outcomes when they elected to cross-train the staff of all outward-facing offices. Ranger College will replicate those results. During the course of writing this QEP document, the committee members agreed that cross-training is “something that should have happened a long time ago.” **6+6 = Pathway to Success** provides that opportunity.

#### **2a. Dedicate existing professional development days to train advisors and admissions staff in financial aid and Pathways.**

The Lead Advisor has been tasked with overseeing Action 2. The college already sets aside time throughout the academic year to refresh advisors on the degree plan and on any updates from state authorities. Those meeting times will now be utilized to mix skills, or to use a

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term from the literature, to “de-job.” All personnel who interact with students should be equipped to answer basic student questions about all aspects of enrollment and registration. This will greatly improve the efficiency of the process and increase student satisfaction. Existing training days will now be attended not only by advisors but also by staff in financial aid and admissions.

**2b. Utilize campus physical and virtual spaces in ways that best address student advising needs.**

Advising will become decentralized and existing spaces will be rearranged to improve efficiency and student satisfaction. Advising currently takes place within an advisor’s office.

**6+6 = Pathway to Success** envisions a campus on which advising can happen anywhere.

Additionally, the lobby of the Welcome Center will be redesigned to bring a campus representative front and center, engaging students the moment they enter the building.



### **Action 3: Implementing Active Advising and Wraparound Services**

A student's basic needs must be met before they can be expected to succeed academically. Researching this QEP has brought this issue to light at Ranger College and will serve as the catalyst for transformational change.

#### **3a and 3b. Identify needed wraparound services for different campuses and student populations, and identify possible donors, service-providers, locations, and partnerships.**

During the QEP process, the college realized the importance of deciding how best to identify services and then how to match those services with students. A focus group of students from all campuses was convened in March 2022, with many of the questions presented to those students designed to guide the future delivery of holistic support services. The full results of that study is located in the [Appendix](#).

Based on the success of that initial focus group, the college will conduct further research into (1) the needs of students based on campus location and demographics, and (2) the services available to those students. The office of the Vice President of Administration (VPA) will spend the fall 2022 semester gathering and formalizing the information, delivering a report to the campus community in December 2022. All staff and advisors will then have access to contacts they can connect with students in need of particular services. Examples include workforce providers, faith-based assistance, childcare, Meals on Wheels, counseling, welfare, Habitat for Humanity, healthcare, and Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).

#### **3c. Train personnel on active advising principles and resources.**

A revised training model addresses two primary changes:

1. Change the current advising philosophy (the "why" we advise).
  2. Change the current advising structure (the "how" we advise).
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The "why" reflects the reason for advising. Currently, advisors are trained to keep students on a degree plan. That plan is the only roadmap, the only guiding directive. This has generated positive results, as Ranger ranks third out of 50 Texas community colleges in time to an associate's degree (THECB, 2021). However, this approach is very limited in scope and not able to meet any other student needs. Right now the college's "why" is to keep students on the proper degree plan, which is important but not all-encompassing. Advisors would receive training on the wraparound services described in Actions 3a and 3b.

The "how" represents the actual physical arrangement of the process, which currently consists of faculty advisors being assigned groups of students who must schedule an advising time slot or arrive at a predetermined location during summer orientation. The student almost always must initiate the session. Like the "why," this "how" does not meet many student needs.

The existing Advising Handbook will be revised to reflect this change in philosophy.

### **3d. Establish a basic needs pantry.**

The VPA has researched a QR code system that will enable the college to best meet the basic needs of students and help them overcome off-campus barriers to success. QR codes may be generated for free by the college and linked to a secure online form that allows students to self-report at their convenience. El Zein et al (2018) demonstrated that college students can be hesitant to seek out assistance because they are embarrassed by their situation; they would appreciate the help but don't want to ask. Three identified barriers expressed by college students include (1) social stigma, (2) insufficient information on pantry use policies, and (3) inconvenient pantry hours. Under **6+6 = Pathway to Success**, a student who sees a notice posted in a campus restroom can easily scan a QR code and complete the form without having to walk into a pantry and ask for help. Assuming they qualify for services, several options are then

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opened up to them. This will also enable the college to connect that student with other services of which they might not be aware, such as community- or state-funded childcare, grants, or utilities assistance. As per the implementation timeline, this program would launch in spring 2023, likely on one campus as a pilot program. The campus would be the Stephenville Center, where the VPA initially conducted a survey requesting student feedback on this type of program. Stephenville is also a traditional commuter campus, and unlike the main campus in Ranger, is much more likely to have students in need of these services. Though the program would have an initial start-up cost to stock the pantry itself and to create a fund for possible stipends, the intention would be to partner with county food banks and other social services to defray or entirely eliminate the expenses.

#### **Action 4: Implementing an Early Alert System**

The interviews conducted during the early stages of this QEP revealed the failure of past attempts at any early alert system.

**4a and 4b. Finalize transition from Blackboard to Canvas and enable Attendance as a default feature for all instructors, and formalize early alert guidelines.**

Ranger College is currently transitioning from an outdated version of the Blackboard Learning Management System to a new LMS, Canvas. That change will be complete in fall 2022, just as the QEP is rolling out many of its initiatives to remove barriers and improve student retention and success. Under the direction of a newly hired LMS specialist, Canvas will have several “defaults” enabled so that students are presented with an uniform and consistent experience from one instructor’s class to the next. Not only will a common theme and navigation be fixed across all courses (this is not currently the case in Blackboard), but an attendance feature will be available to all instructors, who will be required to use it as part of an

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early alert system to catch at-risk students before they fail. Implementing this feature will simply be part of the launch in fall 2022 and require no additional funds. The Faculty and Student Handbooks will be amended to reflect this new policy.

**4c. Train personnel.**

At professional development sessions in August 2022 (and every August thereafter for new personnel), 100% of instructors will be trained in the new LMS and made aware of the requirement to use the attendance feature. Each semester, the Vice President of Instruction will ask the deans to keep all faculty members current on the guidelines regarding the regular submission of attendance reports, which will be viewable by advisors and coaches in order to track student attendance. This will be the first time that Ranger College will have an attendance tracker built into its LMS, and the college leadership is optimistic about the improved success rates this change will bring.

**4d. Communicate with students through a new syllabi-management system.**

As is the case with the early alert system, the college's current LMS contains no means of managing syllabi. Every instructor is responsible for the look, the content, and the uploading of their own course materials. The QEP will change that. Built into the Canvas LMS will be a syllabus-management tool, such as Concourse or Simple Syllabus. This permits admin-level control over every syllabus, ensuring uniformity and compliance with requirements of state and regional accrediting bodies. Further, this provides a seamless experience for students and puts extra emphasis on the early alert system. Communication is the key to retaining students and helping them succeed. The initial start-up costs of one of these tools is well within the QEP's budget, and the system will be activated when Canvas is fully debuted in fall 2022.

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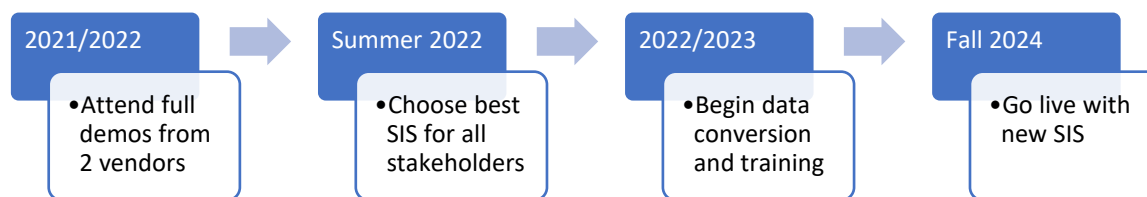
### Action 5: Implementing a Student Information System

This is the most expensive and time-consuming of the QEP actions, but it is also the most critical to the college's ongoing success. As has been documented throughout this study, Ranger College does not currently enjoy any kind of modern SIS. All offices and departments exist separate from one another. Though the obstacles this generates are numerous, here is simply one:

*Students cannot pay their bill online.* They must call the Bursar's office and read a credit card number over the phone, or they must mail a paper check.

It goes far beyond that. Advisors cannot access a student's financial aid records. Thousands of paper letters are put into envelopes and mailed by the Bursar, who is an office of one and has no means of communicating with students through text messaging or any kind of app. In many ways, Ranger College is operating in a bygone age. A modern SIS solves all of these issues and more.

As part of the journey to **6+6 = Pathway to Success**, Ranger attended multi-day demonstrations from the two leading vendors of cloud-based SIS software, Jenzabar and Ellucian. The final decision will be made in late summer 2022 and involve several stages of transition as data is converted and the rollout is prepared.



### Success Through Teamwork

All of these actions can be implemented during the same general time frame, as many are directly synchronized. They are all reasonable, achievable, and directly related to the removal of barriers and overall success of Ranger College students. Though several team members are involved along the way, each action is assigned one point person, so that all tasks can be accomplished while no one person is responsible for too much.

For purposes of assessment, each of these leaders will be tasked with reporting progress on an end-of-semester basis, using a shared, cloud-based system than can be reviewed by all team members, as detailed in [Part VII](#).

<b>Table 16: Action Leaders</b>	
<b>Action</b>	<b>Action Leader</b>
Action 1: Pathways	VP of Instruction
Action 2: Cross-training	Lead Advisor
Action 3: Wraparound Services	VP of Administration
Action 4: Early Alert System	LMS Specialist
Action 5: SIS	VP of Information Technology

## **Part VI: Budget and Resources**

Ranger College will dedicate over \$650,00 to **6+6 = Pathway to Success**. The college is committed to the QEP and has strong support from the Board of Regents to ensure its success through adequate funding and training. Ranger College possesses adequate resources to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services. **6+6 = Pathway to Success** requires a lengthy implementation. Ranger College is fortunate enough to possess the human and financial resources to see the QEP through to its conclusion.

### **Human Capital**

As detailed on Table 16 in the previous section, every team involved in the process will be led by a different member of the college leadership. The actions assigned to each team fall within the parameters of that leader's existing responsibilities. Each of those leaders is already familiar with the Weave reporting system, as all have contributed to assessment narratives as part of the reaccreditation process. The QEP actions they will oversee fall within the areas of their expertise. Their enthusiasm for transformational change and their dedication to students will help ensure the initiative's ultimate success.

### **Financial Capital**

The college's financial position remains strong, with adequate liquid assets and a reasonable level of unrestricted net assets. The process to create a QEP budget began as early as 2020. As potential actions were considered, the committee viewed each through a "budget filter," considering the financial impact the action would have on the college's ability to support that particular endeavor. It was critical to the success of the planning process that the college's chief financial officer (CFO) was a member of the QEP committee. This ensured that every

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committee meeting had real-time access to financial information and insight into the college's overall projects, spending patterns, and budgetary goals.

In the planning and development of the QEP, the team identified the personnel, equipment, and financial resources necessary for the successful implementation of **6+6 = Pathway to Success**. Most of the required expense for the QEP will be for the technological infrastructure and deployment.

<b>Table 17 : QEP Master Budget</b>				
<b>No appreciable budget impact</b>	Actions 1b, 2a, 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b			
	Fall 2022 – Fall 2023	Spring 2024 – Spring 2025	Fall 2025 – Fall 2026	Spring 2027 – Fall 2028
<b>Outreach and Marketing</b>	\$3000	\$1000	\$1000	
<b>Basic Needs Pantry</b>	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
<b>SIS implementation</b>	\$200,000	\$300,000	\$100,000	
<b>Technology Maintenance and Training</b>	\$14,800			
<b>Total</b>	\$277,800	\$311,000	\$111,000	\$10,000
<b>Total QEP Budget (approved 11/16/2021): \$659,800</b>				

The QEP has dedicated sufficient human and financial resources to complete all stated actions, which will in turn help the institution meet its objectives in the areas of student engagement, satisfaction, retention, and completion.

### **Hispanic Serving Institution**

During the process of developing the QEP, in spring 2022, Ranger College received the official designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). This has unlocked access to new grant opportunities. Though this potential funding source is not part of the QEP budget, the changes it helps to create—such as the establishment of an English as a Second Language (ESL)

program—will directly assist in the removal of additional barriers to student success. The QEP leadership team looks forward to working cooperatively with the HSI group to create the ultimate outreach, onboarding, and advising network for Ranger College students.

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## Part VII: Assessment

Ranger College uses Weave software for all of its SACSCOC accreditation materials and will continue to use Weave to assess the outcomes built into **6+6 = Pathway to Success**. Weave allows diverse users from across campus to aggregate data and visualize the assessment process.

The image below is a sample of the Weave interface. All team leaders—one for each action—will be responsible for logging progress and assessment, which will then be compared to established targets. Weave can generate and distribute real-time reports among team members.

The screenshot displays the Weave software interface for the Vice President of Administration. The interface is organized into a hierarchical structure with expandable sections:

- 1 Unit/Dept** Vice President of Administration (expandable)
- DESCRIPTION**: The VPA is the point of contact for Action 3 of the QEP.
- Outcomes** (+)
- 1.1 Outcome** Train personnel on active advising principles and resource. (expandable)
  - DESCRIPTION**: Training for advisors currently consists of going over the degree plan and academic schedule—nothing more. The QEP will reimagine the training for advisors to incorporate the principles of active advising
  - Supported Initiatives (0)** (+)
  - Action Plan** (+)
  - Measures** (+)
  - 1.1.1 Measure** Conduct revised training on new services (expandable)
    - DESCRIPTION**: Holistic or high-touch advising has been demonstrated to improve retention and performance. A completely revised Advising Handbook, paired with a different training model, will help introduce this action.
    - Targets (1)** (+)
      - 1.1.1.1** (expandable)
        - DESCRIPTION**: 100% of personnel will be trained
        - STATUS**: Not Reported this Pe... (dropdown menu)

Team leaders are able to enter any level of required details in Weave, from the big-picture view of how an action links to the strategic plan, down to the granular level of what days and times particular trainings or events will occur. As part of the QEP assessment cycle, Weave will be updated as needed to gauge the program’s success at all levels. Results can be produced as tables, text, or graphs, depending on the needs of a particular stakeholder group. Weave is a key element in the success of Ranger College’s assessment and accreditation plan.

### **Assessment of Target Courses**

Any QEP should demonstrate how its actions will contribute directly to improved performance in the classroom. The actions should lead to measurable results. **6+6 = Pathway to Success** focuses on two courses that will serve as models for successful implementation of the program.

**Speech (SPCH) 1315: Public Speaking** was selected for two reasons:

1. The course is a core requirement of all degree plans.
2. Students do not need to be “TSI complete” in order to take the course; in other words, there is no required score on the Texas Success Initiative assessment that must be met before registering for this course. Students of all skill levels may take the course.

**Math (MATH) 1314: College Algebra** was also chosen for two reasons:

1. The course is required at many four-year institutions to which Ranger College students transfer to complete their degree.
2. Algebra is considered a “gateway” course that historically has a lower success rate.

<b>Table 18: Target Course Data as a Success Metric</b>					
	<b>Fall 2019 Course Enrollment</b>	<b>Student Completion Rate</b>	<b>6+6 Completion Target</b>	<b>Student Success Rate</b>	<b>6+6 Success Target</b>
SPCH 1315	267	87%	97%	73%	84%

MATH 1314	361	86%	96%	61%	71%
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Table 18 uses data from the fall 2019 cohort as representative of a typical, non-pandemic experience. Total enrollment is across all delivery methods: online, face-to-face, dual-credit, et cetera. "Success" is considered a grade of "C" or higher. Through the course of implementation, assessment data will be gathered from these two benchmark courses.

### Assessment of Retention

According to [strategic plan](#) goal 2.1, the college must strive to "improve the college's retention rate by 4% per year from a baseline of fall 2017," at which time the retention rate was 38.1%. Yet since 2017, retention numbers have not improved. A successful QEP will lead to improvement every fall until the target is met.

Table 19: Retention as a Success Metric				
2017	2018	2019	2020	6+6 Retention Target
38.1%	38.4%	38.4%	35.9%	43.1%

### Assessment of Completion

Completion is defined as a student who has earned a certificate or degree. The QEP initiative seeks to close achievement gaps.

Table 20: Completion Within 3 Years as a Success Metric		
	Completion Rate	6+6 Completion Target (National community college average)
Hispanic	36%	31.6% (target met)
White	33%	36%
Black	20%	28.5%

### Assessment of CCSSE and SENSE Data

Improving overall student engagement is a critical component of **6+6 = Pathway to Success**. Ranger College will improve its CCSSE and SENSE results to at least the thresholds of the national cohort average.

<b>Table 21: CCSSE and SENSE as Success Metrics</b>	
<b>“Early Connection” at Ranger College</b>	<b>6+6 Target</b>
47.5%	59.2 % (national average)
<b>“Academic and Social Support Network” at Ranger College</b>	<b>6+6 Target</b>
47.4%	52.6% (national average)
<b>“Clear Academic Plan and Pathway” at Ranger College</b>	<b>6+6 Target</b>
52.8%	55.7% (national average)

### Assessment of Internal Survey Data

The survey distributed to the campus community was essential in providing a clear view of how all stakeholders view the processes crucial to student success. The QEP committee believes that at least two-thirds of respondents should answer favorably when the survey is redeployed.

<b>Table 22: Internal Survey as a Success Metric</b>	
<b>“Students receiving adequate orientation”</b>	<b>6+6 Target</b>
35%	66%
<b>Faculty “receiving adequate training in student engagement practices”</b>	<b>6+6 Target</b>
45%	66%
<b>“Effective procedures used to identify at-risk students”</b>	<b>6+6 Target</b>
44%	66%

### Assessment of the Actions

The targets detailed above should see positive improvements if the objectives of the five actions are successfully met.

<b>Table 23: Action Completion as a Success Metric</b>	
<b>Action</b>	<b>Target</b>
1a	100% personnel trained
1b	100% revised materials published in all relevant places

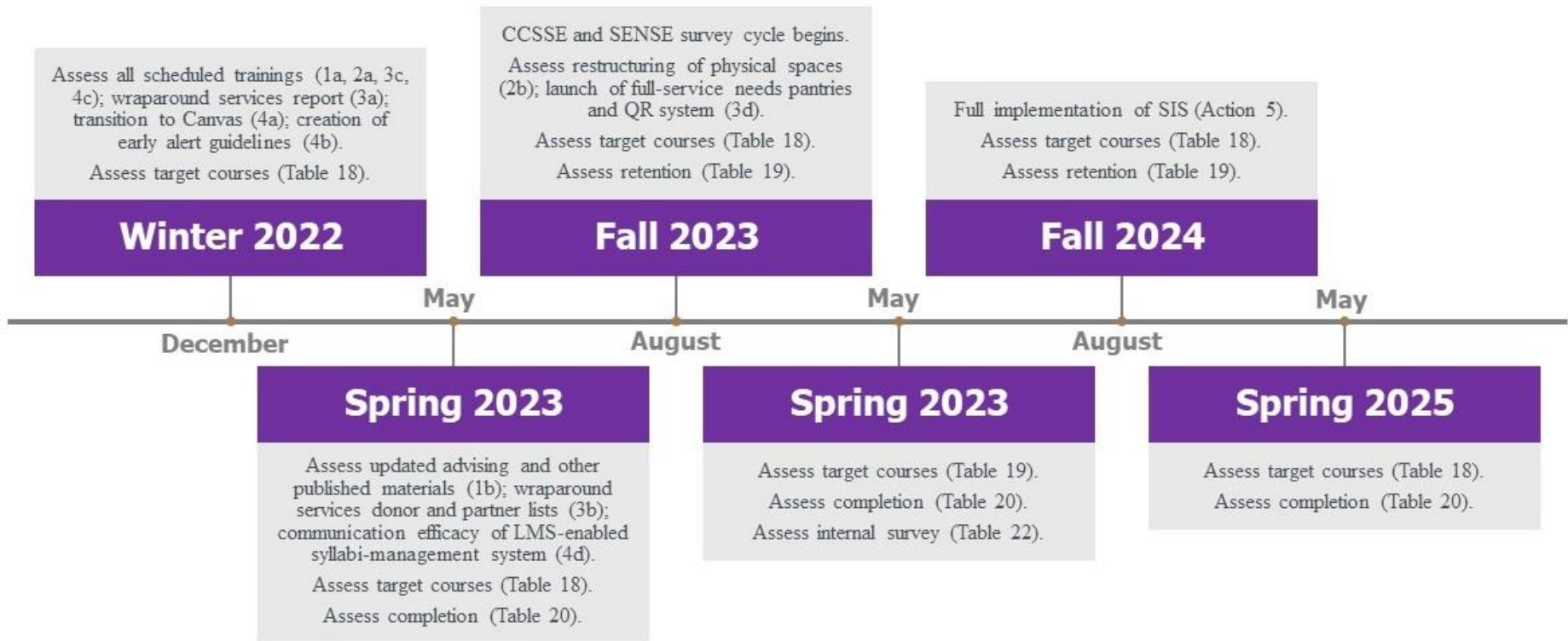
2a	100% personnel trained
2b	Advising decentralized; Welcome Center redesigned
3a	Survey developed and deployed
3b	Annotated list of at least 50 entities in college service area
3c	100% personnel trained
3d	Basic needs pantry staffed and operational
4a	Full conversion; all features enabled
4b	New guidelines published in student and faculty handbooks
4c	100% of advisors receive new training
4d	New management system is installed into LMS
5	New SIS is selected in summer 2022 with full integration by fall 2024.

### **Evaluating the Assessment Process**

A fundamental part of a continuous assessment cycle is “assessing the assessment process.” The college is prepared to adjust the way it assesses the QEP’s actions in the event that the process proves inefficient or a more optimal means of evaluation is discovered along the way. What is important is that the college strives to learn from the process and to create systems that are streamlined and constantly evolving to meet institutional needs.

The following page details a timeline for assessment through spring 2025.

**Assessment Timeline**



## Part VIII: Conclusion

Ranger College can successfully remove existing barriers in the student outreach, onboarding, and advising experience in order to improve metrics across the board. Precedents for similar transformational change exist at other community colleges (Smith, 2018):

- The Community College of Philadelphia revised its advising model in the same manner envisioned by **6+6 = Pathway to Success** and improved retention by 6% within one year.
- Cleveland State Community College used a similar system to improve graduation rates by 8% within one year.

Change is possible—even within one year. Without the implementation of this QEP, Ranger College would continue to exist, but departments will remain siloed, advising will remain static, and retention will remain low. The QEP is the vehicle for change.



By casting a comprehensive data net that combined quantitative and qualitative research, Ranger College was able to define the parameters of an exploration of best practices that was customized for the needs of our diverse student population. Based on that review, the college developed specific actions designed to pull down barriers. A constant cycle of assessment and adjustment ensures the ongoing progress of our Quality Enhancement Plan.

**SIX+SIX**  
**PATHWAY TO SUCCESS**

## Appendix

### Appendix A: Strategic Plan Assessments 2020-2021

#### 1 Focus on Enrollment Growth

- 1.1 Increase enrollment of regular college students by 3 percent per year.
- 1.2 Increase enrollment of dual credit students by 3 percent per year.
- 1.3 Increase enrollment of online only students by 3 percent per year.
- 1.4 Increase enrollment of international students by 2 percent per year.

#### 2 Focus on Student Success

- 2.1 Improve the college's retention rate (increase fall-to-fall retention by 4% per yr from baseline fall 2017), completion rate (meet or exceed statewide avg each yr for 3-,4-, and 6-yr graduation rates), attendance rate, (reduce absences by 5% over 3 yrs), and transfer rate (increase by 5% per yr from baseline 2017).
- 2.2 Increase use of instructional best practices to improve student learning outcomes.
- 2.3 Implement guided pathways by 2020.
- 2.4 Monitor effectiveness of co-requisite developmental education program and make adjustments and improvements as necessary.
- 2.5 Review advising and tutoring systems and recommend improvements.
- 2.6 Improve customer service across all divisions.
- 2.7 Improve licensure pass rates for all relevant programs by meeting or exceeding aggregate statewide rates each year.
- 2.8 Lower the FTE faculty/student ratio.
- 2.9 Align institutional efforts to support 60x30TX goals.

#### 3 Focus on Human Capital

- 3.1 Develop and deploy an effective onboarding system for new employees.
  - 3.2 Implement a new employee evaluation process.
  - 3.3 Increase options and opportunities for professional training and development.
  - 3.4 Increase morale by developing and implementing new methods of showing employee appreciation.
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#### 4 Improved Institutional Effectiveness

4.1 Redesign the College's institutional effectiveness system and train all employees in its use.

4.2 Embed SACSCOC, THECB, DOE, and other necessary quality measures throughout the College's operations.

#### 5 Effective Management of Facilities

5.1 Meet all specifications of the energy efficiency plan.

5.2 Evaluate and improve facilities on a systematic basis.

#### 6 Expanded Workforce Programs

6.1 Establish three new workforce programs by 2020.

6.2 Expand current workforce programs as determined by community needs.

#### 7 New and Enhanced Revenue Streams

7.1 Increase enrollment of non-scholarship students by 5% per year.

7.2 Increase grant funding by 5% by 2021.

7.3 Establish at least one source of enterprise funding by 2020.

7.4 Improved Use of Technology

7.5 Optimize use of the College's learning management system through increased faculty training, streamlined user processes, and revised IT maintenance system.

7.6 Explore alternative modes of course delivery via technology.

#### 8 Strengthened Community Relationships

8.1 Assess community needs and provide appropriate educational opportunities.

8.2 Deepen relationships with dual credit partners by extending the culture of the College to the high schools.

8.3 Participate in community outreach activities

8.4 Foster and strengthen relationships with community leaders.

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## Appendix B: March 2022 Focus Group Report

### Summary of Project

Ranger College held focus group(s) in March of 2022 involving various student populations represented at the college. Through the focus group(s), the college gathered information to help administrators, faculty, and staff to hear the student voice in keeping on the pathway to accomplish their educational goals. The focus group(s) was /were conducted as part of the College's involvement in Texas Pathways. Participants provided information in two ways: written responses and group discussion.

The college team will utilize this information to design an action plan at the Texas Pathways Institute in April 2022.

The discussion was designed to gather information from the students regarding the objectives provided below.

### Participant Demographics

*Three focus groups (one from each campus) were held. Twenty-nine total students participated.*

*34% of students were attending for the 1st time/66% were returning.*

*97% of the students were full-time/3% were part-time.*

*62% of students started at RC/38% started elsewhere.*

*31% of students were taking 7-14 credit hours/69% were taking 15+ credit hours.*

*72% of students' highest-level credential was a HS diploma/3% technical certificate/24% Associates Degree.*

*76% of students identified as she/her/24% identified as he/him.*

*62% were 18-24 years old/24% were 25-34/14% were 35-50.*

*17% were Black/31% were Hispanic/LatinX/51% were white.*

*7% were international students/93% were not.*

*38% were first-generation students/62% had family or relatives that had attended college.*

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*28% took DC courses/24% took AP courses/10% took College Prep courses/17% took honors courses.*

*45% of students received financial aid/10% had applied, but not received/45% did not know if they qualified.*

*48% of students pay using their own income to pay for school/7% used income from family/21% used grants/21% used scholarships/28% used loans.*

*41% of students have children at home. None of them use our childcare because of a waiting list at Erath and the other locations do not have childcare. All of them have had to find childcare elsewhere and have struggled.*

*48% of students do not work on campus/31% work 1-10 hours on campus/3% work 11-20 hours on campus/14% work 21-30 hours on campus/ 3% work 30+ on campus.*

*45% of students do not work off campus/10% work 1-10 hours off campus/10% work 11-20 hours off-campus/14% work 21-30 hours off campus/21% work 30+ hours off campus.*

*57% of students do not care for dependents/10% provide care 1-10 hours/3% provide care 11-20 hours/3% provide care 21-30 hours/24% provide care 30+ hours.*

*24% do not spend time commuting/55% spend 1-10 hours commuting/21% spend 11-20 hours commuting.*

*45% of students spend no time participating In community organizations/55% spend 1-10 hours.*

## **Analysis of Student Perspectives**

### **Objectives for the Keeping Students on a Pathway**

1. To understand what motivates students to persist higher education
2. To understand how students perceive the college's effectiveness in meeting their needs
3. To understand what the college needs to improve to help students succeed

**Additional objectives included:** (Keep the two that were studied and remove the ones not explored)

4. To understand the importance of advising services in helping students meet their goals
  5. To understand the importance of basic needs support services in helping students meet their goals
  6. To understand the significance of relationships in student persistence and success
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## Student Responses

Provide an analysis of the discussion and include a quote or two in each of the sections below.

### To understand what motivates students to persist higher education

Every student that participated in the focus groups was planning to obtain a certificate within the workforce division or complete an associate degree. Many of them plan to continue their education at a four-year university.

### To understand how students perceive the college's effectiveness in meeting their needs

**Ranger Campus** students felt many of their needs are met by S3. They receive tutoring, career counseling and are provided resources to access if they have other needs. Those that did not qualify for S3 feel they are left to figure it out on their own but said their coaches are helpful in assisting them.

**Ranger Campus** students feel the facilities could use updating and that the activity center needs to be more usable. Additionally, they felt that the college needed to focus on helping students find additional funding for school. "The scholarship page is not helpful, and many links are broken." They feel the instructors are supportive and helpful.

**Brown County Center** students felt that instructors provide an extreme amount of guidance and support. One student stated "Our instructors want us to succeed even more than we want us to succeed. Their passion and dedication to our program is evident in everything that they do." "Ms. Alta, goes above and beyond to help us if it is something outside of our instructor's area."

**Brown County Center** students felt that space needed to be added to the center. Many of them have children at home and need a quiet space to study, the center has no space available for this environment. Additionally, many of these students are non-traditional and they struggle financially, they would like to see more resources available. The scholarship link on the website is a mess and does not help students at all. Additionally, they stated that the financial aid department is not extremely helpful and does not follow-up well.

**Erath County Center** students stated that instructors, advisors, directors locally communicate well and support them very well, but that from a college-wide level, specifically that financial aid does not communicate or follow-up. "There has not been one teacher that doesn't communicate well, I have an answer from them within 24 hours." Face to face classes are wonderful, online courses create barriers to connections with the instructors.

**Erath County Center** students would like to see communication improved from the home campus to the centers about registration, financial aid, advising, etc. Additionally, they

felt the facilities needed updating and more maintenance. Seating needs to be made more comfortable for a better learning experience. They also felt storage areas needed to be found to help make classroom space more usable. As with the Brown County Center, they feel a quiet study place would be very helpful.

### **To understand what the college needs to improve to help students succeed**

Provide an analysis of the discussion for the **two** topics selected (Note: Remove objectives not explored). Include a quote or two in each topic summary.

### **To understand the importance of advising services in helping students meet their goals**

**Ranger Campus** students felt like the advisor spent time with them and was interested in their future, but that they weren't always put in the classes they actually needed due to their athletic issues. One student said their "advisor was very helpful and made her feel at ease." There was no plan put in place for the students. The degree plan was not discussed with them, and they did not have a complete understanding of the courses they were being put in and why. Many lost 6-9 hours due to taking classes that they did not need. Many of the students had several dual credit hours. It was felt that counselors needed more training in advising to help students be more successful.

**Brown County Center** students felt the advisors were wonderful, really spent time with them to find out their needs and goals. All of these students were in the LVN program, once they were in the program, the director has been their sole advisor and it has been seamless and there is no stress. With this program there is a plan laid out from start to finish.

**Erath County Center** students that were in the workforce programs felt advising was tremendous. The directors of each program do a wonderful job of meeting with each student and making a plan for their duration at RC. The academic students had mixed experiences. The DC student said there was great communication/training amongst the college and the high school. One academic student had a wonderful experience "the advisors have held my hand through every step and made sure I have met my goals in a timely fashion." The other academic student had struggles and the plan was not laid out in a way that helped him be successful, but then he met with Gabe Lewis and felt he was phenomenal. Many of the students voiced the same experience with Gabe. Download/upload speeds need to be improved, with machining and welding blueprints, they often can't complete due to failures in upload.

### **To understand the importance of basic needs support services in helping students meet their goals**

**Ranger Campus** students felt RC does a lot to reach out to them and support them, but they felt that there was more we could do. For instance, arranging rides to stores to buy the necessities. "Many students do not have transportation and can not afford the gas at this time."

"Many students are embarrassed to admit that they can not afford food or clothes or that they are struggling with mental health Issues."

Students felt the best way to reach them and let them know about supports is discreetly through QR codes, apps, etc. Internet access is not sufficient. There needs to be more broadband or hotspot access.

**Brown County Center** students asked that there be a more discreet way to ask for help if they need it. Maybe create a website that they could fill out a form so that someone could come to them and get them help.

Additionally, provide all the information they need in one place. They also stated that using third party partners creates too many barriers and they end up just not applying or asking for help.

**Erath County Center** students felt that they do not always receive communication about resources available and would like to see it shared with them through text messages or campus cast. They feel they receive too much through their email and because of those important things get overlooked.

They also shared that when resources are through a 3rd party there are too many barriers. "The third-party resources want so much from us to qualify that we just don't follow through, we get tired and give up."

### **To understand the significance of relationships in student persistence and success**

**Ranger Campus** students "The relationships with students, coaches, and other employees are what keeps me here, without those relationships, I would not be successful." "Knowing someone is there and interested in my success makes me excited." All students felt that the relationships they have built while at RC has been essential to their success.

**Brown County Center** students felt the relationships they have built with the students in their class has been critical to their success. Additionally, they felt that the relationship they have with their instructors has been essential. "If Ms. Davis were not the instructor I would not be here, after my entrance interview, I called and cancelled my interviews at other colleges, because I knew this is where I needed to be." "They have a passion for making us great."

**Erath County Center** students felt that the instructors and directors have formed great supportive relationships. They feel like they are family and will support them in all situations. This was the consensus amongst DC, workforce, and academic students. Many of them had attended other schools and said RC was beyond the best for supporting and building relationships with the students. "You can tell the teachers care, some are harder than others, but they are preparing you for the future."

**Positive Features of the College**

Great people.  
Supportive atmosphere.

**Areas of Improvement for the College**

*More student-based activities for students to build relationships outside of athletics.*  
Improve tutoring services and career counseling.  
Find ways to share resource options discreetly.  
Financial aid issues /Improve scholarship resources and offerings.  
Find ways to open off-site centers at night for studying.

**Key Recommendations for the College**

- 1. Discuss Ranger Reach and the impact it can have on the basic needs Insecurity issues.*
  - 2. Find ways to build the external partnerships into the campus so that the students do not have to go elsewhere to find support.*
  - 3. Discuss facilities options-quiet spaces, activity spaces.*
  - 4. Determine ways to Improve tutoring and career counseling.*
-

### Appendix C: Internal Topic Survey

1. Which category best describes you? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Ranger College Administrator
- Ranger College Faculty (including Dual Credit)
- Ranger College Staff
- Dual Credit Partner Administrator
- Industry Partner or Community Member
- Student
- Trustee/Regent

2. How do you define student success?

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3. In your opinion, what is the greatest obstacle to student success as you have defined it?

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4. In your opinion, what is the greatest obstacle to student completion of a degree or certificate? \*

*Check all that apply.*

- Unprepared for college-level courses
- Financial limitations
- Lack of family support
- Lack of instructional support (tutoring etc.)
- Difficulty balancing other obligations (work, family, etc.)
- Inadequate student advising
- Difficulty registering for classes
- Online course challenges
- Lack of student engagement training for faculty
- Developmental courses
- Other - please specify in comments below.

Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

5. Comments:
- 
- 

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements.

You may provide comments on any of these statements in the section below. If you have no knowledge or opinion on the statement you may leave it blank.

6. It is easy for students to enroll at Ranger College.

*Mark only one oval.*

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1      2   3      4      5

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Strongly Disagree      Strongly Agree

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7. New students receive an adequate orientation.

*Mark only one oval.*

1 2 3 4 5

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Strongly Disagree      Strongly Agree

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8. Ranger College faculty (online & face-to-face) receive adequate training in student engagement and teaching practices.

*Mark only one oval.*

1 2 3 4 5

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Strongly Disagree      Strongly Agree

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9. Ranger College cares about student completion and success.

*Mark only one oval.*

1 2 3 4 5

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Strongly Disagree      Strongly Agree

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10. Ranger College has procedures in place to identify students who are struggling and provide extra support.

*Mark only one oval.*

1 2 3 4 5

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Strongly Disagree      Strongly Agree

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11. Students feel that they are an important part of the Ranger College community.

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

12. Students receive adequate advising that helps them reach their completion goals.

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

13. Ranger College staff members are friendly and helpful.

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

14. Ranger College makes students jump through too many hoops to enroll.

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

15. Adding a study skills component to the required Learning Frameworks course would

Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree
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boost student completion and/or success.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

16. Ranger College is adequately staffed in student support departments such as financial aid, the Registrar's office, and Bursar's office, and offsite centers.

Mark only one oval.

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
|   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 17. Online ebooks that are linked to Blackboard (or any other platform used for online grading and instruction) provide "user-friendly" resources that boost student success. |   |   |   |   |   |  |

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

18. Students are able to easily navigate the learning management system Blackboard.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

19. Students and others can easily find information on the Ranger College website.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	

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Strongly Disagree      Strongly Agree

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20. Comments:

21. Are there other areas you see that might improve student success and completion?

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Thank you for participating!

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