

Examining the Impact of a Quality Assurance Initiative on Student Success

Description: The session was presented by Cheryl Saelee, a Senior e-learning specialist at California State University, East Bay (CSUEB), who filled in for Dr. Roger, the director of the Empire online campus. Saelee shared details about CSUEB's quality assurance (QA) initiative and its positive impact on student success. She explained that East Bay has over 10,000 students, with more than 57% being first-generation college students. The university offers over 70 online and hybrid programs and certificates. In Fall 2023, 47% of instruction was delivered online or hybrid, and 37% was completely online. By December 2024, 38.1% of CSU certified quality online/hybrid courses were produced by Cal State East Bay.

The QA initiative at East Bay started in 2015 which helped establish the online campus department and supported faculty through course quality transformation grants, encouraging participation in the Quality Matters process. One of the first steps was creating an [online and hybrid instructional policy](#). The university also developed a master course template and syllabus checklist that aligns with QA standards.

CSUEB was the first CSU campus to become a QM subscriber managed review institution. They have a team of certified QM personnel, including 28 peer reviewers, 4 master reviewers, 5 Quality Matters Coordinators (QMCs), 3 course review managers, and 7 certified facilitators. Since 2015, over 600 QM professional development training sessions have been completed, and more than 200 courses have been certified through the initiative.

Saelee highlighted research conducted at CSUEB to assess the impact of the QA initiative on student learning. Dr. Erick Kong's research in 2017 compared student outcomes in QM certified versus non-certified courses. He found no significant difference in non-passing grades for first-generation students. However, underrepresented minority (URM) students had a much lower percentage of non-passing grades in QM certified courses (24%) compared to non-certified courses (34%). Similarly, Pell eligible students (34% vs. 42%) and remedial students (12% vs. 20%) also had lower percentages of non-passing grades in QM certified courses.

Further research from 2014 to 2017 showed that faculty participation in QA activities, regardless of formal QM certification, positively impacted student learning by reducing the percentage of repeatable grades. Specifically, the percentage of DFW (D, F, and Withdraw) grades was lower in courses taught by faculty who participated in QA activities.

Dr. Kevin Kaatz's qualitative research in 2019 on faculty QA training revealed that a high percentage of faculty found the training helpful, with course organization being the most popular benefit mentioned. Faculty also noted improvements in alignment, accessibility, student engagement, and the usefulness of rubrics and e-learning specialist support. Although student feedback on QM aspects was not systematically collected, students often praised course organization and instructor communication, which faculty attributed to the QA process.

To better visualize the impact of QA training, CSUEB developed a dashboard that shows the percentage of non-passing grades for courses taught by Quality Matters-trained faculty compared to the university overall and across various colleges and student demographics (low income,

first-generation, URM). This dashboard uses data from PeopleSoft and the department's records of instructor training and is accessible via a QR code and a direct link to their campus.

Heather Crofutt's Summary & Reflection: Reflecting on the session, it is clear that Cal State East Bay is committed to online and hybrid education through its QA initiative. The data presented show that this effort has had a positive impact on student success, particularly for underrepresented minority, Pell-eligible, and remedial students in QM certified courses, as well as a general reduction in non-passing grades in courses taught by faculty who have engaged in QA activities. As an open-enrollment institution, this would be a key population of our students as well. The development of a data dashboard to monitor these impacts demonstrate a data-driven approach to continuous improvement. The number of faculty who found QA training helpful and reported improvements in course organization and student engagement demonstrates the value of this effort. In today's climate, the ever-important challenge of funding such efforts for long term sustainability of quality assurance for online learning is a concern. But it could be worth establishing a practice for some core online courses to build a standard.