



**Quality Enhancement Plan  
2016-2021  
Averett University**

**Resiliency through Growth Mindset**

# **Averett University Quality Enhancement Plan**

## **Resiliency through Growth Mindset (2016-2021)**

### Table of Contents

I.	Executive Summary	2
II.	Process Used to Develop the QEP	2
III.	Identification of the Topic	4
IV.	Desired Student Learning Outcomes	9
V.	Literature Review and Best Practices	9
VI.	Actions to be Implemented	11
VII.	Timeline	13
VIII.	Organizational Structure	18
IX.	Resources	18
X.	Assessment	19
XI.	Bibliography	22
XII.	Appendices	23

## **I. Executive Summary**

Averett University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is entitled "Resiliency through Growth Mindset." Research suggests the assumptions students make about the malleability of their own intelligence impact their resilience and thus their academic achievement.

Students who believe that intellectual ability or intelligence is finite and cannot be developed are more likely to view academic difficulty as a sign that they are dumb or lack a natural aptitude for the subject. They are less likely to conclude that learning and academic success are possible if they work harder and/or adopt new learning strategies (Blackwell, Trzesniewski & Dweck, 2007; Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

In contrast, students who adopt a growth mindset – who see intelligence as something that can grow and develop – are more likely to seek out academic challenges and to meet these challenges with resiliency. They are more likely than their fixed-mindset counterparts to increase their efforts and improve their learning strategies.

Fortunately, students can change their mindsets and develop greater resiliency in the face of academic challenge. A growing body of research indicates that with relatively simple interventions it is possible to help students understand that they can increase their intelligence with effort and learning strategies. Once this shift from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset occurs, students demonstrate improved academic performance and persistence.

The Averett University QEP is intended to provide interventions that will be successful in changing mindsets and promoting student success and persistence. Faculty and staff training, faculty development and implementation in the classroom of growth mindset strategies and online modules for students are components of the project. By developing growth mindset, Averett students will benefit from academic challenge, become more successful students, and be better prepared to serve and lead as catalysts for positive change.

## **II. Process Used to Develop the QEP**

The origin of the Averett QEP is in the University's strategic planning process. Both the 2010-2014 Strategic Plan and the Averett 2020 plan were developed through focus groups, surveys, and planning sessions. In 2008, the new president of Averett University invited small groups to the president's house on the edge of campus for conversation and consideration of what the plan should focus on. These sessions took place on the "sun porch" of the house and have become known as the "Sun Porch Sessions." When planning began for the Averett 2020 plan, "Sun Porch 2.0" was used to refocus for the new plan. Bringing together staff, faculty, students, trustees and others allows them to bring their varied knowledge of institutional data, professional experience, research, and the results of their unit assessments in identifying the directions of the plan.

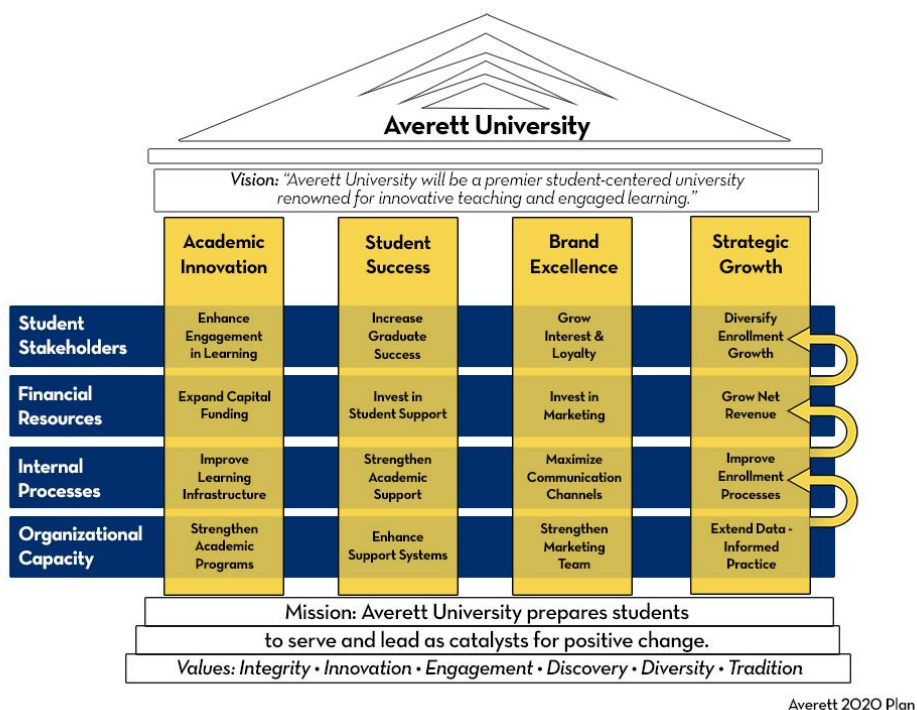
The 2009-2014 Strategic Plan was based upon lists collected from the Sun Porch Sessions and grouped around themes with goals and objectives that evolved through the life time of the plan. That plan was organized around academics, building and properties, community and

## Averett University Quality Enhancement Plan

enrollment, people and processes, student life, and technology. One of the outcomes of the Plan was revision of the University mission to be:

Averett University prepares students to serve and lead as catalysts for positive change. Averett fulfills this mission by educating students from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and nations through liberal arts-based undergraduate and graduate programs in a personal, collegial, interdisciplinary environment.

The Averett 2020 plan was under development as the 2009-2014 Strategic Plan was coming to an end. The "sun porch" methodology proved successful in identifying initiatives for the earlier plan and was used again in developing the new plan. Ballots and handouts were used for the focus groups who met at the president's house, on the sun porch. The results were transcribed and entered into a spreadsheet. The data were analyzed and tabulated by themes. The themes were ranked and results reported (Sun Theme development for Averett 2020, p.1-3, Appendix A). The most highly rated theme by all populations was "Student Success." A new University vision statement was adopted and a strategy map was created to communicate the organization of the new plan:



Projects were established under the themes with project owners forming the "Theme Teams." The themes are the focus for Strategic Planning discussions and actions which are tracked using an online scorecard system for documenting and communicating progress on the plan. Early QEP discussions derived from the experience of projects such as Enhance Academic Advising, First-year Student Success, Promote and Support Timely Program Completion, Engaged Teaching and Learning, Experiential Learning Opportunities, Instructional Technology, and Faculty Training and Mentoring.

To set the stage for the QEP project, the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness made two presentations: Searching for the Perfect QEP for Averett University, August 14, 2015

for faculty, with handout; and, The QEP (Quality Enhancement Plan) for staff, September 17, 2015, using the same handout. These were in conjunction with work on campus on the reaffirmation report and to inform faculty and staff about the QEP process.

A QEP Selection Committee was established to oversee the process so that all appropriate campus constituencies would be involved and that the topic would be creative, significant, relevant, focused, and manageable. The committee consisted of the Associate Dean of Students/Director of Residence Life, three faculty members (Theatre, Education – traditional/GPS, Biology), the Coordinator of Communications/Public Relations for the President's Office, the Associate Director of Institutional Research, and chaired by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Success (VPAA&SS).

The QEP Selection Committee considered existing information and conducted recursive surveys to identify and narrow the potential topics for the QEP to a final two topics. Those topics were presented to the faculty and staff and balloting conducted to gather preferences and comments. One of the topics was selected ("Resiliency and Student Success") and recommended to the President's Council which approved it. The Board of Trustees Committee on Academic Affairs and Student Success subsequently recommended it to the Board of Trustees with approval as an action item. The Board approved the topic at their April 22, 2016 meeting. A new committee of faculty and staff with relevant expertise and interests was convened to develop the QEP plan and initiate implementation. The topic was further refined in focus to "Resiliency through Growth Mindset."

### **III. Identification of the Topic**

The first meeting of the committee was on September 11, 2015 and it was determined that surveys would be sent to various constituencies of the campus community to collect suggestions for the QEP topic. Three initial surveys were administered by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness initially to gather ideas from full-time faculty, part-time faculty and staff. The surveys were anonymous and the questions open ended. Observations and suggestions were varied and numerous as 39 of 72 full-time faculty, 55 of 160 staff, and 30 of 138 part-time faculty responded.

The QEP Selection Committee (Minutes, October 6, 2015 in Appendix B) reviewed results from the survey and constructed a list of nine possibilities for the topic:

- Academic Skills
- Advising
- Cultural Awareness/Globalization/Diversity
- Communication – oral and written
- Critical Thinking
- Ethics/Social Responsibility
- Experiential Learning
- First Year Experience
- Technology

Some of the topics aligned with the Strategic Plan 2020 and some reflected Averett's general education objectives. All reflected needs of students and were consistent with analyses being conducted for strategic projects. Next steps were to gather information from students, faculty and staff to narrow the topics to the top two or three.

Students were surveyed, separating the traditional and non-traditional populations so that the surveys could be anonymous but provide context. The results of the Student rankings are in the chart QEP Student Results Nov. 4, 2015 in Appendix C. The top three traditional choices were Academic Skills, Advising, and First-Year Experience. For nontraditional students the top choices were Academic Skills, Communication, and Critical Thinking. Full-time faculty were asked to rank order their top three choices:

The QEP Selection Committee has narrowed the list of suggested topics to nine. Please rank order your top three choices and provide a short narrative on why you have chosen them. The survey is not anonymous. For information, the following were the rankings from the survey of students (response rate of approximately 10%): The Top 3 Traditional Choices are Academic Skills, Advising, and First-Year Experience. The Top 3 Non-Traditional Choices are Academic Skills, Communication, and Critical Thinking.

The results of this survey include a table of the responses (in Appendix D) and a table with weighted responses provided to the Committee:

	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	The weighted combination below is just one way of providing a calculated rank order: Weighted Combination ((First choice * 3 + Second choice * 2 + Third Choice * 1) / (total votes))
Academic Skills	9	13	8	0.45
Critical Thinking	11	3	7	0.34
Communication (Oral and Written)	6	9	4	0.29
First-Year Experience	8	3	4	0.25
Social Responsibility and Ethics	2	6	4	0.16
Advising	4	3	2	0.15
Cultural Awareness / Global Awareness / Diversity	2	3	7	0.14
Experiential Learning	3	2	5	0.13
Technology	1	3	4	0.10

Discussion (Minutes of the December 3, 2015 meeting, Appendix B) included the following points (among others):

- Some of the topics overlap or could be combined with or subsumed under other topics. For example, academic skills or advising might be included in a First-Year-Experience QEP but there are numerous warnings about taking on too much. It may be better to do a more limited topic well than to try to do too much.
- It was decided to eliminate technology, cultural/global awareness since they were not highly ranked.
- Advising is underway in the Strategic Plan and Experiential Learning under the CCECC (Center for Community Engagement and Career Competitiveness) so they may not be best for the QEP.
- Combining Academic Skills, Critical Thinking, Experiential Learning and Responsibility into a topic like "Becoming an Engaged Student" was suggested.

## Averett University Quality Enhancement Plan

- The lack of "resiliency" was raised as an issue that Student Affairs is looking at and the possibility of a topic of "Being Resilient" could be developed around emotional, social and intellectual resilience.
- While we have collected substantial information internally about topics, we should expand the information about the top candidates to include some external research to ensure that our QEP is based on good practices in Higher Ed.

Student Affairs staff were participating in readings, meetings, and planning around student resiliency and student engagement was a topic that had generated much interest with the establishment of the Center for Community Engagement and Career Competitiveness (CCECC) and the Strategic Plan 2020 Engaged Teaching and Learning project. Information on these topics was already being shared on campus. Several copies of Saundra McGuire's *Teach Students How to Learn* (2015) had been shared with faculty and staff and had prompted some interest in new ways of addressing students' academic skills development. While the topics apply more readily to the incoming younger traditional student, some of the adult students in the non-traditional programs might also benefit from what could be developed around the emergent themes in a way that a "first year experience" would not.

Background information provided included external studies and surveys. Studies such as the HERI (Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA) based on the CIRP (Cooperative Institutional Research Program) indicate that many incoming students are likely to be academically overconfident and accustomed to achieving good grades without spending significant time outside of classes or being sufficiently academically challenged to be well prepared for college. The NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) and FSSE (Faculty Survey of Student Engagement) collect information about first-year students' and seniors' experiences and Faculty perceptions and observations. The 2015 Averett University data indicated that our first-year students report significantly lower numbers of experiences from the categories of higher-order learning, reflective and integrative learning and student-faculty interaction than other similar institutions. Averett's seniors showed a smaller negative rate in experiences of reflective and integrative learning, collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction and rate the support environment more negatively. While studies such as these are self-reported and voluntary participation, they are an opportunity to consider what observable characteristics are being measured and compared in looking at academic engagement. The confluence of faculty, staff and student concerns with measurable (though indirect) data points was an opportunity to focus attention on academic engagement and support for student academic success.

Two proposals (written proposals, E ) were developed and presented at a combined faculty and staff session on February 10, 2016. The following are brief excerpts from the proposals:

### **Topic 1: Engaging in Learning**

**Summary:** The QEP will increase student engagement in high impact educational practices and incorporate academic experiences in courses to deepen learning and improve student success.

The surveys to identify topics for our QEP included observations by faculty that reflect concerns about student responsibility for and ability to "engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development." Students themselves, traditional and GPS, indicated academic skills as an area

of need. Critical thinking, communication, and social responsibility were also identified fairly frequently by faculty, staff and students as areas that would most help to improve student learning and success.

Determination of the scope and extent of the project will help determine specific strategies and activities. In particular, identifying with faculty where opportunities exist for introducing students to the nature and experience of high impact practices and activities for engaged learning would be necessary in designing the program. Most majors have capstone courses and integrating experiences where reflection by seniors might help to identify how lower level students might be better supported in engaging learning practices.

## **Topic 2: Academic Resiliency and Student Success**

**Summary:** The QEP will increase student success through academic experiences and programmatic activities designed to increase student resilience and develop greater student responsibility which will lead to improved student success in learning.

The role of failure in learning and problem solving is important and often not understood by today's students so finding ways to legitimize mistakes and struggle is an important feature.

The surveys to identify topics for our QEP included observations by faculty that reflect concerns about student responsibility for and ability to "engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development." Students themselves, traditional and GPS, indicated academic skills as an area of need. Critical thinking, communication, and social responsibility were also identified fairly frequently by faculty, staff and students as areas that would most help to improve student learning and success.

Resiliency builds one's confidence in one's ability to solve one's own problems and manage one's life. In the classroom, this would be reflected in successfully handling one's academic responsibilities. Increased responsibility developed through programming related to advising, financial literacy, time management and planning also lead to increased retention, persistence and program completion. Coupling an academic program with a student life program to build resiliency would be reinforcing.

Results of "ballots" showed that the topics were both supported, neither was a clear favorite. The decision was to pursue the topic of Academic Resiliency and Student Success.

The recommendation was sent to the President's Council and was approved. The Board of Trustees Committee on Academic Affairs and Student Success discussed and approved the topic, presenting the following action item to the Board:

### Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

Motion: ***Following campus wide input and discussion facilitated by the QEP Selection Committee, the Academic and Student Affairs Committee moves that the***



***Averett University Board of Trustees approves the selection of Academic Resiliency and Student Success as the QEP topic for Averett University's decennial reaccreditation process.***

A signature component of the University's reaccreditation process is the Quality Enhancement Program, which involves selecting a topic to improve student learning and success. Following considerable assessment and input from faculty, staff and students, Averett has chosen to focus on improving student success in learning by developing academic capability and student responsibility. Building academic resiliency means working to increase our students' ability to locate and use resources and to develop better problem-solving and critical thinking skills—increasingly recognized as leadership characteristics.

The Board of Trustees approved the motion at their meeting on April 22, 2016.

With the topic approved, the QEP Development Committee was established to replace the QEP Selection Committee. The following members were appointed (although Marsha Foster has since left the University):

Ginger Henderson – Chair  
Marsha Foster – Chair  
Elizabeth Hickey – Head Coach, Women's Basketball  
Dr. Sherill Anderson - Director of the Galesi Student Success Center  
Michelle Liu – Associate Professor, Physical Education, Wellness and Sport Science  
Joan Kahwajy-Anderson – Director of Counseling Services  
Skyler Daniel – Chaplain  
Charles Wuest – Assistant Professor, English  
Deborah DeMarey – Associate Professor, Biology  
Susan Huckstep – Assistant Professor, Communications Studies/Journalism and English  
Barbara Kushubar - Associate Professor, Physical Education, Wellness and Sport Science  
Joel Nester – Director of Admissions and International Student Counselor  
Brigid Belko – Director of Experiential Learning

The Development Committee is tasked with further refinement of the topic, performing a literature and field review, and developing the QEP Plan document. Through research, discussion, conversation with colleagues at other institutions, and colleagues on campus, the topic evolved to focus on building resiliency through the development of growth mindset. This strategy is considered to be one which will benefit Averett students particularly well.

#### **IV. Desired Student Learning Outcomes**

Programs to promote growth mindset support significant and positive effects on students' persistence, performance, and resilience. Outcomes are often associated with observed increases in student engagement, use of support facilities, academic performance, and retention. These measures of success will be assessed for the QEP but there are also student learning outcomes that are desirable as well:

- Students will be able to recognize fixed mindsets.
- Students will be able to identify strategies to develop a growth mindset.
- Students will demonstrate that they can apply growth mindset strategies to increase academic success in their course.

The first two of the student learning outcomes will be addressed in IDS 101 and beginning in fall 2017, every entering freshman will complete an online growth-mindset module as part of this course. Averett students completing the online PERTS' growth mindset module will read material explaining the brain's ability to change and grow as a result of hard work and the adoption of academic strategies. The module stresses findings from the field of neuroscience that describe how students actually increase their intelligence through study and coursework. Students who may have struggled academically in the past will be reminded that those setbacks are not signs of limited potential, but are opportunities for learning. These messages will be reinforced through writing exercises. PERTS has an online assessment that students in IDS 101 will take that measures how well they learned the concepts in the video.

The third student learning outcome will be used alone or with one or both of the others in the courses to be developed by faculty. The ways in which students will demonstrate the application and how that will be assessed will be part of the module design for the proposed courses.

Assessment for these courses will be collected and analyzed after each semester.

#### **V. Literature review and best practices**

Each fall students arrive on campuses across America and, unfortunately, many of these students arrive with mindsets that predispose them to failure. Indeed, it is not unusual to hear students make comments such as "I don't test well" or "I'm not a math person." They make these statements as if they are describing an irreversible genetic condition, something over which they have no control. Research demonstrates that these types of comments are far from innocuous, but rather indicative of a fixed mindset that makes students less resilient – less likely to face academic challenges with a positive attitude, learning from both their successes and failures.

Academic progress and success require resiliency and resiliency requires continued effort even in the face of failure. Davis and Paster (2000) describe resilience as "a general lifestyle of overcoming disappointing, frustrating and discouraging events, embracing formidable challenges with a positive outlook" (p. 18). In an academic setting, resiliency is demonstrated when students respond to challenges by increasing their effort and seeking new strategies for success (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). As Yeager and Dweck (2012) note, students who lack resiliency are more likely to voice feelings of helplessness, give up in the face of challenges or

even resort to cheating. What leads some students to give up when faced with difficulties while others embrace challenges and work through them? Research suggests students' implicit theories, more specifically the assumptions they make about the malleability of their own intelligence, impact their resilience and thus their academic achievement.

Students who believe that intellectual ability or intelligence is finite and cannot be developed are more likely to view academic difficulty as a sign that they are dumb or lack a natural aptitude for the subject. They are less likely to conclude that learning and academic success are possible if they work harder and/or adopt new learning strategies (Blackwell, Trzesniewski & Dweck, 2007; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). This is shown to be true even for higher-achieving students who, when faced with increasingly challenging coursework, are more likely to give up when they believe their previous success was due to a fixed or natural level of intelligence (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Students with fixed mindsets do not demonstrate resilience in the face of academic challenges because they do not view them as something that can be overcome with hard work and better strategies. In fact, according to Blackwell et al. (2007) fixed-mindset students may try to hide or downplay their academic difficulties for fear of being viewed as unintelligent.

In contrast, students who adopt a growth mindset – who see intelligence as something that can grow and develop – are more likely to seek out academic challenges and to meet these challenges with resiliency. They are more likely than their fixed-mindset counterparts to increase their efforts and improve their learning strategies. These students view academic challenges not as a threat to their self-concept, but as an opportunity to improve and to learn. For example, in a study of students enrolled in an organic chemistry course, Grant and Dweck (2003) found that students who adopted a growth mindset were more likely to achieve higher scores, employ diverse learning strategies and recover from an initial poor grade.

Fortunately, students can change their mindsets and develop greater resiliency in the face of academic challenge. A growing body of research indicates that with relatively simple interventions it is possible to help students understand that they can increase their intelligence with effort and learning strategies. Once this shift from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset occurs, students demonstrate improved academic performance and persistence. Yeager et al. (2013) exposed developmental math students at a community college to information about the malleability of adults' brains. The students then wrote about these concepts. These students were less likely to withdraw from the course and more likely to earn higher grades. Of those exposed to the growth mindset philosophy only 9% dropped the course compared to 20% of students from the control group. Aronson, Fried and Good (2002) provided college students with scientific information explaining how the brain can grow stronger by forging new connections between neurons. Students were asked to visualize this growth and then write a letter to struggling middle students about the brain's potential to change. The college students recorded a significant increase in their overall GPA of approximately .23 grade points. Effects were slightly higher for African American students.

Interventions with younger students have also proven successful in changing mindsets and promoting academic success. Seventh graders who received growth mindset training along with study skills training experienced a higher increase in grades compared to students who were just taught study skills (Blackwell et al., 2007; Yeager and Dweck, 2012). Good, Aronson and Inzlicht (2003) found that middle school students who received a series of weekly emails promoting the value of academic challenges and effort scored significantly higher on statewide math and verbal achievement test than students who had not received those messages.

Recent studies have explored the scalability of mindset interventions in an academic setting. Paunesku et al. (2015) developed an Internet-based mindset intervention and tested the effectiveness of this intervention on thousands of students in a variety of educational settings. Participating students visited a website and were randomly assigned a growth mindset intervention or a control intervention. Initial results of these studies are promising.

More than 1,500 students in 13 high schools participated in the web-based intervention. Low achieving students who received the mindset intervention improved their overall GPA by 0.18. These students passed 67% of their classes compared to control-group students who passed 60% of their coursework (Paunesku et al., 2015). Similarly, community college students who completed one session of the growth mindset intervention improved their overall GPA by 0.18 (Yeager et al., 2013).

Yeager et al. (2016) looked at the impact of interventions on the likelihood that freshmen at a four-year public university would complete at least 12 credit hours during each of their first two semesters — a leading predictor of on-time graduation. More than 7,300 students participated in the study. Here the intervention was particularly effective with students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In the control condition, 69% of disadvantaged students and 79% of advantaged students completed two semesters as full-time students. Among those receiving the intervention, 73% of the disadvantaged students and 80% of advantaged students completed two semesters of full-time enrollment — decreasing the inequality between these two groups by 40%.

Yeager, Walton, Ritter and Dweck (2013) also tested the online growth-mindset intervention at a large four-year university in Texas. As part of freshman orientation, all incoming students were required to complete an online growth mindset module. It took approximately 22 minutes to complete the module, and more than 91% or 7,342 students participated. Although students continue to be tracked, the study's initial focus was on the number of students who successfully completed more than 12 credits their first semester, a common indicator of academic success and persistence. The findings were significant with 64% of the growth-mindset intervention group completing more than 12 credits compared to 61% of the control group. The effects were larger for African-American students. Only 45% of African-Americans in the control group earned more than 12 hours compared to 55% of students receiving the mindset instruction. This one-time intervention reduced the achievement gap between Caucasian students and African-American students by 63%.

These findings suggest that providing students with brief, carefully constructed information about growth mindset can positively impact their academic performance and persistence. The combination of online instruction, reflection and classroom reinforcement, utilized in the referenced studies can help students understand that areas in which they struggle — such as difficulties with certain subjects or difficulties with test taking — are not insurmountable weaknesses. These difficulties are not reasons to simply give up or to underperform. They are, instead, opportunities to learn and to grow.

## **VI. Actions to be Implemented**

Faculty and staff will receive training on February 8, 2017 (Interdisciplinary Day). To raise awareness, Professor Henderson, chair of the QEP Planning Committee, sent an email on January 9, 2017:

## Averett University Quality Enhancement Plan

I hope this finds all of you rested from break and ready for a new semester. As you may or may not know, our topic for the QEP is growth mindset. This is a very exciting project that we truly hope will help address issues with student resiliency, the identified focus area for the QEP.

The first phase of the plan calls for the Averett Community to be introduced to the concept of growth mindset, the research behind it and some ideas for how all members of our community can implement its practice in their areas. We have hired a presenter from Mindset Works, one of the pioneering groups in the field of implementing growth mindset strategies, to come and work with us. Janna will be here on Wednesday February 8th for interdisciplinary day and will be conducting a session specifically geared towards faculty in the morning. After lunch, from 1:30-3:30PM she will be conducting a workshop for the rest of the Averett community. During this time she will be sharing much of the same material but catering this portion to staff and how they can implement these strategies in their areas outside of the classroom.

I have included you on this email because of the leadership role you possess in your area. I am hoping you are able to see the value of this work to everyone on campus and will encourage your staff to attend, and allow them to have this time for professional development. As you know the QEP is a major piece of our SACSCOC work and to have everyone's participation would be awesome! An "official" announcement of this activity will be coming out in coffee break.

If you want more information on growth mindset, the QEP or why your staff should be involved, please let me know. I will give you more than you asked for! I look forward to hearing back from you with questions. Thank you in advance for your support of this activity!

This kick-off event is a precursor to the preparations for the student focused activities that are the main focus of the QEP.

All Averett University traditional undergraduate students are required to enroll in Averett 101 (IDS 101) in the fall of their freshman year. Beginning in fall 2017, every entering freshman will complete an online growth-mindset module as part of this course. This online module has been designed and tested by the Project for Education Research That Scales (PERTS), an applied research center at Stanford University. PERTS is led by prominent researchers in the area of growth mindset including their Director David Paunesku in collaboration with scholars such as psychologist Dr. Carol Dweck. Averett is partnering with PERTS for part of this project.

PERTS' mission "is to improve the equity of learning outcomes by bridging the gap between cutting-edge research and implementation practices. (They) believe that properly scaling educational research can empower schools to reduce inequity and create better experiences for students and teachers" (<https://www.perts.net/about>). Their growth mindset intervention has impacted thousands of students across the nation, and their partnerships include the State of Indiana Community College System, The College Transition Collaborative and Khan Academy online.

Averett students completing the online PERTS' growth mindset module will read material explaining the brain's ability to change and grow as a result of hard work and the adoption of

academic strategies. The module stresses findings from the field of neuroscience that describe how students actually increase their intelligence through study and coursework. Students who may have struggled academically in the past will be reminded that those setbacks are not signs of limited potential, but are opportunities for learning. These messages will be reinforced through writing exercises. This growth mindset intervention draws on past research and has been utilized successfully in a variety of academic settings (i.e. Aronson et al., 2002; Good et al., 2003; Paunesku et. al, 2015). Lessons from the online intervention will be further emphasized throughout the semester in class discussions and other assignments.

In addition to the growth mindset interventions introduced at the freshman level, faculty members across various disciplines will integrate growth mindset strategies into their courses. This integration will include assignments and exercises focused on the growth-mindset concept as well as opportunities to discuss and reflect on this concept. The goal is to see mindset strategies integrated into a minimum of 10 courses per year over a 3 year time period.

In February 2017 all Averett faculty will be introduced to the concept of growth mindset during a half-day workshop. The workshop will include training by a scholar and practitioner from the growth mindset field and will emphasize hands-on practice as well as information gathering. Faculty who wish to incorporate growth-mindset strategies into their courses will be provided with opportunities for further online training. The University will provide stipends to faculty who complete the additional training and adopt mindset teaching strategies. This will ensure that freshmen continue to be exposed to the concept of growth mindset and that upperclassmen also have the opportunity for such exposure. Assessment will be incorporated into the courses as well to determine the efficacy of the strategies at Averett. Faculty presentations and discussions will take place at "Opening Day," a day before classes begin for faculty sessions.

Staff will be introduced to the growth-mindset emphasis during a two-hour workshop and in staff meetings. Staff members are often among the first to hear students express their frustration with academic or social issues. Their understanding of growth-mindset concepts and their ability to encourage students to think critically about challenges will reinforce the concepts students are learning in class. Some offices may choose to incorporate growth mindset related student learning outcomes in their assessment plans though this is not a goal of the QEP at this point.

## VII. Timeline of QEP Implementation

Item	When Completed	By Whom
Hiring of Assistant Director of Student Success with responsibilities to be QEP Project Director: Aires Wilson	January 2017	Fulop, Anderson
PERTS agreement signed	January 2017	Fulop, Howell (CFO)
Approval of QEP budget, incorporation into 2016-2017 operating budget	Preliminary budget for 2016-2017 in place; additional approvals pending (January 2017)	Budget Committee; Howell; President's Council
Presentation of the QEP Project details to Board of Trustees	January 27, 2017	Henderson, Fulop
Presentation of QEP Project	January 2017	Henderson, Fulop

Averett University Quality Enhancement Plan

details to Faculty and Staff		
Presentation of QEP Project and SACSCOC visit to Student leaders	January 2017	Villarose, McKirdy, Fulop, Henderson?
QEP Implementation Committee appointed	January – February 2017	Henderson, Fulop, A. Wilson
Marketing of QEP to campus community (meetings, Coffee Break, Cougar Connection, etc.)	January – May, 2017	A. Wilson, Committee, C. Jones (Marketing Director)
Faculty and Staff Training on Growth Mindset	February 8, 2017 (Interdisciplinary Day) Faculty (morning) Staff (afternoon)	Mindset Works; Henderson, A. Wilson, Committee
SACSCOC campus visit	February 21-23, 2017	
Adjustments made based upon SACSCOC input/advice	February 24 – April 2017	
Process for Faculty submission of applications for courses that incorporate mindset is finalized	March – May, 2017	A. Wilson, Committee
NSSE and FSSE 2017 applied	February – May 2017	OIRE/CCECC
Training for IDS 101 Faculty	April – May 2017	A. Wilson; Committee; IDS Instructors
Courses to incorporate mindset approved	May 2017	A. Wilson; Committee; IDS Instructors
Baseline data defined	April – May, 2017	A. Wilson, Committee, McKirdy
Baseline data compiled from PowerCampus	June 2017	Office of IR and IE
Baseline data compiled from NSSE	June 2017	Office of IR and IE
Finalization of course content for courses incorporating mindset	July 30, 2017	Faculty teaching approved courses
Data on student participants compiled and sent to PERTS	August 2017	Office of IR and IE
Faculty teaching courses with mindset present or discuss at Opening Workshops	August 2017	Faculty
IDS students complete mindset module	September 17, 2017	IDS Instructors
Results reported from PERTS	Fall 2017	PERTS; A. Wilson
IDS instructor debrief and adjustments made	Fall 2017	A. Wilson, Committee, IDS Instructors
Assessments are collected from faculty teaching fall courses incorporating mindset	December 2017	A. Wilson, Committee, Faculty

Averett University Quality Enhancement Plan

and reviewed		
Report issued on Fall 2017 experiences with IDS 1010 and courses with mindset	February 2018	A. Wilson, Committee, McKirdy
NSSE 2018 applied	February – May 2018	OIRE/CCECC
Planning for new courses to include mindset	March – April 2018	A. Wilson, Committee
Adjustments made (if necessary) for IDS 101	April – May 2018	A. Wilson, Committee
Training for IDS 101 Faculty	April – May 2018	A. Wilson; Committee; IDS Instructors
Courses to incorporate mindset approved	May 2018	A. Wilson; Committee; IDS Instructors
Assessments are collected from faculty teaching spring courses incorporating mindset and reviewed	May 2018	A. Wilson, Committee
Data compiled from PowerCampus	June 2018	Office of IR and IE
Data compiled from 2017 NSSE	June 2018	Office of IR and IE
Data analyzed, assessments reviewed, report compiled and issued	June-July 2018	A. Wilson, Committee, OIRE
Discussions of assessments and results to make program improvements or adjust targets	August 2018	
Finalization of course content for courses incorporating mindset	July 30, 2018	Faculty teaching approved courses
Data on student participants compiled and sent to PERTS	August 2018	Office of IR and IE
Faculty teaching courses with mindset present or discuss at Opening Workshops	August 2018	Faculty
IDS students complete mindset module	September 2018	IDS Instructors
Results reported from PERTS	Fall 2018	PERTS; A. Wilson
IDS instructor debrief and adjustments made	Fall 2018	A. Wilson, Committee, IDS Instructors
Assessments are collected from faculty teaching courses incorporating mindset and reviewed	December 2018	A. Wilson, Committee, Faculty
Report issued on Fall 2017 experiences with IDS 1010 and courses with mindset	February 2019	A. Wilson, Committee, McKirdy



Averett University Quality Enhancement Plan

NSSE 2019 applied	February – May 2019	OIRE/CCECC
Planning for new courses to include mindset	March – April 2019	A. Wilson, Committee
Adjustments made (if necessary) for IDS 101	April-May 2019	A. Wilson, Committee
Courses to incorporate mindset approved	May 2019	A. Wilson; Committee; IDS Instructors
Assessments are collected from faculty teaching spring courses incorporating mindset and reviewed	May 2019	A. Wilson, Committee
Data compiled from PowerCampus	June 2019	Office of IR and IE
Data compiled from 2017 NSSE	June 2019	Office of IR and IE
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Results reported from PERTS	Fall 2019	PERTS; A. Wilson
IDS instructor debrief and adjustments made	Fall 2019	A. Wilson, Committee, IDS Instructors
Assessments are collected from faculty teaching courses incorporating mindset and reviewed	December 2019	A. Wilson, Committee, Faculty
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Planning for new courses to include mindset	March – April 2020	A. Wilson, Committee
Adjustments made (if necessary) for IDS 101	April-May 2020	A. Wilson, Committee
Assessments are collected	May 2020	A. Wilson, Committee

Averett University Quality Enhancement Plan

from faculty teaching spring courses incorporating mindset and reviewed		
Data compiled from PowerCampus	June 2020	Office of IR and IE
Data compiled from 2017 NSSE	June 2020	Office of IR and IE
Data analyzed, assessments reviewed, report compiled and issued	June-July 2020	A. Wilson, Committee, OIRE
Discussions of assessments and results to make program improvements or adjust targets	August 2020	
Finalization of course content for courses incorporating mindset	July 30, 2020	Faculty teaching approved courses
Data on student participants compiled and sent to PERTS	August 2020	Office of IR and IE
Faculty teaching courses with mindset present or discuss at Opening Workshops	August 2020	Faculty
IDS students complete mindset module	September 2020	IDS Instructors
Results reported from PERTS	Fall 2020	PERTS; A. Wilson
IDS instructor debrief and adjustments made	Fall 2020	A. Wilson, Committee, IDS Instructors
Assessments collected from faculty teaching courses incorporating mindset and reviewed	December 2020	A. Wilson, Committee, Faculty
Report issued on Fall 2017 experiences with IDS 1010 and courses with mindset	February 2021	A. Wilson, Committee, McKirdy
NSSE 2019 applied	February – May 2021	OIRE/CCECC
Planning for new courses to include mindset	March – April 2021	A. Wilson, Committee
Adjustments made (if necessary) for IDS 101	April-May 2021	A. Wilson, Committee
Assessments collected from faculty teaching spring courses incorporating mindset and reviewed	May 2021	A. Wilson, Committee
Data compiled from PowerCampus	June 2021	Office of IR and IE
Data compiled from 2017 NSSE	June 2021	Office of IR and IE
Data analyzed, assessments	June-July 2021	A. Wilson, Committee, OIRE

reviewed, report compiled and issued		
Complete analyses of QEP outcomes for 5-year report	AY 2020-2021	Office of IR and IE; A. Wilson
Submission of 5 <sup>th</sup> year SACSCOC QEP Assessment and Report	September 2021	Office of IR and IE; A. Wilson

### VIII. Organizational Structure

The QEP project, Resiliency through Growth Mindset, will be spearheaded by the newly hired Assistant Director for Student Success, Aries Wilson. The role of program director was included in the anticipated responsibilities of the national search and the new assistant director brings experience and knowledge in advisement, support, and collaboration. Student Success Center staff continue to develop working relationships with multiple offices throughout the campus and is committed to integrating the philosophy of resiliency/mindfulness within its proactive outreach approach to students of concern. The Assistant Director and a faculty/staff implementation team will oversee the Growth Mindset Program.

The Resiliency Through Growth Mindset QEP is a natural fit for the mission Averett’s Office of Student Success which exists to help students fulfill their academic potential and to motivate them to see their academic career through to graduation. The Office of Student Success is led by Dr. Sherrill Anderson. Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Success Dr. Tim Fulop maintains executive oversight of all Student Success Center activities.

The QEP director will work in conjunction with an implementation committee consisting of faculty and staff and in close consultation with Averett’s Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, Pamela McKirdy. Now that the director has been hired, the committee will be appointed by Dr. Fulop and, under the guidance of the QEP director, will be responsible for overseeing all aspects of the QEP including faculty training, implementation and program assessment.

### IX. Resources

The QEP will be funded as a line item in the University’s budget.

<u>Element</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Cost</u>
IDS Module	Online mindset module being provided at no cost for 2 years. Subsequent modules will be developed or purchased.	None
	Training for IDS instructors is currently being done each year. No new resources are required	none

Averett University Quality Enhancement Plan

	Additional training for QEP director to enhance IDS instructor training. Regional workshops or online courses.	\$2,000.00
Faculty/staff mindset training	One day workshop to provide ground work on mindset and its application in educational settings.	\$5,000.00
	Teaching resources for faculty/staff are available online free of charge. Some additional resources for programming.	\$1,000.00
Mindset Implementation across campus	Stipend provided to faculty on a one time basis for implementing mindset practices in a course.	\$250.00 per course 10 courses per year over 3 years. Total cost \$7,500.00
	Funding to assist student groups develop/implement programs that incorporate mindset principles Groups can apply for funding up to \$500	Maximum of \$1,000.00 per year over 3 years. \$3,000.00 total
	Additional workshops, conferences and training for faculty can be applied for through existing professional development funds.	No cost
Staff	Assistant Director of Student Success will act as QEP director. %10 time as QEP.	\$5,000 per year for 5 years. \$25,000.00
	Staff from Institutional Effectiveness to provide assessment data.	No cost
<b>Total Estimated Costs</b>		<b>\$43,500.00</b>

**X. Assessment**

Programs to promote growth mindset support significant and positive effects on students' persistence, performance, and resilience. Outcomes are often associated with observed increases in student engagement, use of support facilities, academic performance, and retention. These measures of success will be assessed for the QEP but there are also student learning outcomes that are desirable as well:

- Students will be able to recognize fixed mindsets.

## Averett University Quality Enhancement Plan

- Students will be able to identify strategies to develop a growth mindset.
- Students will demonstrate that they can apply growth mindset strategies to increase academic success in their course.

Averett's Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, along with Stanford University's Project for Education Research That Scales (PERTS), will track freshmen who complete the online growth mindset module. Measures will include GPA, number of course hours successfully completed and retention. Data will be compared with previous freshman classes. PERTS will also have an online assessment that students in IDS take that measures how well they learned the concepts in the video. They have research that has predictive validity in the scores from the assessment to GPA and retention. These assumptions will be tested using Averett's data on participating students.

Assessment within courses utilizing mindset techniques will be a combination of faculty observation and, as possible, direct learning outcome assessment. These may be supplemented with qualitative methods such as student/faculty focus groups and interviews. Students participating through these courses will be tracked in that their enrollment in courses with these interventions will be recorded. Exploratory analysis will be used to determine if there are any significant differences between students who take multiple courses with interventions and similar students who did not.

Student growth mindset has been associated in the research with positive effects on students' persistence, performance, and resilience. Outcomes are often associated with observed increases in student engagement, use of support facilities, academic performance, and retention. Averett already tracks student engagement through the CCECC and as reflected in the NSSE and faculty perceptions thereof in the FSSE. These data will also be used in assessing the impact of the QEP interventions. The NSSE and FSSE data are identified in the data files as traditional and non-traditional students and faculty so the items that are used can be disaggregated as necessary.

Some of the NSSE items on which Averett students did not perform as highly as other students may be examined for baseline and intervention assessment:

- Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in (FY low, SR high)
- Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students (both low)
- Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments (both low)
- Included diverse perspectives ... in course discussions or assignments (both low)
- Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept (FY low)
- Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge (FY low)
- Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class (both low)
- Analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts (FY low)
- Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information (FY low)

These and others will be considered by the QEP Implementation Committee once the Committee is formed and the PERTS module and possible course modules are being considered. In particular, the high impact practices (HIP) will be tracked. Averett has NSSE data from 2014, 2015, 2016 and will be applying the 2017 with plans to continue collecting this through the QEP timeframe.

## Averett University Quality Enhancement Plan

Persistence and performance will be tracked through analysis of student credits per term, GPA, and retention. Student use of the Student Success Center will be examined. The new QEP Director is also the Assistant Director of Student Success so the staff of the Center will be integrally involved in the project and its support as well as the assessment of both.

The first freshman cohort will enter in fall 2017 and graduate in spring 2021. It will then be possible to compare assessment results for those graduating seniors who completed the growth mindset training module with those who did not. The use of certain items from the National Survey of Student Engagement will be part of the comparison data as will measures such as GPA and time to degree completion. These will help in determining the impact of the QEP on Averett's students.

## XI. Bibliography

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