



LSC-North Harris Foundations of Excellence®

Executive Summary

Foundations of Excellence (FoE) is a comprehensive, externally guided self-study and improvement process for the first year. The centerpiece of FoE is a model comprised of a set of principles that are termed Foundational Dimensions®. These Dimensions developed by the Policy Center on the First Year of College (now John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education) guide measurement of institutional efforts and provide an aspirational model for the entirety of the beginning college experience. The engine of the FoE process is a campus-based task force, a group with broad representation from across the campus. The primary focus of FoE is academic excellence. Institutions that participate in the FoE process have access to a wide array of services and support.

Dr. Steve Head's particular interest in joining with two- and four-year colleges nationwide was to benchmark LSC-North Harris against some of the best universities and colleges to confirm our strengths and identify areas in need of improvement. LSC-North Harris' resources, organizational maturity, and willingness to examine its strengths and weaknesses is positioning the college to move to an elite group of high achievers. Our fundamental goal is to provide our students with the very best experience they can achieve in their formative first year at LSC-North Harris.

Lone Star – North Harris undertook the FoE process in the summer of 2009. The process began with a campus audit of the first-year experience for new students and continued with a 9 to 12 month process of evaluation using the Foundational Dimensions and related Performance Indicators. The work culminated in the development of a strategic action plan for campus improvement. This spring at the culmination of the FoE self-study, thirty-five task force members including students, staff, faculty and administrators met at an off-campus retreat to accomplish several objectives:



- 1) Understand LSC-North Harris results from the FoE faculty/staff and student assessments, plan how to communicate those results, and use data to target improvements in work with new students
- 2) Create a Top 20 List of Priorities (Action Items) to focus on quality experiences for new and entering students
- 3) Review 8 Top Reasons for Progress made on the Student Success Agenda
- 4) Review Top 20 List of priorities for immediate or future implementation
- 5) Develop action plans for communicating and using FoE results and for integrating potential new or strengthened strategies into LSC-NH student success agenda for new students
- 6) Participate in work sessions and use tools/resources that may serve as models for work with broader groups back on campus
- 7) Begin to develop a *new student success* learning community

This group selected the top 21 action items based on expressed needs and desired outcomes (including a new student philosophy statement) from a list of 96 items produced by the nine Dimension committees comprised of 110 students, staff, faculty, and administrators. Action plans and next steps were formulated to begin implementation of actions in the fall 2010 semester.

The final phase of FoE is the immediate and long-range implementation phase. This phase is very important so that everyone will see results and status updates of the action items. It is also important that someone facilitate this process to track improvement of the first-year students.

A Purdue University researcher, Dr. Brent Drake, and the Gardner Institute undertook a survey of former FoE first-year participants to learn the degree to which they had implemented FoE action plans. They learned some important facts! Institutions that had implemented action plans to a self-reported *high degree* saw a 5.62 average percentage point increase in retention (8.2% increase) over time (four years from the original date of the self study). Some participants acknowledged plan implementation at a *medium* or *limited* level, but still believed that retention had improved. (The Top Action Items with Status Report is included.)



Top Action Items with Status Updates
(A complete explanation of each item can be found in the “Phase 3”
Section of the Full Report)

Advising/Counseling

Increase Campus Awareness of Student Services

In Process -- Highlight Student Success Programs in Faculty/Staff Planner

Completed/In Process –Publish Periodic Newsletters from President to Students and Faculty/Staff

In Process – Offer Community Forums to Different Community Groups

Enhance Future Student Employment Possibilities

In Process -- Job Fair at Centers

Assessment/Institutional Research (IR)

Train and Evaluate Advisors

Completed/In Process

Track progress of EDUC 1300 (First Year Success Course)

In Process -- This process of tracking progress of EDUC 1300 has begun

Communication

Target Communications

In Process – Outreach forums in the community by president and chancellor

Diversity

Have Institutional Orientations to Address Standard Student Behavior

In Process – A common language vocabulary handout is under development to include in Faculty/Staff Planner



In Process – Created Office of Diversity Initiatives and hired full-time coordinator to develop ongoing workshops and activities.

Completed -- Workshop held for faculty, staff and students to address male sagging pants

Offer Professional Development to ensure that Faculty/Staff/Administration Keep up to Date with Our Diverse Student Population

In Process – Office of Diversity is assisting with this action item with limited faculty participation (attendance is mostly staff and students)

Early Alert/Learning Center

Expand Early Alert

In Process - Expanding to all developmental courses

In Process - Expanding to BIOL 1408, BIOL 2404, BIOL 2401

In Process - Expanding to GOVT and HIST

Develop a Tutoring Tracking System

In Process - Evaluating current TutorTrac tracking system and investigating other tracking tools

Financial Aid

Develop Consistent Coordinated follow-up for Financial Aid

In Process – Setting up call-backs

Improve College Cost and Financial Aid Follow up and Scholarships

In Process – Improved customer service, processing and notification by financial aid office and LSCS financial aid

First-Year Experience

Create Definable and Measureable Goals Relating to First Year Students

In Process - Dr. Head created a Student Success Taskforce of Faculty Members



Completed - Attended ESSI and developed strategic action plan priorities for FY students

Completed - Participated in system wide Student Success Committee to address mandatory orientation, advising with EDUC 1300, sequential math requirement, and late registration policies. Recommendations made to Executive Council.

In Process - Started discussions with ORIE to create faculty development through "Data Day" events

Instruction

Identify, Evaluate, and Increase Access to First Day Student Profiles

Completed in math and developmental English sections

Encourage Faculty to Get More Involved in Student Success

In Process - Faculty Task Force established to discuss and create a baseline

Policies and Practices

Disseminate Student Data to Faculty

In Process - report is being generated

Recruit Faculty at the Centers

Completed - Faculty assignments at the Centers have been made

In Process - Recruitment is ongoing

Develop Better Communication from Top to Bottom

Completed -- Multiple newsletters have been disseminated to students and employees

Professional Development

Encourage First Year Professional Development

In Process - Holding discussions with chairs and deans to respond to needs of new adjuncts, new hires, and full-time faculty

In Process - Creating an Adjunct Center of Excellence



Seek Improvement Continually

In Process – staff attending national conferences to share best practices

Campus Culture Change for Student Success (C³ 4 S²)

Hold Everyone Responsible

Ongoing – Establish a campus culture where everyone cares about student success.

Global Concerns

Develop a Wish List (Initiatives/Events/Actions That Are Occurring or Should Be Occurring)

These global concerns are issues that should be acted upon now. These are initiatives, events or actions that are not generally familiar to faculty and staff. We need to make an effort to highlight these initiatives throughout the school year (i.e., inclusion of parents in orientation). For more information on these global concerns and other initiatives, please visit:

<http://www.lonestar.edu/nh-foe>

In Process - These action items came up and are listed throughout the faculty/staff planner.

Foundations of Excellence, ® Full Report Lone Star – North Harris

Phase 1 – Introduction to the Foundation of Excellence Process

During the 2009-2010 academic years, Lone Star College-North Harris was selected to participate as a Foundation of Excellence college. Foundation of Excellence is a comprehensive, externally guided self-study and improvement process to examine the beginning college experience referred to as the first year. The Foundation of Excellence process is the signature work of John Gardner's Policy Center on the First Year of College now known as the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education. The centerpiece of Foundation of Excellence is



a model comprised of a set of principles that are termed Foundational Dimensions® to guide measurement of institutional efforts and provide an aspirational model for the entirety of the beginning college experience (initial contact with students through admissions, orientation, and all curricular and co-curricular experiences). Because the Dimensions focus on institutional structures, policies, and processes (the decisions institutions make about organizing and delivering the first college year), the model is useful in confirming effective practice and/or providing direction for improvement efforts. (www.fyfoundations.org).

Betsy Barefoot, Vice President and Senior Scholar of the John Gardner Institute, did an outstanding job coaching and guiding us through the entire comprehensive assessment process. LSC-North Harris was also fortunate to have the support and participation of a dedicated administration. Dr. Stephen Head, President of LSC-North Harris, took an active role in the FoE process, attending Steering Committee meetings, funding an off-campus FoE Retreat, and promoting the project on campus and to the Chancellor and Board of Trustees. In addition, other administrators demonstrated their commitment to the project by offering their support and participation. As important as senior level commitment is to the success of the project, the support of college-wide staff and faculty proved invaluable.

For all participating institutions, the FoE process is driven by a campus-based task force – a group with broad representation from across campus with assistance by the John Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education and Educational Benchmarking, Inc. The work of the task force begins with a campus audit of the first-year experience (the Current Practices Inventory), and includes the use of two surveys (faculty/staff and student). FoE continues with a nine month process of evaluation using the Foundational Dimensions and related performance indicators and culminates in the development of a strategic action plan for campus improvement.

To begin the self-study at LSC-North Harris, a FoE Director was hired to organize, lead, and monitor the self-study process. A letter of invitation from the president outlined the purpose to confirm our strengths and recognize the need for improvement to continue the commitment to academic excellence and service to students through the exploration of the nine Dimensions/Principles: 1) Philosophy, 2) Organization, 3) Learning, 4)



Campus Culture, 5) Transitions, 6) All Students, 7) Diversity, 8) Roles and Purposes, and 9) Improvement.

Phase 1 – Information Gathering involved administering two Foundation surveys developed by the Policy Center and Educational Benchmarking, Inc. The first instrument gathered information from selected faculty and staff members about the effectiveness of current first-year practices and policies. The second instrument gathered information from first-year students about their views of campus efforts in the first year.

Over the course of the next nine months, a Task Force of 110 participants representing faculty, staff, students and administration examined the current policies, procedures and practices regarding new students at LSC-North Harris. This timeline enabled participants to interact across lines of responsibility with other employees and with students to create an action plan. For each of the nine Dimensions, a Dimension committee was formed to determine how the college measured up against each specific aspect of the first-year experience. The Dimension chairs led hearty discussions and captured the dialogue about current practices with the aid of an electronic reporting platform, FoEtec™. Participants could easily access information discussed and recorded about the current practices at the college regarding the first-year student in the Current Practices Index (CPI). In addition, each Dimension Committee was provided a series of Performance Indicators that allowed each committee to analyze the college's performance in a given criteria or category. At the end of the process, each committee graded the college's current practice in the Dimension and presented a report of its findings and recommended action items to improve the particular Dimension. These recommendations resulted in over 102 action items for improvement which began Phase 2 of the self-study—the process of identifying global themes to action planning.

Phase 2 – Global Themes to Action Planning

Armed with the Dimension committees' 102 recommended action items, a group of Steering Committee members began the arduous task of categorizing and sorting the recommendations into major themes or issues that, if addressed, would guide the college toward a strategic action plan for campus improvement of the critical beginning campus experience. With



both individual and collaborative decision making, the 102 items were sorted and synthesized into themes in no particular order of importance:

- Advising/Counseling
- Assessment/Institutional Research
- Communication
- Diversity
- Early Alert/Learning Center
- Financial Aid
- First-Year Experience
- Instruction
- Policies and Practices
- Professional Development

Two additional themes emerged. Campus Culture Change and Global Concerns became a *Wish List* of Initiatives/Events/Actions that are occurring now or should be occurring.

As the process evolved, the list of action items was condensed to 96. Equipped with this information, the FoE Task Force came together to review the recommendations, **celebrate its accomplishments**, and move toward action planning and next steps.

Phase 3 – Results – Action Plan and Next Step

The data from various performance indicators, student, staff and faculty surveys, and recommendations from Gardner Institute coach, Betsy Barefoot, indicated the need to address two areas with reported low performance and high impact. Addressing these two areas would make substantial increases in strengthening LSC-North Harris' work with entering students. In a day-long retreat format, 35 administrators, staff, faculty, and students divided into five work groups to address the two areas identified as low performance/high impact: (1) **Increased student connections through academic support outside classroom, with other students, with involvement in out-of-class activities, with faculty outside of class and with family members**, and (2) **Leverage Faculty and staff assessments by looking at multiple assessments and comparing across data points, such as NH's strategic plan, SENSE, CCSSE, and FOE surveys**. Twenty priorities were identified using an Action Planning and Next Steps template to identify priorities/strategies, goals, activities/tasks, responsible persons, timelines, resources, and potential issue or concerns. **(See Action Planning and Next Steps)**



The following list provides a summary of the recommended action items:

Recommended Action Items:

- Implement LSCS-North Harris Philosophy Statement (High priority)
" LSC-NH commits to first year student success. Through student, faculty and staff collaboration, we foster educational programs and processes for first year students that promote academic excellence and student engagement, prepare students for an evolving workforce, build strong ethics, value diversity, and encourage community involvement and public-mindedness."
- Improve College cost and financial aid-Follow up and Scholarships (High priority) The College provides good information on tuition, but needs more on the follow-through as far as assisting students with financial aid. Students need more guidance on the process for seeking scholarships on campus as well as what is available on a local, state and national levels. Information about college costs and financial aid options is received initially, but students need to get the status of financial aid more quickly. Student assistants do a good job with communicating general information, but need to make sure training covers situations that require more information by making the student an appointment with an advisor or getting an immediate answer from a knowledgeable person.
- Improve College Cost and Financial Aid-Books (High priority) The College does a good job of marketing the low cost of tuition and fees, but students need to be made aware of the cost for books. We need to give more options to purchase books. More or an effort needs to be made to place books on reserve in the library so that students who cannot afford books will have another option.
- Develop consistent coordinated follow-up for Financial Aid (High priority) Develop a consistent coordinated follow-up for students requesting financial aid/assistance. Advisors need to be fully trained to help students realize the difference between grants, loans, and scholarships and to provide students with aggressive assistance in finding the financial aid package they need.



- Involve more Instructors (especially out of class) (High priority) A stronger effort needs to be made to get faculty involved in programs outside of the classroom. The college has many programs and services available for students. Increased faculty involvement in those programs will no doubt make them even better.
- Disseminate Student Data to Faculty (High priority) Disseminate to faculty semester-by-semester data for retention and graduation rates and demographic. The student outcome goals would be to expand XRAP to all core courses and FTIC. Faculty would run their own advising profiles. Training would be needed to interpret the report.
- Expand Early Alert (High priority). Expand the special attention/early alert beyond the core programs and gateway classes. Provide academic excellence and strengthen our quality academic and service programs. Create effective internal and external systems of communication. Provide student focused service. Provide more student advising and financial aid assistance.
- Enhance future employment possibilities (High priority) Hire personnel to assist with career planning and job placement services, primarily for co-ops and graduates. Create a vocational biography day with guest speakers from the workplace. Increase career exploration workshops. Offer a career exploration course. This action item will provide academic excellence and strengthen our quality academic and service programs. It will provide quality student focused services. It will allow us to plan and achieve quality growth management.
- Collect Data - Seek Improvement Continually (High priority) Collecting data is the over-arching theme for student engagement—we need information before we can establish and emphasize methods of better engaging students. Through evaluation and observation engagement can be documented, shared, and encouraged at a higher level. Teach everyone how to use data. Data Days with IR staff is a suggestion for great discussions within divisions. Focus on outcomes to drive student success. Create effective internal and external systems of communication. Create efficiencies in operating resource allocation. Increase quality and quantity of technology in support of teaching, learning, and administration. Plan and achieve quality growth management.



- Track progress of students in EDUC 1300-Student Success Course that is now required (High priority) Implement a systematic tracking tool that will help determine whether students who have taken EDUC 1300 have greater success in future courses. Student outcome goals would provide academic excellence and strengthen our quality academic and service programs. We could focus on outcome driven student success. We could create effective internal and external systems of communication. We will provide quality student focused service. Potential concerns are finding an adequate tracking system and resources.
- Target Communications (High priority) This area is one that needs some attention, but is a huge challenge due to the disconnect of students and family when it comes to the academic expectations. Some suggestions in this area are more contact at churches and community organizations that have parent/family involvement. Our campus has made a strong effort to make a connection with the family through our new events such as the preview party held every year, but improvements to this program are needed to accomplish our goal. Some needed improvements are to make sure all of the personnel are trained and display enthusiasm at all times. Make sure all events are planned so that families are engaged in the experience in the most positive way. Try to ensure that there are not long lines and food is prepared properly and served at the correct temperature. The first impression of our college will have a lasting effect on both the student and their families. We need to extend outreach to centers in the community, expand presenters to churches, and verify cell phone numbers. We need to have live kiosks as well.
- Address Standard Student Behavior through Institutional Orientations (High priority). We want Institutional Orientations to address better student dress and demeanor. We also discussed a common language/vocabulary handout.
- Improve communication from top to bottom. (High priority) Our president does a good job of disseminating information to all faculty and staff at monthly community forums, but there is a need for a better systematic distribution of information. The Office of the President and the Office of Public Relations and Communications will work to ensure that better and more frequent information is distributed from top to bottom. Departments and Divisions can also use the Office of Public Relations and Communications to make sure that everyone is better aware of student services offered.



- Evaluate and train advisors (High priority). Implement a comprehensive assessment tool that assesses the effectiveness of advisors and puts into place proper training for advisors that will help them systematically place students into the correct courses. Dean states that the action item is already done. Why did it appear more than once? The question warrants discussion.
- Develop a tutoring tracking system (High priority) Create and implement a comprehensive tutoring tracking system that identifies the impact of tutoring on students' future performance, perhaps by focusing a select number of sections each semester in each discipline. The Director of Teaching and Learning says that it's already done. More discussion is needed in this area.
- Increase campus awareness of Student Services (High priority) Develop a systematic way of getting information out to staff and faculty about the various student services on campus. Develop Faculty/Staff Planner with FAQs, explanation of services and policies. This could be a part of adjunct orientation. Student outcome goals would be improved retention, better more accurate referrals, and increased student confidence. Challenges are gathering information, edits, revisions and print.
- Encourage First Year Professional Development (Dean to Chair to Within Dept Meetings) (High priority) We need financial or other incentives to encourage adjunct faculty to participate in opportunities for diversity training. When faculty members are aware of needs, they are willing to get involved more frequently. Students will be better aware of services offered.
- Identify, evaluate, and increase access to First Day student profiles (High priority) Create a campus-wide committee that evaluates the most effective ways to use First Day student profiles. Identify which faculty do not receive First Day student profiles and determine whether access to profiles would help them, and in what ways. Disseminate to all faculty suggestions on how to interpret and use profiles for improvement. Student outcome goals would ensure better advised students. They can be made aware of resources specific to the individual. ORIE could give the information directly to faculty. Faculty could act as front line and advice students. Concerns are getting information to the faculty efficiently. The academic deans will be responsible for implementing.



- Define and measure goals relating to first year students. (High priority) Student outcome goals would include more success as we more clearly understand our impact. We could start with a few key goals and rewrite goals to be measurable. Potential Issues would be obtaining data.
- Increase cultural awareness of ever more diverse students (High priority). We can better relate to students. This will create a sense of community. The activities would include the right type of professional development. Celebrate together (faculty, staff, students, and administration). Challenges would include getting student and faculty involvement.
- Recruit experienced faculty at the Centers (High priority). Recruit "more experienced faculty" who understand the art of connecting with the student populations served by LSC - Greenspoint and Carver. Review faculty evaluations, grade distribution results, and student success data to assess the quality of instruction at the Centers. The student outcome for this action will be increased academic rigor and better prepared students. Activities would include faculty orientation specific to Centers, Job Fair at the Center, System Office focus on Diversity, Recruitment, and Peer Recruitment.

**Lone Star College-North Harris Foundations of Excellence (FoE)
Steering Committee:**

Steve Head (President, LSC-NH)
Dorothy Dixon (Director, Foundations of Excellence) – Liaison
Leslie LaPres (Director, Student Recruitment and Retention) – Liaison
Dorothy Reade (Faculty Senate President/Professor, Dev. Studies) –
Liaison
Gary Clark (Vice President, Instruction)
John DeLeon (Dean, Career Technology)
Bennie Lambert (Vice President, Student and Organizational Development)
Rebecca Richter (Sr. Analyst, College Research & Inst. Effectiveness)
Larry Rideaux (Associate Vice President, College Centers)
Martha Whitley (Director, AtD/Student Success)

Lone Star College-North Harris FoE Planning Committee:

Philosophy Dimension Co-Chairs:



Vickie Johnson (Director, Financial Aid)
Gary Liebst (Dean, Visual, Applied and Performing Arts)

Organization Dimension Co-Chairs:
Joyce Boatright (Professor Dev Studies/Dir. Prof Dev F/S)
Bruce O'Neal (Manager, Communications)

Learning Dimension Co-Chairs:
Hilton LaSalle (Disability Counselor, Assistant Professor)
Michael McFarland (Professor, English)

Campus Culture Dimension Chair:
Shae Adkins (Professor, Speech)

Transitions Dimension Co-Chairs:
John DeLeon (Dean, Career Technology)
Shirley Ennis (Professor, Kinesiology)

All Students Dimension Co-Chairs:
Jim Good (Chair/Professor, History)
Larry Rideaux (Associate Vice President, College Centers)

Diversity Dimension Co-Chairs:
Bruce Carroll (Professor, Biology)
Gary Clark (Vice President, Instruction)

Roles and Purpose Dimension Co-Chairs:
Kiwana Francis (Associate Professor, IT)
Gloria Mallett (Counselor, Professor)

Improvement Dimension Co-Chairs:
Lane Johnson (Director, Center for Teaching & Learning)
Colin Ward (Associate Professor, ESOL)

Pictures are included!!

Here is the link that opens the zip file.

<http://foetec.fyfoundations.org/fyfoundations/lonestarFoEpics.zip>