

Desired Student Learning Outcomes

The QEP team, in consultation with stakeholders from all parts of the college community, has intentionally developed a set of ambitious, unconventional learning outcomes that are tailored to fit the distinct culture, strengths and needs of NRCC students, faculty and staff. Those learning outcomes are described below. And a similarly ambitious and goal-directed plan for assessing these learning outcomes is described at the end of this document.

Goal Setting/Tracking

Students will set long-term goals as well as short term benchmarks for reaching those goals.

Explicit goal setting works to clarify and specify what students want to achieve. Absent this step, achievement is more difficult than it needs to be. It begins with the identification and selection of an “ultimate” goal for their academic careers. Once this ultimate goal is chosen and made explicit, it is then possible to develop a plan or pathway toward the achievement of the identified goal. This plan serves as a means to schedule and prioritize events required to achieve the goal. The components of this plan then become more specific, actionable goals that are more easily measured and achieved than the higher-order goal first specified.

The step of developing increasingly specific and short-term goals required to achieve the ultimate goal is necessary for many reasons. The ultimate goal will be too remote to drive the day-to-day behaviors required to succeed. One does not simply get an associate’s degree in instrumentation and automation control. Instead, an associate’s degree is earned through a process of taking and passing courses in the desired field that together lead to the achievement of the ultimate goal. Making this path explicit provides the opportunity to plan the day-to-day activities required to succeed in the courses required to earn the degree. Indeed, this level of incremental goal setting provides more than a path to achievement to follow. Incremental goal

setting provides a number of places at which both the student and the student support team (including college faculty and staff, fellow students, family and friends) can assess the extent to which the incremental goals are being successfully achieved. This process provides an opportunity not only to reward the achievement of these required steps, but also to identify and correct problems that are encountered along the way. It is important to realize that the achievement of even seemingly small goals needs to be rewarded as the journey progresses. Rewards, even less tangible rewards like praise, are required for students to continue to engage in the behaviors that make them successful day to day. Absent these rewards, the necessary behaviors become less frequent and the likelihood of success decreases.

For NRCC students, goal setting will begin before they ever show up for orientation through a questionnaire. When students begin at NRCC they will be guided through a process that concludes with their selection of an academic plan (major). This major is associated with a specified set of courses and a timetable for the completion of the courses. Using this basic idealized template, students will then specify their goals in course selection and timing toward the achievement of the academic award in the plan. This goal setting will also include intermediate awards/certificate/certifications that can be achieved during the progress toward the ultimate academic award being sought.

The purpose of this initial goal setting exercise is for students to have a specific set of timing expectations to plan toward. When developing this plan, students should include non-academic challenges in developing a reasonable plan. These would include (but will not be restricted to) family life (child or elder care requirements, for example) and financial requirements that could affect timing such as work schedules and financial aid eligibility requirements.

The explicit nature of this more detailed plan permits the ASLP team and faculty advisors to assess each student's progress and to reward (praise) their accomplishments and act to remediate challenges that arise when adequate progress is not observed. However, when establishing goals, it will be desirable to think about setting goals at a level even more specific

than how many and what courses might be taken at a certain time. It is desirable to set course specific goals that track what is required as detailed by the course syllabus each semester to further aid in planning and assessing progress toward not only an acceptable grade in the course but also the achievement of the ultimate goal.

Associated Learning Outcomes

- Students will articulate active educational goals.
- Students will develop learning plans with specific timelines for achieving the articulated goals.
- Students will meet targets specified in the learning plan timeline. (Note: When learning plan targets are not met, new targets will be developed together with strategies to improve the likelihood of meeting the revised targets.)

Community Building

Students, faculty and staff will see themselves as vital parts of the NRCC community who should ask for and offer help to each other.

The basic concept for the QEP is that students will be more likely to persist if they perceive themselves as part of a college community that supports and values their achievements. This persistence is required for students to achieve the goals specified in the first track of this discussion. Fundamental in this approach is the concept that absent the belief among students that they form part of a larger, supportive NRCC community, these students may have difficulty amassing the psychological, academic or physical resources required to achieve their identified goals.

Associated Learning Outcomes:

- Students will know other students, faculty and staff.
- Students will ask for help when experiencing academic and personal challenges.
- Students will hold the belief that they are not alone in the fact that they have both academic and life challenges to overcome in order to succeed.
- Students will feel that others care about their success, failures, and problems.
- Students will care about the success, failures, and problems of others.