# Denmark Technical College
# QEP Impact Report

**Denmark Technical College** is a public, comprehensive, Historically Black (HBCU), two-year technical college located in Denmark, South Carolina; population – 3000. The College is an open-door institution and the only member of the South Carolina Technical College System that provides on-campus housing. Denmark Tech annually educates approximately 2,000 credit and continuing education hour students and awards 200 associate degrees, diplomas, or certificates.

The mission of Denmark Technical College is fourfold: 1) to provide students the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and maintenance of employment as technical, semi-professional, and skilled workers in engineering and industrial technologies, business, computer technologies, and public service; 2) to prepare students for transfer to senior institutions; 3) to provide graduates with competency in written and oral communications, computer literacy, information processing, mathematics, problem-solving and interpersonal skills necessary for life-long learning; and 4) to enhance the economic development and growth of the service area and the state.

**Title/brief description of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) as initially presented**:

Project STAR: Systematic Teaching and Retention is the Quality Enhancement Plan of Denmark Technical College. The institution's Leadership Team proposed an ambitious yet attainable outline of quality improvements in advising, instruction, tutoring, and mentoring and student life/student support services. The premise was that a defined, ordered and concerted vehicle, the STAR Center, would produce higher percentages of students returning to the institution for a consecutive semester. Students served would be those testing into three (3) classes in the Transitional (Developmental) Studies Program: English, Math and Reading. Proactive elements would be introduced to advance attrition-intervention. As documented in the QEP, attrition in 2004 for this identified group at Denmark Tech was 49%. The Plan outlined the STAR Center to establish systematic support in tutoring, mentoring, technology, counseling and college preparations (College Skills course). It was to produce and induce greater levels of perceptions of Mattering as well as to offer academic and student life/student support services (a proved concept in retention Best Practice theory; students who feel as if they "matter" tend to have higher rates of retention). Mattering, as outlined in the DTC QEP, was inclusive of expanded connectivity similar to that of a Learning Community. The Center also would support existing College mechanisms including Counseling, Enrollment Management (Admissions, Recruiting, and Career Planning and Placement), Financial Aid and Student Support Services (Childcare, Residential Life, Transportation and Tutoring). Quantitative data would be used to individualize and guide offerings and to evidence achievements in and outcomes of retention. Qualitative data

would evidence perceptions of Mattering and attrition-intervention. Existing assessment instruments to be used were the institution's New Student Survey and the Student Evaluation of Classroom Instruction. A survey to assess the STAR Center also was proposed and eventually developed: the STAR Center Quality Scale Survey.

**Brief Description of the STAR Center:** The STAR Center is a unit designed solely for Project STAR actualization. It is a dynamic unit that propagates the effective use of academic and student life/ student support assistance through organized and structured systems. The physical structure houses a self-contained SMART learning laboratory. The multi-purpose main area is an open facility with a station for an administrative assistant, three open small-group tutoring centers, and five office cubicles for four fulltime paraprofessionals/tutors and one fulltime counselor. Two adjacent, self-contained offices are for a STAR-dedicated data coordinator and the STAR Director, respectively. There are additional computers in the main area for student use. All computers contain TABE (The Test for Adult Basic Education) access, CareerScope and MHC (McGraw-Hill/Contemporary) Assessment: GED. The Center supports a fall, spring and summer cohort annually as well as students retained from previous cohorts, averaging 345 students served per academic year.

**GOALS of Project STAR:** As stated in the QEP, "The primary goal of Project STAR is to improve retention of Transitional Studies students through systematic teaching, and enhanced academic support and student support services." From this primary goal, seven corroborative goals were defined. Expected Student Learning Outcomes were outlined as measurable results of ten action initiatives that addressed the corroborative goals. Project STAR was fully federally funded; all goals and initiatives were implemented.

**Table 1: Primary and Corroborative Goals**

| **"THE PRIMARY GOAL OF PROJECT STAR IS RETENTION"** |
|---|
| **Corroborative Goals** |
| **Goal 1:** To adopt Project STAR as one of our institutional goals. |
| **Goal 2:** To encourage a sense of campus community; to create inclusive opportunities for self enhancement. |
| **Goal 3:** To offer a continuum of education and experiences to develop and enhance the personal perspective of future goals and success for our students. |
| **Goal 4**: To improve communication among groups and organizations about job opportunities and employee expectations. |
| **Goal 5:** To develop a group mentoring program with off-campus professionals. |
| **Goal 6:** To develop study groups and assist STAR Scholars in participating in these groups. |
| **Goal 7:** To ensure broad dissemination of information learned and gathered. |

**Significant Changes:** During the execution of EEO, the institution experienced several changes. Most significant were governance changes at the institution. Since 2005, DTC Leadership Teams have included four CEOs, three Chief Academic Officers, three Chief Financial Officers, three Deans or Vice Presidents of Institutional Research Development, two Deans of Transitional Studies, and two SACS Liaisons; various combinations have produced

more than ten Leadership Team groupings. Project STAR was affected by several Leadership Teams. In Year One (2005-06), the responsibilities of the Data Coordinator were shifted from the STAR Center to Institutional Research and Planning. Consequently, by Year Three (2007-08), the institution decided to eliminate the position. Henceforth, the responsibilities were managed by the Office of Institutional Research Planning and Development. In Year Four (2008-09), due to budgetary constraints, the English Tutor was terminated. From that point forward, the responsibilities were managed by peer tutors. Another change to Project STAR as written in the QEP beginning in Year Four (2008-09), were limitations placed on outlined co-curricular off-campus learning experiences were,– workplace settings**.** Initiative 6 of the QEP states that the students will tour at least one new workplace setting each semester to learn about the variety of employment possibilities. These opportunities were not afforded to the student's thus limiting career explorations and inventories.

**Description of the QEP's Impact on Student Learning:** The initial and primary impact of Project STAR was an increase in retention. Proposed was an increase in retention by 1% annually. In Year One (2005-06), a positive impact was realized when pre-QEP rates of 50% moved to 75%. STAR averaged above 80% retention through Year Four (2009-10). Relative to retention was re-enrollment rates. STAR students who re-enrolled for subsequent semesters – third semester on – numbered 384, one-third (1/3) of the total STAR enrollment In Year Five (2009-10), Cohort 14 students pre-registered for Fall 2010 classes, and upon returning will be counted as "Re-enrolled," not retained.

**Table 2: Cohort Retention**

| Retained per Academic Year | 2005-06 Cohorts 1-3 | 2006-07 Cohorts 4-6 | 2007-08 Cohorts 7-9 | 2008-09 Cohorts 10-12 | 2009-10 Cohorts 13-15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 75.3% | 83.6% | 81.7% | 85.2% | 45.6% |

Semester to semester retention rates per cohort per annum (*see Appendix 1*)

**Evaluation of Implementation:** Project STAR was quantitatively and qualitatively assessed and evaluated internally. STAR data also were assessed and evaluated by a national external auditor in Year Two (2006) Year Three (2007) and Year Five (2009). Student data were collected by the Office for Institutional Research and Development. Cohort information was compiled annually by the Dean of Transitional Studies assisted by the Enrollment Management Office and the Career Planning and Placement Office. The ten action initiatives outlined in the QEP have been successfully implemented to varying degrees: accomplished as outlined in the initial document; modified due to re-focusing and/or scope; or, tabled due to time constraints. Documented in the final external audit (February 2010), the national external auditor ranked the degree of implementation using a scale from one to five with one reflecting the lowest rating and five as the highest rating.

**Table 3: Impact of Corroborative Goals and Action Initiatives**

**Goal 1: To adopt Project STAR as one of our institutional goals**

**Action Initiative 1:** To establish the Systematic Teaching and Retention (STAR) Center. **Implementation Status:** Accomplished. Rating: 4.0

**Impact**:
Retention of students enrolled in Transitional (Developmental) Studies was increased. A direct result of this increase was a significantly higher percentage of students transitioning into a college major or the workforce as credentialed. Mattering, to include the positive perceptions of the STAR Experience, was attributable.

**Expected Outcomes and Actual Outcomes**

1) Students will know the staff, services, and benefits of the STAR Center – 10% monthly for Year One (2005-06) (*Data were not collected monthly. Students gained knowledge through mandatory use of the STAR Center. For orientation, tutoring, counseling and advising – 83.3% indicated satisfied*);
2) Students will be successful in learning skills in English, Math and Reading – 60% (*Students retained demonstrated success – 74.2%*);
3) Students will be sufficiently motivated to return in the following semester – 75% (*Motivation was not measured. However, retention rates Years One (2005-06) through Four (2008-09) averaged above 80%*);
4) Students will accomplish all requirements to move into a regular college curriculum – 2% per year (*Increases in Years One (2005-06) through Three (2008-09) averaged 11% per year. The summative average is 20% higher than that prior to STAR implementation*);
5) Students will be satisfied with their classroom experiences in English, Math, and Reading (*83.4% of students felt satisfied*).

**Action Initiative 4:** To improve quality of instruction through faculty development.
**Implementation Status**: Accomplished. Rating: 4.0

**Impact**:
STAR staff respectively attended thirty (30) conferences and disseminated Best Practice information to colleagues. Students perceived that success was due, in part, to varied instructional techniques and methods that included technology.

**Expected Outcomes and Actual Outcomes**

6) Students will indicate that they have been successful in learning course content due to the use of technology - 75% (*90.3% of students indicated that technology assisted their learning*);
7) Students will indicate that they have been successful in learning course content due to the use of a variety of instructional methods in the classroom - 75% (*84.5% of students indicated that instructors used a variety of methods*);
8) Students will indicate that they have been successful in learning because faculty used teaching techniques that addressed their learning styles - 75% (*84.4% of STAR students felt teachers used a variety of techniques*).

**Goal 2: To encourage a sense of campus community; to create inclusive opportunities for self enhancement.**

**Action Initiative 5**: To establish STAR Orientation; an interview and registration process for incoming STAR Scholars during the registration period.
**Implementation Status**: Accomplished. Rating: 4.0

**Impact**:
STAR Orientation led to the College at-large re-focused efforts to improve the orientation process. Attention was placed on acclimating students to all aspects of registration and easing the process of placement assessment through additional technology and technology assistants.

**Expected Outcomes and Actual Outcomes**

1) Students will be motivated by the STAR Orientation experience – 80%
   (*Motivation was not measured. 97.8% indicated that the Orientation was informative*);
2) Students will be satisfied with their introduction to the campus and their orientation and registration process – 80%
   (*93.2% of STAR students felt that personnel were helpful and 86.2% were treated with respect*);

**Action Initiative 1:** To establish the Systematic Teaching and Retention (STAR) Center.
**Implementation Status**: Accomplished. Rating: 4.0

**Impact**: A sense of community was established.

**Expected Outcomes and Actual Outcomes**

3) Students will develop a sense of community based in part on their regular interaction with counselors and paraprofessionals – 80%
   (*92.4% of STAR students felt that they were an important part of the campus community*);

**Action Initiative 7:** To implement the Pilot Educator's Program.
**Implementation Status**: Modified. Rating: 3.8

**Impact:** Outlined technologies were not executed to allow full implementation of the Pilot Educators Program. Pilot Educators addressed College Skills classes. Consistent interaction, as anticipated, was unavailable.

**Expected Outcomes and Actual Outcomes**

4) Students will develop a sense of community due to involvement with the Pilot Educators in addition to the STAR Center staff – 80%
   (*88.2% indicated that they felt the staff caring. No Pilot Educators data were available*);

**Action Initiative 6:** To expand career and life support programs offered through Student Support Services.
**Implementation Status:** Accomplished. Rating: 4.0

**Impact**: STAR students were engaged in all aspects of the campus community and felt important to the college (92.4%). Student engagement continued for students transitioned.

**Expected Outcomes and Actual Outcomes**

5) STAR students will gain a sense of campus community through special programs targeting educational, cultural, and social topics each semester – 75%
   (*91.8% of STAR students indicated that they felt a sense of campus community through special programs targeting social, cultural and social topics.*);

**Goal 3: To offer a continuum of education and experiences to develop and enhance the personal perspective of future goals and success for our students**.

**Initiative 2** –To establish a collaborative-instruction College Skills class.
**Implementation Status**: Accomplished. Rating: 4.0

**Impact**: STAR students created portfolios, career maps, and clear goals in the College Skills class. Students indicated that their education and career skills improved (98.3%)

**Expected Outcomes and Actual Outcomes**

1) Students will learn to map their academic, career, and life goals
   (*All STAR students are required to undertake these actions as requirements of the College Skills class, Col 103 with a class – 89.6% class success rate);*

2) Students will demonstrate note-taking ability in class
(*89.6% class success rate*);
3) Students will learn to keep logs and a journal
(*89.6% class success rate*);
4) Students will identify their basic learning style and leaverage what they know to their advantage
(*89.6% class success rate*);
5) Students will demonstrate competence in using basic computer skills for note-taking, testing, and the completion of assignments
(*89.6% class success rate*);

**Initiative 6** – To expand career and life support programs offered through Student Support Services. **Implementation Status**: Accomplished. Rating: 4.0

**Impact**: TABE and Career-Scope results were used by staff and students to focus efforts in instruction and mentoring. TABE also was used to assist in academic readiness for students wishing to become high school credentialed. Additional tutoring and/or one-on-one instruction was determined though TABE.

**Expected Outcomes and Actual Outcomes**

6) Students will explore their career and academic goals using the Student Goals Inventory – 80%
(*All students were required to explore career and academic goals and readiness through TABE and CareerScope – 100%*);

**Initiative 9** – To effectively use computer technology to enhance student learning through the STAR Center.
**Implementation Status**: Modified Rating: 3.8

**Impact**: Computers and technology continually have been added to the STAR Center. Student survey felt that their learning and test-taking skills were improved.

**Expected Outcomes and Actual Outcomes**

7) Students will increase their usage of computers in the learning process – 75%
(*89.2% of STAR students indicated that their new computer skills attributed to the learning process*);
8) Students will use technology mentors to assist them in learning how to use the technology effectively – 76%
(*Technology mentors (tutors) were indicated as helpful – 83.0%*);

**Goal 4: To improve communication among groups and organizations about job opportunities and employee expectations.**

**Initiative 6** – To expand career and life support programs offered through Student Support Services. **Implementation Status**: Accomplished. Rating: 4.0

**Impact**: STAR students who toured indicated (100%) that they gained new knowledge of career options. This event proved more successful in contributing to their workforce development than did the Mentoring Program.

**Expected Outcomes and Actual Outcomes**

1) Students will tour at least one new workplace setting each semester to learn about the variety of employment possibilities - 75%
(Tours *of business or industry took place one per semester through YEAR Four*);
2) Students will be involved in presentations of information on job opportunities and their benefits from the Office of Career Planning and Placement – 70%
(*The Career Planning and Placement Officer presented to the cohort specific College Skills class every semester – 89.6% success*)

**Initiative 8** – To establish a mentoring program with off-campus professionals.
**Implementation Status**: Accomplished. Rating: 5.0

**Impact**: STAR students received mentoring in small groups from business and industry leaders in the service area. This assisted in informing the community at large about the STAR Program. Mentors expressed an appreciation for

the knowledge gained regarding workforce development (100%)

**Expected Outcomes and Actual Outcomes**

3) Students will learn about career options, workplace realities, and job seeking strategies from their Mentors – 80%
(*72.0% of Star students reported that they learned about career options, workplace realities, and job seeking strategies from their Mentors*).

**Goal 5: To develop a group mentoring program with off-campus professionals.**

**Initiative 8** – To establish a mentoring program with off-campus professionals.
**Implementation Status**: Accomplished. Rating: 5.0

**Impact**: STAR students had career choices in mind prior to working with Mentors. While the Program was implemented well, Mattering was limited as perceptions of the impact of the Mentors were lower than expected.

**Expected Outcomes and Actual Outcomes**)

1) Students will learn about career options, workplace realities, and job seeking strategies from their Mentors – 80%
(*72.0% of Star students reported that they learned about career options, workplace realities, and job seeking strategies from their Mentors*);
2) Students will utilize Mentors to help them determine career paths – 80%
(*60.0% indicated that Mentors helped them determine career paths*);
3) Students will be motivated to continue on their chosen career path by their contact with their Mentors – 80%
(*70.0% indicated that contact with Mentors motivated continuation on career paths*);
4) Students will express satisfaction with the Mentors Program – 80%
(*75.0% of STAR students expressed satisfaction with the Mentors Program*).

**Goal 6: To develop study groups and assist STAR Scholars in participating in these groups.**

**Initiative 3 –** To establish small group learning across the curriculum.
**Implementation Status**: Accomplished. Rating: 4.0

**Impact**: STAR students expressed high perceptions of Mattering in their inclusion of small group and one-on-one instruction indicated as attributable to their academic success (93.5%, 95.7%).

**Expected Outcomes and Actual Outcomes**

1) All students will demonstrate active learning through small group work – 80%
(*100% of STAR students worked in small groups in the STAR Center*);
2) STAR Scholars will feel that they were successful learning in small groups – 80%
(*93.5% of students stated that they learned in small groups*);
3) The STAR faculty will be satisfied with the level of student learning in small groups – 75%
(*100% of the STAR faculty/staff expressed satisfaction with student learning levels*);

**Initiative 4** – To improve quality of instruction through faculty development.
**Implementation Status**: Accomplished. Rating: 4.0

**Impact**: STAR Tutors utilized small group and one-on-one instruction to effectively individualize instruction (100%). Students indicated that they felt "in control" of their educational experience (92.6%)

**Expected Outcomes and Actual Outcomes**

4) Students will indicate they have been successful in learning course content due to their experience in working with small groups – 75%
*(93.5% of students stated that they learned in small groups);*

**Goal 7: To ensure broad dissemination of information learned and gathered.**

**Initiative 10**: To communicate information about the Project through Published Reports and Public Relations.
**Implementation Status**: In-Development. Rating: 2.0

**Impact**: The presence of Project STAR as a link on the DTC WEB page and its inclusion in publications generated by the College have assisted in the dissemination of information about the program. Brochures were created by the STAR Director to ensure that the College Community as well as the recruiters highlighted offerings.

**Expected Outcomes and Actual Outcomes**

*1)* Students will experience a sense of community appreciation of their accomplishments through the publication of their successes in the news media and other avenues – 75%
*(Project STAR successes were not publicized in news media; transitioned STAR students were recognized at honors programs and its College graduates at Senior Luncheons, annually);*

2) Students will indicate that the WEB page greatly facilitated their knowledge of STAR Center activities and their communication with STAR Center staff – 70%
*(No data available);*

3) Students will express an awareness of and appreciation for the STAR Experience – 75%
*(100% of STAR students were aware of the STAR Center, 81.6% satisfied with the Experience).*

**Unexpected Impact of Project STAR:** A positive impact occurred in Year Three (2007-08), when the STAR Center Counselor was promoted to Director of Counseling for the institution. As a result, "Best Practices" were adopted college-wide to advance attrition-intervention. Another unanticipated impact was an increase in the number of Transitional Studies students receiving high school credentials. In Spring 2004, there were 163 students enrolled at the college and were seeking a high school credential; only 4 (2.4%) of those students were successful and earned their high school credential. In Year One – Five of the QEP (2005-2010), as a direct result of the QEPs initiative to help students achieve requirements necessary to move into a regular college curriculum (Goal 1, Initiative 1), the number and percentage of students enrolled at the college who earned their high school credential markedly increased.

See the data below in Table 4:

**Table 4: Annual Credential Recipients**

| Credentials per Academic Year | 2005-06 Cohorts 1-3 | 2006-07 Cohorts 4-6 | 2007-08 Cohorts 7-9 | 2008-09 Cohorts 10-12 | 2009-10 Cohorts 13-15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 42<br>19.9% | 42<br>25.4% | 57<br>36.0% | 44<br>30.9% | 17<br>8.7% |

Semester to semester credential rates per cohort per annum (*see Appendix 1*)

Long-term engagement of students who matriculated from Transitional Studies into a curriculum program was another unexpected impact that occurred as a result of the efforts made by the QEP. While short-term engagement for students who were enrolled in the STAR activity was an expected outcome, on-going, post-transitioned engagement was not anticipated. What is more, STAR students distinguished themselves in many others ways. In Year Three (2007-08), the recipient of the Presidential Service Award (outstanding senior) was a STAR-served transitioned graduate. In Year Five (2009-10), a STAR student served as President of the Student Government

Association. Co-curricular and extra-curricular areas of engagement included Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, DTC SGA, College committees and many other co- and extra-curricular organizations.

**Summary:** Project STAR has provided a means by which existing and new systems of support converge at the college to allow a more proficient method of producing and delivering quality education. Prior to the inception of the QEP, the college's retention rate for Transitional Studies students was 49%. Retention of Transitional Studies students from the Fall to Spring terms averaged 79.8% each year of the STAR initiative. This reflects a 30.8% increase in the retention of Transitional Studies students at the college and strongly supports the success of the systematic use of methodology and Best Practices that were introduced via the STAR initiative. The perception of Mattering has been documented (by whom) as effectual in realizing attrition-intervention and has produced levels of engagement similar to the expectations as outlined in the QEP. Improvements in the quality of academic support services across the campus have prompted the use of Best Practices which have proved successful. In subsequent years (2010-2015), Denmark Technical College will effectively absorb the Project Star initiative as a permanent and continuous component of the College. Modifications have begun.

**Appendix I**

| Academic Cohort | # of Students in Cohort | # of Students Withdrawn from the college | # of Students Retain | # of Students Adjacent Semester | # of Students who earned high school credential | # of students who earned |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cohort 1 Fall 2005 | 124 | -17 | 107 | 95<br>88.7% | 18<br>16.8% | 4<br>3.7% |
| Cohort 2 Spring 2006 | 112 | -22 | 90 | 53<br>48.8% | 20<br>22.2% | 0<br>0.0% |
| Cohort 3 Summer 2006 | 14 | -0 | 14 | 11<br>78.6.6% | 4<br>28.5% | 1<br>7.1% |
| 2005-06 Cohorts 1-3 | 250 | -39 | 211 | 159<br>75.3% | 42<br>19.8% | 5<br>2.3% |
| Cohort 4 Fall 2006 | 159 | -30 | 129 | 116<br>89.9% | 22<br>17.0% | 7<br>5.5% |
| Cohort 5 Spring 2007 | 47 | -19 | 28 | 15<br>53.3% | 14<br>50.0% | 0<br>0.0% |
| Cohort 6 Summer 2007 | 9 | -1 | 8 | 7<br>87.5% | 6<br>75.0% | 0<br>0.0% |
| 2006-07 Cohorts 4- 6 | 215 | -50 | 165 | 138<br>83.6% | 42<br>25.4% | 7<br>2.1% |
| Cohort 7 Fall 2007 | 145 | -47 | 98 | 82<br>83.6% | 29<br>29.5% | 10<br>10.2% |
| Cohort 8 Spring 2008 | 92 | -45 | 47 | 44<br>98.1% | 15<br>31.9% | 1<br>2.1% |
| Cohort 9 Summer 2008 | 18 | -5 | 13 | 3<br>23.0% | 13<br>100% | 1<br>7.6% |
| 2007-08 Cohorts 7- 9 | 255 | -97 | 158 | 129<br>81,7% | 57<br>36.0% | 12<br>7.5% |
| Cohort 10 Fall 2008 | 116 | -25 | 91 | 79<br>86.8% | 17<br>18.6% | 4<br>4.4% |
| Cohort 11 Spring 2009 | 47 | -10 | 37 | 30<br>81.0% | 17<br>46.2% | None to date |
| Cohort 12 Summer 2009 | 14 | -0 | 14 | 12<br>85.7% | 10<br>71.4% | None to date |
| 2008-09 Cohorts 10-12 | 177 | -35 | 142 | 121<br>85.2% | 44<br>30.9% | 4<br>2.8% |
| Cohort 13 Fall 2009 | 123 | -11 | 112 | 77<br>68.7% | 11<br>9.8% | None to date |
| Cohort 14 Spring 2010 | 78 | -8 | 70 | 7<br>10.0% | 2<br>2.8% | None to date |
| Cohort 15 Summer 2010 | 12 | -0 | 12 | 4<br>30.0% | 4<br>33.3% | Data Not Available |
| 2009-10 Cohorts 14-16 | 213 | -19 | 194 | 88<br>45.6% | 17<br>8.8% | None to date |

^ The College withdrew students in accordance with governance withdrawal policies in the categories of Administrative, Deceased, Disciplinary, Excessive Absences, Medical and Personal.