

Quality Initiative Proposal – Rhodes State College

Comprehensive Early Alert Program (CEAP)

James A. Rhodes State College

Overview of the Quality Initiative

(1) Provide a title and brief description of the Quality Initiative. Explain whether the initiative will begin and be completed during the Quality Initiative period or if it is part of work already in progress or will achieve a key milestone in the work of a longer initiative.

Rhodes State College (Rhodes State) has selected the Comprehensive Early Alert Program (**CEAP**) as its Quality Initiative to support the accreditation process through the Open Pathway accreditation model set forth by the Higher Learning Commission. **CEAP** evolved from Rhodes State's current early alert initiative which ties directly to the 2014-2016 Campus Completion Plan. The initiative takes a proactive approach to student success and completion and also supports the College's Strategic Plan as an integration and continuation of these planned efforts. **CEAP** is a comprehensive, faculty initiated communication system developed to increase student retention and success by connecting students, especially those academically at-risk, with immediate and intensive interventions resulting in positive academic behaviors. Planning for **CEAP** evolved out of Rhodes State's institutional strategic and completion planning efforts and is an inclusive program intended to quickly identify student challenges early in the semester; proactively connect students to faculty and support services necessary for success; and track student engagement and outcomes for analysis and future improvement.

The program also fosters greater collaboration between the Academic and Student Affairs areas with the objective of increasing student persistence, retention and completion. The primary intervention for students originates with the faculty and transitions into three additional access points where intervention will occur: (1) the Academic Success Center; (2) Student Affairs Advising; and (3) Academic Faculty Advising. Early alert programs are proven to be fundamental components of retention and completion when multiple offices are working together towards the common goal of student success (McDonnell, Soricone, & Sheen, 2014). **CEAP** will bridge the gap between Academic and Student Affairs to establish a more effective student success model.

The **four (4) goals** of the **CEAP** include: (1) create a culture of engagement for faculty and staff by providing professional development throughout the academic year; (2) promote student engagement through the development of policies and procedures that currently limit faculty and staff's ability to best serve students; (3) enhance current interventions to increase academic success and (4) improve the access, sharing and utilization of data through a centralized data management system. The expected milestones of **CEAP** include improved: course completion, semester-to-semester persistence and annual retention.

Sufficiency of the Initiative's Scope and Significance

(2) Explain why the proposed initiative is relevant and significant for the institution. (3) Explain the intended impact of the initiative on the institution and its academic quality.

The focus for **CEAP** is to provide intentional and incremental engagement by faculty and staff to yield greater course success and resource awareness for students. The Academic Success Center, where tutoring and academic coaching services are housed, had three unsuccessful implementations of an early alert system. These failures were due to departmental silos, lack of a cross-departmental, integrated processes and inconsistent practices and policies to guide, and mandate as appropriate, students to use support resources. Currently, these services are not structured to facilitate a coordinated connection

between the educational experiences occurring inside and outside of the classroom. The lack of leadership within the Academy, coupled with the absence of an institutional model, contributed to several failed attempts by Rhodes State to employ a comprehensive approach to early alert.

The College has several free-standing systems to track how students overcome academic and non-academic barriers. In short, there is no bridge to connect the independent technical systems to a process for shared access to data between the Academic Success Center, Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. Planning for previous early alert systems did not include a policy and procedure review to appropriately design an intervention strategy. Previous attempts by Rhodes State to utilize early alert systems depended upon faculty for early classroom assessment and tracking of student performance; however, the communication process that was in place to identify and share information about students with at-risk behaviors, was not clearly defined. It did not promote “closing the loop” between the faculty, advisors or the academic support staff charged with intervening. Faculty and staff training to use the system was available at the onset; however, there was no mandate to participate. Voluntary participation by faculty declined with each attempt. There was also nominal collaboration between the leadership of Academic and Student Affairs. With the development of **CEAP**, the College intends to shift from a fractured process to a comprehensive model that fosters high student and faculty engagement.

At Rhodes State, 71% of students received a grade of “C” or better during fall 2014. **CEAP** will also address the barriers for the 29% with a “D” or below and 2% of part-time or full-time students who withdrew. During AY 2014-15 the semester-to-semester persistence and annual retention for the College was 54.25% and 53.7%, respectively. National research indicates that the majority of students who withdraw from college are in good academic standing at the time of their departure. In an effort to increase completion milestones: (1) course completion rates; (2) semester-to-semester persistence and (3) retention), Rhodes State is committed to more fully engage students, faculty, and staff across the campus. **CEAP** is a comprehensive communication system designed to help facilitate connections on campus for all faculty, staff and students. Tinto’s theory of college student engagement indicates that students who become connected on campus have an increased likelihood of being retained and being successful (2012). Early alert systems have been shown to positively impact students’ course completion and persistence rates (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2012). Increasing students’ awareness of their academic challenges and connecting them with the relevant resources allows them to build essential college know-how (Karp, 2011).

Facilitating persistence begins prior to entrance through college readiness efforts designed to ensure that students understand the importance of entrance exams, course sequencing and career goals. Intervention strategies promote engagement in course work, with faculty and staff, and can lead to a higher level of student achievement. Managing process improvement and reshaping our institutional culture to build a sustainable model that incentivizes students to persist and complete is critical to the success of all students. **CEAP** is comprised of mandatory, early course assessment and follow-up intervention, both leveraged by technology. **CEAP** will be implemented in the spring of 2016 in order to promote course completion and student persistence. Part of the improvement focus includes shifting the historical status of free-standing technology and inter-departmental communication barriers, to implementing a program that is student-centric and encourages faculty, advisor, success coach, and administrator intervention. The primary intervention for students originates with the faculty and transitions into three additional access points where intervention will occur: (1) the Academic Success Center; (2) Student Affairs Advising; and (3) Academic Faculty Advising. When a faculty member requests intervention, the Academic Success Center staff, Student Affairs advisors or Academic Affairs faculty advisors respond by connecting with the student and designing the appropriate Academic Recovery Plan. The Academic Recovery Plan is an agreement between the advisor and the student that clearly defines the actions necessary for academic recovery and long term skill-building. Other intervention modalities will be designed into the **CEAP** to

provide additional support to students. Institutional Research will oversee data reporting and outcome analysis for future improvement.

Rhodes State selected as its first Quality Initiative, the implementation of **CEAP**. This is in great part a commitment to our vision and fulfillment of the College's mission. In addition, **CEAP** is in direct alignment with our 2012-2015 Strategic Plan, "Rediscover Rhodes". The goal to maximize access and student success through programs and services that meet the learning needs and interests of diverse students is the perfect platform. The planning for the **CEAP** also evolved out of Rhodes State's completion plan mandated by the State of Ohio for all publically funded institutions. The College's 2014-2016 Campus Completion Plan, "Driving Transformation" outlined eleven (11) initiatives requiring systematic improvement that would reach the departmental and classroom levels. The College President charged a 26 member Steering Committee, chaired by the vice presidents of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness to develop the completion plan. Committee members included 77 faculty, staff and administrators who worked collaboratively over several months to develop our institutional Completion Plan. Early Alert was one of eleven initiatives identified for development by the six (6) implementation teams. Based upon the Higher Learning Commission's requirements to designate a major improvement effort for reaffirmation of accreditation, Rhodes State opted to leverage the College's current work on Early Alert into the Comprehensive Early Alert Program.

CEAP is a faculty initiated communication system to increase student retention and success by proactively connecting students to faculty and support services necessary for success. **CEAP** will quickly identify student challenges early in the semester and connect students who exhibit poor academic performance and/or at-risk behaviors (e.g. lack of class attendance, low scores, missing assignments, academically underprepared, and life situations) to the resources and support services necessary for success. This initiative creates a unique opportunity to encourage greater collaboration between Academic and Student Affairs with the objective of increasing retention, persistence and completion while reducing the number of students placed on academic warning, probation or dismissal.

Clarity of the Initiative's Purpose

(4) Describe the purposes and goals for the initiative.

An early alert program tied directly to the Rhodes State Completion Plan takes a proactive approach to student success and completion. Mandatory use and scheduled reporting of **CEAP** will ensure the adoption of the Program. The following **four (4) goals** have been identified as essential for launching **CEAP**:

1. **Create a culture of engagement for faculty and staff by providing professional development throughout the academic year.** (Faculty and staff training will be based on national and regional promising practices aimed at keeping students engaged. Continual training will be provided using technology, small group sessions, and mentoring.)
2. **Promote student engagement through the development of policies and procedures that currently limit faculty and staff's ability to best serve students.** (Students will be active participants and have ownership in the early alert process through the development of their individualized Academic Recovery Plan in order to benefit from the Program.)
3. **Enhance current interventions to increase academic success.** (Techniques such as intrusive/proactive advising and success coaching will help connect students to necessary resources and encourage their progress.)
4. **Improve the access, sharing and utilization of data through a centralized data management system.** (Assess the early alert reporting and technology.)

Each of the goals will help shift the organizational culture from one that is reactive to proactive. Hence, the increased course completion, semester-to-semester persistence and annual retention will be improved/enhanced. Table 1 outlines the intended goals, action steps and expected outcomes of **CEAP**.

The **CEAP** model brings Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and faculty together for tracking students and providing early interventions. This highly integrated program links campus stakeholders to the shared goal of student completion and success by creating a process of continuous improvement which supports ongoing problem solving and dialogue between instructional and student support personnel (Dadgar, Nodine, Bracco, & Venezia, 2014).

Table 1: CEAP Goals, Action Steps and Outcomes

Intended Goal	Action Steps	Outcomes
1.0 Create a culture of engagement for faculty and staff by providing professional development throughout the academic year.	1.1 College President establishes an institutional mandate that aligns with the College's core values.	1.1.1 Faculty and staff align their practices to emulate a culture of early intervention. Commitment to early alert is communicated to the campus community at various required events such as the President's Forum, professional development days, employee onboarding, and faculty/adjunct training.
	1.2 Training held in April, August, and January with expert speakers.	1.2.1 Faculty and staff trained to effectively use the early alert reporting system as well as development of skills to effectively encourage and motivate students; helping them connect with resources.
	1.3 Reporting by faculty required at weeks 2 and 4 or 5 with Dean's reporting early alert activity regularly to VP for Academic Affairs.	1.3.1 Early identification of struggling students as well as accountability for required reporting.
	1.4 Establish a Committee of faculty and staff (Academic Affairs and Student Affairs).	1.4.1 Rigorous intervention for students with multiple early alerts, in order to address their challenges.

		1.4.2 Increased partnership between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to regularly discuss concerns related to specific students identified through the early alert process.
2.0 Promote student engagement through the development of policies and procedures that currently limit faculty and staff's ability to best serve students.	<p>2.1 Develop policy and procedures.</p> <p>2.2 Students collaborate with their advisor or success coach to develop an Academic Recovery Plan.</p> <p>2.3 The early alert program will be communicated to students at orientation, during the first-year experience course, and included in the master syllabus.</p>	<p>2.1.1 Policies and procedures designed to provide faculty and staff with a means of communicating and mandating intervention.</p> <p>2.2.1 Students will meet the requirements of their Academic Recovery Plan.</p> <p>2.3.1 All orientations, first-year experience courses, and master syllabi will include information about early alert.</p>
3.0 Enhance current interventions to increase academic success.	3.1 Promising practices for interventions will be used such as intrusive/proactive advising and success coaching.	3.1.1 Collaboration on intervention efforts between faculty, Student Affairs, and Academic Affairs will increase the successful implementation and continued use of early alert.
4.0 Improve the access, sharing and utilization of data through a centralized data management system.	<p>4.1 Institutional Research will oversee data access. Student Affairs and Academic Affairs staff and faculty will access the same reporting system and data for early alert.</p> <p>4.2 Adaptation of new tools for collecting and sharing data across departments.</p>	4.1.1 Regular reports (student academic standing, intervention strategies and outcomes, outcome assessment and improvement) will be created to share with stakeholders.

		4.2.1 Rhodes State will evaluate the progress of the program by collecting and analyzing institutional data to determine the effectiveness of the in and out-of-class student interventions.
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(5) Describe how the institution will evaluate progress, make adjustments, and determine what has been accomplished.

Rhodes State will evaluate the progress of **CEAP** by collecting and analyzing institutional data to enhance student success. The institutional data analysis will determine the effectiveness of the in-class and out-of-class student interventions and the impact of **CEAP** on organizational culture. Measurement milestones will include improved: (1) course completion rates; (2) semester-to-semester persistence and (3) retention.

The Office of Assessment and Quality Improvement and Institutional Research will facilitate the evaluation of **CEAP** as members of the Completion Plan Steering Committee, who will provide oversight of the evaluation process. The review will include an analysis of the process and outcome information gathered during various phases of the Quality Initiative (i.e., 6 months, 12 months, 18 months, 3 years, etc.). The Completion Plan Steering Committee will meet regularly to interpret and report findings, inclusive of recommendations for making modifications to improve **CEAP** outcomes. Table 2 outlines the evaluation process and summarizes the data that will be reviewed.

To ensure sustainability of the project, the **CEAP** implementation team will compile summary reports after collecting designated data for review by the College President and Cabinet. Based upon these reports, the Cabinet will determine the overall effectiveness of **CEAP**; providing insights for subsequent years or make a recommendation to modify specific **CEAP** activities.

Table 2: CEAP Evaluation Process

Goal	Information/Data	Responsible Parties	Due Date
1.0 Create a culture of engagement for faculty and staff by providing professional development throughout the academic year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of faculty and staff participating in CEAP. • Percentage of faculty and staff who participate in training. • Percentage of successful interventions. • Faculty perception of CEAP process. • CEAP participation reports. • CEAP meeting minutes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual faculty and staff • Deans • Chairs • Vice President Academic Affairs (VPAA) • Vice President Student Affairs (VPSA) 	End of fall and spring semester.
2.0 Promote student engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of policies and procedures modified and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual faculty 	End of fall and spring semester.

<p>through the development of policies and procedures that currently limit faculty and staff's ability to best serve students.</p>	<p>developed that are linked to student success and engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Academic Recovery Plans which lead to successful course completion and semester-to-semester persistence. • Percentage of students participating in interventions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisors • Success Coaches • Deans • Chairs • VPAA • VPSA • Students 	
<p>3.0 Enhance interventions to increase academic success.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent participation in professional development activities related to student success. • Number of new interventions implemented. • Evaluation of new interventions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual faculty • Advisors • Success Coaches • Deans • Chairs • VPAA • VPSA 	<p>End of fall and spring semester.</p>
<p>4.0 Improve the access, sharing and utilization of data through a centralized data management system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review process for access of CEAP data • Evaluation and observations of data sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual faculty and staff • Deans • Chairs • VPAA • VPSA 	<p>Annually.</p>

Evidence of Commitment to and Capacity for Accomplishing the Initiative

(6) Describe the level of support for the initiative by internal or external stakeholders.

Rhodes State developed its 2014-16 College Completion Plan with two primary themes emerging: (1) Student Engagement for Persistence and (2) College Readiness. Out of this effort, six (6) implementation teams were initially formed and charged with evaluating the institutional factors that impede student success. The early alert notification process was identified as a completion initiative and focus for improvement. An Early Alert Implementation Team was formed, charged with evaluating the current process, revitalizing the process or developing a new process. **CEAP** will be integrated into the operational framework of the College by: (1) the creation of policy and procedures; (2) mandatory faculty participation in training/professional development and (3) mandatory College wide participation in Presidential biannual forums. The team included members representing faculty and staff from across the College. The Completion Plan and **CEAP** are supported by the College President, members of the Cabinet, academic and administrative leadership, faculty and staff.

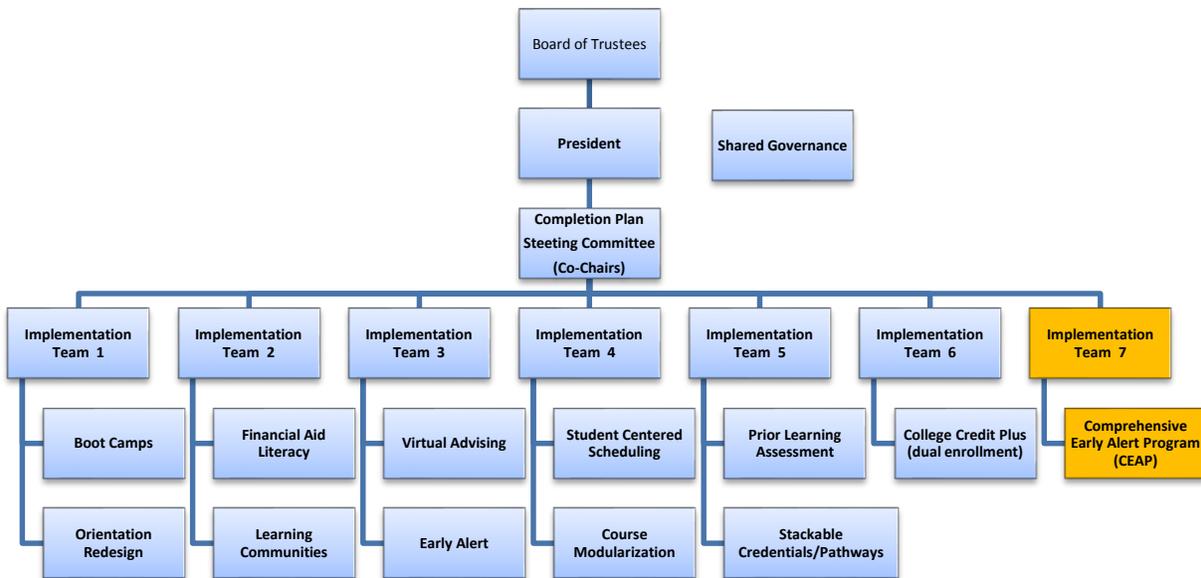
CEAP was included as a major project in the college-wide Completion Plan which seamlessly aligns with the institutional strategies outlined in our Strategic Plan. Resources for technology, intervention strategies, training and professional development will be included in the College's annual budget. The responsibilities of faculty and staff will be under continuous review to ensure proper prioritization towards efforts that ensure student success. Annual reviews will drive ongoing support and will contribute to the sustainability of this initiative.

(7) Identify the groups and individuals that will lead or be directly involved in implementing the initiative.

The Quality Initiative will be integrated into the existing Completion Plan organizational structure (Figure 1) to ensure successful implementation and oversight. The College President will charge a seventh Implementation Team in alignment with establishment of the previous six (6) teams.

The Completion Plan Steering Committee and the **CEAP** will guide the development and framework for the early alert initiative. The framework design will be accomplished through the research and evaluation of various pre-existing early alert programs and robust discussions at all levels of the college. Research will include identifying barriers, necessary policy and procedural changes, and the impact on infrastructure and resources. The Steering Committee will monitor the achievement of outcomes, and Completion Plan Co-chairs/Cabinet Liaisons will prepare and present reports on completion milestones to the Steering Committee being tracked in the college’s electronic-Strategic Institutional Effectiveness & Planning System (e-SIEPS). The Completion Steering Committee Chairs/Cabinet Liaisons will meet with the College President regularly to discuss the Program’s progress and eliminate barriers. This will be an on-going process to evaluate **CEAP** activities and interventions to determine if modifications are required. The evidence will be summarized in reports to the College President and Board of Trustees prior to submission to the Ohio Department of Higher Education spring 2016 (existing bi-annual reporting cycle) and the Higher Learning Commission fall 2017.

Figure 1: Completion Plan Organizational Structure



Note: The Completion Plan Early Alert initiative is transitioned to the more robust Comprehensive Early Alert Program.

(8) List the human, financial, technological and other resources that the institution has committed to this initiative.

The following stakeholders will participate in the implementation of **CEAP** as the Quality Initiative:

- College President;
- Board of Trustees;
- Cabinet members;
- Faculty and staff;
- Students;
- Shared Governance Councils and Committees;
- Completion Plan Steering Committee; and
- Quality Initiative Implementation Team.

In addition to the listed stakeholders, Rhodes State currently supports the AmeriCorps Completion Coach Program which provides academic and social support to students. Coaches focus on students impacted by CEAP. Completion coaches in Academic Affairs and academic advisors in Student Affairs serve as an integral part of the early alert response team. The College will continue to partner with AmeriCorps as a financial contributor.

The College's commitment to CEAP's sustainability is demonstrated by the current and intended investment in technology. CEAP is managed using an in-house early alert system (Banner) to track and report student progress. The Quality Initiative Implementation Team continues to provide recommendations for technology solutions that will provide more holistic case management options and more robust reporting and analytic tools.

Potential Challenges

Challenges to implementation of **CEAP** include: (1) an institutional culture of inconsistent practices, policies and procedures; (2) the need to shift leadership of assessment activities from predominantly administrative to faculty led; (3) insufficient participation from faculty due to limited faculty development; (4) insufficient participation from students due to competing priorities (i.e. work, home, academic responsibilities).

Addressing the potential challenges will require the College's commitment to: (1) improve policies and procedures for the management of CEAP; (2) develop faculty as leaders of CEAP assessment activities (3) increase professional development for faculty and staff on supporting at-risk students; and (4) foster a culture of caring and accountability that will encourage students to make their education a priority. The College's administration will continue to monitor and address any potential challenges of CEAP using data.

(9) Describe the primary activities of the initiative and timeline for implementing them.

The following timeline outlines the primary activities of the Quality Initiative. Additional activities and institutional issues will be added and addressed into the timeline as they evolve. Changes to the timeline will be documented as part of our process for evaluating Rhodes State's Quality Initiative.

- Fall 2014
 - Assign Implementation team.
 - Charge team with the Early Alert initiative.
 - Develop timeline for Early Alert research.
 - Conduct institutional information gathering.
 - Review the historical impact of Early Alert initiatives at the college.
 - Identify possible barriers to Early Alert design and implementation.
 - Examine previous and potential Early Alert technology tools.

- Spring 2015
 - Draft Early Alert definition and policy and identify stakeholders.
 - Gather testimony from appropriate faculty and staff.
 - Host demonstration of peer college Early Alert system and processes.
 - Facilitate the demonstration of Early Alert technology tools.
 - Forward team recommendations to the Completion Plan Steering Committee.
- Summer 2015
 - Approve Early Alert process and proposed technology.
 - Develop and test Early Alert technology.
 - Develop training calendar.
- Fall 2015
 - Train part-time and full-time faculty and staff.
 - Implement Early Alert for all sections and courses with mandatory faculty participation.
 - Develop a report structure for data gathering and analysis.
 - Monitor faculty participation and the Early Alert process effectiveness.
- Spring 2016
 - Assess Early Alert for fall 2015.
 - Present Early Alert outcomes to Completion Plan Steering Committee.
 - Charge the **CEAP** Implementation Team
 - Develop a **CEAP** assessment plan.
 - Make adjustments to Early Alert to transition into **CEAP**.
 - Draft Early Alert policies and submit through Shared Governance.
 - Provide continuous training for faculty and staff.
 - Submit the Completion Plan Report to the Ohio Department of Higher Education.
- Summer 2016
 - Assess **CEAP** for spring 2016.
 - Present **CEAP** outcomes to Completion Plan Steering Committee.
 - Refine **CEAP** based upon data and student outcomes.
 - Provide continuous training for staff.
 - Review and adjust **CEAP** resources.
- Fall 2016
 - Assess **CEAP** for summer 2016.
 - Present **CEAP** outcomes to Completion Plan Steering Committee.
 - Refine **CEAP** based upon data and student outcomes.
 - Provide continuous training for faculty and staff.
 - Present **CEAP** at the President's Forum.
 - Present **CEAP** at a regional or national conference as a promising practice.
- Spring 2017
 - Assess **CEAP** for fall 2016.
 - Present **CEAP** outcomes to Completion Plan Steering Committee.
 - Refine **CEAP** based upon data and student outcomes.
 - Provide continuous training for faculty and staff.
 - Present **CEAP** at the President's Forum.

- Summer 2017
 - Assess **CEAP** for spring 2017.
 - Present **CEAP** outcomes to Completion Plan Steering Committee.
 - Refine **CEAP** based upon data and student outcomes.
 - Provide continuous training for staff.

- Fall 2017
 - Assess **CEAP** for summer 2017.
 - Present **CEAP** outcomes to Completion Plan Steering Committee.
 - Refine **CEAP** based upon data and student outcomes.
 - Provide continuous training for faculty and staff.
 - Present **CEAP** at the President's Forum.
 - Submit Quality Initiative Report to the Higher Learning Commission.

Alignment with the implementation of other institutional priorities

Rhodes State has committed resources to **CEAP** by aligning with the two-year Completion Plan required by the Ohio Department of Higher Education. In addition, the College was diligent in assuring that **CEAP** is consistent with the Rhodes State mission and vision and will provide evidence that aligns with the integration and continuity of the current Strategic Plan.

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