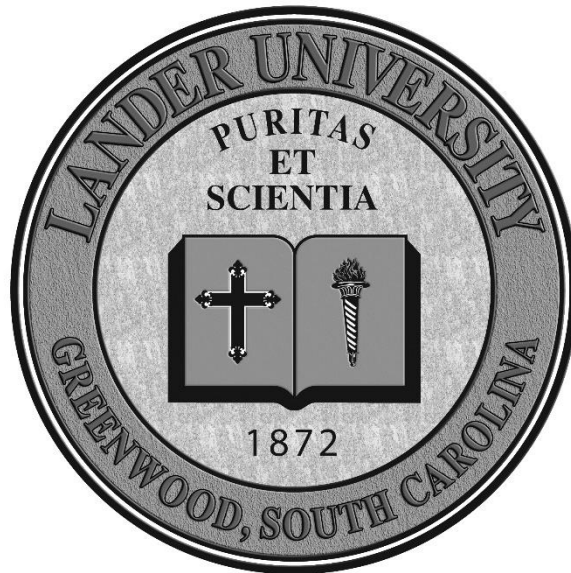# Lander University
Greenwood, South Carolina 29649

Originally Submitted: February 3, 2017
Revised and Resubmitted: September 1, 2017

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN
LINK: Leadership, Involvement, Networking, and Knowledge
Lander University's First Year Experience Program

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Executive Summary

Lander University's QEP centers on a first-year experience (FYE) program designated as the Leadership, Involvement, Networking, and Knowledge (LINK) Program. The mission of the LINK program is to connect students to the knowledge, resources, and experiences to successfully complete their major programs and graduate from Lander University. The LINK Program accomplishes this mission by the following: 1) representative administration of the program by a LINK Executive Committee (LINK ExComm), 2) development and delivery of a required freshman seminar course, LINK 101, 3) professional development of LINK 101 instructors through the LINK Academy, and 4) partnership with units across campus to deliver experiences for students, throughout their time at Lander University, known as LINK events.

LINK 101 is derived from an in-depth re-visioning of Lander's previous freshmen seminar course, UNI 101, that is intended to have a farther-reaching impact. Building on the foundation of the previous freshman seminar course, the University adopted a University Culture, Learning, and Development (UCLD) model to guide the redesign. The UCLD model is a combination of traditional extended orientation and academic types of first-year seminars. In addition, most LINK 101 class sections are taught from a discipline-specific perspective as majors are grouped together in class sections taught by faculty and staff with a discipline-specific background. In short, the holistic approach to student development typical of extended orientation models was retained, the academic rigor of the course was increased, and the course structure was modified to facilitate students forming deeper and more meaningful connections with their disciplines at the beginning of their college careers.

The learning outcomes and course objectives for LINK 101 are:
1. **Leadership: Students will develop the skills of effective leaders by**
   a. Identifying the qualities of great leadership and how they will enhance employability.
   b. Participating in leadership opportunities in diverse contexts.
2. **Involvement: Students will become active citizens in the university community and beyond by**
   a. Describing the principles of responsible citizenship and civic engagement.
   b. Practicing responsible citizenship through active involvement in opportunities within and beyond the campus community.
3. **Networking: Students will build strong, positive networks within the university community by**
   a. Connecting with individuals of diverse perspectives and backgrounds through respectful discourse.
   b. Interacting collaboratively with peers, staff, and faculty to gain knowledge of areas of academic and career interest.
4. **Knowledge: Students will learn how to be successful in college and life by**
   a. Identifying their interests, strengths, and opportunities in order to make informed decisions about a career path.
   b. Developing and applying metacognitive skills and strategies that support personal and academic success.

Developed over several years of intensive institutional review, planning, and close collaboration with key stakeholders, the QEP fulfills SACSCOC Core Requirement 2.12 and Comprehensive Standard 3.3.2. The program design, deeply rooted in research on human development and educational best practice, has measurable student learning outcomes. Furthermore, the QEP explicitly supports Lander University's new Mission and is designed to be fiscally responsible.

Identification of the Quality Enhancement Plan Topic

Stakeholder Representation and Process Overview

Lander University began identifying a topic for the QEP during the fall 2014 semester with the appointment of the Topic Selection Committee, chaired by Dr. James Colbert, Professor of Chemistry and Associate Provost. The Committee was composed of 15-18 members drawn from the University and Greenwood community. Each College Dean appointed one faculty member as College representative, the University President appointed three Greenwood community members, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs appointed three University staff members, and the Vice President for Student Affairs appointed one University staff member and four students, one from each academic class (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior). Membership of the Committee was revised on occasion throughout the year to accommodate employee leave issues and other exigencies; however, care was taken to appoint new members promptly so that all stakeholders were duly represented during the entire process (see Table 1).

The Committee met three times between late November 2014 and early February 2015 to begin the review of institutional data and develop a process for collecting feedback on possible topics, which included a survey of faculty, staff, and students; three open-invitation Faculty/Staff Town Hall meetings; focus groups with members of the Student Government Association, Leadership Greenwood, and the Lander University Board of Visitors; and a survey of alumni employed by Greenwood District 50 Schools. The Committee continued to meet biweekly throughout the spring 2015 semester to review institutional peer comparison data as well as the growing body of internally generated focused group data.

An invitation for Topic Pre-Proposals was extended to all faculty and staff in April 2015, yielding nine submissions. The Committee met in mid-May to review all submissions and selected the following four pre-proposals for completion as white papers by August 15, 2015: 1) Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning; 2) Lander Enhanced Advising Program; 3) Bearcat LINK: A First Year Experience; and 4) The Center for Integrative Studies.

The Committee met twice during September 2015 to review the final submissions. Committee members evaluated each paper using a standardized rubric to rate relevance to the data-based critical-need themes identified by the Committee. Eleven committee members submitted completed ratings which, when aggregated, indicated that a majority (n=8) rated the *Bearcat LINK: Leadership, Involvement, Networking, Knowledge—A First Year Experience* proposal as best satisfying the criteria.

Decision Point

A special faculty meeting was held on October 14, 2015, during which the Topic Selection Committee gave a presentation reviewing its work identifying possible QEP topics and conclusions drawn from data analysis. Faculty were encouraged to review the four proposals selected as topic finalists, which were available on the Lander QEP website. A second faculty meeting was held on October 28, 2015 during which the Topic Selection Committee presented its recommendation that the *Bearcat LINK* proposal be selected to serve as the foundation for Lander University's 2017 Quality Enhancement Plan. A motion to accept the committee's recommendation was made, followed by open discussion and a subsequent call to vote. By majority faculty vote (n=100, 68% in favor, 27% against, and five abstentions) the committee's recommendation was accepted and the topic approved.

Overview of the Bearcat LINK Proposal

The *Bearcat LINK* white paper proposed four central ideas around which to shape the new QEP: 1) that a centralized department be created to coordinate a comprehensive First-Year Experience

(FYE) program; 2) that the program be organized around the concepts of Leadership, Involvement, Networking, and Knowledge (LINK); 3) that the LINK concepts provide the orienting focus for existing and new freshman programs; and 4) that it serve as a point of university-wide collaboration between faculty and staff.

Table 1. Final QEP Topic Selection Committee Roster

Member	Affiliation	Representation Role
Jim Colbert, Chair	Academic Affairs	Faculty, Administration
John Moore	Arts and Humanities	Faculty
Mike Shurden	Business and Public Affairs	Faculty
Leland Nielsen	Education	Faculty
Jason Lee	Science and Mathematics	Faculty, Alumnus
Lisa Wiecki	Library	Faculty, Administration
Kim Shannon	Student Affairs	Staff
Debra Franks	Student Affairs	Staff, Alumna
Tracy Clifton	Student Affairs	Staff
Vivian Gaylord	Enrollment Management	Staff
Beth Taylor	Greenwood District 50 Schools	Community
Angelle Laborde	Greenwood Chamber of Commerce	Community
Heather Jones	Greenwood Partnership Alliance	Community
Kelly McWorter	Greenwood Tourism and Visitors Bureau	Community
Tyler Griffin	Student	Student
Catherine Sayre	Student	Student
Kaitlin Sherfield	Student	Student
Cornisha Waller	Student	Student

Detailed Description of Committee's Work
The Topic Selection Committee reviewed a variety of institutional data to help inform its work to identify a valuable subject for the QEP. Committee members were provided the full set of data from each instrument assessing freshman achievement, and discussion focused on specific data points that might serve as opportunities for improvement of student learning and/or the environment supporting student learning. The Committee analyzed data from the ETS® Proficiency Profile, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE®), Skyfactor First-Year Seminar Assessment (FYSA), and the University's internal Enhanced Advising Program (EAP) as well as retention data from freshman to sophomore year. With the exception of the Skyfactor FYSA data, all institutional data is publicly available on Lander University's Office of Institutional Effectiveness website.

ETS® Proficiency Profile
The ETS® Proficiency Profile measures student skills in reading, critical thinking, writing, and mathematics and provides context-based sub-scores in the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences. Student achievement is classified for each dimension as proficient, marginal, or not proficient. Prior to 2013, Lander University administered the ETS® Proficiency Profile each year to freshmen during orientation and to seniors as a part of their capstone courses in each major. After 2013, testing of freshmen was discontinued, but senior testing still occurs in the capstone courses.

The Committee examined the July 2013 aggregated report, which includes annual data for Lander students from the 2006-07 academic year through the 2012-13 academic year and a section aggregating the data for the period. The Committee observed that Lander students show increases in proficiency across all skills from the freshman to the senior year assessment. However, there was room for improvement in student learning in each of the skills measured. The Committee noted that a QEP focusing on improvements in reading, critical thinking, writing, or mathematics could benefit student learning if Lander focused on high impact practices relating to one or more of these skills. The ETS® Proficiency Profile would then be useful to evaluate the impact of this type of QEP.

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE®)
The National Survey of Student Engagement collects student perception data from freshmen and seniors regarding the nature and quality of their undergraduate experience. Lander University administers the NSSE® to students on a three-year cycle. The Committee reviewed the most recent NSSE® report from 2013. Freshman and senior students were asked to indicate the number of high impact practices in which they had participated. The high-impact practices listed for freshmen were "Learning Communities, Service Learning, and Research with Faculty, Internships, Study Abroad, and Culminating Experiences." Forty-seven percent of Lander's freshmen responded that they had been involved in at least one high impact practice. The high-impact practices listed for seniors were "Learning Communities, Service Learning, and Research with Faculty." Ninety-six percent of Lander's seniors responded that they had been involved in at least one high impact practice. The data indicated that there were opportunities for improving the engagement of freshman students in high-impact practices.

Retention data
Lander University calculates student enrollment data including retention and graduation rates for each cohort of freshmen enrolled for a six-year period from date of initial matriculation. The Committee examined the data published in the *Factbook 2014-15*, which included freshman cohorts from 2001 to 2013. The data indicates that Lander's freshman-to-sophomore year retention rates fluctuated between 60 and 70 percent for the past five years (2009-2013), and the graduation rates ranged from 40 to 50 percent during the same period. Committee members expressed interest in selecting a project that would improve student retention and graduation rates.

Skyfactor (formerly EBI MAP-Works) First-Year Seminar Assessment (FYSA)
In the fall of 2014, Lander University implemented a new freshman seminar course requirement, UNI 101, in an attempt to positively impact student retention. In order to measure the effectiveness of the course, Lander University utilized the Skyfactor First-Year Seminar Assessment (FYSA). The assessment is a survey instrument focused on student support goals that provides data from a comparison group of Carnegie institutions selected by the University. The FYSA measures 23 factors reflecting course objectives for UNI 101 which focus on topics related to student orientation to college life and campus services. Minimal content on student study skills and strategies for academic success is included in UNI 101.

The Committee reviewed the full data set and an assessment summary report which provides a list of performance factors with rankings of the results as "above goal," "at goal," or "below goal." In addition, this list provides a recommendation for action to improve low-ranked items. Analysis of the assessment data revealed a striking difference in student attitudes and perceptions relating to the course goals for orientation to college life and the goals relating to skills for academic success. Students rated the course "above goal" on the survey items relating to orientation such as "Course improved transition to college," "Course improved knowledge of

campus policies," and "Course improved knowledge of wellness." The recommended action from FYSA was simply to "maintain" these items. However, students rated "Course improved academic skills" as "below goal," and the FYSA recommendation was to make these areas a "top priority" for improvement. While students rated "Course improved knowledge of study strategies" as above goal, the FYSA also recommended that the institution "maintain or improve" this goal. The Committee concluded that this data offered a clear opportunity to revise the UNI 101 course to balance the focus on the orientation goals with a more robust emphasis on student skills for academic success in order to improve retention of students from the freshman to sophomore year as well as overall graduation rates.

Enhanced Advising Program
The Enhanced Advising Program is a University initiative focused on freshmen "created by a faculty and student team that attempts to create a learning community of freshmen in similar fields of study along with an academic advisor and an upper-class peer mentor. This project's goal is to facilitate the transition from high school to university life while guiding students to become responsible and active participants in their matriculation process."

The Committee reviewed the 2013-2014 assessment report for the Enhanced Advising program and a related conference paper presented by the Director at the University of South Carolina Upstate Research Symposium (March 2015). The report and paper described the enhancements and interventions focusing on issues of student readiness for college and academic skills for success provided to students participating in the program. The impact of the program was measured primarily by comparing the freshman-to-sophomore retention of students participating in the program with retention data for all Lander students. The program director was unable to draw clear conclusions about the impact of the Enhanced Advising program on student success, but cited evidence from student evaluations and participating faculty feedback that the program was perceived by both groups as beneficial.

Data Generated by the QEP Topic Selection Committee
In addition to the available institutional data, the Committee used surveys and focus groups to identify student learning outcomes and high impact practices valued by various stakeholders as potential QEP topics.

Faculty, Staff, and Student Survey
The Committee designed two surveys, one for faculty and staff and the other for students. Surveys began with an introduction to SACSCOC Core Requirement 2.12 and asked participants to rank a list of potential QEP topics and high impact practices drawn from the QEP research documents on the SACSCOC website. Surveys also included two open-ended questions asking participants to submit additional suggestions for topics and to provide general comments. The surveys were administered online and made available from January 28 through February 11, 2015 and yielded 295 total responses. Results were disaggregated and analyzed by stakeholder group (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2. Top Five QEP Topics

Topics	Faculty N=85	Staff N=51	Students N=159
1st	Critical Thinking, Inquiry, Analysis (n=57)	Written and Oral Communication (n=36)	Foundations/Skills for College Success and Lifelong Learning (n=66)

2nd	Written and Oral Communication (n=48)	Critical Thinking, Inquiry, Analysis (n=23)	Written and Oral Communication (n=58)
3rd	Teamwork and Problem Solving (n=23)	Foundations/Skills for College Success and Lifelong Learning (n=18)	Critical Thinking, Inquiry, Analysis (n=58)
4th	Civic Knowledge and Engagement (n=21)	Teamwork and Problem Solving (n=16)	Integrative and Applied Learning (n=50)
5th	Integrative and Applied Learning (n=20)	Ethical Reasoning and Action, Leadership (n=14)	Teamwork and Problem Solving (n=49)

Table 3. Top Five High Impact Practices

Rank	Faculty N=85	Staff N=51	Students N=159
1st	Internships, Simulations, Case-Based Learning (n=46)	FY Seminars and Experiences, Orientation, Placement, Dev Ed, Advising (n=30)	Internships, Simulations, Case-Based Learning (n=98)
2nd	"[Skill] Across the Curriculum" (n=39)	Internships, Simulations, Case-Based Learning (n=29)	FY Seminars and Experiences, Orientation, Placement, Dev Ed, Advising (n=64)
3rd	Capstone Courses and Projects, Integrative Learning (n=32)	"[Skill] Across the Curriculum" (n=22)	Undergraduate Research, Faculty Mentoring (n=58)
4th	Undergraduate Research, Faculty Mentoring (n=29)	Service-Learning and Community-Based Learning (n=17)	Service-Learning and Community-Based Learning (n=54)
5th	FY Seminars and Experiences, Orientation, Placement, Dev Ed, Advising (n=23)	Capstone Courses and Projects, Integrative Learning (n=13)	Diversity and Global Learning (n=36)

Faculty and Staff Town Hall SWOT Analysis
Since one of the components of the charge to the Committee was to select a topic that would be valued by the faculty and staff, the Committee wanted to engage the faculty and staff in a more personal and interactive opportunity for input on the topic selection process. To accomplish this, the Committee invited faculty and staff to attend one of three town hall meetings that would provide not only venues for open discussion, but also additional data in the form of results of a SWOT (internal variables: strengths and weaknesses; external variables: opportunities and threats) analysis. The summary data table from the Faculty/Staff/Student Survey was provided to initiate discussion with the town hall participants. After a brief discussion period, each participant was provided four adhesive notes representing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and asked to write 1-3 comments on each note to be

attached to four posters stationed around the room. Volunteers read the notes on the posters and attempted to group responses into similar categories to develop a sense of the key themes represented.

The written records of the three meetings were reviewed by the Committee, and three key themes were identified that connected many of the issues discussed at the town hall meetings. First, many comments related in some way to student retention and the various factors that influence retention and graduation rates. Second, the Lander University freshman seminar course, UNI 101, was recognized as a strength in that it appeared to be increasing student retention but also as an opportunity for improvement because it lacked a focus on academic skills supporting student success. Third, many faculty comments reflected dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the current General Education Program and a desire for change and improvement.

Student Focus Group
On April 13, 2015, a focus group was conducted with members of Lander's Student Government Association. The focus group format included assigning the students to teams and prompting the teams with several questions or topics. Resulting discussions were recorded by each group and shared with the other groups.

The Committee reviewed the summary report of the results which focused on curriculum revision and increasing college success resources. The Committee interpreted these to be consistent with three emerging themes for a possible QEP: improvement in the General Education Program, expansion of the Enhanced Advising Program, and revision of UNI 101 and/or creation of a new UNI 499 for seniors to teach professional skills and aid student transition into careers.

Leadership Greenwood Focus Group
Leadership Greenwood is a program sponsored by the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce that introduces professionals in the region to the Greenwood community and business environment. The 2015 cohort of Leadership Greenwood participants met in April on the University campus and were engaged as a focus group of community stakeholders to collect input on possible QEP topics. The Committee Chair introduced the group to the QEP requirements and process for topic selection and elicited input on two questions.

Question 1 – *If you were hiring a Lander graduate, what knowledge, skills, or values do you think are most important for your workplace?*

Question 2 – *What experiences do you think are vital for Lander to provide to produce the highest quality graduates?*

For each question, the chair took notes on the responses and then provided a list of possible QEP topics and high-impact practices. In response to the lists, the participants were asked to provide additional comments or revisions to their previous comments.

The Leadership Greenwood responses were summarized and provided to the Committee. The Committee noted that many of the responses to the first question in the summary report focused on skills that related well to some of the key themes the Committee was considering essential to student success. Responses to the second question connected to high-impact practices that might be most appropriate for juniors or seniors, such as internships or other career focused activities.

Board of Visitors Focus Group
The Lander University Board of Visitors was another group of community stakeholders identified by the institution to provide input and support for institutional programs and initiatives. At the May 28 meeting of the Board of Visitors, the Committee Chair conducted a focus group exercise identical to the one described for the Leadership Greenwood group. The responses were remarkably similar.

Alumni Survey of District 50 Schools
The Committee discussed options for acquiring additional stakeholder input from Lander University Alumni. The Committee representative from Greenwood District 50 Schools offered to facilitate a survey of Lander alumni employed by the District. The electronic survey was announced to the alumni by email on May 12, 2015, was open for responses until June 5, and yielded 237 responses.

The summary report generated by the ClassApps online survey tool was reviewed by the Committee. The same lists of QEP topics and high-impact practices presented in the Faculty, Staff, and Student surveys were used, and respondents were requested to rank the top three topics or high-impact practices from each list. In addition, the alumni were asked open response questions relating to their experiences at Lander University. The survey software allowed respondents to skip some questions. Slightly more than half of all respondents (n=125) answered the question ranking the top three topics. The data for the top six topics identified are provided below. Once again, there were notable similarities to responses from other stakeholder groups.

1. Written and oral communication skills   58/125
2. Technology literacy   54/125
3. Critical thinking/inquiry/analysis   48/125
4. Teamwork and problem solving   48/125
5. Math/science knowledge/quantitative literacy/information literacy   35/125
6. Foundations/skills for college success and lifelong learning   32/125

Forty-eight percent of respondents (n=114) answered the question ranking the top three high-impact practices. The ranking data for the top six high impact practices are provided below.

1. Internships/simulations/case-based learning   82/114
2. Service learning and community-based learning   45/114
3. Freshman year seminars and experiences/orientation/placement/etc. 40/114
4. [Skills] across the curriculum/writing/information literacy/etc.   38/114
5. Learning communities   37/114
6. Diversity/global learning   25/114

These results were also consistent with the values of other community stakeholders, such as the Leadership Greenwood and Board of Visitors groups. In addition, comments provided by alumni to the free response questions closely aligned with those from other stakeholders.

Key Themes and Conclusions
Throughout the review and analysis of institutional and stakeholder data, the Committee provided updates to the faculty at regularly scheduled faculty meetings. These updates focused on key themes in the data that the Committee identified as potential opportunities for improvement in student learning or the environment supporting student learning and possible

strategies relying on high impact practices that might serve as topics for a QEP at Lander University.

A first-year experience or seminar was not the top choice of each stakeholder group, but issues relating to college readiness of freshmen and academic skills necessary for retention and success appeared in the data from most stakeholders. As the Committee prepared for the final collection of faculty and staff input in the form of white papers, a consensus among Committee members formed around the following key themes: 1) support for at risk students; 2) advising; 3) UNI 101, Lander's first-year seminar (FYS); 4) freshman orientation; 5) general education 6) basic skills; and 7) faculty professional development (focused on classroom teaching, classroom technology, and student collaboration).

In 2007, Lander developed its first QEP around experiential learning. The Experience Your Education (EYE) Program was designed to be available for all students at all levels, but most experiential learning activities were targeted toward providing academic and career focused enrichment and preparation for junior and senior students. This program was optional and generally attracted students with top academic credentials. In addition, the Lander University International Honors Program had undergone a major review and revision in spring 2013 to create a new Honors College targeting students with top academic credentials, which was launched on August 13, 2013. The Committee concluded that it was time to focus attention on students who enter Lander University with credentials on the lower end of the academic spectrum. A QEP focused on student learning outcomes relating to study skills and on student success factors that could be delivered through advising, a freshman seminar/orientation, general education programs or a QEP focused on professional development to help faculty work with these students seemed to be appropriate.

Contextualization: Connecting to University-Level Strategic Planning
An important change in institutional leadership occurred during the two-year span in which the University was identifying a QEP topic and creating an action plan. Dr. Richard Cosentino became Lander's 12th president in July 2015. One of his first initiatives was to lead the development of new Vision and Mission statements, along with a Strategic Plan to guide the future development of the institution. A significant part of the new Strategic Plan involved reevaluating the scope and responsibilities of administrative units, making adjustments to organizational charts, and realigning program activities to fit within the new Vision and Mission. The majority of this work occurred during the fall 2015 semester, and a draft Strategic Plan was released to the university community in early January 2016. The parallel work toward a new Strategic Plan and a new QEP was exciting, but it also meant that the QEP topic selection and development occurred in a somewhat volatile environment. Some of this volatility is reflected in the changing models presented for discussion at different times. However, the emerging Strategic Plan served as the anchor for every conversation throughout the entire process.

Quality Enhancement Plan Development Process

With the *Bearcat LINK* proposal identified as the foundation for Lander University's new QEP, the development stage of the process began in January 2016 with the appointment of the QEP Development Coordinator, Dr. Marie Nix, Professor of Psychology and Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, and occurred in four phases:

- Phase 1: Work during the spring semester of 2016 focused on process organization, committee formation, and concept exploration.
- Phase 2: The summer of 2016 was devoted to developing the concept, constructing student learning outcomes, and designing a curriculum shell for the revised freshman seminar (renamed LINK 101).
- Phase 3: The fall semester of 2016 was devoted to refining student learning outcomes and producing the implementation plan.
- Phase 4: Finally, beginning in January 2017 and continuing through the summer of 2017, efforts were focused on development of the LINK 101 curriculum and preparation for instructors. Dr. Mark Pilgrim, Associate Professor of Biology, who had served as a member of the QEP Faculty Staff Advisory Committee and the QEP Development Subcommittee, was named QEP Program Director.

QEP Development Phase 1: Process Organization (SPRING 2016)
Guided by the principle of equitable representation of vested parties embedded in Comprehensive Standard 3.3.2, it was decided that the holistic investigative strategies provided by the qualitative research and evaluation methods (Patton, 2002) would provide a useful framework to structure the process of developing the selected topic into a representative and actionable plan. Qualitative research designs are particularly well suited to the development of quality enhancement initiatives when the final product must reflect the perspectives and desires of diverse constituents. Data collection strategies often rely on open-ended questionnaires and multiple in-depth interviews with both groups and individuals. The resulting data is rich in detail and allows for thematic analysis that reaches beyond details related to person or organizational units and reveals core values and goals shared by multiple stakeholders.

Evaluation research is commonly divided into two categories, depending on the outcome goals. Summative evaluations rely on both qualitative and quantitative data and are conducted with the intent of providing judgements of overall effectiveness of a program, which are then used to inform decisions about whether or not to continue a program. Both internal and external reference points are utilized when conducting summative evaluations. In contrast, the primary purpose of formative evaluation research is to improve existing programs, and the key reference points are internal, located in the specific context relevant to the program being evaluated. Given that the QEP centers on enhancing an existing program, it was decided that a formative evaluation approach would be an effective strategy for developing the plan.

Formative evaluation research relies primarily on qualitative data arising from purposive sampling techniques aimed to achieve dense and meaningful results that are thematically triangulated across data sources. Toward this end, the QEP development process was designed to encourage cooperative inquiry, also known as participatory evaluation, during every developmental phase. Participatory evaluation is a bottom-up strategy for collectively engaging with a problem, identifying strengths and weaknesses in a program, and developing an effective plan to remediate weaknesses and further support strengths. As a collective activity, cooperative inquiry has the added benefit of fostering an organizational culture that honors active self-reflection and ongoing commitment to improvement, a fundamental value inherent in the accreditation process.

Finally, the endogenous nature of data emerging from formative evaluations is well suited to analysis techniques found in Grounded Theory (Willig and Stainton-Rogers, 2008; Bryant and Charmez, 2007), which served as the methodological heuristic during all phases of data analysis.

QEP Development Phase 2: Committee Formation (SPRING 2016)
Per MacDonald's democratic evaluator model (1987), the QEP Development Coordinator sought to "represent the full range of interests...by acting as information broker between groups who want and need knowledge of each other" (Patton, 2002, p. 186). The Coordinator's role was to serve as a resource for others but not as the final decision-maker. As such, the Coordinator was embedded in the process as a participant observer.

Three types of committees were identified as important for efficiently developing the QEP, each with a clearly defined purpose in the process. The first committee was comprised of individuals representing the interests of faculty and staff—the Faculty/Staff Advisory Committee. The second Committee was comprised of individuals representing administrative units impacted by a first year experience project—the Administrative Advisory Committee. And a third, smaller subcommittee was comprised of individuals overlapping the first and second committees who had prior experience with elements of the current first year experience activities on campus—the QEP Development Subcommittee.

Faculty/Staff Advisory Committee
An open-invitation QEP development interest meeting for faculty and staff was held on January 27, 2016. Seven Student Affairs staff, one librarian, and four faculty members attended the meeting. During this meeting, an overview of the general strategies to be used during the QEP development was outlined, and volunteers were invited to join the Faculty/Staff Advisory Committee (FSAC).

Unfortunately, faculty volunteer response was low. Three barriers to faculty participation were identified. Faculty have preexisting work and time commitments that make little room for adding another responsibility to their days. The prospect of adding another "job" to an already full slate was daunting to many individuals who were interested in contributing to the development of the QEP. The fact that the majority of project development would occur during the summer when most faculty are not on contract posed another barrier. This meant that work flow and organization structures needed to be created that facilitated and insured an authentic democratic process could occur while minimizing an additional workload burden. One strategy for accomplishing this was to create a QEP Project Site in Blackboard to house resource materials and serve as an organized work platform for the Faculty/Staff Advisory Committee. This structure created an efficient means of communication and allowed for asynchronous participation as individuals' schedules permitted. An added benefit of this mechanism was that contributions could be treated confidentially and separated from their authorship, allowing a broader range of ideas to be introduced into the conversation and judged on their merit in a neutral environment, thereby encouraging participation by individuals who might not feel comfortable voicing their concerns and opinions otherwise.

Volunteers from the January 27 meeting were organized into the FSAC and added to the QEP Project Site roster. Solicitation for additional faculty and staff Committee members continued through February and March, and the final Committee membership (14 faculty, 9 staff) was determined by March 28, 2016 (see Table 4). Duties of the FSAC were to review relevant project materials, serve as a data source representing faculty and staff perspectives, and provide feedback regarding the desirability of the developing project.

Table 4. Faculty/Staff Advisory Committee Roster

Member	Area Represented
April Atkins	Library
Justin Brewer	Student Counseling and Mental Health Services
Lillian Craton	English, Honors College
Erin Garland	Student Affairs
Alexandrea Drake	Student Housing and Freshmen Programs
Debra Franks	Behavioral Intervention Team
Zach Helms	Housing and Residence Life
Lisa McDonald	Biology
Elizabeth Lee	Nursing
Jason Lee	Biology
Jennifer Mathis	Admissions Office
Jalysa O'Conner	Student Affairs
Mark Pilgrim	Biology
Franklin Rausch	History
Shelby Reed	Orientation
Pamela Ryan	Mathematics
Kimberly Shannon	Student Disability Services
Lee Vartanian	Teacher Education
Robert Figueira	History
Tracy Garrett	Teacher Education
Dan Harrison	Sociology
Carlos Mentley	Spanish
Andre Lubecke	Mathematics

Administrative Advisory Committee

A second advisory Committee composed of relevant representatives of administrative units across campus was appointed by the Provost in early April 2016. Committee membership is listed in Table 5. Duties of the Administrative Advisory Committee (AAC) were to review relevant project materials, serve as a data source representing the perspectives of administration, and to provide feedback regarding the desirability and feasibility of the developing plan. The AAC operated as an avenue for institutional leadership to partner with other QEP Committees during all phases of development. The AAC met on the following dates: April 14, 21, 28, May 4, 25, June 8, July 27, and August 10.

Table 5. Administrative Advisory Committee Roster

Member	Role	Area Represented
David Mash	Vice President, Provost	Academic Affairs
Andy Benoit	Vice President	Enrollment and Access Management
Robert Barrett	Dean	College of Business
Randy Bouknight	Vice President	Student Affairs
James Colbert	Associate Provost	Academic Affairs

Renee Love	Dean	College of Arts and Humanities
Judith Neufeld	Dean	College of Education
Marie Nix	Coordinator	QEP Development
Dave Slimmer	Dean	College of Science and Mathematics
Holisa Wharton	Interim Dean	School of Nursing
Lillian Craton	Director	Honors College
Debra Franks	Coordinator	UNI 101, Student Affairs
Tracy Clifton	Director	Student Conduct

QEP Development Subcommittee
The QEP Development Subcommittee (DSC) was formed May 25, 2016 and served as the designated workgroup tasked with the primary responsibility of developing the LINK concept into an action plan. Members from the FSAC and AAC who were identified as being information-rich informants (an intensity sampling technique) were invited to serve on the DSC. Committee membership is listed in Table 6. The DSC began meeting on June 1, 2016 and met biweekly throughout June and July (essentially, but not exactly, meeting on alternating weeks to the AAC schedule). This schedule was designed to allow the work of each Committee to build cumulatively week-to-week between the groups. Duties of the QEP Development Subcommittee included analyzing data, operationalizing concepts and terms, drafting student learning outcomes, and designing a curriculum outline for LINK 101.

Table 6. QEP Development Subcommittee Roster

Member	Area Represented
Marie Nix, Chair	PSYC/QEP Dev. Coordinator
James Colbert	CHEM/Academic Affairs
Debra Franks	Staff/UNI 101 Coordinator
Lillian Craton	HONS/ENGL/UNI 101 Instructor
Jason Lee	BIOL/UNI 101 Instructor
Mark Pilgrim	BIOL/UNI 101 Instructor
Shelby Reed	Staff/ Orientation Director

QEP Development Phase 3: Concept Exploration and Development (SPRING - SUMMER 2016)
A common practice in qualitative research paradigms is to begin a project with data collection, perform initial analyses, and then systematically alternate between exploring the research literature and continuing data collection and analysis, all the while deliberately holding theoretical, research-based knowledge in limited abeyance so that data themes and their interpretations are largely absent of the constrictions that exogenous (etic) influences create. In contrast with typical quantitative research paradigms, especially in Grounded Theory methodology, exogenous theoretical influences are deliberately placed in a subordinate position so that data interpretation may follow a more organic, recursive, and emergent path in a specific context without the biases of preexisting theoretical lens. As the study progresses, connections to existing data or theory are made at punctuated moments in data analysis (theoretical triangulation) and are used to enrich and broaden the ongoing data collection and interpretation. This is a particularly appropriate methodology to adopt for the development of a QEP in that it allows the final form of whatever topic is selected to reflect the unique needs and culture of an individual organization. When done mindfully, the delicate interplay between

analytical developments balanced with conceptual clarity gained from the literature ensures that the process moves forward in a manner that meaningfully connects with, in this case, best practices, without prematurely determining the outcome.

While internal data serves as the central reference point for formative evaluation research, it is important to set the stage for meaningful understanding of the problem at hand. Early concept exploration began with a preliminary overview of the literature on FYE programs. The key resources referenced for the initial review were identified through the National Resource Center for Students in Transition, located at the University of South Carolina, a nationally recognized pioneer and leader in the field. Two primary resources were identified as specifically relevant for the LINK project: the five-volume monograph series *The First-Year Seminar: Designing, Implementing, and Assessing Courses to Support Student Learning and Success* (2011) and the *Journal of the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition,* which the Jackson Library added to its database in February 2016. The initial literature review was followed by an examination of FYE programs and first-year seminars offered at selected institutions (typical case sampling of aspirant institutions). The QEP Development Coordinator attended the 35th Annual Conference on the First-Year Experience in February 2016 to learn more about current trends and practices in FYEs.

Data Collection and Analysis
Data collection began in early February with interviews of staff members serving on the FSAC. An email invitation to schedule a confidential personal meeting with the Coordinator to discuss the *Bearcat LINK* proposal was sent on February 1 to all staff attending the January 27 meeting. Four staff members responded and interviews occurred on February 3 and 4. The purpose of conducting individual staff interviews was to assist the Coordinator in developing a fuller understanding of staff perspectives on the *Bearcat LINK* proposal. This was important because the adopted topic proposal was authored by members of the Student Affairs staff, and any FYE implementation plan would directly and significantly impact this division.

Next, an open-ended questionnaire was sent via the QEP Project Site to members of the FSAC on March 23. The goal of this exercise was to gather additional perspectives on, experiences with, and desires for student outcomes of first-year students. Committee members were asked to answer as completely as possible, from their perspective, the following four questions: 1) What should students know after participating in a FYE that they don't know now? 2) What should students be able to do that they can't do now? 3) How should their behavior change? 4) What changes in values are anticipated?

Six faculty and one staff member submitted responses, which were then collated, coded, and organized into broad thematic categories (see Figure 1).

An information packet was developed that contained an outline of the *Bearcat LINK* proposal, an inventory of existing offices and programs relating to freshmen, a draft summary of the emerging University Strategic Plan, an overview of SACSCOC Core Requirement 2.12, a data summary, and four possible approaches to developing a FYE program. The information packet served as the foundation for early conversations about the characteristics and structure of Lander's FYE program, which occurred as follows: 1) two small group discussions with FSAC faculty members (March 25 and 30); 2) a meeting with the Faculty Senate Chair (April 5); 3) a meeting with the Retention Council Chair (April 5); and 4) the first meeting of the AAC (April 14). The Coordinator then gave an introductory presentation to the full Faculty Senate on April 18. Senators were encouraged to share the presentation materials with their respective departments, and both senators and departmental faculty were invited to provide feedback

directly to the Coordinator or through their senators. Notes from the Senate discussion and individual feedback sent to the Coordinator were archived and incorporated into the dataset. Follow-up discussions of possible FYE conceptualizations continued with the AAC on April 21, April 28, and May 4. A progress update outlining the emerging QEP conceptualization was sent to the faculty members of the FSAC on May 10 along with an invitation to submit feedback which was added to the growing body of data.

Figure 1. Early Student Learning Outcomes Themes
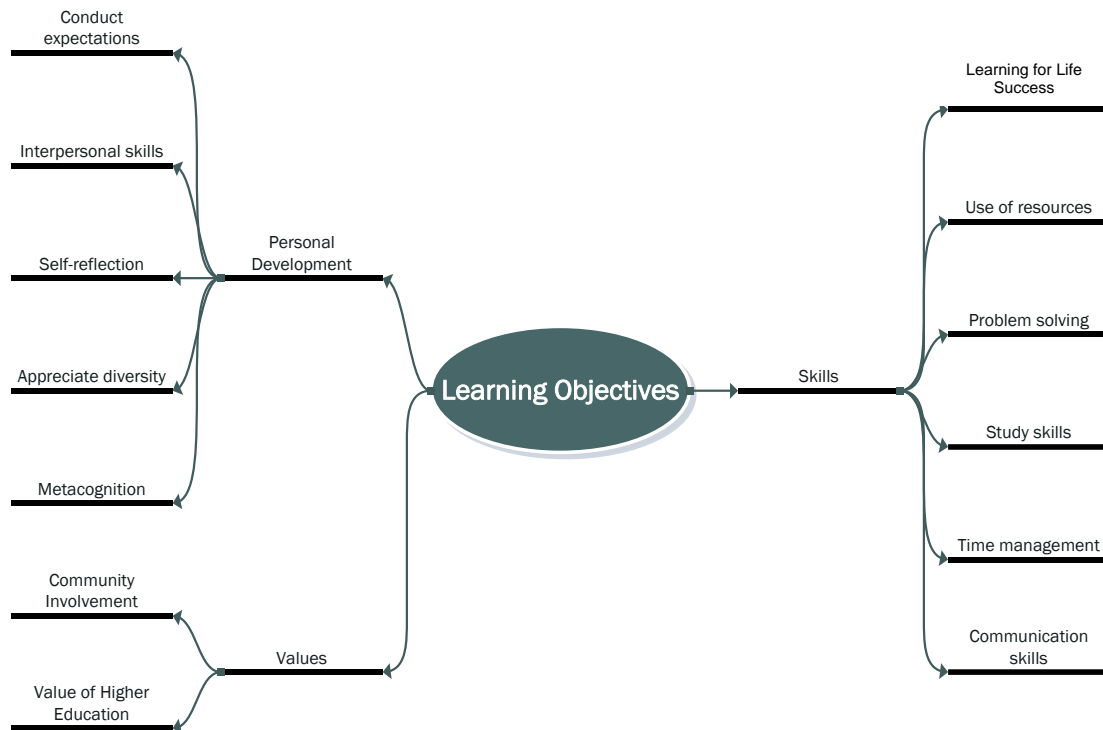
A fourth data collection session occurred on May 25, during which the AAC membership formed small teams and generated responses to the open-ended questionnaire completed earlier by the FSAC members. Responses were collated, combined with the FSAC responses, and thematically analyzed.

Decision Point
After in-depth review and discussion of data and available resources in the context of the emerging Strategic Plan, institutional leadership resolved that the most effective path toward creating a FYE program should focus first on building connections across freshmen experiences through a re-visioning of the existing freshman seminar, UNI 101. The charge was to build on the existing strengths of UNI 101 to create a richer and more meaningful freshmen experience within a flexible framework that enhanced connection to academic disciplines and could support growth into a more comprehensive FYE over time. In addition, the seminar, renamed "LINK 101," could serve as a vehicle to address many of the topics of interest that surfaced from focus groups, surveys and data analysis during the topic selection process as being important to stakeholders.

Creating the Roadmap: Defining Terms and Student Learning Outcomes

Raw data from the questionnaire responses, along with the thematic analyses, were presented for discussion to the QEP Development Subcommittee (DSC) members during its first meeting on June 1. A central theme that emerged from this data revolved around the purpose of a liberal arts education. To further develop this theme, invitations to submit statements describing the personal value and meaning of a liberal arts education were sent to Lander faculty on June 3. Submissions (n=8) were combined with the spring questionnaire responses from the FSAC and the Administrative Advisory Council (AAC) as well as feedback received from Faculty Senators (in response to the April presentation) and then triangulated for recurring themes related to the meaning and value of a liberal arts education and the role of a first-year experience in this context.

Analysis revealed four core values reflected in the faculty philosophies of a liberal arts education: 1) being a life-long learner; 2) appreciating and respecting diversity; 3) adopting a mastery orientation toward learning; and 4) committing to civic responsibility and engagement. These values formed the foundation of the initial FYE vision statement, "For every Lander student to develop a personally meaningful life plan that reflects the essential values reflected in the philosophy of a liberal arts education."

The core values were then combined with the larger data set and contextualized within the definition of a first-year experience provided by Koch and Gardner (2006) to create the initial mission statement, "To provide an intentional and integrated collection of academic and co-curricular experiences for entering freshmen that establishes a firm foundation upon which they can build the skills, knowledge, and values essential for success in higher education and the world beyond."

The next step toward identifying specific student learning outcomes began with a secondary in-depth thematic analysis of the expanded data set (described above). Results were sorted, coded, and connected to research on human development during emerging adulthood (18-25 years, characterized by intense exploration and definition of identity, Arnett, 2000, 2001; Arnett, Ramos, and Jensen, 2001; Arnett and Tanner, 2006), yielding four global student outcomes for participants in the University's FYE program. They are: 1) that students develop the competencies necessary for college success; 2) that students develop an autonomous and responsible emotional, intellectual, and social integration into college life; 3) that students develop a self-determined system of meaning and values; and, 4) that students develop a commitment to exploring and pursuing life goals.

With a broad conceptual framework in hand, the task of systematically operationalizing the abstract concepts of Leadership, Involvement, Networking, and Knowledge into student learning outcomes began with the DSC creating an initial list (n=23) which were then rated by members of the DSC and AAC for face validity and matched with each of the four central concepts in LINK. Results from the rating task were somewhat ambiguous so the process was repeated, yielding a more exhaustive list of outcomes (n=66) which were again rated for face validity by the DSC, AAC, and FSAC. Results from the second rating exercise yielded clearer relationships between specific statements and LINK concepts. This data set was used to winnow the list of possible learning outcomes down to the three strongest statements per concept (n=12). Results were then evaluated by the DSC, AAC, and FSAC in terms of overall fit within the Vision, Mission, and outcome goals and edited accordingly. A working draft of the Vision, Mission, goals and student learning outcomes was finalized on July 14 and sent for review and

feedback to the FSAC on July 15 and to department chairs on July 20. Submitted feedback was reviewed by the DSC and incorporated into the working draft.

Next, the DSC turned its attention to evaluating the UNI 101 curriculum in order to identify areas needing strengthening. Materials referenced during the committee evaluation included outcome data from the 2015-16 Skyfactor First-Year Seminar Assessment, a summary of the conclusions drawn by the Topic Selection Committee, data from the FSAC and AAC regarding academic success, the syllabus (see Appendix 1) and instructional materials for UNI 101. A central focus for curriculum improvement, as identified by the Topic Selection Committee and reflected in the FSAC/AAC data, was enhancing coverage of academic skills that supported college success. Inspiration for accomplishing this goal was drawn from a review of two well-regarded texts used in first-year seminars (Cuseo, Thompson, Campagna and Fecas, 2016; Strickland and Strickland, 2017). The table of contents from these texts was used to generate a comprehensive list of course topics against which to compare the current UNI 101 curriculum. DSC members rated the degree of overlap between the two, noting gaps in UNI 101 coverage. The list was also sent to the instructors who taught UNI 101 in fall 2015 (less the instructors who were serving on the DSC, n=15) with a request that they complete the rating as a means of triangulating data (n= 6 respondents). Results from each group were collated and provided to the DSC for discussion. Next, each DSC member was asked to reflect on the data and independently generate a list of course topics to be covered in LINK 101, which were subsequently merged, edited and tailored to match the student learning outcomes for LINK 101. The draft curriculum was finalized on July 25. Table 8 outlines the DSC's recommendation for topics to be covered in LINK 101.

One of the challenges that the DSC had to resolve was how to accommodate coverage of the additional content deemed important for the new LINK 101. The original UNI 101 course was a one credit hour course and the expanded material would not reasonably fit within that parameter. Adding a credit hour to LINK 101 would create a significant hardship for many degree programs across campus. As a result, a compromise was reached wherein the course credit would remain the same but a second contact hour would be added. Ultimately, the decision was made that classes would meet face to face for one hour each week and that students would complete online modules independently in advance of the class meetings to allow more material to be covered. Topics in Table 7 noted in bold type are those that were not part of UNI 101 but were added to LINK 101 and distributed across two contact hours.

The draft curriculum was added to the overall LINK design draft and presented to the AAC on July 27 for feedback and discussion. At the end of this meeting, the AAC voted to endorse the design draft as presented below.

Table 7. Draft Course Topics and Fall Schedule

Week	Class 1	Class 2
1	Welcome and Introduction, Syllabus, Connecting	Classroom Expectations/Etiquette
2	Student Conduct/Honor Code 1	**Student Conduct/Honor Code 2**
3	Labor Day - No Class/Campus Save Act/Title IX	Lander Traditions
4	Campus Resources	**Metacognition 1**
5	**Metacognition 2**	**Metacognition 3**
6	Psychological/Physical Wellness 1	**Psychological/Physical Wellness 2**

7	Involvement/Connections 1	**Involvement/Connections 2**
8	Academic Planning 1	**Academic Planning 2**
9	Fall Break - No Class	Career Planning
10	Info Literacy 1	**Info Literacy 2**
11	Financial Wellness	**Leadership 1**
12	**Leadership 2**	**Leadership 3**
13	**Liberal Arts Education 1**	**Liberal Arts Education 2**
14	Diversity	Thanksgiving - No Class
15	Presentations 1	Presentations 2

QEP Development Phase 4: Refining Student Learning Outcomes and Producing the Implementation Plan (FALL 2016)
The final LINK design draft was presented to the faculty for consideration during a special faculty meeting held September 2, 2016. Additional feedback opportunities were held as follows:

- September 7 – Open Forum for Students
- September 9 – Department Chairs and Faculty Senate Chair Focus Group
- September 12 – Faculty Senate
- September 14 – Open Forum for Faculty and Staff
- September 16 – Open Forum for General Education Faculty
- September 20 – Board of Trustees, Academic Affairs Subcommittee
- September 21 – Faculty Meeting
- September 28 – Focused Student Interviews
- September 29-October 15 – Informal Student Interviews
- November 4 – Open Forum for Faculty and Staff
- December 5 – Survey of Freshman Sample

Data from the feedback meetings and focus groups were collated by the QEP Development Coordinator and operationalized into a draft implementation plan that was presented to the AAC on October 19 for comment and further development. The revised implementation plan (October 28 draft) was presented to faculty and staff at a final Open Forum meeting held on November 4. Feedback was reviewed and incorporated into the implementation design as possible.

Decision Point
The final implementation plan was presented to faculty during a special faculty meeting held November 16, 2016. The vote to adopt the conceptual and implementation design of *LINK: Leadership, Involvement, Networking, Knowledge—Lander's Freshmen Seminar* was held November 21-28, 2016 via an anonymous electronic survey. Seventy-one faculty responded, 92.9 percent of whom voted to approve the plan (see Appendix 2). The plan was then presented to the Board of Trustees on December 13, 2016 and received unanimous endorsement.

QEP Development Phase 5/Implementation: Development of the LINK 101 Curriculum and Instructor Development (SPRING - SUMMER 2017)
In January 2017, a QEP Program Director (LINK Program Director) was appointed from Academic Affairs. The role of the Director was to assist the QEP Development Coordinator during the spring term in continuing to develop the QEP and to launch the LINK Program in the summer of 2017. The majority of work during the early spring semester of 2017 consisted of

completing the QEP draft document and securing commitments from faculty and staff to teach LINK 101 and to make presentations at the professional development workshops to be held for LINK instructors in the summer LINK Academies.

Feedback from QEP Consultants

During the SACSCOC On Site Reaffirmation visit in March 2017, recommendations for improvement of the QEP were provided by the QEP Consultant, Dr. Stephanie Foote. A summary of her input is provided below:

- Focus on a key issue that is important to Lander University – make clear how LINK will address that issue
- Establish that the QEP is not merely a "means to an end" (i.e. retention and success of students) but that it will result in a transformative change in students
- Clearly define the "identity" of LINK 101 – connect the learning outcomes, disciplinary cluster organization, and 21st century dispositions (such as critical thinking, teamwork, etc.)
- Make abundantly clear what differentiates LINK 101 from UNI 101
- LINK 101 should be one piece of a larger vision – a LINK Program
- Retain and strengthen reflections assignments from UNI 101
- Demonstrate the alignment of measurable student learning outcomes with institutional Vision/Mission
- Reduce the number of measured objectives in LINK 101. Develop clearly stated, measurable learning outcomes for the program and the course
- Identify the assessment data that will be collected and how it will be used to improve the program
- Provide a detailed timeline for implementation of the QEP

In addition, a consultant was hired in April 2017 to provide guidance on revising the QEP. A summary of the consultant's input is provided below:

- The QEP should be a significant project that will reach a significant number of students. Revising a 1-hour course (UNI 101) and making it optional for incoming freshmen (as was presented in the original QEP) is not a significant initiative that will impact a large number of students
- The QEP Report as submitted does not convey widespread faculty buy-in to teach the LINK 101 course
- In the model originally proposed to have LINK 101 delivered by instructional teams made up of a faculty member, a staff member, and a student, challenges include providing the necessary training for all participants and finding sufficient opportunity for collaboration and planning by team members prior to delivery of the course in fall 2017
- As UNI 101 is modified to create LINK 101, topics that could be moved from Orientation to the LINK course or from the LINK course to orientation should be identified
- LINK 101 should build on strengths and address weaknesses in UNI 101
- The revised QEP must include:
  o Evidence of planning and development committees that are broadly representative
  o Evidence of a sufficient number of instructors
  o Detailed timeline for implementation
  o Detailed budget and budget narrative
  o Robust plan to assess attainment of goals

This revised QEP addresses the concerns noted above. Some of the major issues are highlighted over the next few pages.

An Executive Committee made up of representatives from three major divisions on campus – Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Enrollment – and led by the QEP Program Director was formed in early May 2017 (Table 8).

Table 8. LINK Executive Committee (LINK ExComm)

Member	University Division and Title	Role
Dr. Mark J. Pilgrim	Academic Affairs Associate Professor of Biology	Director, LINK Program
Brian Hamm	Enrollment and Access Management Assistant VP of Enrollment and Student Success	Member
Debra Joe Franks	Student Affairs Director of Behavioral Intervention Team	Member
Tracy Clifton	Student Affairs Director of Student Conduct	Member
Dr. Suzanne Ozment	Academic Affairs Interim Provost, Vice President	Ex officio member
Dr. James Colbert	Academic Affairs Associate Provost Director of EYE Program Professor of Chemistry	Ex officio member and SACSCOC Liaison
Andy Benoit	Enrollment and Access Management Vice President	Ex officio member
Randy Bouknight	Student Affairs Vice President	Ex officio member

Representation from each area ensures broad stakeholder involvement and promotes collaboration and communication among these areas minimizing duplication of effort across campus. The LINK ExComm accomplished the following during summer 2017:
- revision of the Mission of the LINK Program and of the learning outcomes for LINK 101;
- recruitment and scheduling of faculty and staff to teach LINK 101, in collaboration with their supervisors across campus;
- planning and delivery of three LINK Academies to provide professional development for LINK 101 instructors;
- development of the LINK 101 curriculum and learning outcome assessments; and
- alignment of lessons and assignments with program goals

In order to enhance the impact that the LINK Program will have on students, a proposal to make LINK 101 mandatory for all incoming freshmen with fewer than 24 hours was submitted by the LINK ExComm to the Undergraduate Programs Committee which, in turn, sent a recommendation for approval to the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee. The Curriculum Committee recommended approval to the Faculty Senate and on May 8, 2017, the Senate approved the course as mandatory for all incoming freshmen with fewer than 24 hours, effective fall 2017.

The previous QEP Vision and Mission Statements were revised to align more closely with the new University Vision and Mission Statements (see Table 9). This revision incorporated suggestions from LINK 101 instructors participating in the summer LINK Academies.

Table 9. Lander University Vision and Mission and LINK Program Mission

Lander University Vision and Mission	LINK Program Mission
Vision: All Lander graduates are educated, well rounded and prepared to continue their education or launch their careers. Mission: Lander University offers high-demand and market-driven programs to ambitious and talented students in South Carolina and beyond. These programs are delivered in a rich liberal arts environment to produce highly qualified and marketable graduates.	Mission: Connecting students to the knowledge, resources, and experiences to successfully complete their major programs and graduate from Lander University.

The LINK Program accomplishes its mission by the following: 1) representative administration of the program by a LINK Executive Committee (LINK ExComm), 2) development and delivery of the freshman seminar course, LINK 101, 3) professional development of LINK 101 instructors through the LINK Academy, and 4) partnership with units across campus to deliver experiences for students throughout their time at Lander University, known as LINK events.

The initial LINK 101 learning outcomes were also revised during summer 2017 to address results of the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of UNI 101 as well as input from the consultants, the LINK ExComm, and the LINK 101 instructors who participated in the summer LINK Academies (see Table 10).

Table 10. Lander University Vision and Mission and LINK 101 Learning Outcomes

Lander University	LINK 101 Learning Outcomes
Vision: All Lander graduates are educated, well rounded and prepared to continue their education or launch their careers. Mission: Lander University offers high-demand and market-driven programs to ambitious and talented students in South Carolina and beyond. These programs are delivered in a rich liberal arts environment to produce highly qualified and marketable graduates.	1. Leadership: Students will develop the skills of effective leaders. 2. Involvement: Student will become active citizens in the university community and beyond. 3. Networking: Students will build strong, positive networks within the university community. 4. Knowledge: Students will learn how to be successful in college and life.

Analysis of the Strengths and Weaknesses of UNI 101

In the summer of 2017, the group of faculty and staff developing the curriculum for LINK 101 drew on UNI 101 assessment results in order to build on the strengths and address the weaknesses of UNI 101.

As designed, LINK 101 is similar to UNI 101 in several ways. LINK 101 is a mandatory course for all incoming freshmen with fewer than 24 credit hours. LINK 101 classes meet once per week during the student's first semester at Lander University. Topics covered in the course include campus resources, the academic Honor Code and Student Code of Conduct, academic success, student wellness, career/major exploration, and financial wellness. Class sections of the course are taught by either faculty or staff.

However, LINK 101 differs from UNI 101 in significant ways (Table 11).

Table 11. Significant Differences Between UNI 101 and LINK 101

UNI 101	LINK 101
Course topics covered during class time	Course topics covered in online modules outside of class as well as during class time
Class instruction provided mostly by staff and few faculty	Class instruction provided by either staff (60% of classes) or faculty (40% of classes)
Course content developed mostly by Student Affairs	Course content developed by a representative Executive Committee and faculty and staff instructors from several divisions on campus (Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Business and Administration, Enrollment and Access Management)
Course topics include those typically found in extended orientation model freshman seminar courses.	Course topics include discipline-specific content developed by faculty in the student's major or content to address the needs of a special population of students.
Students were assigned randomly to course sections that were all the same in terms of content and assignments.	Class sections are organized by academic discipline-specific clusters (Nursing, Biology, Education, Behavioral and Social Sciences, Business, Arts and Humanities, Mathematics and Computer Science) or special populations (Honors, International, Athletics, General, or Undecided). Students are assigned to a section based on their major or special population.

Factors with the highest impact were identified during assessment of UNI 101 through Skyfactor FYSA. LINK 101 maintains and enhances the perceived strengths of UNI 101 as revealed by Skyfactor FYSA results, instructor input, and the year-end summary reports of UNI 101 (Table 12).

Table 12. Strengths of UNI 101 Maintained in LINK 101

FYSA Highest Impact Factors Considered Strengths of UNI 101 (at and above goal of 5.5) Fall 2016 (n=573-581)	How strengths will be maintained/enhanced in LINK 101
Course improved understanding of academic integrity. (5.80)	• Student Handbook online module and assessments address topic. • Information Literacy/Use of Library online module and activity allow students to seek information sources and cite properly. • Faculty within discipline-clusters address topic in class.

Course improved knowledge of academic services. (5.84)	• Academic Success online module and assessments address topic. How to make an appointment for tutoring or advising is addressed. • Making an appointment with the first-year advisor and setting SMART goals is a required assignment.
Course improved knowledge of study strategies. (5.43)	• Academic Success online module and assessments address topic. • In many class sections, successful juniors and seniors in the major provide tips through panel discussions. • A faculty workshop on metacognition will be offered to instructors so they may include these strategies in their classes.

In order to enhance student understanding of academic integrity, students complete online modules on the Student Code of Conduct found in the Student Handbook and on information literacy/Use of the Library. Student understanding of these topics will be assessed using module assignments and quizzes. For the module on information literacy/use of the library, students complete an activity using a variety of library resources to find information and cite sources appropriately. The online modules and associated assessments are expected to enhance student perceptions of the effectiveness of the course in the area of academic integrity. During the 2016-2017 academic year, first-generation college students in UNI 101 were asked on the Skyfactor FYSA (Q#43), "As a result of this course/experience, I better understand: the value of academic integrity." These students ranked UNI 101 less effective (5.66, n=225) than other students (5.96, n=324). Similarly, when asked about "rules regarding academic honesty" (Q#42), first-generation college students ranked UNI 101 less effective (5.73, n=225) than did other students (6.01, n=326). These results suggest that for first generation students in particular more attention should be paid to the topic.

In order to improve knowledge of academic services, not only do students complete the online module titled "Academic Success," but they also practice the skills they learned by completing the module quiz and making an appointment with their first-year advisor. During the advising session, the student creates SMART goals to achieve academic success. This online module and associated assessments are expected to enhance student perceptions of the effectiveness of the course in the area of academic services. Enhancing this factor may also impact first-generation college students more acutely than other students. First-generation students, when asked whether UNI 101 improved their knowledge of how academic advising works (Q#58), ranked this lower (5.62, n=226) compared to other students (5.85, n=323).

To improve student understanding of study strategies, many LINK 101 instructors plan to involve successful upperclassmen in a panel discussion about effective study strategies that should be impactful for freshmen. This approach also allows the program to introduce peer leaders informally into the classroom in Year 1. Formal peer leaders will be introduced into LINK 101 by Year 3, following formalized peer leader training. Again, first-generation college students may be impacted more than other students in this area. First-generation student responses to "As a result of this course/experience, I better understand: study strategies that work best for me" (Q#40) were lower (5.32, n=224) than for other students (5.56, n=321).

Responses to other study strategies questions showed a marked difference between first-generation college students and other students:
- Q#70 "taking effective notes in class" (5.31 vs. 5.60),
- Q#77 "keep up with class readings in my courses" (5.10 vs. 5.51),
- Q#78 "participation in classroom discussions" (5.23 vs. 5.52),
- Q#80 "use study groups to prepare for tests" (4.99 vs. 5.39), and
- Q#82 "use my time effectively when studying for tests" (5.13 vs. 5.60).

Since first-generation college students are recognized to be an at-risk group at most colleges and universities, the intent is to impact this group of students in particular. A measure of the effectiveness of the program is not only an increase in overall student ratings of the factors, but also closing the gap in perceptions between first-generation college students and other students.

LINK 101 is designed to address the weaknesses of UNI 101 as revealed by the same sources as above (Table 13):

Table 13. Weaknesses of UNI 101 Addressed in LINK 101

FYSA Highest Impact Factors Considered Weaknesses of UNI 101 (>0.25 below goal of 5.5) Fall 2016	How weaknesses will be addressed in LINK 101
Course improved academic skills. (4.62)	- Academic Success online module and assessments address topic. Learning objectives addressed include: list tips for academic success, identify the parts of an effective study plan, and create a well written SMART goal. - Textbook resources include readings from etextbook: "51 Tips for Academic Success", "How to Get Good Grades", "Study Smart", "Manage Your Time", "Succeeding in Class", "Getting Organized", "Taking Notes", "Preparing for Tests" - Online modules cover most topics from UNI 101 not pertaining to academic skills so that a larger portion of class time may be devoted to academic skills topics. - Faculty input in developing curriculum to build students' academic skills
Usefulness of course materials. (4.62)	- Faculty from the academic disciplines on campus are lead instructors, responsible for selecting content based on the needs of the students within that academic discipline. The course content addresses deficits seen in academic discipline area upperclassmen. - Increased class time for student-centered, active learning allows more time to apply

	course content and allow students to practice what they have learned.
Course increased co-curricular engagement. (5.21)	• LINK 101 continues requiring students to attend events/activities on campus outside of class time. In addition, reflection assignments are required for each event which are graded using a standard rubric across all sections. The reflection directs students to associate their experiential learning in co-curricular events with their past experiences and LINK 101 goals and to develop their awareness of how the event may have changed their approach to future situations. • LINK 101 instructors are encouraged to attend co-curricular events with their students. • The LINK Program will implement a path to graduation distinction which will incorporate increased co-curricular engagement throughout the student's college experience.

UNI 101 instructor input and the year-end summaries for UNI 101 prepared by staff in Student Affairs have also been valuable sources of information for improvements to incorporate into LINK 101 (Table 14):

Table 14. UNI 101 Year-End Summary Reports and Instructor Questionnaire Results Used to Improve LINK 101

UNI 101 Year-End Summary Report (YESR) 2016-2017 and Instructor Questionnaire Results (IQR)	**How LINK 101 will Incorporate Feedback**
"Freshman students often do not know what they need for success in college and might not recognize the usefulness or importance of a course topic until a particular situation arises". (YESR)	LINK 101 incorporates "just-in-time" (JIT) teaching – a widely respected pedagogy which delivers content in the course at a time in the students' experience when they most need it and are the most receptive.
"all instructors should be invited to attend meetings to review ALL course content and pedagogy" (YESR)	The LINK Program designs and delivers professional development programming for LINK 101 instructors consisting of 3 day-long symposia related to LINK 101 course content, teaching techniques, and program themes of leadership, involvement, networking, and knowledge.
Questionnaire Q#9: "How could University 101 be improved?" - Many comments from instructors about lack of time to cover	Although LINK 101 is still 1 contact hour, much of the content covered during class time in UNI 101 has been moved to online

content thoroughly or give students time to practice skills (IQR)
Questionnaire Q#6: "There was adequate classroom time to cover each course topic." (72% disagreed or strongly disagreed) (IQR)
In 2016-2017, the academic class period across campus was shortened to 50 minutes (from 60 minutes).
"Many of the PowerPoints need to be updated and condensed to allow more time for experiential activities in the classroom." (YESR)

modules to be completed by students outside of class. This allows classroom time to be devoted to more in-depth coverage of material and/or practice of important academic skills. PowerPoints used for UNI 101 were streamlined for use in video lectures in the online modules.

Questionnaire Q#7: "What were the most positive and/or fulfilling aspects of teaching University 101?" – many comments about connecting with and helping students (IQR)

Because much content is delivered through online modules, LINK 101 class time allows more time for instructors to connect with students. In addition, all LINK 101 instructors are encouraged to engage their students outside of class through activities such as Freshman Move-in Day, House Calls (when instructors visit students in their dorms to deliver a care package), attending campus events with students, having breakfast/lunch/dinner with students in the cafeteria, etc.

"improvement needs to occur in building skill levels acquired by students in the overall evaluation of the course (interesting/important subject matter, improving academic success, assisting with transitioning to college social environment, and recommending course to other first-year students)" (YESR)

LINK 101 moves extended orientation topics to online modules and focus class time instead on academic skills topics that are deemed important by faculty. In most cases, LINK 101 instructors have consulted with their academic departments to identify important topics for discipline specific cluster LINK sections. This reorientation of the course to focus on discipline-specific needs and connecting with students should make the material covered more relevant to students' interests and improve their academic success.

The Skyfactor FYSA, year-end summary report of assessment data, and surveys of LINK 101 instructors continue to be used in conjunction with course-embedded direct assessments to inform the LINK ExComm of needed improvements to LINK 101 and the LINK program.

Overview of LINK Program and Student Outcomes

The focus of Lander's 2017 QEP is primarily on the revision and enhancement of the existing FYS to further support student academic success. However, the Vision, Mission, and overall program goals for LINK were designed with an eye toward creating future opportunities. The concepts of Leadership, Involvement, Networking, and Knowledge provide a framework for campus initiatives that support the newly adopted University Strategic Plan and prepare students to be competitive in the 21st century workplace.

LINK Program Vision: Know yourself. Know your direction. Understand how to get there.

LINK Program Mission: To connect students to the knowledge, resources, and experiences necessary to successfully complete their major programs and to graduate from Lander University.

LINK 101 Course Description, Learning Outcomes and Course Objectives:
Course Description:
"LINK 101 is required for all first-time freshmen and students who are admitted with fewer than twenty-four (24) credit hours. Students must earn a passing grade to graduate from Lander. LINK 101 is a one credit hour course that consists of one face-to-face contact hour and one hour of online independent study per week. The curriculum covers common topics such as campus resources; the Academic Honor Code and Student Code of Conduct; academic success; student wellness; career/major exploration; and financial wellness. Special topics will be developed according to the needs of each cluster section.

LINK 101 Course Outcomes and Learning Objectives:
1) Leadership: Students will develop the skills of effective leaders by
   a) Identifying the qualities of great leadership and how they will enhance employability.
   b) Participating in leadership opportunities in diverse contexts.
2) Involvement: Students will become active citizens in the university community and beyond by
   a) Describing the principles of responsible citizenship and civic engagement.
   b) Practicing responsible citizenship through active involvement in opportunities within and beyond the campus community.
3) Networking: Students will build strong, positive networks within the university community by
   a) Connecting with individuals of diverse perspectives and backgrounds through respectful discourse.
   b) Interacting collaboratively with peers, staff, and faculty to gain knowledge of areas of academic and career interest.
4) Knowledge: Students will learn how to be successful in college and life by
   a) Identifying their interests, strengths, and opportunities in order to make informed decisions about a career path.
   b) Developing and applying metacognitive skills and strategies that support personal and academic success."

LINK 101 Model: University Culture, Learning, and Development
Figure 2 shows three general approaches to first-year seminars that were considered during deliberations on how to revise the previous seminar, UNI 101, to best support student success at Lander.

Figure 2. Models of First-Year Seminars

Extended Orientation	University Culture Learning, & Development	Thematic Gen Ed Competencies
Student Handbook	Philosophy of Liberal Arts Education	University-level knowledge and comprehension
Academic Catalog	Intellectual Development	The ability to apply information
History of Lander	Personal Development	The ability to communicate effectively and appropriately
Campus Resources	Professional Development	

As described in the syllabus (Appendix 1), the main objectives of UNI 101 revolved around expanding student awareness of campus resources that support a successful transition to college, providing an overview of academic and student life regulations, and presenting opportunities for co-curricular engagement. This corresponds to an Extended Orientation model. Another model was presented that represented a strongly academic focus. A third model, labeled a University Culture, Learning and Development model, was created to represent a hybrid between an extended orientation and an academic type of FYS.

Extended orientation seminars, inspired by the work of Upcraft and colleagues (Upcraft and Gardner, 1989; Upcraft, Gardner, and Barefoot, 2005), are characterized by a holistic and student-centered approach to providing student support during the freshman year. In their seminal text on the freshmen-year experience, Upcraft and Gardner (1989, p. 2) argued that there are six areas of personal and academic challenge that students face when entering college: 1) increased standards of academic and intellectual competence; 2) new possibilities for interpersonal relationships; 3) the ongoing process of developing a personal identity; 4) the need to select a career path and life-style; 5) making responsible decisions regarding their personal health and wellbeing; and 6) developing a personally meaningful and integrated life philosophy. The holistic nature of extended orientation seminars articulated well with the global LINK Mission, Vision, and course objectives of LINK 101, which are organized around developmental tasks relevant during emerging adulthood—mastering the interpersonal, professional, and intellectual competence, responsibility, autonomy, and achievement orientation necessary for success in college and beyond (Arnett, 2000).

However, without meaningful contextualization, students enrolled in extended seminars can feel disconnected from their future aspirations. Not surprisingly, students start their first day of college thinking about what they expect immediately after their last day of college—entering a career. Seniors, reflecting on what they would have found helpful during their freshman year, indicated that connecting earlier with a faculty member who knew "something about career possibilities" in a general disciplinary area would have helped them make informed decisions about their educational plan. Freshmen gave similar responses. This is consistent with findings on student-faculty contact well established in the literature (Kuh, 1981; Tinto, 1975, 1987;

Carson, 2000). It was less important, and to some students undesirable, that first year seminar instructors be specifically drawn from students' major department; rather, the most important criteria for instructors was that they be sufficiently knowledgeable to be able to offer broad insights.

Barefoot (1992, cited in Keup and Petschauer, 2011, p. 5) identified two forms of academically oriented first-year seminars. One is based on uniform thematic academic content, with the emphasis on students achieving competence in a single content area or skill such as communication, and each course section is identical in structure and presentation. The other form adopts uniform student learning outcomes but allows content to be tailored to specific disciplines, reflecting the knowledge and expertise of the instructor. The University Culture, Learning and Development model represents a hybrid of these two designs. The uniform emphasis in LINK 101 on the meaning and value of a liberal arts education mirrors the thematic model whereas the organizational structure of disciplinary clusters in which faculty may tailor course content to best support student success within their areas reflects the discipline-based model. The combination of these elements into the UNI 101 extended orientation model created a University Culture, Learning, and Development model and implementation plan for the new LINK 101 course (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Lander's University Culture, Learning, and Development Model
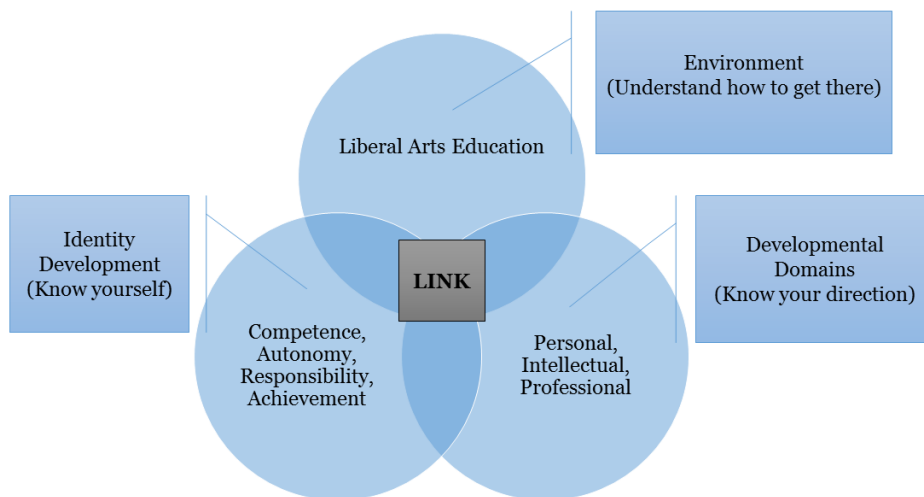
Organizational Structure and Implementation Strategies

The organizational structure and staffing strategy for LINK 101 represents a notable change from the former practice in UNI 101 which was housed in Student Affairs, organized into course sections of approximately 25 students, and taught primarily by Student Affairs staff. The revised structure situates LINK 101 in Academic Affairs, uses faculty and staff in partnership to design courses, assigns faculty and staff to teach class sections and will later add student peer leaders, and organizes sections by academic disciplinary areas or other special groups (Table 15). The new implementation strategy connects students earlier to their academic disciplines and creates an opportunity for staff and faculty to collaborate in the development and administration of the course.

Table 15. LINK 101 Instructors by Area, Cluster, and Role

Office	Area	LINK 101 Course Cluster	Instructor	Role
Academic Affairs	College of Arts and Humanities	Arts and Humanities	Hester, Laura	Faculty
	College of Behavioral and Social Sciences	Behavioral and Social Sciences	Snyder, Tim	
	College of Business	Business	Vinson, Stan	
	College of Education	Education	Innes, Jodi	
		Education	Sacerdote, Chris	
	College of Science and Mathematics	Biology	Lee, Jason	
		Biology	Maze, TD	
		Mathematics and Computer Science	Dunn, Gina	
		Nursing	Pilgrim, Mark	
	Library	Arts and Humanities	Akins, April	
		Behavioral and Social Sciences	Mash, David	
	School of Nursing	Nursing	Coats, Rachel	
		Nursing	Wharton, Holisa	
	Student Support Services	Education	Glover, Leslie	Staff
Business and Administration	Information Technology Services	Mathematics and Computer Science	McCaslan, Keith	Staff
Enrollment and Access Management	International Programs Director	International	Constant, Jeff	Staff
	Academic Success Center	Behavioral and Social Sciences	Aga, Brittany	
		Biology	O'Donnell, Becca	
		Business	Polatty, Caleb	
	AVP Enrollment & Student Success	General	**Hamm, Brian**	
	Registrar's Office	General	Felder, Brandon	
Student Affairs	Campus Recreation	Athletics	Gilstrap, Matthew	Staff
			Lotze, Scott	
	Director, Behavioral Intervention	Nursing	**Franks, Debra Joe**	
	Director of Student Conduct	Undecided	**Clifton, Tracy**	
	Housing and Residence Life	General	Dendy, Ebonee	
		General	Nodine, Sonny	
	Spirit Program	Athletics	Schoolfield, Kim	
	Student Activities	General	Franklin, Jill	
	Student Conduct	Behavioral and Social Sciences	O'Conner, Jalyssa	
	Wellness Center	Honors	Brewer, Justin	
		Nursing	Shannon, Kim	

Of the 32 LINK 101 instructors, 14 (44%) report to the Office of Academic Affairs, 1 (3%) reports to the Office of Business and Administration, 6 (19%) report to the Office of Enrollment and Access Management, and 11 (34%) report to the Office of Student Affairs. The administrative heads of each of these offices, except the Office of Business and Administration, serve as *ex officio* members of the LINK ExComm. The same offices are represented by working members of the LINK ExComm. This diverse stakeholder involvement, both on the LINK ExComm and among the instructors of LINK 101, has increased communication among these offices and led to sharing of resources and joint planning of events, thereby reducing duplication of effort. The LINK ExComm has already discussed the need for increased representation from the Office of Business and Administration in the future.

Of the 32 LINK 101 instructors, 13 (41%) are faculty and 19 (59%) are staff. The collaborative instructional teams composed of both faculty and staff that were formed during the LINK Academy sessions held for LINK instructors in summer 2017 have led to a synergistic combination of pedagogical experience from faculty and institutional experience from staff. The LINK ExComm and the LINK 101 instructors designed the course in group workshop experiences. The organizational design ensures that collaboration continues between faculty and staff as discipline-specific clusters of LINK 101 are taught by faculty and staff, with a lead instructor for each cluster.

Peer leaders will be incorporated into the classroom in Year 3 (fall 2019) of the QEP, allowing Year 1 for recruitment and development of peer leaders and Year 2 for training. The plan to add junior and senior student peer mentors is supported by student surveys conducted by the Lander Enhanced Advising Program and by input from a focus group of student orientation leaders. Mirroring findings from research on peer mentoring in FYS (Colvin and Ashman, 2010; Latino and Ashcraft, 2012; Latino and Unite, 2012), feedback from Lander students indicated strong support for peer leaders in LINK 101. Students indicated that they wanted to have an early opportunity to meet and work with another student in their general disciplinary area who had been successful at Lander and who would give an "honest inside scoop" into their major (coursework, instructors, policies, etc.). They stated that they would feel more comfortable first approaching a fellow student rather than the course instructor about any concerns they had. Also, students believed it would be valuable to have an upper-class student mentor available to aid them with more general college adjustment issues.

Course Structure
LINK 101 is a single-semester mandatory course offered each fall to all first-time freshmen with fewer than 24 college credit hours. A limited number of sections will be offered in the spring semester to new freshmen and transfer students with fewer than 24 college credit hours and to students who did not successfully complete LINK 101 in the fall. Students who do not pass LINK 101 will be guided to concentrate on areas of weakness that surfaced the first time they took the course. Additional instruction will be tailored to the needs of individual students in those sections. The LINK ExComm will also investigate other options in the future for students who fail LINK 101 such as taking a course that focuses on academic skills or a directed-independent study to allow the student and instructor to focus on the student's weak areas.

LINK 101 carries one academic credit hour and requires one contact hour per week in the classroom in addition to completion of online modules and assignments outside of class time. Most of the extended orientation topics have been transformed into 13 online modules with 2-4 learning objectives each, video lectures or interactive tutorials, and quizzes consisting of 2-5 multiple choice questions (total=40 questions) or a short assignment (total=4). Delivery of the module content and assessment is accomplished using the university's learning management

system, Blackboard. In-class face-to-face time between instructor and students is utilized to further explore the extended orientation topics or discipline-specific topics in a student-centered, active learning environment. Moving much of the content delivery online allows more time in class to form connections between instructor and student as well as peer connections among students.

Sections are organized around discipline-based or special interest clusters. Students were assigned by first-year advisors during summer orientations to course sections that correspond to their declared major or to a special interest group. Discipline clusters create a context in which faculty, staff, and students can effectively and efficiently collaborate to support student success as related to discipline-specific requirements. As well, they create expanded opportunities for enriched student-instructor interaction early in students' college experience.

Seven disciplinary clusters and five special population sections were identified as follows:

Discipline Clusters LINK 101
1. College of Arts and Humanities (CAH): Visual Arts, Music, Mass Communications and Theater, English, Spanish
2. College of Behavioral and Social Sciences (COBSS): Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, Criminal Justice/Criminology, History
3. Biology (BIO)
4. Mathematics and Computer Information Systems (MACS)
5. Nursing (NURS): Pre-Nursing and Nursing Applicants
6. Business: (BUS)
7. Education (EDU)

Special Population Clusters LINK 101
8. General (GEN): mixed majors
9. Undecided (UND): students who have not declared a major
10. Honors (HON): all freshmen in the Honors Program
11. International (INT): foreign students in the International Program
12. Athletics (ATH): student athletes whose schedule would not permit enrollment in the appropriate discipline cluster LINK 101

The goal is to offer at least one section of LINK 101 for each cluster type each fall. The number of sections offered will vary in response to enrollment demand. However, the implementation plan is designed to accommodate all enrolled first-time freshmen each fall semester, and annual capacity is calculated to accommodate a 10 percent freshmen enrollment increase for each successive year. Section enrollment is capped at 25 students.

Staffing Design and Instructor Responsibilities
Most of the discipline clusters for LINK 101 have a designated lead faculty instructor since faculty are more likely to understand the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for students to be successful in their academic discipline. Staff instructors who have the necessary qualifications also teach, and occasionally lead, discipline-specific sections. For example, staff with an MBA degree will be scheduled to teach in the BUS LINK 101; staff with a M.Ed. will be scheduled to teach in the EDU LINK 101; and staff with an RN degree or clinical experience will teach in the NURS LINK 101. In some cases, staff with significant experience helping students within a cluster will be selected to teach. For example, the first-year advisor for biology will teach a section within the BIO LINK 101 cluster. All staff teaching LINK 101 have at least 18 hours of relevant graduate credit and preference will go to staff with an earned Master's degree.

Ideally, each discipline cluster has LINK 101 sections taught by both faculty and staff. It is anticipated that the collaboration between faculty, who are experienced in effective teaching techniques and the needs of students within their disciplines, and staff, who are knowledgeable about the resources on campus that students can use to be successful, will have a synergistic effect on student success. When peer leaders are added to LINK 101 in Year 3 of the QEP, they will provide the perspective of a successful student, enhancing the value of the collaborative instructional team even further.

The lead faculty instructor teaches one or two sections of LINK 101 and also oversees all aspects of the organization, development, and delivery of the LINK 101 curriculum in class sections within the cluster. S/he works in collaboration with other faculty and staff instructors to develop curriculum materials, coordinate assessment activities, and coordinate with the LINK ExComm, department chairs and college deans to schedule needed course sections each semester.

In Year 3 and beyond, peer leaders will support and supervise course activities as directed by the faculty or staff instructor. Peer leaders will attend all class meetings and may deliver some course content, as deemed appropriate by the course instructor. The peer leader will most likely be a junior or senior student from any of the disciplines comprising a disciplinary cluster or from the population represented in a special section who is nominated by the course instructor to the LINK ExComm.

Clusters of LINK 101 for special populations also have a designated lead faculty or staff instructor. Lead staff instructors have the same responsibilities as those outlined above for lead faculty instructors. Special populations of students have been identified with particular needs for academic and personal success that are not discipline-specific. For example, approximately 15% of the early alert notifications submitted by faculty registering concerns about students in 2016 were about students from the Honors College. Most of the issues reported were related to anxiety and stress. The LINK ExComm made the decision, in collaboration with the Director of the Honors Program, counselors within the Wellness Center, and the Director of the Behavioral Intervention Team, to create a specific section of LINK 101 for Honors students that is team-taught by a faculty member and one of the counselors. Content developed for the Honors LINK 101 includes information about resources and techniques for dealing with anxiety and stress.

Another special section of LINK 101 was created for student athletes (ATH LINK 101). Students were assigned to this section if their schedules prevented participation in a discipline-specific cluster LINK 101. This section was created not only to accommodate complicated practice and game schedules, but also to address topics such as time management of special relevance to student athletes.

A LINK 101 section for international students (INT LINK 101) is being taught by the Director of International Programs who has reported that a significant number of international students, a large percentage of whom are also athletes, do not utilize the resources and services provided by the International Programs office until it may be too late academically.

General LINK 101 (GEN LINK 101) sections were created for students in a mix of majors who could not be scheduled into the appropriate discipline-specific LINK 101 or a special population LINK 101 section. Discipline-specific LINK 101 sections could not be offered in fall 2017 for physical science or exercise science due to instructor scheduling conflicts, but majors in these programs were assigned where possible to discipline based groups in GEN LINK 101 sections.

Students without a declared major were assigned to the Undecided LINK 101 (UND LINK 101) section. The instructor of this section will spend a significant amount of time covering topics related to self-awareness, career exploration, and information about the majors available on campus. The instructor for this section has set a goal that students be able to declare a major by the end of the semester.

Curriculum Design and Professional Development for Instructors
As noted earlier, a topical draft (Table 7) was developed by the Development Subcommittee during the summer of 2016 to serve as a general guide for the curriculum. This draft represented a beginning point for faculty and staff instructors. However, the final course topics, instructional materials, and assignments, including the development of standardized assignment assessment rubrics, were created during the summer 2017 LINK Academies. Lead instructors participated fully in development of the curriculum. While all sections of LINK 101 must adhere to the stated learning outcomes and use the standardized online modules, lead instructors have the license to tailor content and materials to best fit the needs of students in their discipline or special population cluster.

Summer 2017 LINK Academy. A series of three one-day professional development workshops called the LINK Academy was delivered in summer 2017 by members of the LINK ExComm and other faculty and staff. The goals of the LINK Academy are to provide 1) information related to the LINK program and the underlying principles of LINK 101 – leadership, involvement, networking, and knowledge, 2) an opportunity for instructional teams to work together on LINK 101 outcomes, curriculum, and assessment, and 3) professional development for each instructor and each instructional team of LINK 101. Academy attendance was requested of all LINK 101 instructors in summer of 2017, and each instructor who attended all three sessions was compensated with a stipend of $300. Attendance at the LINK Academy will be required of all LINK 101 instructors in subsequent years. In addition, faculty conducting workshops and/or attending the LINK Academy will be given professional development credit in their annual performance evaluations commensurate with their level of participation. Specifically, faculty leading a session or serving as a discussant in the LINK Academy will be given credit for a local conference presentation or non-peer reviewed publication while faculty attending the LINK Academy will be given credit for workshop attendance. In addition to attending the LINK Academy, LINK 101 instructors spent time during the summer with their instructional teams to develop the discipline-specific curriculum. Lead faculty and staff instructors receive a salary stipend as compensation for their additional responsibilities. Materials developed for the LINK Academy presentations and video recordings of those presentations have been archived and will be used as the basis for a LINK 101 instructor training program and a manual for instructor trainees participating in the program in the future.

Table 16. Summer 2017 LINK Academy Schedule, Topics, Presenters, and Evaluation

LINK Academy #1 (6/29/17)		AVE[12] (n=17)
8:45-9:00	Check-in	-
9:00-9:30	• Introductions - LINK ExComm and LINK 101 Instructors • Ice-breaker/Team Building (Joe Franks[1])	4.5
9:30-10:30	**Session #1 – Introduction to LINK 101** • QEP, Development of LINK, Program Goals (Mark Pilgrim[2]) • Incoming Freshmen Information (Brian Hamm[3]) **Breakout #1 – outcomes and goals**	4.4 4.3

10:30-10:45	*Break* – coffee, water, and snacks available*	-
10:45-12:00	**Session #2 – LINK 101 Core Curriculum** • Presentation of core topics and modules (Joe Franks[1]/Tracy Clifton[4]) **Breakout #2 – cluster-specific topics**	4.0 4.3
12:00-1:30	*Lunch* – You are encouraged to sit with fellow instructors in your cluster and continue the discussions*	
1:30-2:15	**Session #3 – University 101 and LINK 101** • Panel Discussion/Open Forum (Mark Pilgrim[2], Brian Hamm[3], Joe Franks[1], Tracy Clifton[4]) **Breakout #3 – addressing strengths/weaknesses of UNI 101 in LINK 101**	3.7 3.8
2:15-2:45	**Session #4 – Technology Introduction** • Microsoft Teams and OneNote (Keith McCaslan[5])	4.2
2:45-3:00	**Closing Remarks** • Summary, discussion, charge (Mark Pilgrim[2]) • Evaluation of LINK Academy #1	-

LINK Academy #2 (7/13/17)		**AVE[12] (n=18)**
8:45-9:00	Check-in	-
9:00-9:15	• Ice-breaker/Team Building (Joe Franks[1])	4.4
9:15-10:00	**Session #1 Refining LINK Academy #1 Topics – Mark Pilgrim[2], Brian Hamm[3], Joe Franks[1], and Tracy Clifton[4] (45 minutes)** • Outcomes/objectives and planning **Breakouts #1A-1C**	4.1
10:00 – 10:30	**Technology Training – Keith McCaslan[5] (30 minutes) [CANCELLED]** • Blackboard and other "Questions with Keith"	-
10:30-10:45	*Break* – coffee, water, and snacks available*	-
10:45-12:00	**Session #2 LINK 101 Resources – Mark Pilgrim[2], Brian Hamm[3], Joe Franks[1], and Tracy Clifton[4] (75 minutes)** • Syllabus, texts, modules, social media/communication **Breakout #2**	4.3
12:00-1:15	*Lunch* – You are encouraged to sit with fellow instructors in your cluster and continue the discussions*	-
1:15-2:00	**Session #3 – Leadership Workshop #1 – Frank Rausch[6] (45 minutes)** **Breakout #3**	4.4
2:00-2:45	**Session #4 – Involvement Workshop #1 – Matt Gilstrap[7] (45 minutes)** **Breakout #4**	4.7
2:45-3:00	**Closing Remarks –Mark Pilgrim[2]** • Summary, discussion, charge • Evaluation of LINK Academy #2	-

LINK Academy #3 (7/24/17)		AVE[12] (n=17)
8:45-9:00	Check-in	-
9:00-9:15	• Ice-breaker/Team Building (Tracy Clifton[4]) [CANCELLED]	-
9:15-10:00	**Session #1 - Networking Workshop #1 – Paige Ouzts[8] (45 minutes)** • Enhanced Advising Program	4.1
10:00 – 10:45	**Session #2 - Networking Workshop #2 – Andy Benoit[9] (45 minutes)**	4.2
10:45 – 11:00	*Break* – coffee, water, and snacks available*	-
11:00 – 11:45	**Session #3 Networking Workshop #3 – Jeannie McCallum[10] (45 minutes)**	3.7
11:45 – 1:00	*Lunch* – You are encouraged to sit with fellow instructors in your cluster and continue the discussions*	-
1:00 – 1:45	**Session #4 – Leadership Workshop #2 – Mike Rapay[11] (45 minutes)** • Leadership Conference and other opportunities	3.4
1:45 – 2:45	**Session #5 – Beyond LINK101 – Mark Pilgrim[2], Tracy Clifton[4], Brian Hamm[3] (60 minutes)**	3.9
2:45-3:00	**Closing Remarks – Mark Pilgrim[2]** • Summary, discussion, charge • Evaluation of LINK Academy #3	-

Affiliations:

[1] LINK ExComm, Nursing LINK 101 Instructor, Student Affairs – Director, Behavioral Intervention Team

[2] Director, LINK Program, LINK ExComm, Nursing LINK 101 Instructor, Academic Affairs – Associate Professor of Biology

[3] LINK ExComm, General LINK 101 Lead Instructor, Enrollment and Access Management – Assistant VP of Enrollment and Student Success

[4] LINK ExComm, Undecided LINK 101 Lead Instructor, Student Affairs – Director of Student Conduct

[5] MACS LINK 101 Instructor, Business and Administration – Instructional Technology Consultant

[6] Academic Affairs – Assistant Professor of History

[7] Athletics LINK 101 Instructor, Student Affairs – Director of Campus Recreation and Intramural Sports

[8] Academic Affairs – Enhanced Advising Program Director, Professor of Physics

[9] LINK ExComm (*ex officio*), Enrollment and Access Management – Vice President

[10] Business and Administration – Director, Human Resources

[11] Student Affairs – Director of Student Activities and Engagement

[12] Attendees were asked to evaluate the overall usefulness of each part of the Academy by circling the appropriate value. 1=Poor to 5=Excellent.

Attendance at each LINK Academy was satisfactory, considering the busy schedules of staff and the fact that many faculty are not under contract during the summer months. Attendance was 23 (72%) at Academy #1, 25 (78%) at Academy #2, and 22 (69%) at Academy #3, out of 32 instructors. In the future, the calendar for the summer LINK Academy will be distributed well in advance to increase participation. Each individual session offered through the LINK Academy was evaluated by the attendees on a numerical scale from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent). Response

rates were 17/23 (74%) at Academy #1, 18/25 (72%) at Academy #2, and 17/22 (77%) at Academy #3 on the evaluations. At the last academy of the summer, the overall LINK Academy was evaluated on whether it accomplished its goals. Open comments for improving the Academy were also solicited (see Appendices 3-5). In general, all session evaluations ranged between 3.4-4.7, indicating attendees thought the sessions were above average (3) to excellent (5) in overall effectiveness. The attendees felt that the summer Academy as a whole accomplished set goals, with perceptions ranging between 4.4 and 4.5 out of 5 (Table 17).

Table 17. Feedback from LINK Academy 2017	AVE[1] (n=17)
The goals of the LINK Academy are to provide	
1. Information related to the LINK program and the underlying principles of LINK 101 – Leadership, Involvement, Networking, and Knowledge,	4.5
2. An opportunity for instructional teams to work together on LINK 101 outcomes, curriculum, and assessment, and	4.4
3. Professional development for each instructor and each instructional team of LINK 101.	4.5

Note:
[1] Attendees at LINK Academy #3 were asked to evaluate how ALL of the LINK Academies accomplished the goals by circling the appropriate value. 1=Poor to 5=Excellent. 17 responses/22 attendees (77% response rate).

In addition to the LINK Academy, each fall and spring semester LINK instructors will be provided with at least 2 professional development workshops (4 each academic year). Two are planned for fall 2017 on the topics of early alert/reporting concerns about students and metacognition. Topics for spring workshops will be identified following fall semester LINK 101 course evaluations. Faculty and staff instructors with high rankings on specific LINK 101 topics will be asked to develop and present workshops for their colleagues. LINK 101 instructors will also meet with the LINK ExComm at least twice during each academic year to discuss how their classes are going, once around mid-term (October) and again after-term (January). Feedback at all workshops and meetings will be recorded and utilized to improve the program.

Beyond LINK 101
In addition to providing significant revisions to Lander University's FYS, the LINK Program envisions many other changes to campus culture:
- The LINK Program will continue to enhance and diversify its leadership within the LINK ExComm and among LINK 101 instructors to represent most areas on campus. Increased collaboration will enhance the program, strengthen communication between areas on campus, and reduce duplication of effort across campus.
- The LINK Program will provide continuing professional development for faculty and staff teaching LINK 101 through the LINK Academy. In addition, the LINK Academy represents an initial effort at Lander University for a Center for Teaching and Learning, which was one of the highly supported potential QEP topics.
- The LINK Program will develop a peer leader training program and a graduation distinction program. Peer leaders will be trained and assigned to LINK 101 sections by Year 3 of the program. A graduation distinction, tentatively called "True Bearcat," will be developed that will recognize student involvement and leadership on campus and beyond. One requirement for the "True Bearcat" distinction may be to serve as a peer leader in LINK 101.
- Student learning communities are likely to become the *de facto* standard considering the cluster organization of LINK 101 around majors and special interests. Other initiatives on

campus encourage the development of living and learning communities as well. Professional learning communities among faculty and staff are also being organized as an outgrowth of the collaborative teaching model adopted in LINK 101.

- The LINK Program will seek an increased presence in and contribution to freshman orientation. Many successful new student programs across the country focus on the spectrum of orientation, transition, and retention (OTR) for student success.

The implementation timeline for LINK Program initiatives, within LINK 101 and beyond, is outlined below:

Implementation Actions and Timeline
Status: Completed
January 2017

- Hold student contest for marketing logo and tag line
- Coordinate development of marketing plan
- Identify faculty instructors for LINK 101 sections

February 2017

- Submit deactivation form for UNI 101
- Submit activation form for LINK 101
- Designate new Director of the LINK Program
- Director of the LINK Program attends annual FYE Conference
- Solicit faculty and staff volunteers for workshops at LINK Academy
- Implement marketing plan

March-April 2017

- Host SACSCOC Review Team
- Identify instructors for LINK 101 sections

May 2017

- Schedule sections of LINK 101 based on orientation registrants and enrollment
- Obtain approval for LINK 101 as a mandatory course for all incoming freshmen with fewer than 24 credit hours
- Match faculty and staff scheduling preferences and teaching expertise with LINK 101 schedule.

June 2017

- Distribute program updates through "The LINK Letter" Volume 1, Issue 3 to all instructors of LINK 101
- LINK ExComm members visit USC to learn about the USC FYE program (6/14/17)
- Identify co-curricular events scheduled for fall semester and map to LINK goals
- Collaborate with Office of Student Activities to develop graduation distinction program that ties to LINK goals
- Register incoming students in LINK 101 at first freshman orientation (6/27-6/28)
- Hold 1st LINK Academy (6/29/17) – incorporate feedback on LINK program

July 2017

- Obtain final approval from Business Affairs and Academic Affairs for FY 2018 LINK Program budget for FY2018 (7/6/17)
- Hold 2nd LINK Academy (7/13/17) – incorporate feedback on LINK program

- Provide update to President's Cabinet and to Academic Council on LINK Program (7/20/17)
- Hold 3rd LINK Academy (7/24/17) – incorporate feedback on LINK program
- LINK ExComm members attend Institute on Developing and Sustaining First-Year Seminars in Savannah GA for team-building and professional development.
- Complete core LINK 101 curriculum, modules, and assessments.

August 2017
- Make Blackboard Master LINK 101 course available to all sections of LINK 101; lead instructors incorporate discipline-specific curriculum and assessments
- Complete registration of incoming freshmen for LINK 101; adjust sections of LINK 101 based on enrollment and need
- First day of classes - first class of LINK 101 (8/17/17)

<u>**Status: Planning Stages**</u>
September - December 2017
- September 7 - LINK Workshop #1 (open to all faculty) – Topic: "Early Alerts and Student Concerns" by Joe Franks at brown bag luncheon
- LINK 101 instructor evaluations throughout fall semester
- October - LINK Program meeting with all LINK 101 instructors to take stock of how things are going
- October/November - LINK Workshop #2 (open to all faculty) – Topic: "Metacognition" by TD Maze, brown bag luncheon
- December – LINK ExComm and LINK 101 instructors - end of first semester of LINK 101 – collect core topics assessment information from all sections
- Analyze instructor evaluation information; identify most effective instructors for core and discipline-specific topics

January - May 2018
- Deliver LINK 101 sections for transfer students with less than 24 hours college credit, any incoming first-time college students, and students who failed LINK 101
- LINK instructors and LINK ExComm meet to discuss the first semester of LINK 101 – strengths to be retained and enhanced, weaknesses to be improved, opportunities to be utilized, and threats to be addressed
- Meet with LINK 101 instructors from fall 2017 to discuss Year 2 (fall 2018) – instructors, changes to curriculum, assessment of discipline-specific knowledge and skills
- Identify instructors for core and discipline-specific topics and workshops during spring semester or LINK Academy
- Deliver at least 2 workshops led by faculty and staff identified as top instructors from student evaluations
- Develop the "True Bearcat" graduation distinction program for students who complete LINK 101 and maintain high levels of leadership and involvement on campus and in the community
- Conduct syllabus building workshop in April or early May covering course outcomes, learning objectives, assessments, topic selection.
- Write annual LINK Program report, distribute to all faculty and staff involved in the program, and make available to all faculty, staff, and administration.
- Possible dates for 2nd Annual LINK Academy (May 7-11, 2018) – some workshops required for all new and returning LINK 101 instructors. Additional orientation workshops for new instructors may be required.

June 2018
- Report to Lander Board of Trustees on LINK Program; investigate need for a fee for LINK 101

Year 2 (July 2018 – June 2019)
- Continue best practices in LINK 101 from Year 1; expand the number of LINK 101 sections and add instructors as needed to accommodate increases in enrollment
- Complete development of peer leader training program; identify peer leaders for LINK
- Publicize "True Bearcat" graduation distinction program to Year 1 and Year 2 LINK 101 student cohorts; promote in LINK 101 in subsequent years.
- Summer 2018 - increase involvement of LINK Program in student orientation

Year 3 (July 2019 – June 2020)
- Continue best practices in LINK 101 from Year 2, expand the number of LINK 101 sections and add instructors as needed to accommodate increases in enrollment
- Conduct LINK 101 peer leader training
- Incorporate peer leaders into at least 50% of LINK 101 sections
- Summer 2019 - increase involvement of LINK Program in student orientation

Year 4 (July 2020 – July 2021)
- Continue best practices in LINK 101 from year 3, expand LINK 101 sections and instructors by at least 10% to accommodate increases in enrollment
- Conduct LINK 101 peer leader training
- Incorporate peer leaders into 100% of LINK 101 sections
- Recognize Lander graduates with "True Bearcat" distinction (2017 LINK 101 cohort)
- Summer 2020 – increase involvement of LINK Program in student orientation

Year 5 (July 2021 – June 2022)
- Continue best practices in LINK 101 from Year 4, expand number of LINK 101 sections and add instructors as needed to accommodate increases in enrollment
- Conduct LINK 101 peer leader training
- Submit Fifth Year Interim Report to SACSCOC
- Summer 2021 – increase involvement of LINK Program in student orientation

Assessment: Overview of Data Collection

The LINK ExComm coordinates assessment of LINK Program goals and LINK 101 learning outcomes in collaboration with stakeholders such as LINK 101 instructors

Outcome data are intended to provide evidence to answer three critical questions:
1) Do students who successfully complete LINK 101 and other LINK program initiatives demonstrate increased levels of academic achievement and engagement?
2) Do students who successfully complete LINK 101 and other LINK program initiatives demonstrate increased persistence in college, as indicated by first-to-second year retention and graduation rates?
3) Which elements in the LINK 101 curriculum and other LINK program initiatives are important for supporting student success?

Institutional Assessment Providing Indicators of Student Success
1. Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI). Beginning in March 2015, the SSI was administered to all enrolled students at Lander University (baseline data, pre-LINK101=SSI-15); the next two administrations are scheduled on a three-year cycle for March 2018 (SSI-18) and March 2021 (SSI-21). The SSI is an indirect, self-reported measure of student satisfaction with the programs and services offered by Lander and identifies topics students perceive as important for enhancing the overall quality of their educational experience. Institutional results are reported as an average of importance, an average of satisfaction along with standard deviations, and a difference gap between importance and satisfaction, which is analyzed for statistical significance. Six survey items were selected as relevant benchmarks against which to gauge the success of the LINK 101 curriculum, five of which showed significant gaps between perceived importance and student satisfaction. The selected items are identified in the table below and matched to the relevant LINK 101 student learning outcomes (LO).

Table 18. SSI Item Alignment with LINK 101 Course Objectives (CO)

SSI Item	Alignment
Most students feel a sense of belonging here. (Item 1)	CO 4a
Faculty care about me as an individual. (Item 3)	CO 3a
	CO 3b
	CO 4b
Academic support services adequately meet the needs of students. (Item 44)	CO 2b
	CO 3b
Students are made to feel welcome on this campus. (Item 45)	CO 3a
	CO 3b
I can easily get involved in campus organizations. (Item 46)	CO 1b
	CO 2b
	CO 3b
	CO 4b
There are adequate services to help me decide upon a career. (Item 49)	CO 3b

Benchmarks for success:
- a. SSI-18 data will demonstrate a significant between-groups difference compared to the SSI-15 data ($p<0.05$, effect size of 0.3 or higher)
- b. SSI-21 data will demonstrate a significant between-groups difference compared to the SSI-15 data ($p<0.05$, effect size of 0.3 or higher)

2. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE®). The NSSE® is administered to freshmen and seniors on a three-year cycle and is an indirect, self-reported measure of student perceptions regarding the nature and quality of their undergraduate experience. The two most recent NSSE® administrations occurred in 2013 (NSSE-13) and 2016 (NSSE-16); the next NSSE® administrations are scheduled for 2019 (NSSE-19) and 2022 (NSSE-22). Table 19 lists NSSE® items and the relevant LINK 101 student learning outcomes.

Table 19. NSSE® Item Alignment with LINK 101 Course Objectives

NSSE® Items	Alignment
Collaborative Learning (Item 1)	CO 4b
Reflective and Integrative Learning (Item 2)	
2a. Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments	CO 4b
2b. Connected your learning to societal problems or issues	CO 2a
2c. Included diverse perspectives in course discussions or assignments	CO 3a
2d. Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	CO 3a
2e. Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his/her perspective	CO 3a
2f. Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept	CO 4b
2g. Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge	CO 4b
Student-Faculty Interaction (Item 3)	CO 3a CO 3b
Discussion with Diverse Others (Item 8)	CO 3a
Learning Strategies (Item 9)	CO 4b
Quality of Interactions (Item13)	
13a. Students	CO 3b
13b. Academic advisors	CO 3b
13c. Faculty	CO 3b
13d. Student services staff	CO 3b
Supportive Environment (Item 14)	

14b. Providing support to help students succeed academically	CO 3b CO 4b
14c. Using learning support services	CO 3b CO 4b
14d. Encouraging contact among students from different background	CO 3a
14h. Attending campus activities and events	CO 2b CO 3b
14i. Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues	CO 2b
High Impact Practices	
Learning Community	CO 3b CO 4b
Service-Learning	CO 2b
Internship/Field Experience	CO 1b CO 3b CO 4b
Research with Faculty	CO 1b CO 3b CO 4b
Study Abroad	CO 1b CO 3b CO 4b

Benchmarks for success indicated by NSSE® items:
a. LINK 101 student responses (NSSE-19 and NSSE-22) will demonstrate significantly higher average ratings for items subsumed under Reflective and Integrative Learning, Quality of Interaction, and Supportive Environment than pre-LINK101 student ratings (NSSE-13 or NSSE-16) ($p<0.05$, effect size of 0.3 or higher)
b. LINK 101 average student ratings (NSSE-19 and NSSE-22) will demonstrate a significantly higher rate of participating in High Impact Practices than pre-LINK101 student ratings (NSSE-13 or NSSE-16) ($p<0.05$, effect size of 0.3 or higher)

3. Student Retention and Graduation Data generated by the Office of Institutional Research. Lander University calculates student enrollment data, including retention and graduation outcomes, for each cohort of freshmen enrolled for a six-year period from date of initial matriculation. These data are published annually in the Lander University Factbook and reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). According to this data (IPEDS 2015 and 2016 reports), first year to second year retention rates hover around the 68-69 percent mark.
    a. LINK 101 students will be retained at a significantly higher rate from 2017 to 2018 (Fall 2017 cohort) than students in previous years ($p<0.05$, effect size of 0.3 minimum)
    b. LINK101 students will be retained at a significantly higher rate in each successive year of the program (2018-2020 cohorts) than in the previous year ($p<0.05$, effect size of 0.3 minimum)

4. Skyfactor First-Year Seminar Assessment (FYSA). The FYSA measures student perceptions of 23 factors reflecting course objectives relating to student orientation to college life,

campus services, study skills, and strategies for academic success. The FYSA was administered at the end of each semester to students enrolled in UNI 101 (2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17). The existing success indicator is an average rating of 5.5 or higher on survey items (Likert Scale, 1-7). The FYSA will be continued annually to assess improvements in the LINK 101 curriculum in each successive year and when compared to UNI 101.

Benchmarks for success:
   a. LINK 101 FYSA mean ratings on each survey item will equal or exceed 5.5
   b. LINK 101 FYSA (2017-18) average ratings will demonstrate a significant gain when compared to FYSA 2015-16 and 2016-17 data ($p < 0.05$, effect size of 0.3 or higher)
   c. LINK 101 FYSA average ratings will demonstrate a significant gain in each successive year of the program compared to the previous year ($p < 0.05$, effect size of 0.3 minimum)

Table 20. Institutional Assessment Schedule

Assessment	pre-LINK	Year 1 (2017-18)	Year 2 (2018-19)	Year 3 (2019-20)	Year 4 (2020-21)	Year 5 (2021-22)
SSI	2015	X	-	-	X	-
NSSE®	2013 2016			X		
Student Retention and Graduation Data	2016-17	X	X	X	X	X
FYSA	2014-15 2015-16 2016-17	X	X	X	X	X

Course-embedded Assessment of LINK 101 Student Learning Outcomes
Assessment of the achievement of the learning outcomes and course objectives of LINK 101 will be measured directly by embedded assessments within LINK 101. Assessments related to core topics shared across all LINK 101 sections will account for 50% of the points earned by students in LINK 101. Embedded direct core assessments include 1) online module quizzes and assignments, 2) pre-/post-course tests (What Do You Know (WDYK) LINK Tests) delivered at the beginning and end of the course, respectively, and 3) rubric scores for reflective assignments following participation in LINK events.

Direct Assessment of Course Outcomes by Online Module Quizzes
Some course content will be delivered via online modules through the university's learning management system, Blackboard. For each content module, learning objectives have been mapped to the course learning objectives (See Table 21). Achievement of the learning objectives will be measured within the module by 2-5 multiple choice questions completed after reviewing the module materials – video lectures, PowerPoint slides, suggested readings, and other online resources – or by completing an assignment, for which rubrics will be provided.

Table 21. Alignment of LINK 101 Online Module Objectives with LINK 101 Learning Outcomes

MODULES	LINK 101 Learning Outcomes			
	Leadership	**Involvement**	**Networking**	**Knowledge**
Academic Success			X	X
Bearcat Spirit		X		X
Blackboard/ITS			X	X
Campus Recreation and Intramurals		X		X
Career Services			X	X
Financial Literacy			X	X
The Healthy Student			X	X
Information Literacy/Library			X	X
Lander History	X	X		X
Lander Traditions			X	X
Leadership	X			
Student Activities		X		X
Student Handbook		X	X	X

LINK 101 instructors assign the online modules listed above to be completed outside of class time. After students view the online lecture (varying from 3 to 20 minutes each), they complete a short module quiz consisting of 2-5 multiple choice questions and submit their answers via Blackboard. Four of the modules include short assignments, for which a grading rubric is provided. Multiple-choice quiz scores and rubric scores will be analyzed across all sections of LINK 101 to gauge the collective effectiveness of the online module to achieve the course outcomes.

Benchmarks for success:
a. 90% of the students will complete at least 75% of the online modules and assessments.
b. Of those who complete the online modules and assessments, 90% will receive 100% of the points allocated per module.

Direct Assessment of Course Objectives by Course Pre-/Post-Tests
The improvement of the students' scores between pre- and post-tests will measure an increase in students' abilities to achieve the course outcomes and will provide evidence of the effectiveness of the modules, other course materials and class activities.

Benchmark for success:
a. 90% of the students will meet or exceed expectations on the post-test. Meeting expectations will be scoring 75% correct and exceeding expectations will be scoring above 80% correct on the post-test.

Direct Assessment of Course Objectives by Rubric Scores on Reflective Assignment
Students in LINK 101 will be required to attend 8 "LINKed" events throughout the semester (see Table 22 for a list of pre-approved LINKed events for fall 2017).

Table 22. Alignment of Campus Events with LINK Program Outcomes and LINK 101 Course Outcomes

		FALL 2017 PROGRAMMING LINK APPROVED ACTIVITIES/EVENTS		
Day	**Date**	**Activity/Event**	**Sponsor**	**LINK Category**
Mon.	14-Aug	Snow Cones by the Pool	Student Activities	I
Tues.	15-Aug	Welcome Back Block Party	Student Activities	I
Wed.	16-Aug	Who's Bad	Student Activities	I
Thurs.	17-Aug	Wonder Woman	Student Activities	I
Fri.	18-Aug	Bingo	Student Activities	I
Sun.	20-Aug	DIY Event	Student Activities	LI
Mon.	21-Aug	ECLIPSE DAY (Carnival and then pool party)	Student Activities	INK
Tues.	22-Aug	Headphone Disco	Student Activities	I
Wed.	23-Aug	CommUniversity	Student Activities	LINK
Wed.	23-Aug	Derek Hughes	Student Activities	I
Thurs.	24-Aug	Tie Dye	Student Activities	I
Thurs.	24-Aug	Avoid a Major Meltdown (Snow Cones on the Plaza)	Career Services	INK
Fri.	25-Aug	Trivia	Student Activities	IK
Fri.	25-Aug	Atlanta Braves Game – Outdoor Adventures	Campus Rec	I
Sat.	26-Aug	Dive-In Jaws	Student Activities	I
Tues.	29-Aug	Water War	Student Activities	I
Wed.	30-Aug	Beauty and the Beast	Student Activities	I
Wed.	6-Sep	Eat N' Play at the Soccer Games	Student Activities, Campus Rec	I
Wed.	6-Sep	Intramural Outdoor Soccer League Start Date	Campus Rec	LI
Wed.	6-Sep	Intramural Kickball League Start Date	Campus Rec	LI
Wed.	6-Sep	The Asia Project	Student Activities	I
Thurs.	7-Sep	Intramural Flag Football Start Date	Campus Rec	LI
Thurs.	7-Sep	Novelty Day	Student Activities	I
Sat.	9-Sep	Lander Leadership Conference/Greek 101	Student Activities	LINK
Mon.	11-Sep	Singles Tennis Tournament Start Date	Campus Rec	I
Mon.	11-Sep	House Calls	Wellness Center	NK
Tues.	12-Sep	A Cappella group	Student Activities	I
Fri.	15-Sep	Film	Student Activities	I
Mon.	18-Sep	Salsa Dancing	Student Activities	I
Tues.	19-Sep	Game Night at the Fire Pit	Student Activities	I
Thurs.	21-Sep	Student Professional Portraits	Student Activities	IN
Thurs.	21-Sep	Puppies on the Plaza	Student Activities	I
Thurs.	21-Sep	FIFA Tournament	Student Activities, Campus Rec	LI
Thurs.	21-Sep	Greek/Athlete Program (Open to all campus)	Student Activities, LUPD, T9, Athletics	INK
Sat.	23-Sep	Skydiving Trip – Outdoor Adventures	Campus Rec	LI
Mon.	25-Sep	Pans Labyrinth	Student Activities	I
Wed.	27-Sep	Lip Sync Battle	Student Activities	I
Thurs.	28-Sep	Disc Golf Tournament	Campus Rec	LI
Mon.	2-Oct	Mental Health Awareness (11am-1pm *Commons)	Wellness Center	INK

FALL 2017 PROGRAMMING
LINK APPROVED ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

Day	Date	Activity/Event	Sponsor	LINK Category
Tues.	3-Oct	Mental Health Awareness (11am-1pm *Commons)	Wellness Center	INK
Wed.	4-Oct	Mental Health Awareness (11am-1pm *Commons)	Wellness Center	INK
Thurs.	5-Oct	Mental Health Awareness (11am-1pm *Commons)	Wellness Center	INK
Mon.	9-Oct	Hocus Pocus at the Fire Pit	Student Activities	I
Tues.	10-Oct	Scavenger Hunt	Student Activities	LINK
Tues.	10-Oct	BMW- Info Session for Internships	Career Services	IN
Tues.	10-Oct	MLB The Show 17 Tournament	Campus Rec	LI
Tues.	10-Oct	Intramural Dodgeball League Start Date	Campus Rec	LI
Tues.	10-Oct	Intramural 3 on 3 Basketball League Start Date	Campus Rec	LI
Wed.	11-Oct	Intramural Indoor Volleyball League Start Date	Campus Rec	LI
Wed.	18-Oct	Battle of the Bands Breast Cancer Concert	Student Activities	IK
Thurs.	19-Oct	Student Professional Portraits	Student Activities	LIN
Thurs.	19-Oct	Minute to Win It	Student Activities	I
Thurs.	19-Oct	Domestic Violence Awareness Day (11am-1pm *Commons)	Wellness Center	KI
Sat.	21-Oct	Family Day	Student Activities	IN
Sat.	21-Oct	Cornhole Tournament (Family Day)	Campus Rec	I
Sun.	22-Oct	ToughMudder – Outdoor Adventures	Campus Rec	I
Mon.	23-Oct	Moonshine Run/Walk	Campus Rec, Student Affairs	INK
Tues.	24-Oct	Halloween (the movie)/Costume Contest	Student Activities	I
Thurs.	26-Oct	Cake Decorating Contest	Student Activities	I
Sat.	28-Oct	Barbells for Boobs Competition - Breast Cancer Awareness	Campus Rec	IK
Mon.	30-Oct	The Evasons	Student Activities	I
Tues.	31-Oct	Pumpkin Carving	Student Activities	I
Tues.	31-Oct	Halloween Dodgeball Tournament	Campus Rec	LI
Wed.	1-Nov	Dia de Los Muertos	Student Activities	I
Tues.	7-Nov	ThinkFast Trivia Game Show	Student Activities	LIK
Tues.	7-Nov	Doubles Badminton Tournament	Campus Rec	LI
Thurs.	9-Nov	Eat N' Play Harvest Festival Theme	Student Activities, Campus Rec	I
Sat.	11-Nov	Rainbow Falls Hiking Trip – Outdoor Adventures	Campus Rec	I
Mon.	13-Nov	The Dating Doctor David Coleman/Speed Dating	Student Activities	IK
Wed.	15-Nov	Craft Event	Student Activities	I
Wed.	15-Nov	Handball Tournament	Campus Rec	I
Thurs.	16-Nov	Student Professional Portraits	Student Activities	LIN
Thurs.	16-Nov	Film	Student Activities	I
Tues.	28-Nov	Holiday Tree Lighting	Student Activities	IN
Wed.	29-Nov	Bowling Night	Campus Rec	I

<table>
<tr><td colspan="5" align="center">FALL 2017 PROGRAMMING
LINK APPROVED ACTIVITIES/EVENTS</td></tr>
<tr><td>Day</td><td>Date</td><td>Activity/Event</td><td>Sponsor</td><td>LINK
Category</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mon.</td><td>4-Dec</td><td>Destress Fest (*Commons)</td><td>Wellness Center,
Career Services</td><td>IK</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mon.</td><td>4-Dec</td><td>Puppies on the Plaza</td><td>Student Activities</td><td>I</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mon.</td><td>4-Dec</td><td>Holiday Movie</td><td>Student Activities</td><td>I</td></tr>
</table>

⇒ L=Leadership, I=Involvement, N=Networking, K=Knowledge

⇒ For Student Activities sponsored programs, please reference the Events Schedule on the Student Activities website (http://www.lander.edu/sites/student-activities/Events-Calendar.aspx). The website will be updated as events are added to the schedule and/or as program times are finalized.

⇒ All Intramural leagues and the Singles Tennis Tournament have their start date posted above, however the end date will be TBD depending on the length of the season. The league start dates are subject to be changed*

⇒ Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)-mandated and/or Title IX related topics (bystander intervention, intimate partner violence, stalking, and high risk behavior) will be rolled into as many programs as possible. *Lander University Police Department will provide support and/or sponsor programs relevant to these topics and other campus safety related matters.*

⇒ Residence Life programs are planned by the Resident Assistants and/or the Residence Hall Association. RAs advertise and host programs in their assigned area. Attending such programs provides students with an opportunity to cultivate meaningful relationships within their respective communities.

*** This is not an exhaustive list. Additional events/activities may be added and publicized accordingly.***

Students may petition to have additional experiences as LINK events. Some examples include tutoring sessions, using the Writing Center, volunteering, and joining and participating in a student organization. The Fine Arts Lectureship Series (FALS) events may also count toward credit in LINK 101. Instructors of LINK 101 approve student petitions for LINK events within their class sections. The LINK ExComm provides additional support if requested by the instructor.

Following participation in the event, the student completes a reflective assignment to answer the question "How did this event help me learn more about or practice leadership, involvement, networking, or gain college-level knowledge?". The rubric used to score the reflection use the principles outlined by David Kolb in his "Experiential Learning Model" as described by McLeod (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning Applied to LINKed Events Reflection
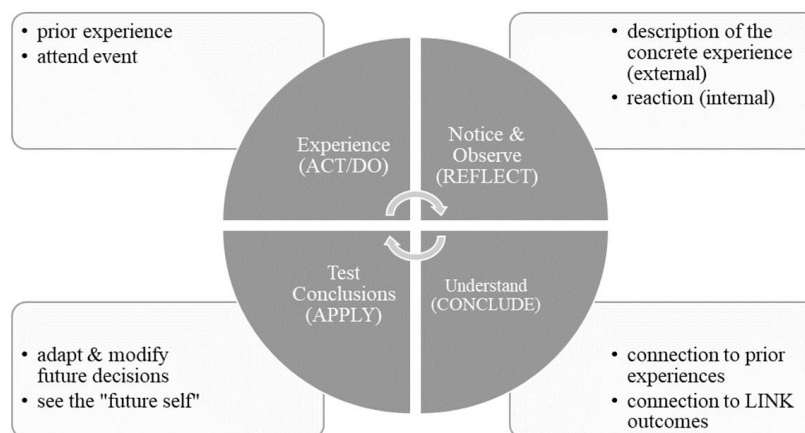
The assignment will be scored using a standard rubric across all sections based on Kolb's model (see Table 23). The reflection of the student will reveal the impact of the event on the student (rubric criteria "Connection to Prior Experience" and "Connection to Self") and provide qualitative evidence of achievement of the course objectives (rubric criterion "Connection to LINK").

Table 23. Grading Rubric for LINKed Events Reflection Assignments

Criteria	Excellent (5 pts)	Sufficient (4 pts)	Developing (3 pts)	Poor (0-2 pts)
Concrete description of event (external) and reaction (internal)	Event described in exceptional detail and student reaction was clearly indicated.	Event described in sufficient detail and reaction was included.	Some detail about the event and student reaction was included.	Insufficient detail about the event or the student reaction was included.
Connection to prior experience	Student incorporated prior experiences and connected them to the event/activity in a clear manner.	Student included prior experience but may not have connected it to the event/ activity clearly.	Student included prior experience but did not connect it clearly to the event/activity.	Student was vague or did not mention prior experiences.
Connection to LINK outcomes	Student was able to connect the event/activity experience in a meaningful way to the course objectives.	Student made some attempt to connect the event/activity experience to the course objectives.	Student mentioned course objectives but did not clearly connect them to the experience.	Student was vague or did not mention course objectives.

Connection to self	Student was able to clearly define how the event/activity has changed their perspective or approach to future situations.	Student made some attempt to connect the event/activity to their perspective or future approach.	Student mentioned self-perspective but did not clearly connect them to the event/activity.	Student was vague or did not mention their perspective in relationship to the event/activity.
Effective and Appropriate Communication	College-level vocabulary and sentence structure was used; free of grammatical and spelling errors.	Vocabulary and sentence structure was simple; free of grammatical and spelling errors.	Vocabulary and sentence structure was simple; some grammatical and spelling errors were present.	Vocabulary and sentence structure was flawed; grammatical and spelling errors significant.

Benchmarks for success:
a. 75% of the students will attend the required number of events and submit reflection assignments as required.
b. at least 75% of the students who submit reflection assignments as required will clearly connect the events they attended with their perspective of self and their achievement of the course outcomes (average score >4 on the middle three rubric "Connection" criteria)

Direct Assessment of Course Objectives by Discipline-specific Content and Assessments
LINK 101 instructors, in collaboration with their lead instructor and the LINK ExComm, develop course content and assessments to address the needs of their student population cluster that are aligned with the LINK101 course learning outcomes. The cluster-specific content and assessment will be piloted during the first year of the QEP. Informal evaluation of content and assessments during Year 1 will provide baseline measurements for comparison in subsequent years. The cluster-specific assessments account for 50% of the points earned by students in LINK 101.

Table 24. 5-Year Assessment Plan for LINK 101 Course-Embedded Assessments

	Year 1 (2017-18)	Year 2 (2018-19)	Year 3 (2019-20)	Year 4 (2020-21)	Year 5 (2021-22)
Module Quizzes and Assignments	Assessment of all Outcomes (LINK)				
WDYK-LINK Tests					
LINKed Event Reflections					
Discipline-specific assessments	Pilot and baseline assessment	Networking Knowledge	Leadership Involvement	Networking Knowledge	Leadership Involvement

Year 6 and beyond repeat the pattern established in Years 2-5.

Budget and Resources

The aim throughout the development of the QEP has been to increase the quality of the educational experience for students while allocating a budget consistent with the capability of the institution.

The former freshman seminar, UNI 101, was a required one-hour course for all new freshmen. Instructors were paid at the standard University adjunct rate of $800 per credit hour, with the understanding that they would teach one or more sections in addition to their regular job duties. Each instructor was assigned a course section of 20 to 25 students, and, in order to serve all incoming students, 24 sections were required. Instructors received no professional development to assist them to teach the course effectively.

The LINK 101 budget (Table 25) reallocates the instructional costs of delivering UNI 101 and adds funds to cover the increased instructional cosst of LINK 101. Instructional costs have risen for several reasons: 1) instructors are being compensated at the rate for 1.5 credit hours ($1200) in recognition of the additional work involved in evaluating online quizzes, LINK Event reflection assignments, and other class activities; 2) a larger freshman class has resulted in 17 more freshman seminar sections than were offered in fall 2016; and 3) funds have been added for instructor professional development.

Personnel: Faculty, Staff, and Students

During the summer of 2017, it became clear that University recruiting efforts would yield a record number of incoming freshmen for fall semester. In addition, the cluster organization of the course made it necessary to offer more sections of LINK 101 than had been offered for UNI 101 in the past. Clusters had to be scheduled when faculty or staff could serve as lead instructors, and faculty schedules seemed to be less flexible than staff schedules because of other teaching obligations. The LINK ExComm, based on data from the Office of Enrollment and Access Management, estimated at least 750 incoming freshmen when creating the LINK 101 schedule. Forty-one sections of LINK 101 grouped into 12 types of clusters are being offered in fall 2017. At least 10% growth in enrollment is anticipated each year for the next few years which will necessitate a concomitant increase in seats available in LINK 101. This potential growth has been accounted for in the 5-year budget in the line items for class section instructors, peer leaders (starting in Year 3), LINK Academy professional development workshops, and materials. Two additional clusters—for Physical Sciences and Exercise Science—will be created in Year 2, which will lead to 15 clusters, and hence 15 lead instructors, in Years 2-5. Although there will be an initial cost for compensating online module designers, after Year 1, the modules may be copied and used again in subsequent years. This represents an initial investment in course development which is non-recurring. In summary, over the five-year budget, 83-88% will be allocated to personnel compensation annually.

Materials, Conferences, and Assessments

In order to save students money on textbooks for the course, the LINK ExComm opted to purchase an online suite of electronic texts which had been used previously in UNI 101. For a nominal fee, the e-texts were made available to all incoming freshmen and LINK 101 instructors for one year. Each online content module was mapped to relevant parts of the e-texts, and links were provided within each module. Other items that were accounted for in the budget included printing and materials. In addition, some LINK-branded merchandise, such as T-shirts and cups, will be designed with student input to increase campus awareness of the program and to serve as additional incentives for students and instructors to participate in the LINK Program. Food will also be provided at all LINK Academy workshops. In summary, over the five-year budget, only 5-7% of the LINK Program budget will be spent on materials annually.

Members of the LINK ExComm and LINK 101 instructors will be expected to attend conferences such as the annual First-Year Experience (FYE) Conference and the Institute on Developing and Sustaining First Year Seminars to remain up-to-date on scholarship related to first-year experience programs. The LINK Program Director attended the FYE conference in Atlanta, GA in February 2017, and all four working members of the LINK ExComm attended the Institute in Savannah, GA in July 2017. All agreed these conferences were extremely beneficial. In the future, at least two individuals will be sent each year to each of these conferences. By Year 3, the expectation is that some instructors will present LINK-related findings at these conferences. In summary, over the five-year budget, 3-6% of the LINK Program budget will be spent annually on conference attendance.

Finally, the majority of assessments for the LINK Program has been developed in-house by faculty and staff as course-embedded measures. The SkyFactor FYSA will be purchased for the LINK program. The LINK Program will also extract information from other institutional assessments that are already in use at Lander University (NSSE® and SSI) and, therefore, has budgeted payment of a portion of the costs of those instruments. In summary, over the five-year budget, only 3-4% of the LINK Program budget will be spent on assessment.

At the end of the first full week of classes in fall 2017, Lander estimates a total enrollment increase of 84 students over fall 2016 which will generate over $800,000 in new revenue for the institution. The implementation strategy for LINK 101 is to leverage the reallocation of instructional costs from UNI 101 and the revenue from increased enrollment to fund the QEP. The fall 2017 course schedule accommodates most LINK 101 sections with normal faculty course loads. Only 3 faculty members instructing LINK 101 have overloads (one has a one-hour overload, one has a two-hour overload, and one has a three-hour overload). Similarly, all staff instructors were able either to teach outside of normal work hours or make up the time missed when teaching LINK 101. The five-year timeline for implementation of the QEP indicates that the addition of a course fee for LINK 101 will be explored by the administration at the end of the first year and added to student costs, if necessary. These factors demonstrate the institution's fiscal and human resource capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP.

Table 25. LINK Program 5-Year Budget

	Year 1 2017-18	Year 2 2018-19	Year 3 2019-20	Year 4 2020-21	Year 5 2021-22	Total
Personnel	$ 109,241	$ 114,691	$ 133,486	$ 142,460.50	$ 152,332.45	$ 652,210.95
Program Director[1]	$ 32,541	$ 32,541	$ 32,541	$ 32,541	$ 32,541	$ 162,705
Cluster Lead Instructor[2]	$ 9,600	$ 11,200	$ 11,200	$ 11,200	$ 11,200	$ 54,400
Class Section Instructor[3]	$ 52,800	$ 58,080	$ 63,888	$ 70,276.80	$ 77,304.48	$ 322,349.28
Online Module Designer[4]	$ 2,600	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 2,600
Peer Leader[5]	$ -	$ -	$ 11,700	$ 12,870	$ 14,157	$ 38,727
Academy Graduate[6]	$ 9,900	$ 10,890	$ 11,979	$ 13,176.90	$ 14,494.59	$ 60,440.49
Academy Leader[7]	$ 1,800	$ 1,980	$ 2,178	$ 2,395.80	$ 2,635.38	$ 10,989.18
Materials	$ 9,250	$ 9,250	$ 9,250	$ 9,250	$ 9,250	$ 46,250
Text[8]	$ 750	$ 750	$ 750	$ 750	$ 750	$ 3,750
Printing/Materials[9]	$ 3,500	$ 3,500	$ 3,500	$ 3,500	$ 3,500	$ 17,500
Catering[10]	$ 5,000	$ 5,000	$ 5,000	$ 5,000	$ 5,000	$ 25,000
Conferences	$ 7,818	$ 5,500	$ 5,500	$ 5,500	$ 5,500	$ 29,818
Institute on Developing and Sustaining FYS[11]	$ 5,348	$ 2,500	$ 2,500	$ 2,500	$ 2,500	$ 15,348
FYE Conference[12]	$ 2,470	$ 3,000	$ 3,000	$ 3,000	$ 3,000	$ 14,470
Assessments	$ 5,677	$ 5,677	$ 5,677	$ 5,677	$ 5,677	$ 28,385
Noel-Levitz SSI	$ 1,000	$ 1,000	$ 1,000	$ 1,000	$ 1,000	$ 5,000
Skyfactor FYSA	$ 3,677	$ 3,677	$ 3,677	$ 3,677	$ 3,677	$ 18,385
NSSE®	$ 1,000	$ 1,000	$ 1,000	$ 1,000	$ 1,000	$ 5,000
Total	$ 131,986	$ 135,118	$ 153,913	$ 162,887.50	$ 172,759.45	$ 756,663.95

Budget Notes:
[1] $14,400 stipend for academic year + $18,141 stipend for summer [3(annual salary/9)]
[2] $800 per 12 cluster lead instructors, 10% growth each year
[3] $1200 per 44 sections (41 fall + 3 spring), 10% growth each year
[4] $200 per 13 online modules, non-recurring
[5] $7.50/hour, 2 hours/week for 15 weeks for 44 sections, 10% growth each year
[6] $300 per 33 instructors, 10% growth each year
[7] $200 per 9 session leaders, 10% growth each year
[8] annual renewal for online textbook for all freshmen
[9] estimated cost for program printing and branded merchandise costs
[10] estimated cost for 3-day LINK Academy and 2 additional catered events @ $1000 each
[11] actual cost for Year 1 to send all 4 LINK ExComm members, estimated cost for 2 participants each in Years 2-5
[12] actual cost for Year 1 for 2 participants, Years 2-5 estimated cost for 2 participants

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Spring 2016 UNI 101 Course Description and Topics

"The objectives of University 101 are to provide first-year students with an understanding of the resources and tools available to them for making a successful transition from high school to college; to ensure that they become active, responsible members of the community; to help them acquire basic academic survival skills; to encourage active participation in student activities and campus recreation programs and to assist them in becoming a successful college student.

University 101 is required for all first-time freshmen and students who are admitted with less than twenty-four (24) credit hours. University 101 is a required course for graduation from Lander University. Students must earn a passing grade (C or better) in order to graduate from Lander. ONE SEMESTER HOUR.

This syllabus has been prepared by the instructor and is a guide for the class. This syllabus contains the goals and objectives for the course, textbooks, class grading policy, course outline including assignments and exam dates, and other required information. This syllabus provides a planning guide for the semester.

University 101 will:
- help the student academically, personally and socially to adjust to Lander University
- inform new students about the availability of services and programs
- assist new students in becoming familiar with the campus and local environment
- provide planned, intentional opportunities for new students to interact with fellow new students, as well as continuing students, faculty and staff members
- inform students about history/traditions, governance structure and campus culture to aid development of an identification with and integration into the university
- assist new students in becoming familiar with the wide range of electronic and information resources available and to review expectations of their use
- provide students with information about laws and policies regarding educational records and other protected information
- provide opportunities to understand academic and student life policies and procedures
- recognize the purpose and value of academic integrity and describe the key components related to the Lander University Honor Code
- describe and demonstrate principles of responsible citizenship within and beyond the campus community
- describe processes and resources related to overall wellness
- explain the implications of personal decisions for personal wellness"

    A. Required Texts
    Lander University provides each freshman student with a printed copy of the Lander University 2015-2016 Student Handbook and the 2015-2016 Lander University Academic Catalog. These are the required texts for University 101.

B. Class Topics and Schedule for University 101

Week 1	Welcome and Introduction to University 101
Week 2	Martin L. King Holiday (No Class)
Week 3	Student Handbook
Week 4	Library Instruction
Week 5	Academic Success
Week 6	Mid-Term Exam
Week 7	The Healthy Student
Week 8	Leadership
Week 9	Spring Break (No Class)
Week 10	Money and Finances
Week 11	Career Services
Week 12	Lander Traditions: Student Life and School Spirit
Week 13	Alcohol/Drugs: What You Don't Want to Know
Week 14	Diversity
Week 15	Wrap Up and Review for Final Exam
Week 16	Final Exam and Class Evaluation

Appendix 2. Faculty Vote on QEP Implementation

1. **State your endorsement of the QEP as presented by Dr. Nix.**

	Percent Answered
I **Do** endorse the proposal.	92.9%
I **Do Not** endorse the proposal.	7.0%
Unanswered	0%

2. **Which course structure do you prefer?**

	Percent Answered
LINK 101 – a single, stand-alone course, offered both fall and spring semesters	73.2%
LINK 101 and 102 – a two semester course sequence, starting in the fall semester and continuing through the spring	22.5%
Unanswered	4.2%

3. **Do you have any other comments or observations to offer related to the plan?**

Unanswered Responses: 40

Given Answers

- nope.
- I love the LINK proposal - it's a great plan! I really appreciate that it's based in current research and that so much faculty input has gone into it also.
- I commend those who have put so much time and effort into the QEP
- Developmentally, the two-semester sequence provides more opportunity to support students' development of critical skills and for assessment throughout the first year.
- Logistically, this option is more complicated (e.g., what to do with students who enter in the spring).
- NA
- I appreciate the process that was followed to determine the best QEP offering and the many opportunities given to provide input. It is evident that much thought and research went into the preparation of the QEP. Thank you to all who participated in putting this together for our students!
- I have no preference on the course structure. I can see advantages and disadvantages to both.
- Some majors may cover some of the same proposed material in their 101's. For example, I cover careers, critical thinking, writing, research and metacognition in IDS 101, as well as specific IDS 101 content. That course is offered in the Fall. Just a FYI.
- From a practical perspective, a single, stand alone course would be a more efficient use of resources.

- I think this course should be required of the students if we are trying to make it a true freshmen experience. I also think they course credit should be 1 hours as only approximately half of the content is academic. The contact hours do not have to match the credit hours (lab courses are approximately 6 hours of contact but only get 4 hours of credit and they are fully academic). The students also need this the first term they are here, otherwise many of the topics will come too late, they will have already damaged their GPA along with their self esteem and confidence.

- No

- I think it's best to start off with a single-semester course, at first. Putting this together will be a lot of work and I fear that it might run out of steam in the spring. Plus, asking the students to spend 2 hours each week, in an optional course, may be a tough sell over two semesters. Starting small (one semester) would allow the program to grow and find the right balance of content, time, and tactics.

- I like the idea of starting with a single course, developing a really high quality curriculum on a smaller scale, then expanding to the two-semester sequence over time.

- Instead of having most students take the class by default in their first semester, I would be interested in having the course be strongly encouraged for students who do poorly in their first semester of coursework at Lander.
- Also, more time should be spent on academic skills and written and oral communication skills. Less time on wellness and leadership.

- I do not endorse the QEP as presented so I put "I DO NOT" endorse; however, I understand that it is imperative that a QEP program be in place for SACSCOC. I think the plan would work if the "Suggested Discipline Clusters" were removed. If it was an open plan, I think there would be more participation. Experienced faculty from any discipline could lead, as desired. I believe that would be a more reasonable plan that would not put undue burden on some academic areas and would actually promote collegiality among all disciplines.

- I do not understand where you are going to find faculty to teach these courses from my department (we do not have time). I'm also not sure students will take the course if not required.

- I would like for the areas offering the course to have some space in the schedule to offer discipline specific content (e.g., career options, guest speakers) if desired.

- Dr. Nix has done a terrific job and worked very hard creating this plan. I very much look forward to seeing it in action.

- N/A
- There is a logical fallacy in asking for an endorsement followed by asking for the preferred format.

- na

- Observations based on teaching this years' freshman: they are overwhelmingly unprepared for college; including the expectations, the discipline required to succeed, and basic behavior requirements - namely cell phone use for texting/checking Facebook during class. Many other professors have stated these same complaints. We would like to see this addressed during EXPO.

- Not at this time

- I was pleased with the inclusiveness of the process with which the QEP was created.

- I believe that it would be beneficial to our students to have research emphasized in this course. Not just "how to use the library," but how to recognize primary, secondary, and tertiary sources, and knowing when and what makes a source authoritative. A lack of critical thinking among students entering college is problematic, and not only makes for weak college students, but weak citizens. If there is any way more research, and then subsequently more writing, could be incorporated into this course, I think it would be a great service to the students and the future teachers of those students.

- I would like the professional development workshops in the Spring semester

- Faculty participation in the planning (course design) and execution (instruction) is crucial to the program's success.

- Maybe consider either getting rid of the clusters or maybe not combine larger schools and colleges together in one cluster. It could be a very heavy load for some areas who have large numbers of students.

- I applaud Dr. Nix for all of her hard work to make this work for Lander.

- No.

Appendix 3. Feedback from LINK Academy #1 2017

List and describe the STRENGTHS of this Academy session.
- Being able to share ideas with others – both faculty and staff.
- Good intro knowledge about LINK
- Time allotted, open communication, very inviting. Great sense of team/membership, great way to get staff and faculty involved.
- Being able to work in our clusters was beneficial for brain storming ways to ensure retention with our students.
- Interacting with my LINK group while training.
- Presenter was open for questions. More seasoned colleagues were able to mentor those with less background knowledge.
- Info was interesting and good to get. We will have to follow the "monitor and adjust" guidelines.
- Collaboration w/peers.
- Got more knowledge about LINK.
- Getting to know fellow instructors. Understanding more of the "why" in the changes being made to the class. Gaining more resources and knowledge on topics.
- It is awesome being new here having people beside me who have taught a course like this before.
- Group discussions.
- Snacks! Collaboration between clusters. Brainstorming periods.
- It was great to meet other instructors and to spend time meeting with the other instructor in my cluster. I liked the drop the ball activity. Food was awesome!
- Clustering. Diversity of the group.

List and describe the WEAKNESSES of this Academy session. What are your suggestions for improvement?
- Increased time for tech presentation
- Don't necessarily need to talk much about UNI-101
- The constitution of course/core classes! The worksheet should've been explained prior to receiving or gone over prior to, then broken down into clusters.
- More time is needed for breakout sessions and more opportunities to work with other disciplines.
- Confusing handout/spreadsheets – titles would help.
- Unfortunately, not all of the data is available at this time – this will make it more comfortable to teach.
- Handout some thinking material in advance so some of the time could be spent deeply discussing issues rather than just getting started.
- Very confusing spreadsheets of class information. One planning chart vs. several.
- The number of spreadsheets was a little much. Information on some of them which made it difficult to follow.
- The curriculum section was confusing esp. in terms of the semester schedule. It took me a while to understand what was going on.
- Too many schedules for classes with differing information. Keep it simple. 4 different charts were 2 to 3 too many.
- More open collaboration with previous instructors to learn what they "did".
- Core curriculum confusing. Learning outcomes development – help! More techniques for

curriculum development.
- None.
- Room temp.

Additional comments:
- Overall, good job.
- Thanks for the lunch and refreshments.
- I feel more confident about teaching LINK now that I have a stronger understanding of our goals.
- Will be good when we learn when the LINK resources will be available, e.g. - modules.
- Committee doing a great job; glad to be a part of this.
- Thank you.
- More guidance about the flipped approach to teaching.
- None.

Appendix 4. Feedback from LINK Academy #2 2017

List and describe the STRENGTHS of this Academy session.
- Good to connect with cluster and brainstorm semester structure/course content.
- The presentations – ideas for classes.
- I loved the opportunity to share ideas with all LINK instructors. The brainstorming was excellent. The input from everyone was very beneficial.
- Presenters were great. Mark does a great job keeping us on task. Working with individuals in your cluster is great.
- Great refinement of topics covered last time! I feel much more confident in my understanding of the course organization. Great – also – was the use of feedback in order to decide on today's topics.
- More focused. Seemed better organized. Got a lot more out of it – tangible outcomes.
- Great time for small group work. Good "demonstration" of reaching a consensus in a large group through continued conversation (syllabus points).
- Great interaction. Good discussion questions.
- Interactive, feel like more got accomplished dealing w/class material.
- Group work and time together.
- Enjoyed the leadership and involvement workshops!
- Had time to work out issues concerning the course (i.e. syllabus).
- Good breakouts/talks. Food was good – thanks.
- Connecting with cluster group. Clarifying aspects of LINK Program. Leadership presentation.
- Bridging gap b/w professionals in room. Bringing new ideas and concepts to various parts of leadership and involvement.
- Learning about activities that Lander offers. Hoonuit site.
- I can see how a more specific (subject) leadership discussion could be made based off of what Frank presented.

List and describe the WEAKNESSES of this Academy session. What are your suggestions for improvement?
- Too much time for involvement workshop.
- I was distracted by chatter and movement by some of the participants.
- None.
- Nothing.
- Goal of breakout session #1 was not very clear.
- Some of these topics could have been handled by the ExComm and passed down (i.e. deciding the points).
- None.
- I feel like a number of the topics were repetitive from the previous one (the course scheduling, etc.). Not everyone's opinions were heard.
- Workshops were a little too long.
- None I can think.
- I struggled to follow during session #1 b/c so many different people were talking at the same time.

Additional comments:

- Overall, good job.
- Very helpful! :)
- Has been very helpful in developing ideas for icebreakers, activities, etc.
- I liked going to Dining Hall for lunch. Please do something for metacognition.
- Lunch was better 1st time.
- Thanks for putting together.
- More group work time on 3rd session.
- Didn't have time to do activity as a group [written next to Session #1 rating].
- I had to step out multiple times, so I feel as if my evaluation is not completely valid.

Appendix 5. Feedback from LINK Academy #3 2017

List and describe the STRENGTHS of this Academy session.
- Understanding the Lander population, Andy Benoit.
- I liked the different voices of the presenters.
- Good organization. Lots of info. Great approachability of leaders!
- Good information but total relevance?
- Each of the sessions were relevant and helpful. The activities provided by each session leader was very helpful in planning potential activities.
- Interactions between/among participants.
- Networking activities.
- Number of presenters and the active info presented.
- Andy's info was good.
- Interaction with several groups.
- Brainstorming opportunities for student involvement and potential success. Understanding the impact of not retaining students from year to year.
- Shared good information. Like hearing from faculty and staff together.
- Different presenters = a larger variety of educational techniques.
- Clustering. Diversity of the group.

List and describe the WEAKNESSES of this Academy session. What are your suggestions for improvement?
- Relevance of a couple sessions to LINK 101 students was not as great as most sessions. [indicated session #3 and #4 "good – just less relevant to freshmen"].
- Too many sessions on same topic w/o adding new info.
- Information overload – 3 networking sessions was too many.
- None.
- Jeannie's info was largely irrelevant for 1st semester freshmen.
- Repetitive of some info related to involvement.
- Room temp.

Additional comments:
- Overall, good job.
- This series of academies has really enhanced my knowledge about Lander in general and LINK in specific.
- Lunch was nice. Too much of the same thing. Maybe just morning sessions.
- I like the idea of the LINK academies but a lot of the information (particularly #3) seemed unnecessary – esp. the emphasis on Networking. Need more practical, less theoretical info.
- Looking forward to additional opportunities.
- For the first year, very well done! Lots of room for growth within instructional side and developing the LINK Program.