

Tulsa Community College

OPEID: 00976300

Tulsa Community College has served Tulsa and northeastern Oklahoma since 1970. Now Oklahoma's largest, multi-campus community college, TCC serves approximately 20,000 students in college programs annually. As a large, multi-campus institution serving a population that is 47% students of color, 41% low income (Pell recipients), and 27% first generation to college, TCC is distinctly situated to test the proposed intervention and provide insight for other institutions on improving retention for underserved students.

TCC is addressing **Absolute Priority 1** in its Early-Phase proposal – “**Start Smart: Contextualizing the First Year Experience to Improve Postsecondary Outcomes**” – and is addressing the **Competitive Preference Priority**.

TCC aims to **improve success for underserved and underrepresented students by redesigning its First Year Experience (FYE) course**.

For degree/certificate-seeking participants, the **Project Objectives** are to: 1) Increase first-year credit accumulation; 2) Increase retention rates; 3) Increase the completion rates; 4) Increase the transfer rates; 5) Reduce average time to credential; and 6) Increase the # credentials conferred above the baseline for each.

Activities: Within the FYE redesign intervention, TCC will deploy two strategies – 1) **contextualization** of the course consistent with the intended major and 2) embedding of “**Smart Start**” sessions within the course so students receive specific information about their program of interest, meet the program faculty, and learn about the requirements and the academic rigor from someone in the program. Utilizing the framework of Complete College America's Purpose First Pillar, there will be intentional interaction with advisors and career development specialists—every position in their success network at the College. The pilot study will focus on **500 students who declare a major in Social Sciences**.

The proposed project intervention is grounded in **evidence-based research**. The What Works Clearinghouse Intervention Report on “First Year Experiences Courses: Supporting Postsecondary Success” noted that: “**first year experience courses were found to have potentially positive effects on credit accumulation, degree attainment (college), and general academic achievement (college) for freshman college students**” (July 2016, p. 2). In the **2009 Jamelske study** cited in the report, the first-year experience courses were linked to a specific course topic (e.g., biology, economics, psychology), were capped at 20 students, and included small group peer activities, close work with a faculty member, and an upperclassman as a student peer mentor. The WWC confirmed that there was a **statistically significant difference** between first year experience course participants and comparison participants on cumulative grade point average. The WWC characterizes this finding as a **statistically significant positive effect** (WWC: FYE Courses Intervention Report, p. 7).

Intended Outcomes: The evaluation will examine the effects of the FYE Course redesign intervention on four outcomes – successful completion of FYE course; student persistence (in any program); student retention (in any program); and attainment of an Associate's degree or transfer to Bachelor's degree-granting institution