



Quality Enhancement Plan Report
December 2025

Prepared by:



Executive Summary: *LEAP*

Stanly Community College (SCC or the College) prepares students to succeed in an everchanging workforce. SCC's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), entitled *Leadership, Employability, Accountability, and Professionalism (LEAP)* is designed to support these efforts by preparing students for the evolving academic and professional worlds. Students must not only be competent in their academic and technical career knowledge and skills but also in those intangible "soft" skills (Nagy, 2019). By integrating soft skills into the academic curriculum (Adams, 2012), the College aims to better prepare students to thrive and succeed in both their college years and in preparation for their careers.

In today's competitive job market, employees with strong employability or "soft" skills are those who succeed (Chandhok, 2021). However, many students entering the workforce lack the interpersonal and communication skills necessary for their chosen careers. Local employers report to SCC that, while the college does an excellent job of teaching the required technical skills, students are lacking the necessary soft skills. With this in mind, the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) will integrate soft skills into the Advanced Manufacturing, Industry, and Trades (AMIT) programs and courses, train the relevant faculty to enhance soft skills in their coursework, and better prepare students for success in their future careers. SCC has designed the program for *Leadership, Employability, Accountability, and Professionalism (LEAP)* to empower students to develop soft skills that are in high demand by employers. When setting goals for implementing soft skills into the curriculum, SCC considered the specific needs of the students, the academic disciplines involved, and the desired outcomes.

- Goal 1: Equip students with a foundation in critical soft skills, specifically in accountability, dressing appropriately, teamwork, and workplace communication.
- Goal 2: Improve students' self-efficacy, awareness, and employability through soft skills development.
- Goal 3: Cultivate skills of leadership, employability, accountability and professionalism in students by integrating the key soft skills of dressing appropriately, teamwork, workplace communication, and accountability into the academic curriculum.

QEP Title and Description

LEAP: Leadership, Employability, Accountability, and Professionalism is Stanly Community College's plan to enhance students' employability skills to ensure they are workplace-ready upon leaving the college. *LEAP* is designed to empower students to develop employability skills that are in high demand by employers and help ensure that students possess a core set of soft skills necessary for success in the workplace.

LEAP will integrate soft skills into the Advanced Manufacturing, Industry, and Trades (AMIT) programs and courses. Through a rigorous survey process that involved local employers, SCC students, and SCC employees, the college selected four specific skills on which to focus:

1. **Accountability:** Accountability refers to an individual's willingness to take responsibility for their actions, decisions, and outcomes, including meeting deadlines.
2. **Dressing appropriately:** Dressing appropriately involves choosing clothing, accessories, and grooming that suit the particular workplace, industry, or professional environment.
3. **Teamwork:** Teamwork is the collaborative effort of individuals toward a shared goal.

4. **Workplace communication:** Workplace communication is the appropriate exchange of information, ideas, and feedback involving a range of styles such as verbal, written, and non-verbal communication, and encompassing various forms including emails, phone calls, video conferences, and in-person discussions.

Foundational instruction and assessment will occur in AMIT's contextualized section of ACA-111, SCC's student success course which all students are required to take in their first semester. From there, application and additional assessment of the four *LEAP* skills will be integrated into the AMIT programs through their individual courses.

If *LEAP* is successful, AMIT students will have developed the knowledge of and ability to demonstrate the soft skills necessary for career success, accompanied by an increased self-confidence in the performance of these skills.

In 2025, SACSCOC approved *LEAP* as Stanly Community College's five-year QEP. This report serves as the first biannual report.

Section One: Initial Goals and Intended Outcomes

LEAP Goals:

- Goal 1: Equip students with a foundation in critical soft skills, specifically in accountability, dressing appropriately, teamwork, and workplace communication.
- Goal 2: Improve students' self-efficacy, awareness, and employability through soft skills development.
- Goal 3: Cultivate skills of leadership, employability, accountability and professionalism in students by integrating the key soft skills of dressing appropriately, teamwork, workplace communication, and accountability into the academic curriculum.

LEAP Objectives:

- Objective 1: Develop and enhance students' workplace readiness through the awareness of select soft skills.
- Objective 2: Increase students' self-awareness, confidence, and leadership potential by focusing on the development of the four *LEAP* skills.
- Objective 3: Promote leadership, employability, accountability, and professionalism in students through the mastery of four select soft skills.
- Objective 4: Improve instructors' and employers' perceptions of students' leadership, employability, accountability, and professionalism as reflected in their use of the key soft skills:
- Objective 5: Integrate *LEAP* skills into all relevant program courses.

LEAP Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes evolved from these goals and objectives and will help assess whether and to what degree *LEAP* is successful in achieving the goals. There are three SLOs for each of the four skills assessing each skill on the same behaviors of *identify*, *discuss*, and *demonstrate*.

Upon completion of the *LEAP* interventions, students will be able to:

1. SLO #1: identify key elements of [Accountability , Dressing Appropriately, Teamwork, Workplace Communication].
2. SLO #2: discuss concepts and importance of [Accountability , Dressing Appropriately, Teamwork, Workplace Communication].
3. SLO #3: demonstrate effective and consistent use of [Accountability , Dressing Appropriately, Teamwork, Workplace Communication].

Section Two: Changes Made to the QEP

Changes Based on the Onsite Team's Recommendations

Originally, SCC planned to implement *LEAP* broadly across all curriculum programs and courses. The SACSCOC On-Site Review Committee advised that we narrow the focus so that the QEP is more manageable. So, while the College's ultimate goal is for *LEAP* to benefit all students, implementation will begin in the manufacturing, industry, and trades programs which comprise a division of the school of Advanced Manufacturing, Industry, Technology, and Trades (AMITT). These programs include:

- Air Conditioning, Heating and Refrigeration Technology
- Collision Repair and Refinishing
- Computer-Integrated Machining
- Heavy Equipment Operations
- Welding

Because these specific programs make up only one division of AMITT, the College refers to these programs collectively as AMIT, or AMITT with one T, and the acronym AMIT will be used throughout this report to more easily identify the programs selected for implementation of the QEP.

The AMIT programs were chosen for *LEAP* implementation based on several factors. First, several of the AMIT programs already provide some instruction on employability skills so, while that instruction is not systematically or evenly applied across their curricula, the AMIT instructors have some knowledge and experience with soft skills instruction and are eager to expand it. Second, a significant portion of the survey results from local employers came from those associated with AMIT programs. AMIT programs have some of the most active advisory boards and will provide an effective pipeline to access employer input and feedback. Third, students in the AMIT programs come into their programs with little knowledge or experience in soft skills. The QEP Team feels they are a population of students that have the most room for growth and will provide rich data to help refine and improve *LEAP*. Finally, the AMIT faculty agreed with these factors and volunteered their programs for assessment.

Section Three: QEP Impact on Student Learning

Achievement of QEP Goal 1

Goal 1: Equip students with a foundation in critical soft skills, specifically in accountability, dressing appropriately, teamwork, and workplace communication.

- Objective 1: Develop and enhance students' workplace readiness through the awareness of select soft skills.

- Student learning outcome #1: students will be able to identify the key elements of each *LEAP* skill.
 - Method: measured using a scenario-based multiple-choice lesson administered in the ACA-111 Student Success Course.
 - Target: 80% of students will score 80% or higher.
 - Results: 100% of all students completing the relevant lessons scored 80% or higher for all four *LEAP* skills.
 - Accountability: 100% (N = 4) scored 80% or higher
 - Dressing appropriately: 100% (N = 4) scored 80% or higher
 - Teamwork: 100% (N = 4) scored 80% or higher
 - Workplace communication: 100% (N = 4) scored 80% or higher

Achievement of QEP Goal 2

Goal 2: Improve students' self-efficacy, awareness, and employability through soft skills development.

- Objective 2: Increase students' self-awareness, confidence, and leadership potential by focusing on the development of the four *LEAP* skills.
 - Method: Administer a pre- and post- self-assessment survey to students enrolled in the redesigned Student Success class and at the conclusion of each semester, focusing on the development of dressing appropriately, teamwork, workplace communication, and accountability.
 - Target: 80% of students will report an increase in awareness of and self-confidence in the use of key soft skills.
 - Results: 67% of students reported an increase in awareness of and self-confidence in the use of the four *LEAP* soft skills.

Achievement of QEP Goal 3

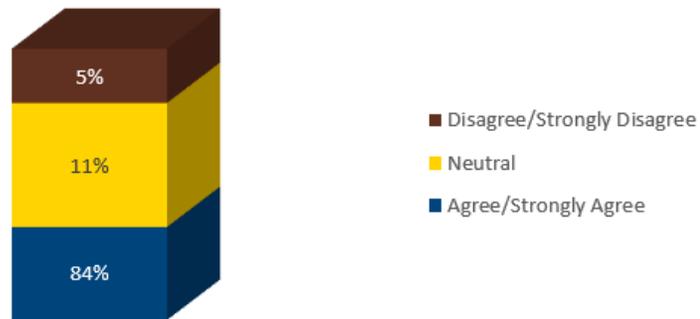
Goal 3: Cultivate skills of leadership, employability, accountability and professionalism in students by integrating the key soft skills of dressing appropriately, teamwork, workplace communication, and accountability into the academic curriculum.

- Objective 3: Promote leadership, employability, accountability, and professionalism in students through the mastery of four select soft skills.
 - Student learning outcome #2: students will be able to discuss the importance and challenges associated with each *LEAP* skill.
 - Method: Instructors will assess students' ability to discuss the use of each soft skill using the standardized *LEAP* skills rubric *Assessing Understanding of Accountability in AMIT* applied to the relevant instructor-created activity.

- Target: 80% of students will demonstrate effective use of soft skills in activities by scoring at least 3 (satisfactory) out of 5 using the standardized *Assessing Understanding* rubric.
 - Results:
 - Accountability: 100% (N = 5) of students scored at least 3 (satisfactory) out of 5 using the standardized *Assessing Understanding* rubric.
 - Dressing appropriately: N/A
 - Teamwork: N/A
 - Workplace communication: N/A
 - Student learning outcome #3: students will be able to demonstrate use of each *LEAP* skill.
 - Method: Instructors will assess students' ability to demonstrate the use of each soft skill using the appropriate standardized *LEAP* skills rubrics applied to the relevant instructor-created activity.
 - Target: 80% of students will demonstrate effective use of soft skills in activities by scoring at least 3 (satisfactory) out of 5 on the standardized *Assessing Basic Application* rubric.
 - Results: N/A – Because it is still very early in implementation, none of the AMIT instructors incorporating *LEAP* into their courses have yet incorporated formal *LEAP* skills' demonstration instruction and assessment into their courses.
 - Accountability:
 - Dressing appropriately:
 - Teamwork:
 - Workplace communication:
- Objective 4: Improve instructors' and employers' perceptions of students' leadership, employability, accountability, and professionalism as reflected in their use of the key soft skills:
 - Method of Assessment 1: survey instructors to assess their perceptions of students' use of the key soft skills of accountability dressing appropriately, teamwork, workplace communication, and accountability in their roles.
 - Target: instructors will report an improvement in students' use of the key soft skills
 - Results: As shown in Figure 1, instructors responding to the survey have a positive perception of students' use of the key soft skills.

Figure 1

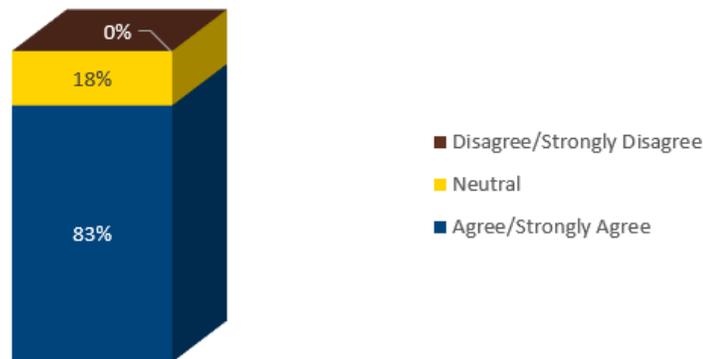
Instructors' Perceptions of Students' LEAP Workplace Skills (N = 7)



- Method of Assessment 2: survey employers on their perceptions of students' leadership, employability, accountability, and professionalism, with a focus on how well they apply dressing appropriately, teamwork, workplace communication, and accountability in their roles.
- Target: employers will report satisfaction with graduates' leadership and soft skills proficiency, specifically in the areas targeted by the *LEAP* initiative.
- Results: As shown in Figure 2, a majority of employers responding to the survey have a positive perception of students' use of the key soft skills.

Figure 2

Employers' Perceptions of Students' LEAP Workplace Skills (N = 2)



- Objective 5: Integrate *LEAP* skills into all relevant program courses.
 - Method of Assessment: Review syllabi and course content in courses following the Student Success class to determine the inclusion of *LEAP*-related content, with a strong focus on the four key soft skills.
 - Target: 100% of the selected courses will include elements of leadership, employability, accountability, and professionalism, all driven by the development and application of dressing appropriately, teamwork, workplace communication, and accountability.
 - Results: 100% of the selected courses included elements of leadership, employability, accountability, and professionalism.

Section Four: Reflections on What the College Has Learned

Over the past few years, SCC has implemented multiple initiatives to increase student success and enhance employability. *LEAP* is one of a series of complementary student success projects. SCC's membership in and ongoing partnership with Achieving the Dream, previous and ongoing work associated with the Guided Pathways initiative, current work made possible through a federal Title III Strengthening Institutions Program grant entitled *Guided Pathways: Career and Workforce Services from Connection to Completion*, and current partnership with Jobs for the Future's Disrupt the Divide initiative work in synergy with *LEAP* for student success and enhanced employability. More specifically, though, *LEAP* supplements these other efforts by addressing specific employability skills students do not learn through traditional program curriculum and course work.

Challenges

Employer and Instructor Surveys

We received only two responses to the employer survey and seven responses to the instructor survey. The low response rates makes it difficult to draw any significant conclusions about *LEAP*'s quality or level of success.

Scope

Implementation which began officially in August 2025 has been slower than anticipated. Narrowing the QEP's focus down to one division of programs has significantly limited the pace of implementation as well as our ability to reach the number of students envisioned. As part of planned implementation, instructors, before embedding *LEAP* into their program and course curricula, receive training through ACUE then are contracted to complete the appropriate redesign of their selected courses. To date, only three AMIT instructors representing three AMIT programs have received ACUE training and, of those, only two were contracted for a course redesign. This is not for lack of commitment or resources on the college's part, but rather due to the AMIT instructors' time constraints and challenges in finding adjuncts to help mitigate those time constraints and challenges to allow the instructors time for training. At this pace, we will be hard-pressed to fully implement *LEAP* into all AMIT programs by the end of the QEP's five-year term let alone be prepared to scale it to other programs as originally planned.

Opportunities

Although only two AMIT instructors have embedded *LEAP* into their courses, several others representing two non-AMIT programs have embedded *LEAP*-related content into their courses. Additionally, there are many other non-AMIT instructors receiving ACUE training, priming them to be ready to incorporate *LEAP* into their courses. Because those other 38 instructors do not represent non-AMIT programs, they are not prioritized for being looped into *LEAP* training and QEP data collection. If we expanded the QEP to include all programs, then we would be able to increase the rate with which *LEAP* can be incorporated into programs and expand the number of students who could benefit.

Not only would the expansion of *LEAP* to other programs increase the rate of implementation and benefit to students, but it would also allow us to expand the sample size for the employer and instructor surveys, thereby allowing for more responses. With increased responses, we could make a more substantive assessment of the overall quality and success of *LEAP* as the QEP progresses.