

## Summary of the Connection between Warner University’s Institutional Planning and Its QEP: VITAL (Value in Tasks, Achievement, and Learning)

Warner University’s new strategic plan, approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2022, makes clear the goals of retention and student success. A new foundational goal in the six-goal plan is to “retain students, faculty, and staff”; an objective for this goal is to “implement initiatives to improve student success in courses with consistently low grades”; and a target outcome for that objective is to “decrease the number of Ds, Fs, and Ws.”

The University has been targeting retention and student success long before the development of its new strategic plan, however. The strategic plan from 2018–2021, titled ESSential Warner, contained three fundamental pillars: Engagement, Service, and Stewardship. Under the pillar of Engagement was a specific strategy to “recruit, retain, and graduate students committed to lives of service marked by intellectual curiosity, spiritual integrity, and compassionate humility,” and a number of initiatives related to academic support, success, and retention were executed within the time frame of the ESSential Warner strategic plan. One of these initiatives included the development of Royal Resources, a student-services hub that connects students with the resources needed for academic success—the Library, academic advising, the Registrar’s Office, and the Academic Skills Center and Office of Disability Services. Another initiative involved making significant improvements to the University’s monitoring of at-risk students.

Additionally, in August 2019, the faculty participated in a faculty workshop session in which they were introduced to Simon Sinek’s popular idea of “Start with Why.” The workshop session revolved around the idea that students are more inclined to stay engaged with coursework if they know why it is relevant to them.

Shortly thereafter, a member of the University’s QEP committee encountered educational research that supports the “start with why” notion. In pedagogical terms, the concept is referred to as *Utility Value Intervention*.

With the specific targeted outcome in the new strategic plan of “decreasing the number of Ds, Fs, and Ws” in mind, Warner University proposes a student-success-related QEP based on the concept of Utility Value Interventions (UVIs), with UVIs being **assignments that require students to reflect about the perceived usefulness or relevancy of course tasks in light of their future plans**. Anchored in the “start with why” principle, this initiative will incorporate UVIs in targeted first-year courses with high DFW rates, with the goal of improving student success and thereby improving student retention.

Thus, **the University’s QEP—which has been termed VITAL (Value in Tasks, Achievement, and Learning)—has been identified and developed through the institution’s ongoing comprehensive planning and evaluation process.**