The Start Right Initiative at El Paso Community College (EPCC) is the newest endeavor undertaken. Just in its infancy, this project has the potential of having the greatest impact on the lives and experiences of EPCC students. It casts a wide net over many of the experiences a student will have at the college, beginning at the point when a student says “I want to attend EPCC,” through the time the student accumulates 30 degree or certificate applicable college credit hours, and ultimately extends to the student walking across the stage as a proud graduate of El Paso Community College.

Organizationally, the Start Right Initiative is comprised of a Steering Committee and three Work Groups, including the Entering New Student, Instructional Interventions, and Retention/Early Interventions. The goal is simple: ensure that each and every student enrolling at El Paso Community College is treated professionally and courteously throughout their time at EPCC. Additionally, safety nets are cast far and wide to help students reach their potential and their career aspirations. In short, “Failure is not an Option.”

The Entering New Student Work Group is charged with successfully matriculating the student into the college, through the maze of departments and requirements, and delivering him/her into the classroom and lab for the beginning of an exciting educational adventure. Among the issues to be addressed are orientation, placement testing and financial aid.

The Instructional Interventions Work Group targets the curriculum and its delivery. Among the initiatives addressed by this group are faculty development, alternative instructional delivery methods, and the use of technology to complement and strengthen student learning.

The Retention/Early Interventions Work Group is charged with setting up mechanisms that will ensure that the student is able to progress satisfactorily through their studies, both academically as well as in a reasonable timeframe. The creation of an early alert system, advising and mentoring, and support programs to aid students in distress, either academically or personally, will be designed.

A fourth Work Group, Beyond, will be created later to take the student through to graduation and beyond. The focus is on completing degree and certificate programs of study, job placements and career advising. In other words, does the student have an end goal in sight, and does he/she achieve it? A degree just to have a degree is not acceptable.

Start Right is like planning a cross country trip, with the point of departure being admission to the college and the destination the achievement of a certificate or degree and the resulting use of it (transfer into a university or employment).