

# Quality and Promise

Insights into Enhanced Learning and Retention at The University of Akron

**Quality**

The standard of something  
The degree of excellence  
Superiority in kind  
A distinguishing attribute

Steve Kaufman, M.Ed.  
Sr. Instructional Designer &  
Strategic Initiatives Coordinator  
The University of Akron



## The Faculty Meeting

What we expect...



What can happen...

That's me! The QM Coordinator





- 1) The push for departments to get programs online as quickly as possible.

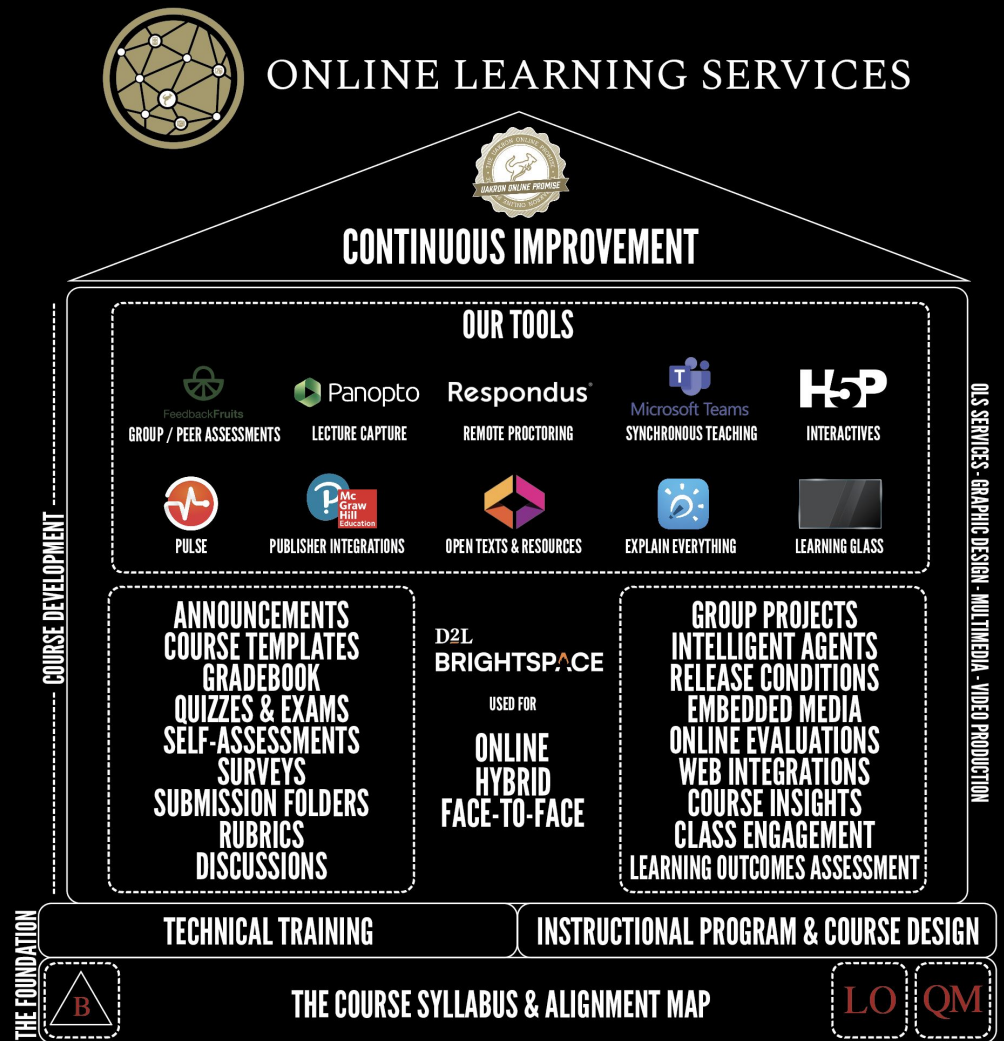


2) The perception that QM, as a quality assurance tool is too difficult and too time consuming.

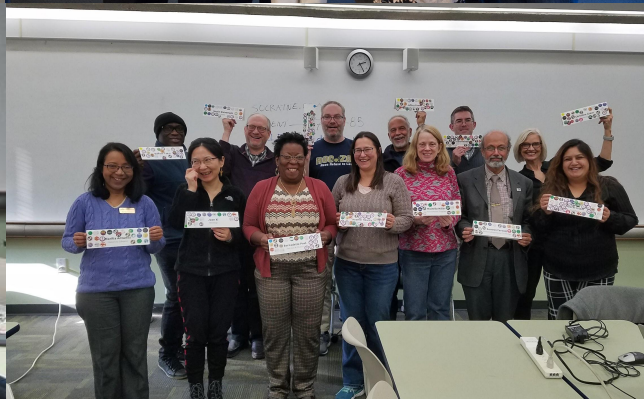


# Build on what we do well.

- Teach the “tech” of online learning
- Address measurable learning objectives
- Require alignment documents
- Strategize on learner engagement
- Discuss pedagogical strategy









What can we do to incentivize working with instructional designers to willingly go through a quality assurance process as rigorous as QM?

# An “Online Promise”

**Promise**

Our framework to increase faculty buy-in for quality assurance as a student success initiative.

**WE  
WANT  
YOUR  
FEEDBACK**



# Benchmark: Priorities Survey for Online Learners

We asked 5000 students what they REALLY thought about their online learning experiences. What did they say?

- “I loved the online courses. It had been great being able to work and go to school without having to quit one or the other.”
- “I've had a great experience with online courses, much better than expected. I am glad to have had several professors that were very clear and provided variety in their instruction.”
- “Online classes make furthering my education possible. It gives me the flexibility I need for a busy work and home life.”



# Benchmark: Priorities Survey for Online Learners

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What did they say?

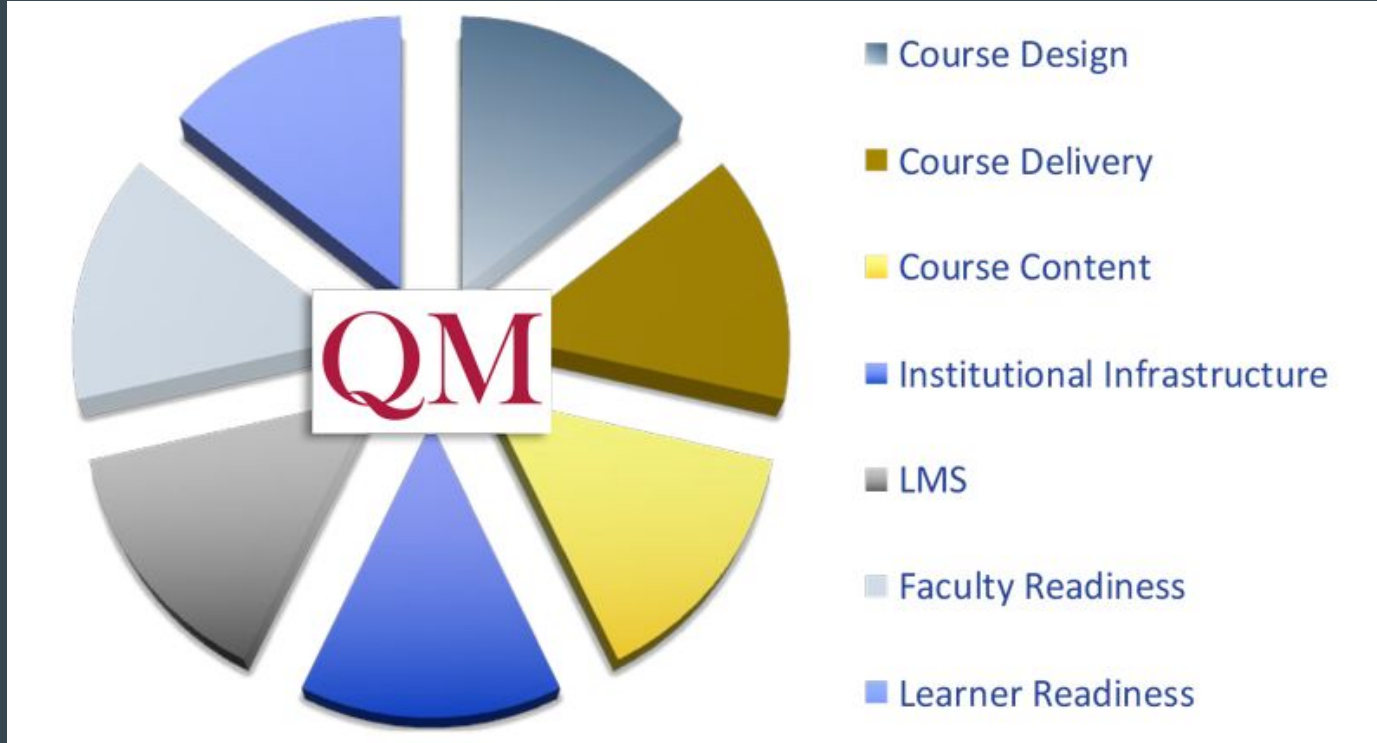
- “I think the most important factor about having online classes that needs to change is the technological knowledge of the professor. Additionally, I think this also goes for any teacher because they are all using Brightspace and require us to understand their random organization of it, but they can't respond to our emails in time”
- “Quicker feedback would be a great benefit when it came to assignments.”
- “Need to make programs more accessible for students with full time jobs. It is a shame that classes needed for a degree are not offered every year, or multiple semesters out of the year.”

Design

Delivery



# But what about the other pieces of the pie?





We took this data, and created:



## The UAkron Online Promise

**The UAkron Online Promise** is a demonstration of 6 reciprocal guarantees between UAkron Online Learners and Faculty. Faculty that exemplify The UAkron Online Promise proudly display a certification mark on your course homepage in recognition of your dedication to online student success.

## Q 24: If we focus on improving one area in the online course experience, what would it be?

Areas	Survey Totals
Communication	105
Preparation	95
Engagement	85
Accountability	83
Commitment	72
Other	43
Inclusive	16

371: "Please, all online professors should be willing and mandated to meet with his/her students at their request."

n= 711

A successful learning experience requires that both the student and the instructor fulfill specific expectations. University of Akron Online students and faculty are:

Students are expected to:	Promise	Therefore, faculty promise to:
Be ready and able to learn online with a computer, reliable internet and enough time to successfully complete your coursework.	<b>Prepared for Online Learning</b>	Be prepared to teach a quality online course that provides the guidance and resources students need to succeed.
Communicate with faculty and peers in a collegial manner and to seek out assistance if needed.	<b>Consistently Communicating</b>	Reply to student inquiries within two business days and create an online environment with a clear description of the opportunities for interaction with the instructor and other students.
Be an active participant in individual and group activities.	<b>Actively Engaged</b>	Facilitate a variety of learning opportunities with rich, relevant content that supports active learning and engagement.
Act with academic integrity in relation to your instructor and peers, following all assessment guidelines and meeting established course deadlines.	<b>Accountable</b>	Provide a clear description of assignments, due dates, and grading criteria by the first day of class; clearly communicate any adjustments to your syllabus and course schedule.
Value diverse perspectives and engage respectfully with peers and faculty of all backgrounds.	<b>Inclusive</b>	Teach an inclusive and accessible course that affirms the value of diversity and encourages each student to reach their fullest potential.
Seek out university resources to resolve any academic or technical challenges you may encounter.	<b>Committed to Success</b>	Provide proactive and timely feedback for assignments and assessments that creates pathways for improvement, increases knowledge and achievement, and ensures student learning.

# Personalizing the Rubric for Our Needs



**HE** Specific Review Standards from the QM Higher Education Rubric, Seventh Edition

Standards	Specific Review Standards	Points
Course Overview and Introduction	1.1: Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components.	3
	1.2: Learners are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course.	3
	1.3: Communication guidelines for the course are clearly stated.	2
	1.4: Course and institutional policies with which the learner is expected to comply are clearly stated within the course, or a link to current policies is provided.	2
	1.5: Minimum technology requirements for the course are clearly stated, and information on how to obtain the technologies is provided.	2
	1.6: Technical skills and digital information literacy skills expected of the learner are clearly stated.	1
	1.7: Required prior knowledge in the discipline and/or any specific competencies are clearly stated in the course site.	1
	1.8: The self-introduction by the instructor is welcoming and is available in the course site.	1
	1.9: Learners have the opportunity to introduce themselves.	1
Learning Objectives (Competencies)	2.1: The course-level learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives.	3
	2.2: The module/unit-level learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives.	3
	2.3: Learning objectives are clearly stated, are learner-centered, and are prominently located in the course.	3
	2.4: The relationship between learning objectives, learning activities, and assessments is made clear.	3
	2.5: The learning objectives are suited to and reflect the level of the course.	3
Assessment and Measurement	3.1: The assessments measure the achievement of the stated learning objectives.	3
	3.2: The course grading policy is stated clearly, available at the beginning of the course, and consistent throughout the course site.	3
	3.3: Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of learners' work, and their connection to the course grading policy is clearly explained.	3
	3.4: The course includes multiple types of assessments that are sequenced and suited to the level of the course.	2
	3.5: The types and timing of assessments provide learners with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress with timely feedback.	2
Instructional Materials	4.1: The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated learning objectives.	3
	4.2: The relationship between the use of instructional materials in the course and completion of learning activities and assessments is clearly explained.	3
	4.3: The course models the academic integrity expected of learners by providing both source references and permissions for use of instructional materials.	2
	4.4: The instructional materials represent up-to-date theory and practice in the discipline.	2
Learning Activities and Learner Interaction	5.1: The learning activities help learners achieve the stated objectives.	3
	5.2: Learning activities provide opportunities for interactions that support active learning.	3
	5.3: The instructor's plan for regular interaction with learners in substantive ways during the course is clearly stated.	3
	5.4: The assignments for learner interaction are clearly stated.	2
Course Technology	6.1: The tools used in the course support the learning objectives.	3
	6.2: Course tools promote learner engagement and active learning.	2
	6.3: A variety of technology is used in the course.	1
	6.4: The course provides learners with information on protecting their data and privacy.	1
Support	7.1: Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's accessibility policies and accommodation services.	3
	7.2: Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's academic support services and resources that can help learners succeed in the course.	3
	7.3: Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's academic support services and resources that can help learners succeed.	1
	7.4: Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's student services and resources that can help learners succeed.	1
Accessibility and Usability	8.1: Course navigation facilitates ease of use.	3
	8.2: The course design facilitates readability.	3
	8.3: Text in the course is accessible.	3
	8.4: Images in the course are accessible.	2
	8.5: Video and audio content in the course is accessible.	2
	8.6: Multimedia in the course is easy to use.	2
	8.7: Vendor accessibility statements are provided for the technologies used in the course.	1

\* Meeting QM Specific Review Standards does not guarantee or imply that specific laws, regulations, or policies of any country are met.  
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# The UAkron Online Promise



# The UAkron Online Promise



Faculty complete surveys and prepare for the 3 consultations for the Committed to Quality process.

During the first consultation, OLS will help you develop a plan to achieve the 6 guarantees. The Committed to Quality badge will be placed on the course homepage during this consultation.

During the second consultation, we will discuss any student feedback or progress that you want to share. OLS may offer supportive strategies and/or assist in the completion of any remaining course features and activities.

In the third consultation, we will help you to finalize any revisions focusing on course design, accessibility, usability, and learner support. After this consultation, you will be eligible to apply for the Quality Online Course badge.

# The UAkron Online Promise



Faculty who have completed the 3 consultations to achieve the Committed to Quality badge, can proceed to this step. In this step, faculty can complete the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) Peer Review process to become eligible for the Quality Online Course badge.

The Institute for Teaching and Learning has established a peer review program for faculty. Participants will be paired with a colleague who has completed the workshop, “Effective Teaching in Trying Times: Six Steps to a Better Course.” The review process involves a one-on-one virtual meeting where peers share their Brightspace course pages and discuss strategies for effective teaching, such as establishing instructor presence and using Brightspace features to engage students in the course. The time commitment is one hour, and faculty will receive a letter from ITL documenting participation.



# The UAkron Online Promise



To qualify for the High Quality Online Course badge, you can submit your course for a nationally recognized external peer review.

A faculty-driven peer-review process, like Quality Matters (QM) recognizes quality of online and blended course design. The Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric is a set of quality assurance standards that peer faculty will use to evaluate the design of online and blended courses.

If you are interested in submitting your course for a nationally recognized external peer review please contact your instructional designer.



*Certificate of Course Certification is hereby granted to*  
**NURS446 Professional Nursing Leadership**

*for successfully meeting Quality Matters Higher Education  
Course Design Rubric Standards in an Official Review.*

**University of Akron**

Issue Date: June 12, 2023

Course Representative: Pamela Bonnett



Quality Matters (QM) is the global organization leading quality assurance in online and innovative digital teaching and learning environments. When you see QM Certification Marks on courses or programs, it means they have met QM Course Design Standards or QM Program Review Criteria in a rigorous review process. This QM Certification for Course Design is valid up to five years from the date of issue. Before expiration, or upon significant alteration, courses can be recertified.



*Certificate of Course Certification is hereby granted to*  
**HIST:251 U.S. History Since 1877**

*for successfully meeting Quality Matters Higher Education  
Course Design Rubric Standards in an Official Review.*

**University of Akron**

Issue Date: July 6, 2023

Course Representative: Gregory Wilson



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*Certificate of Course Certification is hereby granted to*  
**7600:219 Intro to Public Relations**

*for successfully meeting Quality Matters Higher Education  
Course Design Rubric Standards in an Official Review.*

**University of Akron**

Issue Date: July 18, 2022

Course Representative: Julia Spiker



Quality Matters (QM) is the global organization leading quality assurance in online and innovative digital teaching and learning environments. When you see QM Certification Marks on courses or programs, it means they have met QM Course Design Standards or QM Program Review Criteria in a rigorous review process. This QM Certification for Course Design is valid up to five years from the date of issue. Before expiration, or upon significant alteration, courses can be recertified.



*Certificate of Course Certification is hereby granted to*  
**CLAS:230 Sports and Society in Ancient  
Greece and Rome**

*for successfully meeting Quality Matters Higher Education  
Course Design Rubric Standards in an Official Review.*

**University of Akron**

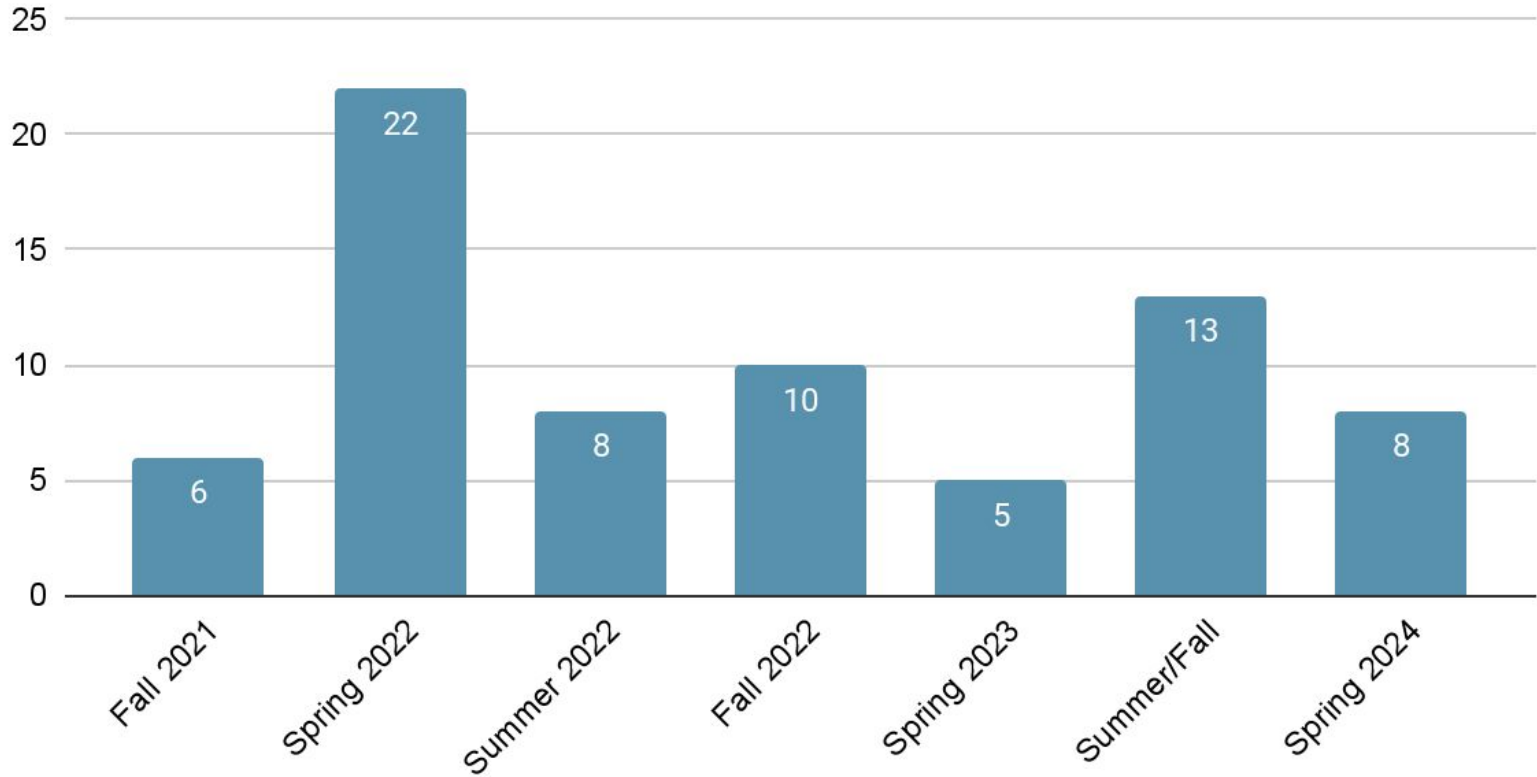
Issue Date: July 3, 2023

Course Representative: Eugenia Gorogianni



Quality Matters (QM) is the global organization leading quality assurance in online and innovative digital teaching and learning environments. When you see QM Certification Marks on courses or programs, it means they have met QM Course Design Standards or QM Program Review Criteria in a rigorous review process. This QM Certification for Course Design is valid up to five years from the date of issue. Before expiration, or upon significant alteration, courses can be recertified.

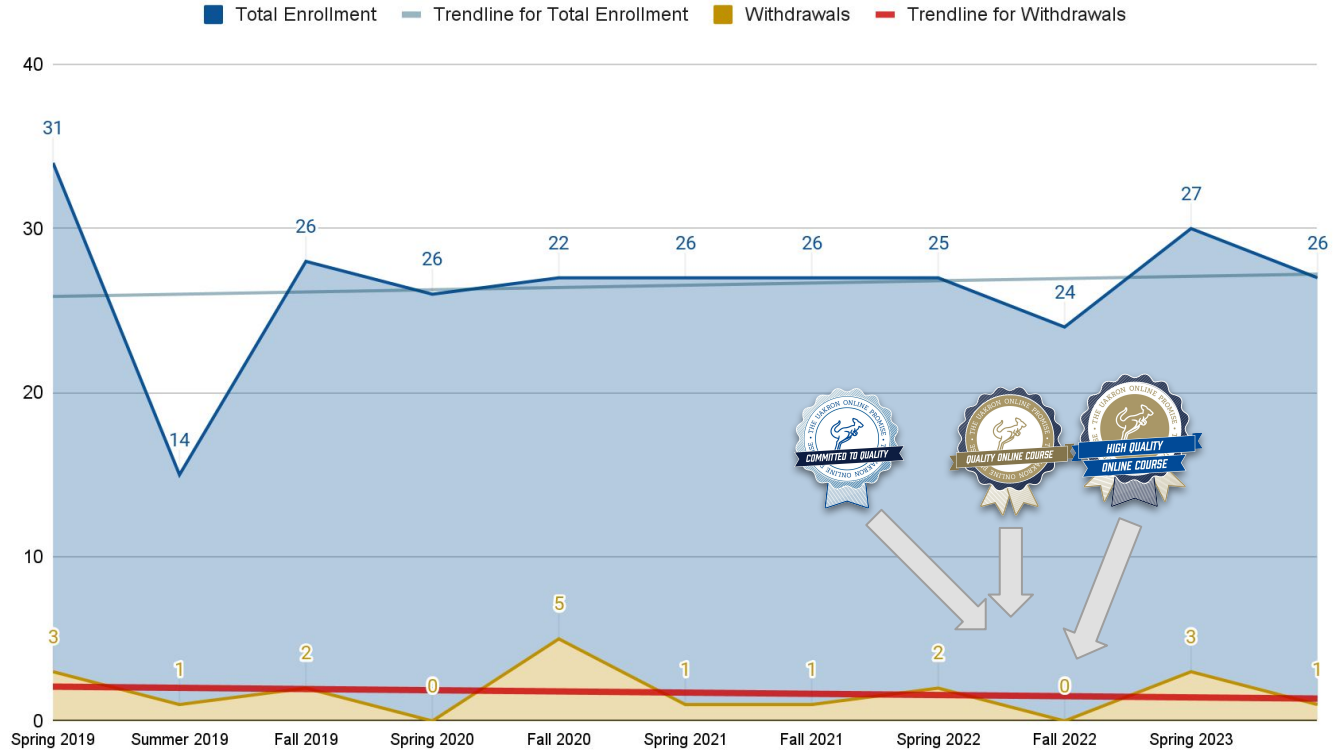
# UAkron Online Promise Participation



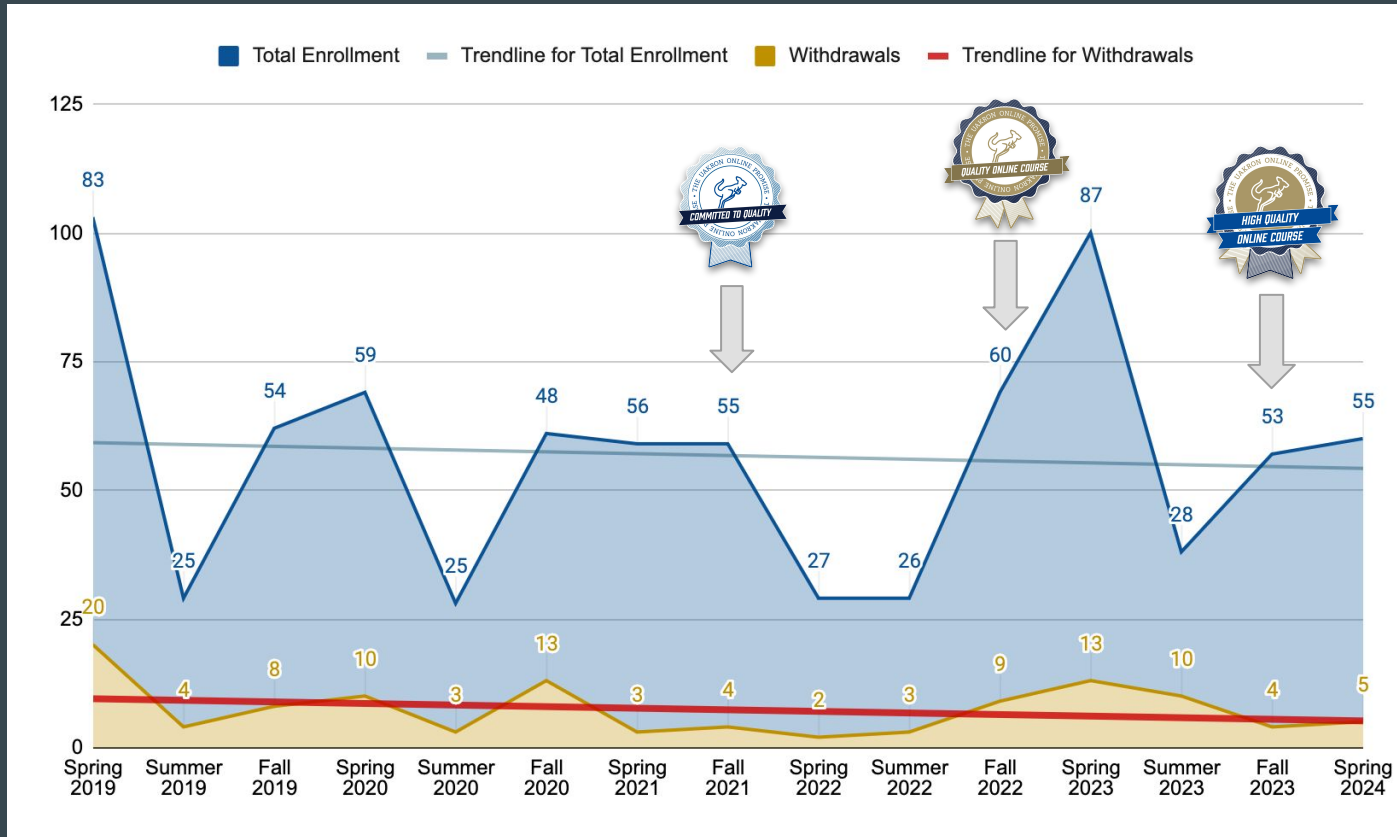
What does the data show?



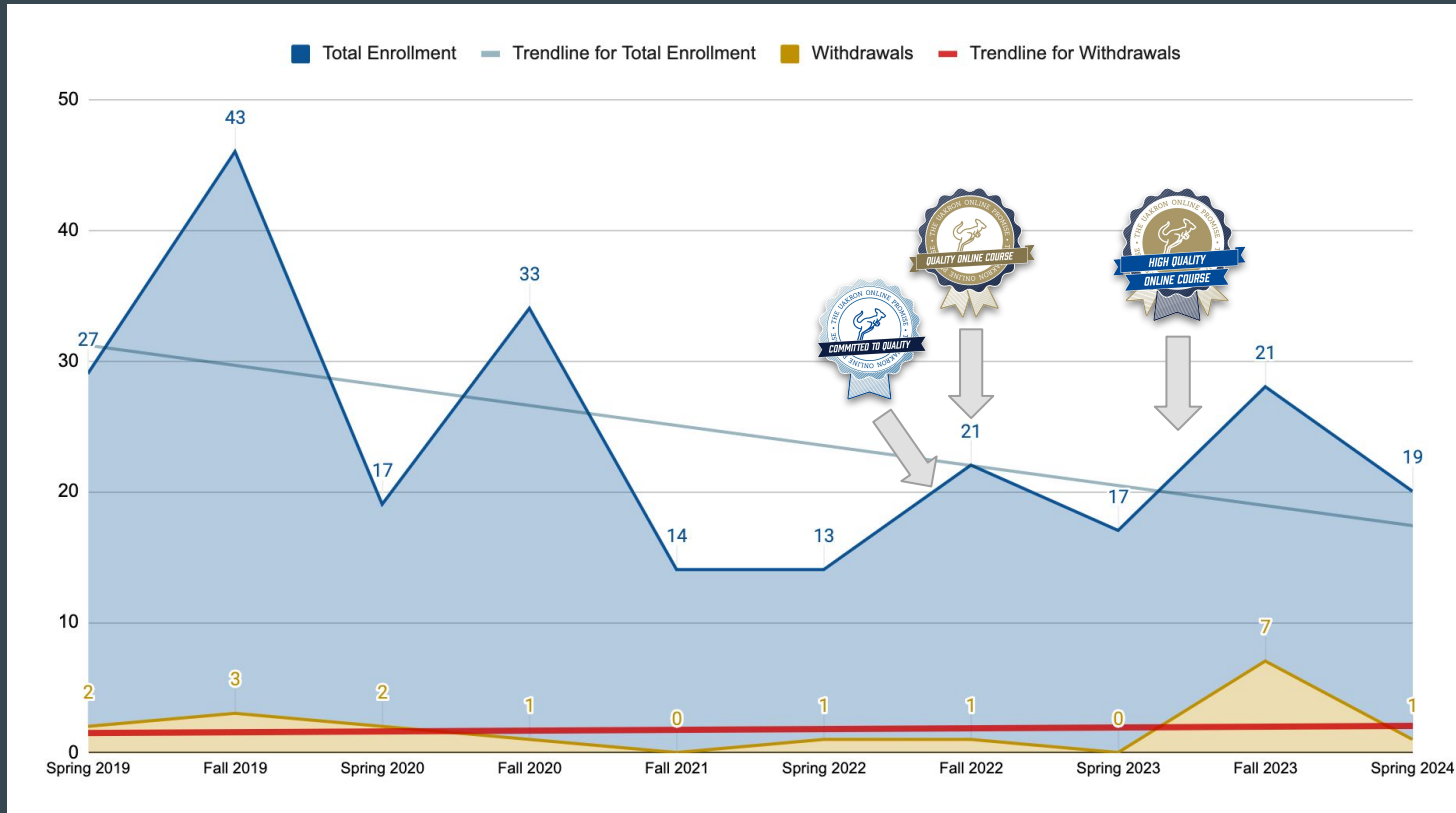
# Intro to Public Relations



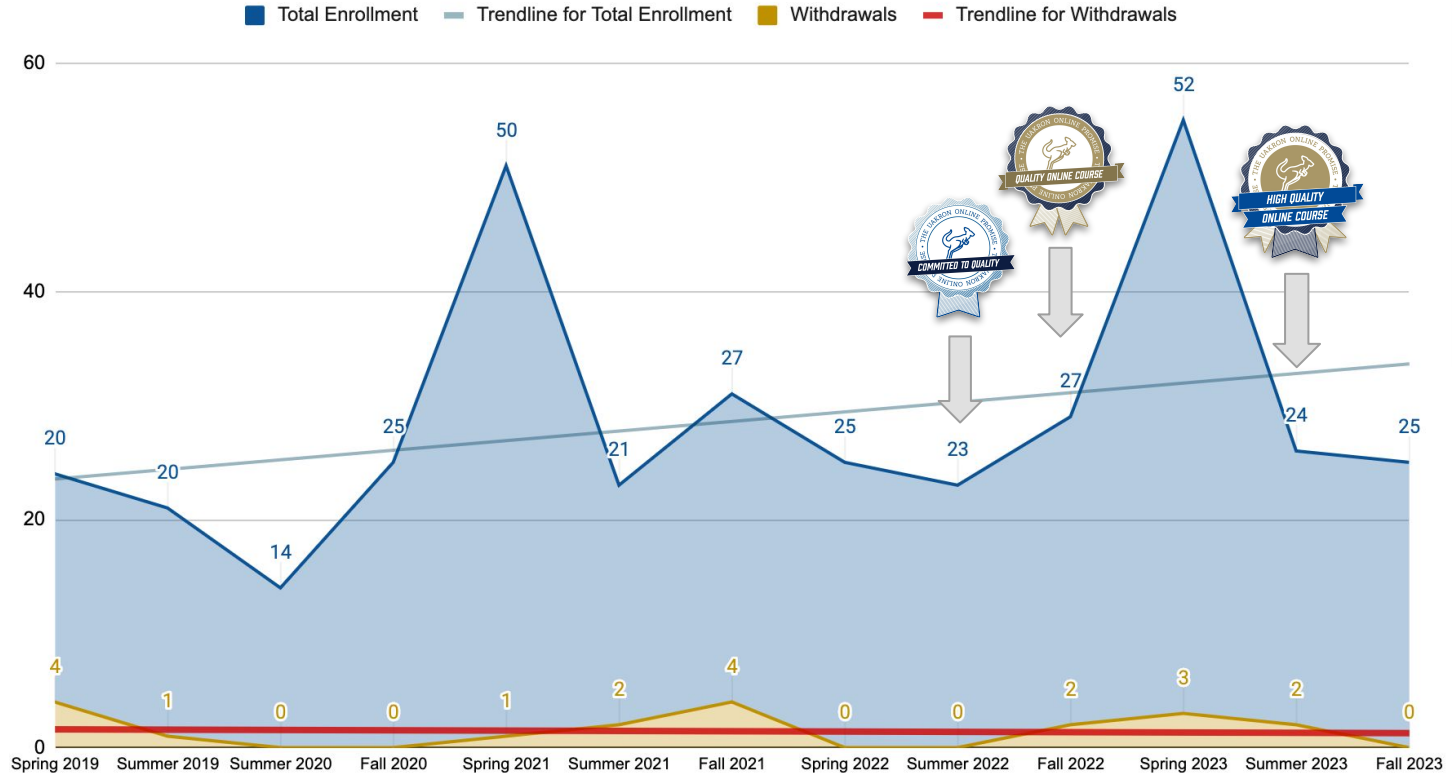
# Sports and Society in Ancient Greece and Rome



# Professional Nursing Leadership



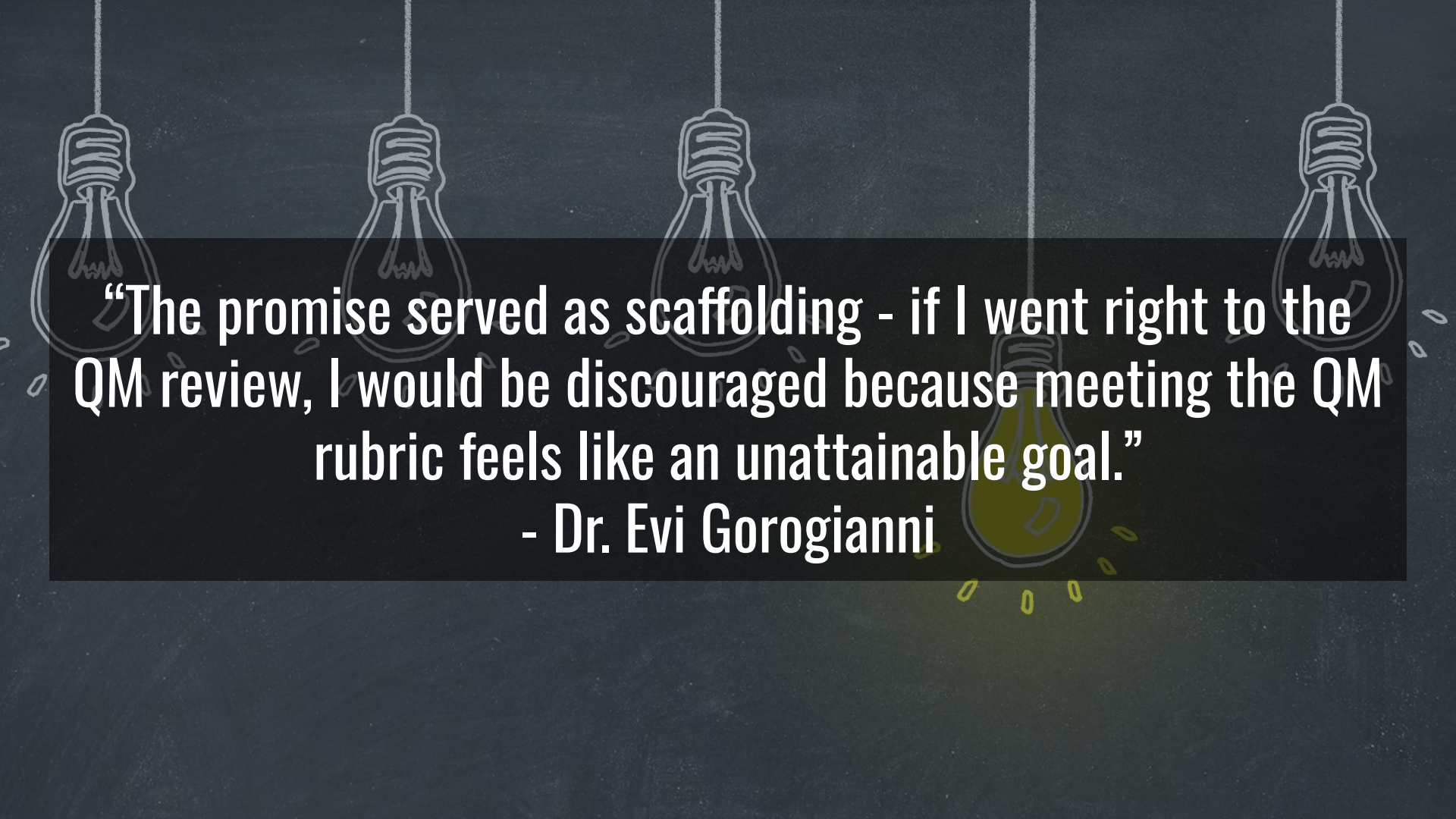
# U.S. History Since 1877





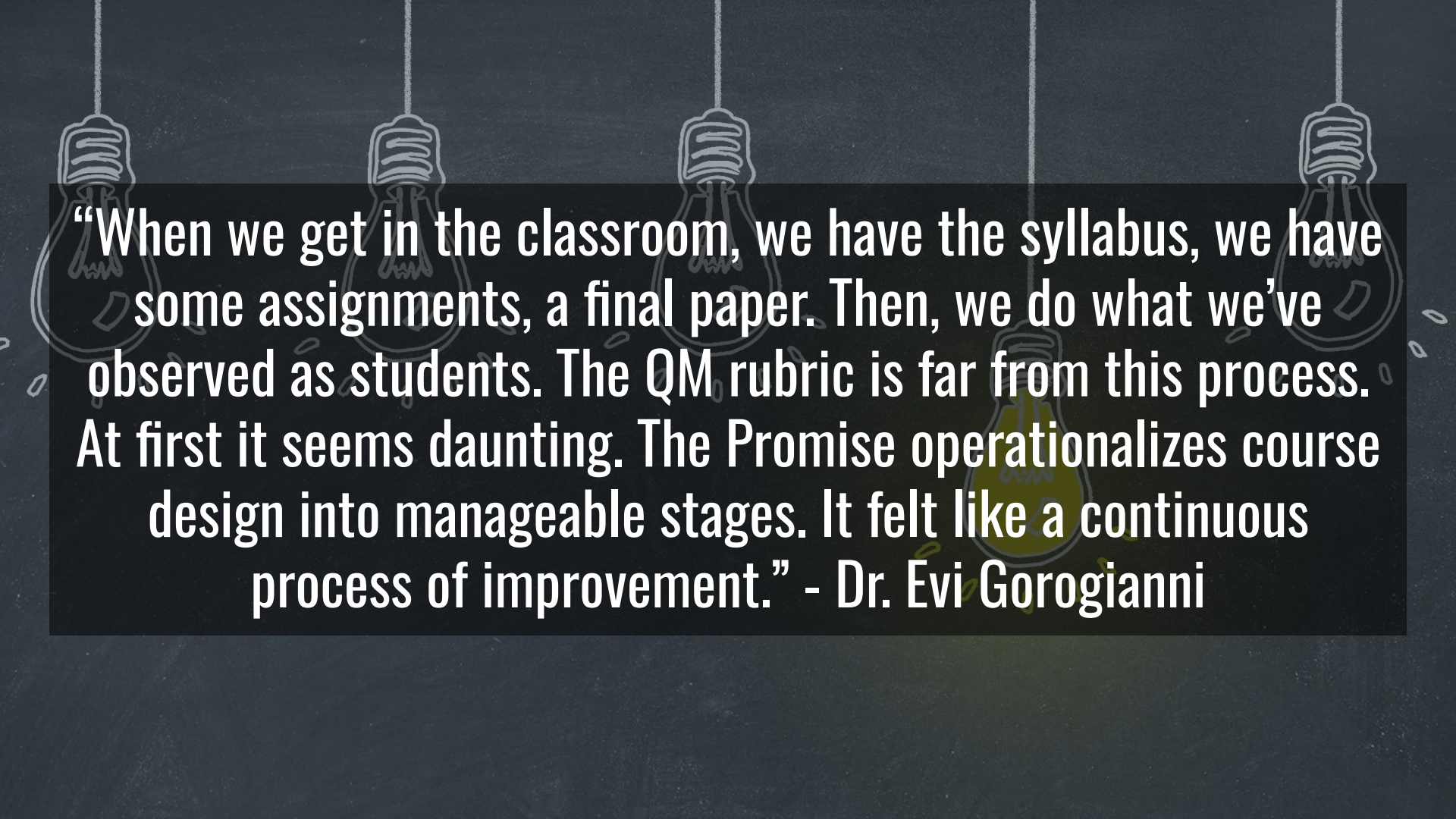
# FACULTY

Faculty Comments

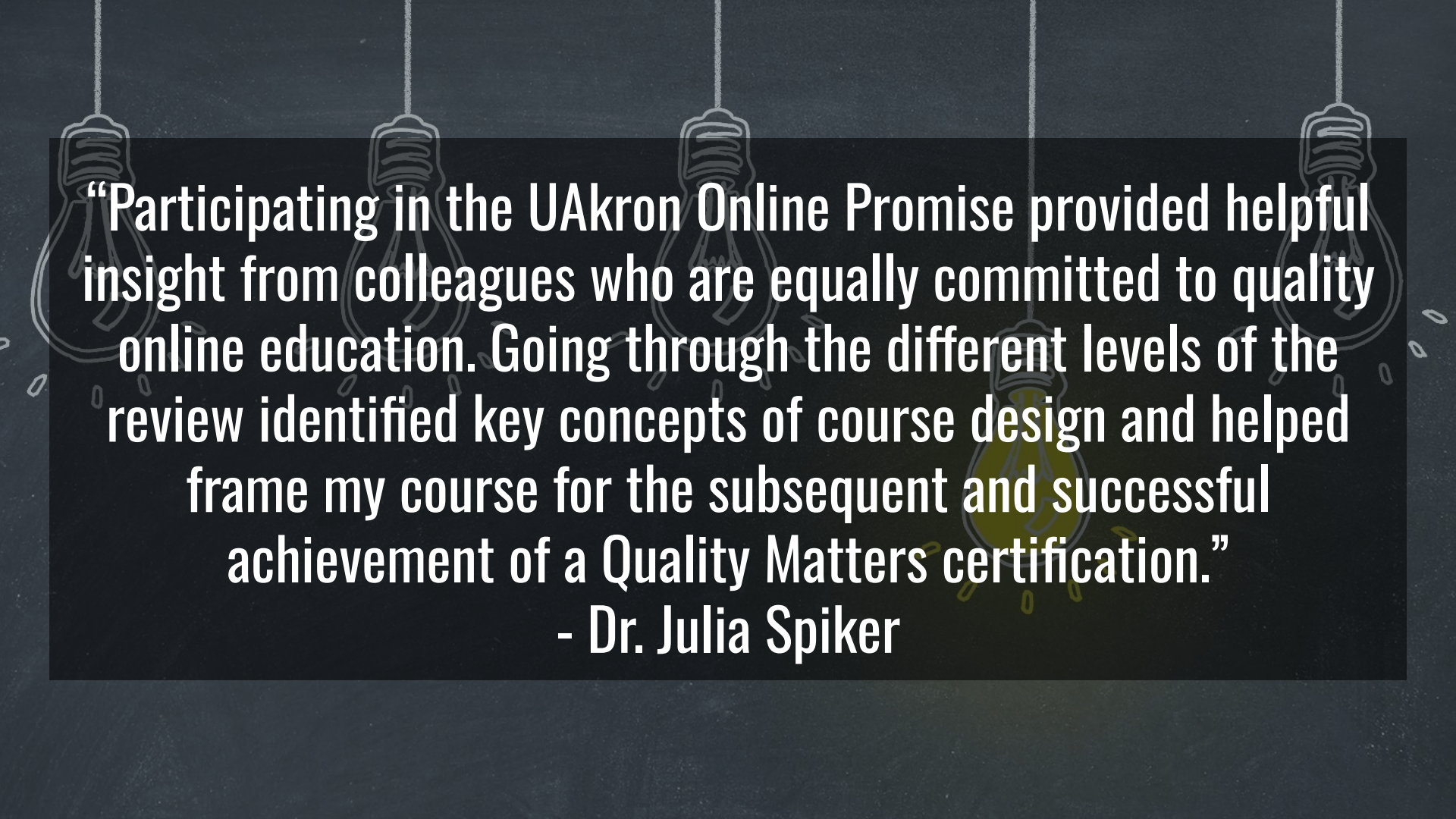


**“The promise served as scaffolding - if I went right to the QM review, I would be discouraged because meeting the QM rubric feels like an unattainable goal.”**

**- Dr. Evi Gorogianni**

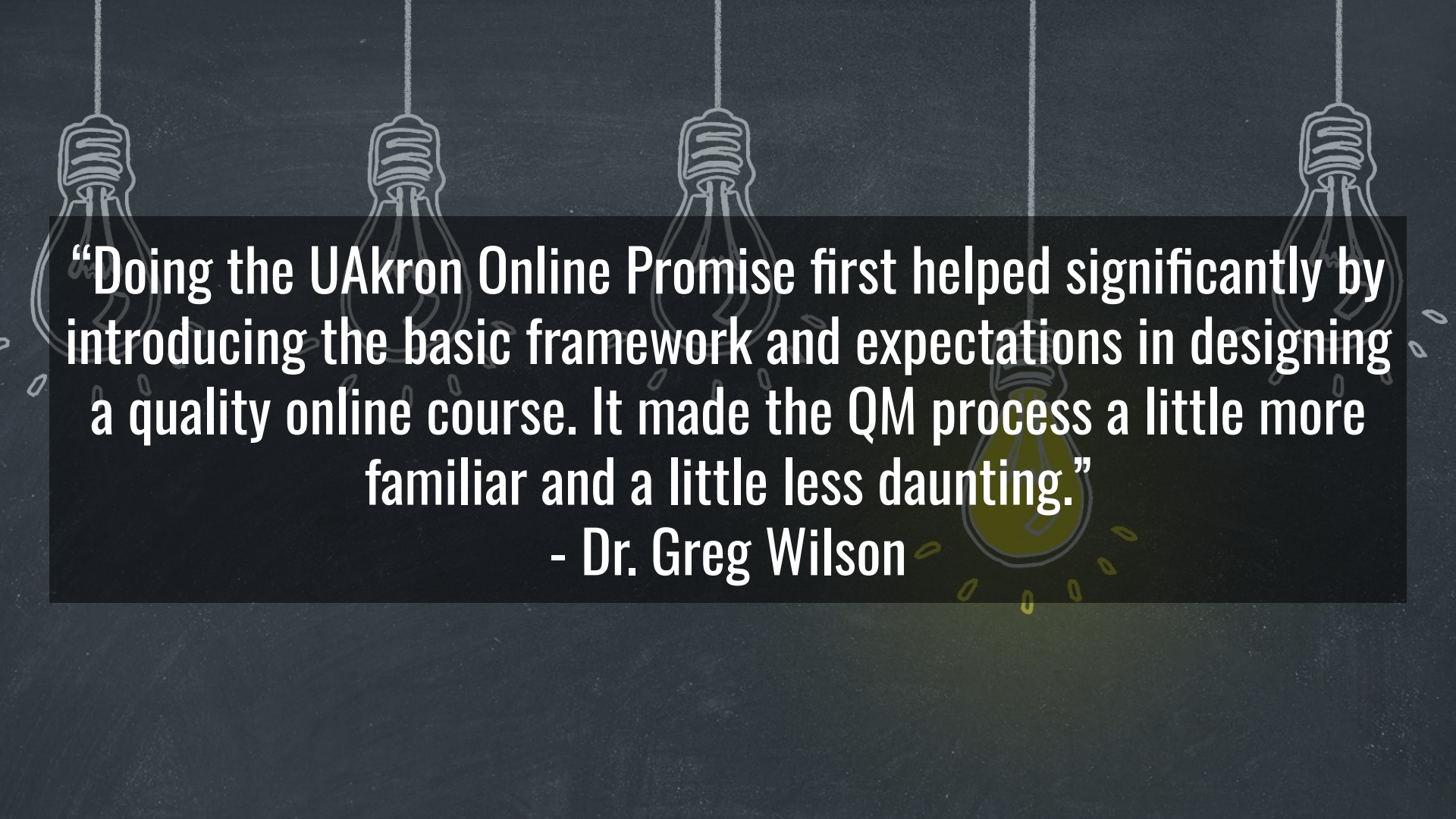


**“When we get in the classroom, we have the syllabus, we have some assignments, a final paper. Then, we do what we’ve observed as students. The QM rubric is far from this process. At first it seems daunting. The Promise operationalizes course design into manageable stages. It felt like a continuous process of improvement.” - Dr. Evi Gorogianni**



**“Participating in the UAkron Online Promise provided helpful insight from colleagues who are equally committed to quality online education. Going through the different levels of the review identified key concepts of course design and helped frame my course for the subsequent and successful achievement of a Quality Matters certification.”**

**- Dr. Julia Spiker**



**“Doing the UAkron Online Promise first helped significantly by introducing the basic framework and expectations in designing a quality online course. It made the QM process a little more familiar and a little less daunting.”**

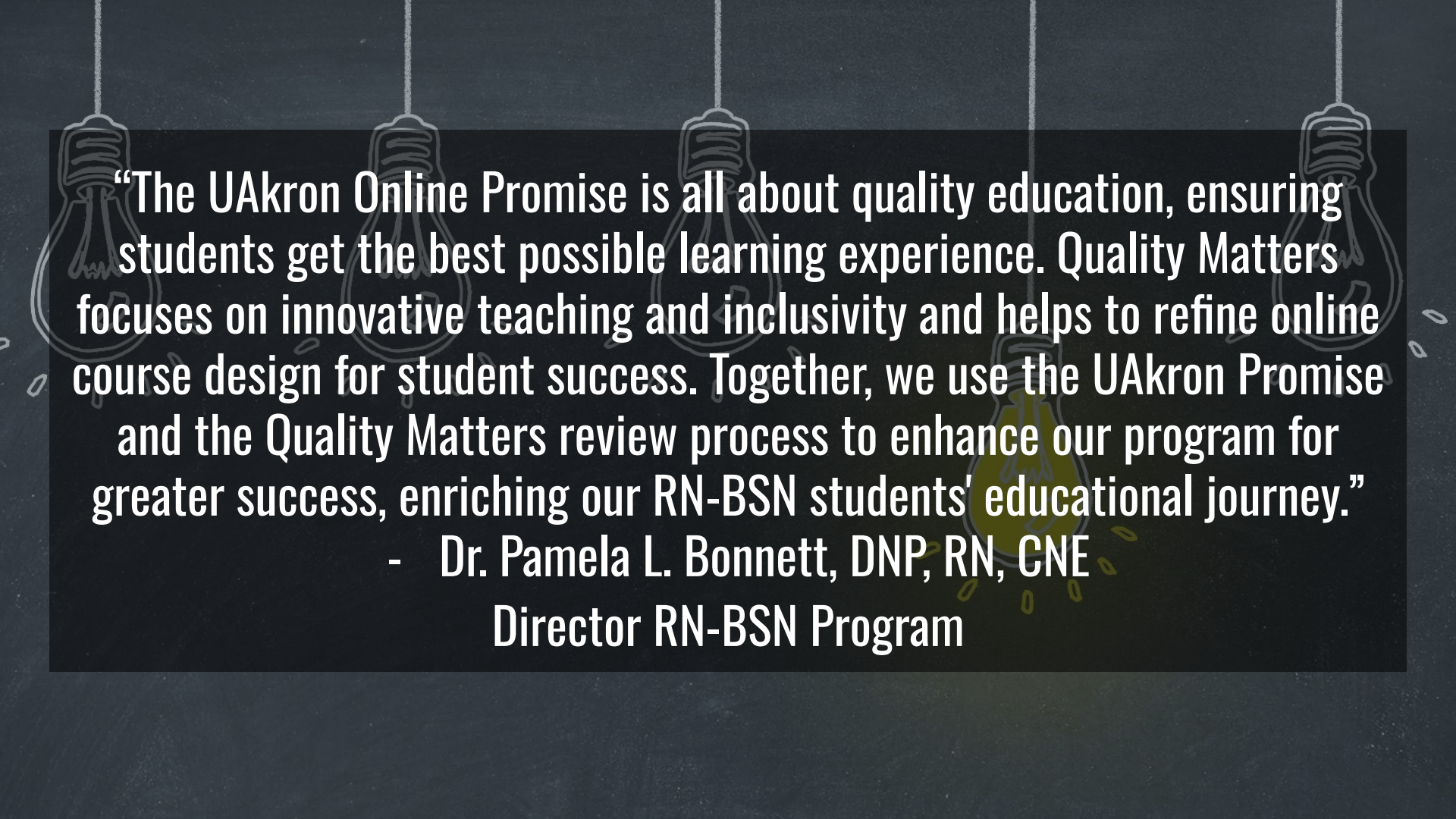
**- Dr. Greg Wilson**

The background features several lightbulbs hanging from thin white strings against a dark, textured grey background. One lightbulb in the lower right is illuminated with a yellow glow, while the others are unlit. A dark grey rectangular box with rounded corners is centered on the page, containing white text.

**“Having the feedback from the QM review committee was very helpful; good peer review on teaching is a valuable tool and I am glad to have had that. On the negative side, the QM template is a little rigid and at times confusing as to what it expected by instructors.**

**Perhaps QM can reconsider making the process more accessible to faculty by redesigning their template and website – the irony is that it is not exactly user friendly.”**

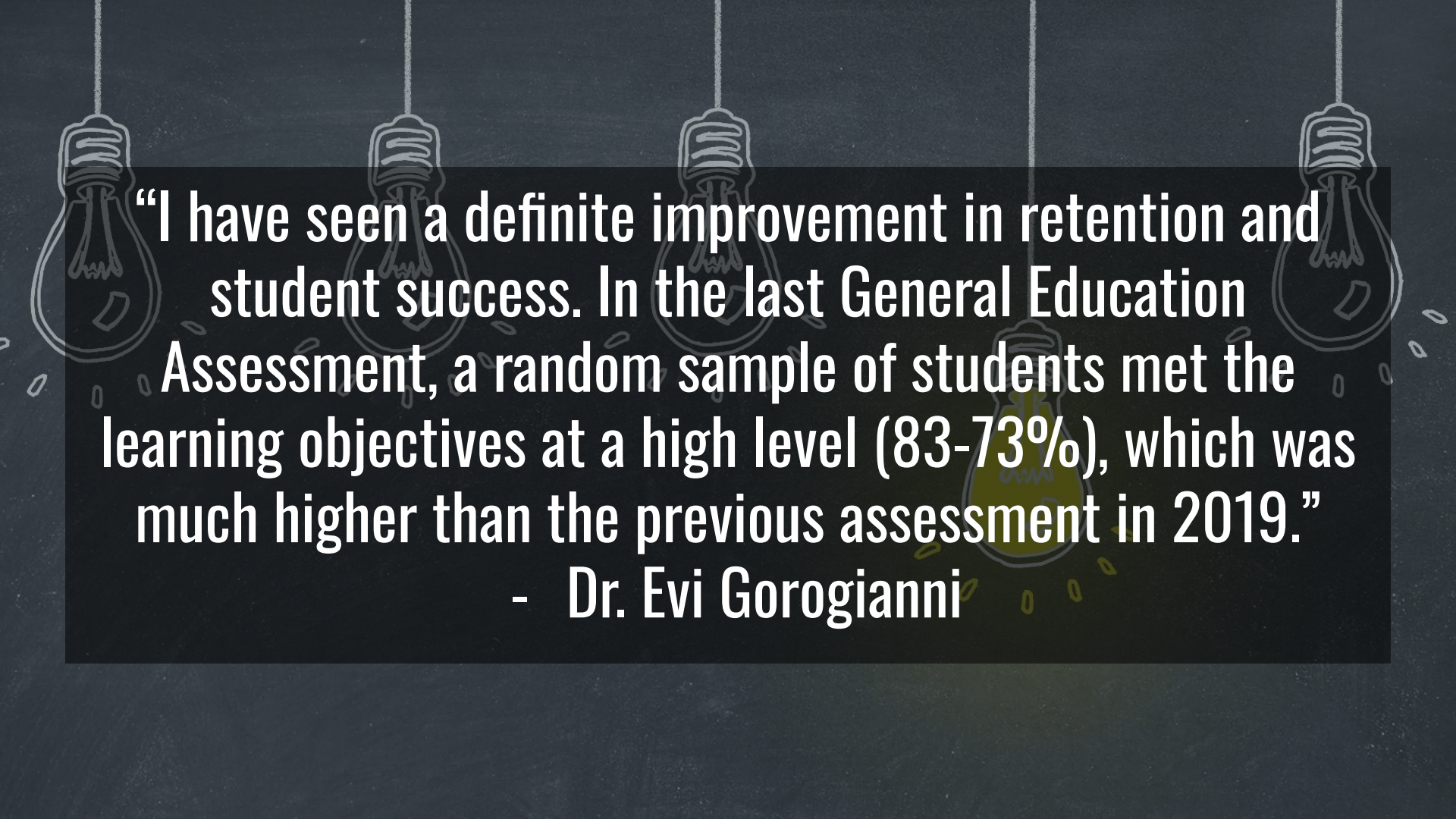
**- Dr. Greg Wilson**

The background features a dark grey, textured surface with several white-outlined lightbulbs hanging from thin white lines. One lightbulb in the lower right quadrant is highlighted with a yellow glow and radiating lines. A large, dark grey rectangular box with rounded corners is centered on the page, containing white text.

**“The UAkron Online Promise is all about quality education, ensuring students get the best possible learning experience. Quality Matters focuses on innovative teaching and inclusivity and helps to refine online course design for student success. Together, we use the UAkron Promise and the Quality Matters review process to enhance our program for greater success, enriching our RN-BSN students’ educational journey.”**

**- Dr. Pamela L. Bonnett, DNP, RN, CNE**

**Director RN-BSN Program**



**“I have seen a definite improvement in retention and student success. In the last General Education Assessment, a random sample of students met the learning objectives at a high level (83-73%), which was much higher than the previous assessment in 2019.”**

**- Dr. Evi Gorogianni**



# Quality Matters @ UA



**245 APPQMR  
Completers**  
2008-2024



**48 Recognized  
Courses**  
2012-2024



**29 PRC  
Completers**  
2009-2024



**6 MRC  
Completers**  
2009-2024



# Lessons Learned

A wooden signpost with three directional signs: 'Learn', 'Practice', and 'Improve'. The signpost is made of weathered wood and is set against a background of a cloudy sky and a green field. The signs are attached to a central vertical post with metal bolts. The word 'Learn' is on the top sign, 'Practice' is on the middle sign, and 'Improve' is on the bottom sign. Each sign has a small black triangle pointing in the direction of the sign.

- Document the initial course across our new metrics BEFORE we meet with the faculty member.
- Increase the rigor of the second stage of UAOP. It's not as rigorous as the first stage.
- Track key assessments at the onset of the project so we can easily see the impact of the UAOP on student achievement

We have been able to shift the faculty conversation about QM from “if” to “when” my course is certified.

**Shift** [sift] n.  
transfer from  
change in a



***THANK YOU***

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[@steveekaufman](https://www.instagram.com/steveekaufman)