Models for Student Success: Developing a Community College Student Roadmap
CONTENTS

SPRING 2013

Creating Community College Roadmaps for Success
Tia Brown McNair, AAC&U .......................................................... 3

PRACTICE

Engaging the Roadmap to Student Success
John C. Redmond, Mary Elizabeth Tyler Boucebc, and James D. Engstrom;
all of Georgia Perimeter College ............................................. 5

Mapping First-Year Engagement and Educational Success
Richard D. Gampert and Cynthia Jones; both of Hostos Community College, CUNY. . . . 8

Lane’s GPS Guide to Student Learning, Engagement, and Navigation
Mary Brau, Barbara Breaden, Lida Herburger, Anne B. McGrall, Andrea Newton,
Mary Parthemer, and Sarah Ulerick; all of Lane Community College ............. 10

Student Affairs and Faculty Join Hands to Support Student Achievement at
Miami Dade College
Malou C. Harrison and Isabel Rodriguez-Dehmer; both of Miami Dade College . . . .12

Helping Community College Students “Connect the Dots” of their
College Experience with E-Portfolios
Elise Martin, Middlesex Community College .................................... 14

Mt. San Antonio College—Roadmap to Student Success Project
Terri Long, Mt. San Antonio Community College .................................. 16

General Education: Charting a Roadmap toward Student Success
Sharon N. Robertson, Northern Virginia Community College .................... 18

Building the Road to Success for Students at Prince George’s
Community College
W. Allen Richman, Angela D. Anderson, Iris Antoons, Bridget Brennan, Andristine
Robinson, Crystal Smith, and Mirian Torain; all of Prince George’s Community College. . . . 20

The Freshman Academies Assessment Protocol: A Reflective
Tool for Student Success
Arthur Corradetti, Michele Cuomo, Victor Fichera, and Susan Madera; all of
Queensborough Community College .......................................... 23

E-Portfolios in Student Roadmaps at Salt Lake Community College
David Hubert, Salt Lake Community College ................................... 25

Assessment of General Education: Adapting the AAC&U Value Rubrics
Kellie C. Sorey and Daniel T. DeMarte; both of Tidewater Community College .......... 27

Get HIP: Facilitating Student and Faculty Success
Kris Roney and Mary Carney; both of University of North Georgia. .................. 29

REALITY CHECK

Envisioning My Success
Kelly Davidson, student, Prince George’s Community College ..................... 31

Peer Review (ISSN 1541-1389) is published quarterly by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1818 R Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009-1604. Annual rates are $35 for individual subscriber and $45 for libraries. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 2013. All rights reserved. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Peer Review, 1818 R Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009-1604.
n 2010, as part of the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ (AAC&U) signature initiative, Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP), twelve community colleges embarked on a journey to develop institutional models for student success through a new project called Developing a Community College Roadmap. The models were designed to advance learning and promote achievement early in a student’s college career. Funded by MetLife Foundation, the Roadmap project includes in its definition of student success both the demonstrated achievement of essential learning outcomes as well as degree or certificate completion. Quality and completion are recognized as interdependent, and aren’t pursued as separate and distinct outcomes.

The goal of the Roadmap project is to create integrated, robust, and proactive programs of academic and social support—tied to expected learning outcomes—that engage students at entrance and teach them how to become active partners in their own quest for educational success. Based on a common theory of action that evolved from prior LEAP projects (see fig. 1), the institutional models designed by the participating campuses, and described in this special issue of Peer Review, originate from individual assessments that identified specific campus needs related to quality learning and pathways to completion. The Roadmap project’s theory of action identifies four primary elements for achievement of Essential Learning Outcomes within the greater framework of inclusion and excellence for all students:

- Cross-divisional collaboration between academic and student affairs,
- Program integration for a clear and comprehensive pathway for student success,
- Use of high-impact practices for engaged student learning, and
- Enhanced assessment strategies that measure quality of learning and student outcomes.

In their respective communities, campus teams applied the theory of action through a variety of campus projects. They created integrated roadmaps across divisional boundaries; used various assessment strategies to build and act on available evidence of “what works”; aligned high-impact practices, student learning outcomes, and student support efforts in the curriculum and the cocurriculum; and engaged students in the process of project planning. Through communities of practice, based on specific topics (e.g., using e-portfolios, gathering evidence and measuring success, building navigable roadmaps), participating campuses were encouraged to share ideas, to explore solutions, to take risks, and to learn from failed starts. Understanding that one size would not fit all, each institution was given the support and freedom to design a context-sensitive model for student success. Each institution addressed specific areas of need in order to improve teaching and learning while strengthening pathways to completion.
WHY THIS PROJECT MATTERS

Community colleges are most commonly where new majority students in the United States are being educated. According to the American Association of Community Colleges’ 2013 Community College Fact Sheet, in fall 2012 forty-five percent of all undergraduates, with an average age of twenty-eight, attended community colleges, representing
- 45 percent first-time freshmen,
- 49 percent Hispanics,
- 42 percent black,
- 44 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and
- 56 percent Native American. Therefore, it makes sense to develop institutional models for student success that can both benefit a significant number of undergraduate students and serve an increasingly diverse student population.

By focusing on both quality and completion, this project unites campus efforts to improve persistence, retention, and completion while also emphasizing a high-quality liberal education for all students. These institutions all are committed to providing a liberal education emphasizing broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture, and society) as well as achievement in a specific field of interest to every student. They want to help students develop a sense of social responsibility; strong intellectual and practical skills that span all major fields of study; and the demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings. According to the report summarizing findings from AAC&U’s 2013 employer survey It Takes More Than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success (Hart Research Associates 2013, 2), “74 percent of employers would recommend this educational approach to a young person they know as the best way to prepare for success in today’s global economy.” While most campus leaders agree with this viewpoint, many struggle to design institutional models that advance efforts to achieve both quality and completion. The Roadmap project seeks to address this need.

As Lane Community College states in an article included in this issue, “An intentional institutional shift from a freedom to fail culture to a right to succeed culture” serves as the starting point for designing models for student success that emphasize both quality and completion. Intentionality is a key word. Roadmap campuses are “connecting the dots” for student success by building on strengths and recognizing opportunities for improvement through internal assessment. They are reforming institutional cultures that focus on assets and talents that students bring to campus rather than on student deficits. Roadmap teams include individuals from many sectors of each institution and, thus, are able to think critically and creatively about strategies to demolish the traditional silos that hinder progress. In project models, faculty and staff development and administrative support are all central to the implementation of institutional approaches to increase student success. Such models are critical to long-term sustainability of institutional change.

In 2012, AAC&U president Carol Schneider wrote in her Liberal Education piece, Where Completion Goes Awry: The Metrics for “Success” Mask Mounting Problems with Quality, “When we create incentive systems for enhanced degree production, with no questions asked about the sufficiency of learning, the door is literally wide open to choices that deplete rather than build educational quality. The real key to economic opportunity and advancement depends not on whether the student possesses a credential, but rather on whether students actually leave college with that rich portfolio of learning that employers seek and society urgently needs.” As the articles in this issue of Peer Review show, the campuses participating in the Roadmap project are leadership institutions focusing on completion and quality. They are committed to engaging in continued self-reflection and to designing student success models that will endure.

As we enter into the second phase of the Roadmap project, ten new colleges have joined the project: Alamo Colleges, Brookdale Community College, Chattanooga State Community College, College of the Canyons, Community College of Allegheny County, Community College of Baltimore County, Manchester Community College, Massachusetts Bay Community College, Monroe Community College, and Wallace State Community College–Hanceville. The current colleges will serve as mentors to the new campuses. As the title of Miami Dade College’s article maintains, “It Takes a Village” to create resilient leadership among educators intent on defining student success by completion and quality.

—Tia McNair, Senior Director for Student Success, AAC&U

Institutions participating in phase one of the Developing a Community College Roadmap project include
- Georgia Perimeter College
- Hostos Community College (CUNY)
- Lane Community College (Oregon)
- Miami Dade College (Florida)
- Middlesex Community College (Massachusetts)
- Mt. San Antonio College (California)
- Northern Virginia Community College
- Prince George’s Community College (Maryland)
- Queensborough Community College (CUNY)
- Salt Lake Community College (Utah)
- Tidewater Community College (Virginia)
- University of North Georgia (formerly Gainesville State College and North Georgia College and State University)
Engaging the Roadmap to Student Success

John C. Redmond, assistant professor of anthropology, department of cultural and behavioral sciences, Georgia Perimeter College
Mary Elizabeth Tyler Boucebci, community-based learning coordinator, office of quality enhancement plan, Georgia Perimeter College
James D. Engstrom, department chair, cultural and behavioral sciences, Georgia Perimeter College

Georgia Perimeter College (GPC) is a participant in the Developing a Community College Student Roadmap project, sponsored by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). The Roadmap project comprises twelve community colleges poised to become national models in supporting student success. Collectively, these leadership institutions work to take what are often isolated and independent student success efforts and create an integrated roadmap to support both student persistence and higher levels of academic achievement. At GPC, the Roadmap project provided the opportunity to explore a key question from our strategic plan: “What teaching strategies will provide relevant and responsive learning opportunities that will lead to student success?”

GPC’s roadmap to student success focused on the following high-impact practices (HIPS) and how these practices affected student success at GPC:

- first-year experiences
- learning communities
- a pilot study program that institutes a number of HIPs, including those listed above, for a specific cohort population.

Currently, we are focused on establishing the first area of impact, namely, First Year Experiences. Accordingly, GPC established a first-year seminar (FYS) in fall 2011 as part of a broader effort to connect with students in the early period of their transition to a college environment. GPCS 1010, first-year seminar, is a three-credit course that meets twice a week every semester. The course introduces students to college life, provides information on expectations of college students and strategies for college success, and builds information literacy through the investigation of a specific theme. Themes are selected and designed by seminar instructors. To evaluate the impact of this course, we created a pilot study in which we embedded the FYS into a learning community that employed project-based learning methods, tutoring, and mandatory study periods.

DATA ON INITIAL CHANGE

To access the initial impact of the college-wide strategic plan, we compared the results of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement between 2008 and 2011. The data showed significant increases in self-reported participation in student activities and service learning, indicating that students were becoming more involved in college activities and student learning projects such as campus clubs and service-learning opportunities. The percentage of students engaged in college sponsored activities increased from 20 percent in 2008 to 27.4 percent in 2011. The percentage of students reporting spending more than six hours per week in these activities nearly doubled in the three-year period examined, from 4.3 percent to 7.9 percent. The percentage of students who said they participated in a community-based project increased from 22 percent in 2008 to 31.2 percent in 2011. Furthermore, results from a pilot administration of the Critical Thinking Assessment Test in 2011 showed that the GPC students sampled performed at or above national averages for two-year colleges on ten out of the fifteen behaviors measured, but below national averages on five measures. Thus, while these measures highlight some positive trends, there remains ample room for improvement and a need for more valid assessment data.

DEVELOPING THE ROADMAP: THE FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

In the fall 2011, we initiated our first-year seminar (FYS) course as part of a broader effort to connect with students in the early period of their transition to a college environment. Because research shows that students who complete these classes feel a stronger connection to their institutions, are more likely to remain in school, and are more likely to show gains in academic achievement, we instituted a three-tiered plan to institutionalize the seminar courses and make them available for all incoming first-year students (Porter and Swing 2006). In phase one, students who required two or more learning
support courses were required to enroll in an FYS course, followed by phase two in which students enrolled in one learning support will be required to enroll in a FYS. A third phase will look to promote FYS courses for all students. We currently are in the process of developing a permanent position for the administration of the program as these enrollment numbers are expected to climb (fig. 1).

FYS can vary greatly in form and function across institutions (Pascarella and Terenzini 2011), and we chose to use a three-credit course that introduces students to college life, provides information on strategies for college success, and builds information literacy through investigation of a specific theme. Themes are selected and designed by seminar instructors and can range greatly, but all courses are designed to engage students with the college and the community, develop self-understanding, learn about strategies, behaviors, and college resources that will optimize their personal and academic success, and help them plan for their future. Early indicators support the success of developing a permanent position for the administration of the program as these enrollment numbers are expected to climb (fig. 1).

At GPC we design learning communities (LC) as interdisciplinary clusters of courses that explore a particular theme or shared academic interest. Teachers work together to create a dynamic learning environment for their students. Readings, discussions, and assignments typically overlap from the different courses to foster bonds between the students in the community. LC courses at GPC work to emphasize the “big picture” by creating connections between the different courses that relate to important topics in students’ lives. By providing an opportunity to become a member of a supportive learning environment, LC students typically have an easier time developing study groups and other peer support systems (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith 1990).

While GPC has implemented learning communities on a limited basis, we have seen considerable success. Students who participate in learning communities typically have a higher retention rate than the general student population. Data from the Project DEgree program, a learning community at GPC designed to improve student progress and increase persistence and sponsored by the Gateway to College National Network, shows a nearly 80 percent persistence rate between spring 2011 and summer 2011 compared to 45 percent college wide. Likewise, spring 2011 to fall 2012 persistence rates were also higher in students involved in Project DEgree compared to matched controls. Through this data a clear need to expand the use of these learning communities has been identified and GPC has placed strong emphasis on developing the framework to institutionalize the practice (fig. 2).

**DEVELOPING THE ROADMAP: LEARNING COMMUNITIES**

At GPC we design learning communities (LC) as interdisciplinary clusters of courses that explore a particular theme or shared academic interest. Teachers work together to create a dynamic learning environment for their students. Readings, discussions, and assignments typically overlap from the different courses to foster bonds between the students in the community. LC courses at GPC work to emphasize the “big picture” by creating connections between the different courses that relate to important topics in students’ lives. By providing an opportunity to become a member of a supportive learning environment, LC students typically have an easier time developing study groups and other peer support systems (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith 1990).

While GPC has implemented learning communities on a limited basis, we have seen considerable success. Students who participate in learning communities typically have a higher retention rate than the general student population. Data from the Project DEgree program, a learning community at GPC designed to improve student progress and increase persistence and sponsored by the Gateway to College National Network, shows a nearly 80 percent persistence rate between spring 2011 and summer 2011 compared to 45 percent college wide. Likewise, spring 2011 to fall 2012 persistence rates were also higher in students involved

**INTEGRATING THE ROADMAP**

At the heart of the Roadmap project, we targeted a specific set of academic programs that support student success through the integration of HIPs. These included our emerging FYS course, and the LC developed through the Project DEgree program. While these initiatives were new to the college they provided an ideal scenario to evaluate the impact of these HIPs in a specific cohort population. With this in mind we developed a pilot project to examine the effectiveness of the creation and integration of this robust and proactive program of academic and social support that engaged students to become active partners in their own quest for academic success. In the study we investigated how a tailored student educational program including an FYS, an LC, and project-based learning modules can affect specific learning outcomes including critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, teamwork and problem solving, and measures of academic success including GPA and academic persistence.

Initially we decided on a mixed methods strategy that included both quantitative statistical analysis and qualitative measures collected from focus group reports. The study tracked student performance in two groups: (1) a traditional lecture class that did not include any specific HIPs, and (2) a select student cohort (Project DEgree students) exposed to a specifically tailored student educational plan including an FYS (GPCS 1010), project-based learning, and a learning community. Quantitative measures, including comparison of academic success through specific course grades, overall GPA, and persistence will be compared between the two groups once those numbers become available.
**FINDINGS**

Overall, students reacted positively to their experiences in the program. It should be noted that the LC included tutoring and a “Choices for Life” course that explored specific topics which promote healthy, proactive lifestyles, as well as either an English or math course. Student responses to focus group questions indicated that the program was important to them because they felt it was “a great course for the transition into college.” Students also liked the fact that the course material was presented in different ways, such as guest speakers or projects. Specifically, students reported that the FYS was helping them gain a better understanding of academic life, including time management skills, the ability to identify their priorities and rank them based on importance, and the importance of different learning styles to help them discover which way they learned best. Students reported that they were better able to understand college life and were more aware of their career options after being a part of the project. The students also felt that having a “great instructor” was an important factor in making the class enjoyable and effective.

Often two-year commuter colleges struggle to build collaborative environments for their students. However, students involved in the project reported that they were participating in increased teamwork as a result of the activities and assignments. Primarily, they reported that they were provided support and encouragement from each other through the LC. For example, one student said, “if somebody needs help with their studies and if we feel like we are good enough to explain it to them, we do.” Some students even mentioned that they wanted more group projects because they require students to work together and encourage collaboration. Students also felt their writing and communication skills had improved during the course of the semester. Overall, the students reported an increase in their confidence levels as a result of the project and more engagement with their coursework. They also felt they were more aware of career options. One student said, “It actually gives us clarity on a lot of things, especially for school and careers.” Apart from feeling engaged in the classroom, the students also reported feeling increased engagement with activities on campus, and felt their instructor played an important role in helping them feel like they were a part of campus life.

Overall, students reacted positively to the program, expressed increased knowledge of academic life, increased engagement with others on campus, and increased critical and creative thinking skills—all of which lead to an increased expectation that students will complete their two-year degree and advance to further undergraduate study.

**CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

During the course of this project GPC was forced to struggle with some serious financial shortfalls. These shortfalls necessitated an adaptable and scalable action plan in the light of changing institutional dynamics. In the end, we learned that persistence does pay, and that building on small successes is a viable strategy. As we regain our financial stability, we have not lost sight of our educational mission to increase student success. Concomitant with the work of the Roadmap project, GPC has recently established a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) based on HIPs to improve student outcomes. The QEP is titled “EDGE: Engagement Drives GPC Education,” and its goals are to change behaviors, attitudes, and learning outcomes in selected classes across the college. **Behaviors:** Students will be more likely to persist in their courses; faculty will increase their focus and skills in making their courses engaging. **Attitudes:** Students will perceive their courses as more relevant and will report greater engagement as part of their overall college experience. **Learning outcomes:** Students will improve in their ability to think critically, to make connections between course content and real-world issues, and will perform better on assessments of course content. The college has established an office of the QEP to manage these efforts to infuse HIPs more broadly across the curriculum, particularly in the introductory classes taken by large numbers of students. We expect that the lessons learned in our three years of the Roadmap project will inform the implementation of the QEP as our college continues in its quest to provide the highest quality education possible for our students.

**REFERENCES**


Mapping First-Year Engagement and Educational Success

- Richard D. Gampert, acting assistant dean for institutional research and student assessment, Hostos Community College, CUNY
- Cynthia Jones, lecturer, English department and office of academic affairs fellow, Hostos Community College, CUNY

Hostos is a mid-size college situated in the South Bronx, one of the poorest congressional districts in the country. A large majority of Hostos’ students are the first in their families to attend college. More than 70 percent of our students come from a family in which English is not the native language, and upwards of 90 percent of our first-year students have at least one remedial/developmental need. Fully one-third are not proficient in any of the three basic skills areas: reading, writing, and mathematics. Faced with these obstacles, almost 40 percent of first-year students drop out of college by the end of the academic year.

The task was to develop a credit-bearing college orientation course that would be linked to the remedial reading and writing courses

INSTITUTIONAL REFLECTION
To address these students’ needs, Hostos has undertaken several initiatives, each entailing extensive institutional reflection: the Middle States Institutional Self-Study; Foundations of Excellence (FoE) Self-Study; five-year strategic planning; and the Roadmap Project. These various college-wide initiatives provided direction and frameworks for the delivery of purposeful services to students, including reflection and review around bilingual and remedial/developmental education. At the time Hostos began working with AAC&U’s Developing a Community College Student Roadmap project, the college was reviewing the curriculum for its remedial and developmental educational programs, and it was focusing on the need to provide incoming students with a clear understanding of the expectations of college life. The concurrently developed strategic plan, also identifying these same trends, made one of its central priorities the interrelated challenges of retention and remedial/developmental education.

Within this context, Hostos used its involvement in Roadmap as an opportunity to review its first-year ESL and developmental programs. Specifically, the task was to develop a credit-bearing college orientation course that would be linked to the remedial reading and writing courses. The goal was to have a course that would engage students with the college through modules relating to available resources, time management, expectations, and, through the use of a common text, provide additional opportunities for reading and writing. For students in the ESL course sequence, the individual modules would be embedded as additional activities within the existing curriculum. This different approach was selected to accommodate the developing English language skills of the ESL students.

CURRICULAR MODULES
Hostos’s Roadmap project has metamorphosed over the past year, with the initial focus shifting towards the creation of individual curricular modules for use with incoming ESL students. The modules are designed to help them better acclimate to college life and better understand the expectations of college-level work. Using these modules as a starting point, a number of additional
initiatives have been developed that build on the work originally created in conjunction with the Roadmap project. The goal was to pilot these modules and then, following reviews and revisions, to begin to incorporate them into the college orientation course that was a central part of the original proposal.

The first set of modules was developed and piloted through a two-day Summer Bridge Program for First Year Students in summer 2012. The Summer Bridge was a key recommendation from the FoE Self Study, and it was developed collaboratively across academic and student affairs. The program provided seventy-two entering students with focused modules on the topics of Classroom Expectations, Time Management, Educational Planning, and Developmental Learning Supports, as well as workshops on the Library and Educational Technology resources. The modules used in the Summer Bridge program were those that were proposed and initially developed for use in the Roadmap project. The success of the Summer Bridge has led to its replication for students during summer 2013.

Hostos also piloted Reading Mathematics, a series of 45-hour workshops to provide students from the developmental reading and developmental mathematics courses with the opportunity to explore the interconnections between reading and mathematics. This was accomplished through reading of and writing about various literary texts (both fiction and nonfiction) focused on the theme of mathematics. Throughout, students engaged in activities that explored the area of inquiry: How can I become a more effective reader, writer, thinker, and mathematics learner?

Almost half of the thirty-eight tested students passed the reading test and were able to progress with their studies, many attributing their success to the materials and workshop activities. Due to the success of the workshop, a mathematics-themed literary text was used in a fall 2012 developmental reading course.

**STUDENT SUCCESS COACH PROGRAM**

In fall 2012, Hostos initiated its Student Success Coach program, the goal of which is to have every entering Hostos student assigned a coach to provide assistance in navigating college and adjusting to the expectations of college life. The coach will remain assigned to his/her student as long as that student is enrolled at Hostos, right through graduation. By the spring of 2015, the goal is to have every Hostos student assigned a coach. In summer 2012, the coaches were oriented to the culture of the college through the Summer Bridge Program, New Student Orientations, academic advisement, and further follow-up with college support services.

Coaches continue to meet with their assigned students to assist them in identifying and addressing needs, interests, academics, and goals. The coaches do not directly provide students with specific services, but rather serve as conduits for referrals to internal and external supports, as appropriate. The roles undertaken by the Success Coaches are consistent with the findings of and recommendations from the FoE Self Study. Ultimately, the coaches will play a significant part in helping students remain in college and graduate.

The office of academic affairs has convened a faculty committee, chaired by a Roadmap team member, to work on the curriculum for the College Orientation Course, an initial Roadmap project. Although still in its early phases, the course curriculum will be based on work developed for the Summer Bridge program, as well as the orientation and training sessions for the Success Coaches. The goal is to have the curriculum for the course completed by the end of the current academic year for implementation beginning in the fall.

As Hostos completes its second year as a Roadmap college, it has become clear that the original proposal has not been implemented in the way that was initially envisioned. However, the college does not see this as an impediment to success of future Roadmap activities. More importantly, many of the facets of the initial proposal have spun off in various ways and are in the process of being implemented throughout the college. None of these activities could have been accomplished, even in modified form, if there had not been buy-in across the institution—proactive institutional support through presidential involvement, campus-wide cross-divisional study groups, and committees. In that regard, Hostos has been fortunate to have enjoyed, from the beginning, institutional commitment to student learning and success from the highest levels of the college.

Moving forward, the college is looking to continue to implement the Roadmap work, connecting student success to curriculum revision, course development, support services, and the inclusion of high-impact practices.
Lane’s GPS Guide to Student Learning, Engagement, and Navigation

For students to have a clear roadmap to learning and success, the institution must recognize and align its curricular, cocurricular, and student support coordinates into a navigable order. Lane Community College is well on its way to developing this comprehensive roadmap for student learning, engagement, and navigation. Lane’s Roadmap team is developing a multidimensional “Guide to Personal Success,” what we call the Lane GPS.

This major systemic and cultural change supports three components of the Lane GPS:

- **Learning**: Using Core Learning Outcomes (CLOs) as guiding principles for liberal education and guideposts for a student’s academic journey.
- **Engagement**: Empowering students with high-impact practices (HIPs) to advance their learning and success.
- **Navigation**: Developing transparent processes and tools that support integrated practices for student progression and completion.

Our GPS model for students has its origins in an intentional institutional shift from a *freedom to fail* culture to a *right to succeed* culture. Like many open-access community colleges, Lane offers students an array of courses, programs, and academic degrees. While the college strongly encouraged academic advising, students have been free to take whatever courses they could enroll in. Many courses have had no prerequisites for success and we have lacked first-year experiences and visible HIPs.

Once we recognized the unintended results of giving students freedom without sufficient guidance, we set about adopting practices to foster students’ right to succeed. Members of Lane’s Success and Goal Attainment committee (SAGA) were key leaders in articulating the right to succeed. As a group of academic and student affairs faculty and staff, SAGA has served as a think tank for student success, progression, and completion since 2004. SAGA gathered and shared evidence about national best practices for improving student success that led to a five-year Engaging Students Title III grant in 2008.

In a right to succeed culture all faculty and staff are responsible to ensure students can exercise their right to succeed in their learning, their progression, and their timely degree completion. While this new culture might constrain students’ options in some ways, it is making the roads to success truly accessible and navigable.

Two of Lane’s strategic directions—a liberal education approach to student learning and optimal student preparation, progression, and completion—provided the institutional base for the Roadmap team’s integrated action plan, with learning, engagement, and navigation at the center.

**GUIDING LEARNING: TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY CORE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Lane’s previous general education outcomes had proven confusing, unassessable, and largely unknown. The Roadmap project provided the catalyst for developing new core learning outcomes, now seen as a
legitimate and critical component of a right-to-succeed culture. In addition, Roadmap supported the Assessment Team’s efforts to move the culture of assessment into the student learning conversation around success and completion. In a series of campus conferences and workshops, the Roadmap and Assessment Teams provided multiple occasions for faculty and staff to examine the relationship between learning outcomes, student success, and degree completion.

The result of two years of work was adoption of five Core Learning Outcomes that support the strategic direction of a liberal education model and that will be used as “markers” in the students’ GPS:
- Think critically
- Engage diverse values with civic and ethical awareness
- Create ideas and solutions
- Communicate effectively
- Apply learning

These outcomes invite the use of HIPs as pedagogical tools. Through rubrics and other assessments they provide information to students about the learning path they are on and how far and in what direction they need to go.

GUIDING ENGAGEMENT: WIDESPREAD USE OF HIPs
The second feature of the Lane GPS involves helping students achieve program outcomes through broad communication, dissemination, and implementation of HIPs. Lane’s Title III Engaging Students program has developed first-year experiences, mandatory orientation and advising, and early warning systems, while increasing the number of learning communities. Lane’s Roadmap project took responsibility for developing the Lane GPS as a means of communicating to students the value of these and many other HIPs.

Lane embraces both AAC&U’s HIPs and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement’s “promising practices for promoting community college student success.” The Lane GPS will identify all of the relevant HIPs for students in a developmental, wrap-around model. Appropriate placement, advising, orientation, academic planning, and interventions, along with student engagement practices such as collaborative assignments, capstones, and learning communities, will all support students’ right to succeed and achieve their academic goals.

GUIDING ACADEMIC PROGRESSION AND DEGREE COMPLETION
The third feature of the Lane GPS model involves improving the underlying mechanisms, tools, and processes that support students’ progress toward their goals. Through the work of the Title III grant, orientation, advising, and academic planning will be mandatory for new students. The Lane GPS Navigation feature will allow students to track their progress in courses and credits toward their degrees and certificates, along with their intellectual journey and curricular and cocurricular HIPs.

The implementation of the web-based tool DegreeWorks will enable students and advisors to evaluate which degree requirements are complete and which requirements remain. The Roadmap Action Plan served as a catalyst for its implementation.

This digital record will chronicle the student’s travel log: from orientation to advising and financial literacy development, from courses to engagement in HIPs, from intentional academic planning and scheduling to achievement of Core Learning Outcomes (CLOs), and from tracking progress to completion. This tracking system and its user’s guide will become the complete Lane GPS, a comprehensive tool to assist students in actualizing their right to succeed at Lane and beyond our open doors.

ROADMAP TEAM AS LEADERS
The Roadmap Team has helped set the stage to deliver on right to succeed promises. The multiple dimensions of the Lane GPS emerge from the core commitments of team members, representing transfer and career-technical programs, student affairs, SAGA, the Title III grant, learning communities, learning assessment and planning, and first-year experiences. Like many nationally engaged community colleges, Lane has undertaken multiple initiatives to support student success, quality progression, and completion. In this busy landscape, the role of the Roadmap project team has been to help connect initiatives through innovation, advocacy, and persistence.

Our team’s broad-based leadership — both high-level decision makers and those whose work and commitment can move the conversation — provides a model of influence (speaking up), rather than new work for the college. We connect individuals and teams toward the aims of the Lane GPS.

TRACKING OUR NEXT STEPS
In a right to succeed culture, it is essential that students be empowered to know where they are at any time in their learning process. The complex maze of college procedures, courses, and degree requirements can be mapped and navigated. Lane’s next steps will be to raise visibility of CLOs and HIPs among faculty, staff, and students. In tagging HIPs and CLOs as guideposts for students’ academic journeys, our GPS can avoid cluttering the student landscape with detours and can mark degree progress in terms of learning, experience, and cumulative credits.

Are we there yet? Our Roadmap vision is helping Lane realize its commitment to students’ right to succeed. Taking our action plan to the next level means pushing our targeted elements outward, developing in-service activities to further our vision, reinforcing connections, and exploring new approaches to our goal: students’ right to succeed through a liberal education approach to learning, empowered by high-impact engagement strategies and encouraged by transparent navigation and support practices. *
“it takes a village” is an overused truism at times, but we find value in using it to describe how our Roadmap to Completion pilot initiative sought to engage the community of Student and Academic Affairs at Miami Dade College (MDC) to support student success. Research has revealed that college students who successfully complete 50 percent or more of the courses required for their program of study within one year are more than twice as likely to earn their degree. It is on this foundation that MDC is building its Student Achievement Initiatives. And it certainly has taken a community of colleagues from all of the college’s internal constituencies to come together for the common purpose of developing academic and student support strategies that substantially increase student completion rates while maintaining access and quality.

Our Roadmap to Completion pilot initiative, part of AAC&U’s Developing a Community College Roadmap project, began two years ago with a look at the college’s inventory of student success practices and interventions, and it sought to identify opportunities where strategic enhancements could possibly lead to greater student achievement. The Roadmap team of faculty and administrators acknowledged the college’s comprehensive intervention efforts in supporting students who were not meeting the institution’s Standards of Academic Progress, since students who are not making satisfactory academic progress are unable to progress in their coursework toward learning and credential completion. As such, the Roadmap pilot team saw an opportunity to complement existing intervention efforts with some additional intrusive steps. MDC’s Roadmap to Completion model strategically connected faculty, students, and student affairs by utilizing the existing academic progress alert system and intrusive advising to address issues that cause barriers to student progress. We defined barriers as both cognitive and noncognitive factors that have the potential to create a delay in the momentum of student progress, thus contributing to the risk of inhibiting credential completion (ACT 2010).

Pre-Pilot State

MDC faculty use a well-established electronic academic progress alert system as a proactive means of keeping students informed of their progress at key points during the term. Faculty have the opportunity to systematically identify the students in each of their courses who are not making satisfactory progress, and these students automatically receive a notification e-mail to that effect. The desired outcome is for students to then exercise initiative and avail themselves of one or more of MDC’s supports—such as faculty office hours, peer-led or online tutoring in the student success center, advising, mentoring, or our Single Stop services which address non-academic life issues such as access to food or medical cash assistance, childcare subsidies, free legal and financial counseling, free tax preparation, and other services. However, the reality with our students proved to be that they did not readily access such services on their own; when not attending classes, they face pressing obligations of work and family to which they must answer.
THE PILOT PHASE
The Roadmap pilot endeavored to optimize the benefit to students provided by the academic alert system by convening the joint efforts of student affairs (advising) and academic affairs (faculty). The Roadmap team convened focus groups (students, faculty, and advisors) to understand whether what had been discovered was correct and to hear from college constituents on how best to move forward with a “proactive” and “intrusive” approach. The idea was to create a more robust and intrusive intervention that not only utilized the academic progress alert system, but was also complementary in inviting student affairs “to the table” to provide intake and advising to students identified as not progressing in a given course.

The Roadmap pilot garnered the participation of faculty who made their entries in the academic progress alert system at the institution’s designated time in the term, which subsequently generated reports that were received by our advisement and career services department for each student who was not making satisfactory progress. The department then used a combination of technology and in-person communications, coupled with advisement and direct referral strategies, to appropriately identify and address the academic deficiencies and life issues experienced by students. The Roadmap pilot was able to address academic and life issues, and also to reinforce the college’s student learning outcomes, by helping students develop an Individualized Education Plan; receive referral for tutoring; engage in service learning, internships, and student organizations; and access a plethora of high-impact support services. This collaborative referral process shows how far academic institutions have come to create purposeful ways and means to dismantle student affairs and academic affairs silos while promoting a culture focused on the mutual mission of student learning and success.

NARRATIVES SPEAK VOLUMES
Post facto, it was also a meaningful exercise when the Roadmap team sought to glean the perspectives of academic affairs, student affairs, and students about the efficacy of integrating efforts in delivering particular interventions. One social work major indicated, “In regards to advisors and faculty working together, when my professors give me a progress report, my advisor sits with me to discuss it. This helped me by getting me the tutoring I needed.”

Professor Sarah Garman, senior faculty in developmental education, commented, “It can ‘take a village’ to help a student, and these alerts allow everyone to communicate easily and effectively.”

Lourdes Delgado, director of advisement and career services added, “These relationships between faculty and advisors allow for a more seamless and meaningful advising experience for our students, which subsequently contributes to greater academic achievement.”

REINFORCEMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
In the coming years, the Roadmap project at MDC will continue to focus on intrusive advising and early interventions, with special attention paid to the integration of student learning outcomes (SLOs). Building on a college-wide mandate to refine and assess learning, each student services area has selected two of the general education SLOs on which to focus with intentional learning activities. The effects of this work will be measured with a pre- and post-assessment that gauges the competency of each student in these specific SLOs. Students will complete the assessment prior to their required individualized education planning session that takes place by the fourth week of the term. The two SLOs of focus for MDC’s advisement and career services department are “Solve problems using critical and creative thinking and scientific reasoning” and “Formulate strategies to locate, evaluate and apply information.”

Future plans also include the development of a reflective writing exercise to engage students in thinking about their purpose for attending college and what they plan to accomplish. During advising sessions, advisors would then refer to the piece and its alignment with a student’s accomplishments at various points during that student’s tenure at the college.

LESSONS LEARNED
The lessons learned from the first three years of the Roadmap pilot initiative are meaningful in understanding the power of “the village” that makes student success possible. Confirmed very clearly is that both faculty and students see great value in the integration of their respective expertise in support of students. Students feel validated when there is an intrusive effort on the part of faculty and student services, collectively and in partnership, to address student achievement. Faculty are adamant about the merits of an alert system, and given that they are the primary users of such a system, they have valid recommendations to be considered. The Roadmap team acknowledges that for initiatives to flourish at any institution, there must be “buy-in” from all constituent groups, at all levels. In that particular regard, the support and cooperation the team received at Miami Dade College was most welcome. All roads lead to the continuation of a robust Roadmap initiative, so stay tuned for future updates.

REFERENCES
In late summer 2010, Middlesex Community College (MCC), one of the largest community colleges in Massachusetts, was named as a leadership institution for AAC&U’s Developing a Community College Roadmap project, and we launched our efforts to expand and connect two college initiatives designed to increase student engagement and learning. One of these initiatives, a Title III grant program targeting first-year students, used intrusive advising and a revised curriculum to engage students in the development of Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLOs)—in particular, the outcome for personal and professional development. The other initiative, emerging from our recently revised strategic plan, was general education (GE) revision work with a strong emphasis on “evidence-based practices.” This revision work drew on annual ISLO assessment evidence collected over four years that had made clear that “one course does not a writer (or a critical thinker or a socially responsible person) make.” In response, we were replacing our then current distribution system of individual course “intensives” with a GE curriculum that provided students with “ample and sufficient” opportunities to practice and receive feedback on their development of our ISLOs.

This GE revision became the foundation for our Roadmap project. As they redesigned their courses for GE designation, MCC faculty sought professional development support to help them design assessments and modify learning experiences that supported and assessed our ISLOs in contextually relevant ways. The resources and network of collaboration of the Roadmap project would help us to move our work forward.

In 2011, we sent a team to the AAC&U Summer Institute on High-Impact Practices and Student Success to begin work on a model for professional development that would support the integration and assessment of our most effective ISLO, personal and professional development. The team, inspired by institute presentations and discussions, returned to campus with the design for a freshman seminar that would link with GE courses as learning communities, providing students with authentic opportunities to think metacognitively while building competency with one or more ISLOs. These freshman seminar learning communities would provide us baseline evidence of student competency with our ISLOs, and students’ e-portfolios would complement that evidence with formative qualitative narratives that would help us better understand how our students were learning.

**LEVERAGING MULTIPLE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

While our Roadmap team worked to build consensus for the development of a freshman seminar that summer, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts put out an RFP for Performance Incentive Fund opportunities to advance the state’s Vision Project goals. MCC submitted a proposal that included the development of one-credit freshman seminars (first-year experience courses—FYE) linked to GE courses as learning communities, using the Roadmap team’s freshman seminar model. Our proposal was funded, providing us with adequate support for the development of a full-scale freshman seminar. This additional source of funding allowed us to redesign our Roadmap project to focus on the use of e-portfolios in freshman seminars.

---

**Helping Community College Students “Connect the Dots” of their College Experience with E-Portfolios**

*Elise Martin, dean of assessment, Middlesex Community College*
LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR STUDENT E-PORTFOLIOS AT MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The Roadmap team decided to use the pilot year of FYE implementation to lay the foundation for an e-portfolio culture at MCC, so that eventual e-portfolio creation in FYE classes would create an entry point for MCC students’ e-portfolio use that would be built upon during the remainder of students’ college years.

During this year of culture-building, we sought and received valuable support from two of our fellow Roadmap institutions already using e-portfolios. Using Roadmap project funds, we invited presenters from Queensborough Community College and Salt Lake Community College to MCC to share with our college community ways in which they were using e-portfolios to enhance and assess student learning.

Additional culture-building work during this year included multiple information sessions offered by the Roadmap team to the larger college community. We shared ideas, practices, and examples from other institutions, and we facilitated dialogue on the topic of student e-portfolio use. Using an informational, community-building model, we held “listening sessions” where we encouraged discussion of likely obstacles and drawbacks to this new pedagogy, as well as exploration of the possibilities for increasing students’ engagement with their learning, their metacognition, and their ability to make interdisciplinary connections between what might currently be perceived as disparate learning experiences on and off campus.

E-PORTFOLIOS FOR LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

An e-portfolio culture enables students to proudly represent and reflect upon their learning publicly, but it requires e-portfolios to function as tools for increasing student learning and engagement first and foremost, while secondarily serving institutional assessment needs. Early in this work, our team identified this prioritization, articulating our belief that only if the tool was determined to be valuable for the former purpose could it ever be used authentically for the latter purpose. This mirrors our philosophy for student learning assessment. We believe that keeping assessment work focused on the learning yields useful, authentic assessment results that faculty and staff care about and use as part of a feedback loop to improve their students’ learning.

E-PORTFOLIO FACULTY FELLOWS

During our year of culture-building, two faculty emerged as potential “cheerleaders” for student e-portfolio use, leading us to create two stipended e-portfolio faculty fellow positions, with distinct areas of focus—one for FYE and linked GE courses, and one for e-portfolios in career programs. We intend for students to create their e-portfolios as first-year students, affirming their new status as college students, and then add to them over time, validating for themselves and for others their personal, academic and professional growth while in college.

Some career programs had models for e-portfolio use in mind, based on their current use of “hard copy” student portfolios. Others built templates from scratch. What was particularly interesting about the actual implementation of these e-portfolio models in career programs was that many students adapted the faculty-developed templates as they built their own e-portfolios, making use of the web-based environment they are often quite familiar with. In these instances, the technology, put in the hands of student users, appeared to be driving curricular change.

In fall 2012, we launched our e-portfolio pilot, with our “early adopters” from FYE courses and the business, criminal justice, dental hygiene, and hospitality management programs, supported by peer tutors recruited from our peer tutoring program. In all, approximately 150 students built e-portfolios during this pilot semester as part of their coursework. At the end of the semester, students were encouraged to submit their e-portfolios to our first annual MCC E-portfolio Showcase, judged by faculty, staff, and student tutors as well as two faculty from Salt Lake. Seven student e-portfolios were selected as winners, and they were highlighted on the MCC Pinterest site. We are recruiting these student winners to serve as next year’s peer tutors, using their winning e-portfolios as models and examples for future students.

SCALING UP

During our fall 2012 pilot semester, our e-portfolio faculty fellows continued their outreach to FYE and GE faculty and career programs, as well as to student affairs staff. We have new pilots planned for 2013 in many areas. We are also working closely with our service learning area to develop a service learning e-portfolio template that will capture and enhance those student learning experiences while also providing our service learning partners with web-based insight into the impact that these experiences have on students. This focus on cocurricular learning is a priority for us, as we believe that student use of e-portfolios to make connections between and among learning experiences, related to institutional and programmatic learning outcomes, will foster integrative learning. Connecting these varied learning experiences will provide students with multimodal representations of the various ways in which they experience and develop competency with learning outcomes across and beyond their college experiences, thus creating model roadmaps for new students at MCC.

REFERENCE

The Mt. San Antonio College (Mt. SAC) Roadmap project is a virtual and interactive web-based tool for students, providing them with information on applying to college, financial aid, tutoring, and other student services, as well as information regarding degrees, certificates, and transfer. The Roadmap team at Mt. SAC consists of a diverse, cross-divisional group committed to creating an effective tool to improve overall satisfaction and success for our students. Drawing from Instructional Services, Research and Institutional Effectiveness, Career and Transfer Services, and both counseling and instructional faculty, the team has experience in classroom teaching, curriculum development, research, planning, student support services, and the development of measurable and meaningful learning outcomes. The dynamics of the team members provide the necessary knowledge and understanding of the campus and its processes to give students with varied educational goals and backgrounds a single source of information needed to successfully navigate a complex educational system of higher education.

The website that students can access has a background of the map of the campus. In the foreground are Mt. SAC students who are connected to the various components of each pathway: Get Started, Get Help, Get Tutoring, Get Involved, Get a Plan, and Get Going (see fig. 1). The Roadmap is not intended to be linear. The team expects students to come and go, and even return to various parts of the map many times. Instead, the site is a compilation of all of the various programs and services on campus that students should know about to have a successful experience at the college. For example, the Get Started pathway includes Apply to Mt. SAC, Apply for Financial Aid, Get Assessed, and Get Counseling.

After developing the prototype, the team presented to two student focus groups for feedback. The first group consisted of a career and technical education class in computer graphics. Since the Roadmap is presented in an electronic format, the team felt that these students could provide valuable input regarding the design. The Roadmap team developed a series of questions to ask the students, and the research yielded useful qualitative suggestions for improvement. The second student focus group consisted of first-time Mt. SAC students in one of the college’s summer learning communities. The goal in targeting these students was to determine how useful they thought the Roadmap would be as they began their educational
endeavors. The same set of questions was used with this student focus group, and additional ideas for improvement emerged. Based on the suggestions made by the focus groups, the team is working with designers to modify and refine the Roadmap. The team will use continue to use student input, and it should not be overlooked as a source of data for designing student pathways.

The initial concept of the Roadmap was presented to the information technology staff to determine the feasibility of placing the Roadmap on the college’s web page and in the student portal. The project proposal was also presented to the Basic Skills Coordinating Committee, the Student Preparation and Success Council, the Educational Master Planning Group, and the Academic Senate on campus to obtain campus-wide buy-in. Last semester, a member of the Roadmap Team presented the concept to the Counseling Department, which expressed great support in the concept and an interest in providing additional input. A presentation will be made to the college’s board of trustees during the spring 2013 semester.

The Roadmap Project aligns locally with the recent recommendations from the California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force, which focus on career readiness, strengthening student support, improving education of basic skills students, and aligning course offerings to meet the needs of students. When students gather important information from a pathway, they will be able to access resources and make better decisions about their educational goals.

The Roadmap also supports the college’s Educational Master Plan, which includes as goals on preparing students for success, using technology to enhance educational services, and ensuring that curricular, articulation, and counseling efforts are aligned to maximize successful university transfer. The Roadmap clearly identifies programs that students may want to be involved in that will increase their academic success, while also providing them with information regarding curriculum, articulation, counseling, student services, and transfer. It is a prime example of the power of technology to enhance the overall educational experience for students.

The Roadmap is not intended to be linear. The team expects students to come and go, and even return to various parts of the map many times.

The Roadmap Team created a way to measure the impact of the college’s work on students using the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics. For example, the Lifelong Learning VALUE Rubric will be used in numerous sections of the Roadmap to assess students’ progress. The Get Started and Get Help sections of the Roadmap align well with the Independence component of this rubric. The assessment process will allow for numerous assessment points over the course of students’ time at the college. The Roadmap also aligns well with the college’s release of an online degree audit system (DegreeWorks) that students can use to check their progress toward their goal of earning a certificate, an associate’s degree, or transfer.

When the Roadmap is ready to launch, the college plans to make it accessible to the students and staff through various vehicles. Mt. SAC has established communication avenues with the local high schools through our high school outreach program. When the outreach staff visit the high schools, the Roadmap can be a part of the new student orientation sessions, so that students can access valuable information about getting started at Mt. SAC. Also, various academic programs of study, especially in the career and technical education area, have mandatory orientations designed for their cohorts of students. The Roadmap can also be a part of these orientations. The Roadmap will also be marketed to the associated students and student organizations and clubs. Eventually, the Roadmap team plans to offer staff development sessions to inform interested faculty and staff about the Roadmap project so that the information can be disseminated by faculty in their classes, especially in the first weeks of the semester.

In the process of designing and implementing the Roadmap, three significant lessons have emerged. First, the diversity of the Roadmap team has been important for creating an integrated product that will be valuable to our students, although working across professional responsibility boundaries has proved to be complex and time consuming. Second, student input and feedback using focus groups has been invaluable to the project’s success, and it will inform future developments as well. Third, the campus-wide communication planning has been essential to foster a collective understanding of the uses and benefits of the Roadmap. With the support developed through these strategies, the Roadmap team at Mt. SAC believes that the Roadmap to Student Success will not only be a tool that students enjoy using, but a tool that will lead them to the successful completion of their academic goals.
General Education: Charting a Roadmap toward Student Success

- Sharon N. Robertson, associate vice president for academic services, Northern Virginia Community College

Is this really a general education course? What criteria do we use to decide? At Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA), we have been wrestling with these and other questions about general education for many years. NOVA defines general education as that part of the NOVA experience, unbounded by disciplines, that honors the connections among bodies of knowledge. Degree graduates are expected to meet specific outcomes in communication, critical thinking, cultural and social understanding, information literacy, personal development, quantitative reasoning, and scientific reasoning.

NOVA participated in AAC&U’s Developing a Community College Roadmap project to refine the process for identifying and approving courses that can be used to meet students’ general education requirements. This refined process helps faculty map courses to specific general education outcomes as they design new programs. This, in turn, helps ensure student success in learning by leading us to update courses, improve advising, and make sure our curricula reliably incorporate each general education outcome.

Our Roadmap team worked with colleagues on NOVA’s Council for General Education to review more than 200 courses that had been approved as general education courses in the humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and laboratory sciences/mathematics categories. The council split into three groups so that reviewers of any given set of courses did not teach in that category of general education. Reviewers compared the content summary for each course—which lists student learning outcomes and required topics—with a matrix listing all thirty-six of the general education outcomes NOVA expects of its degree graduates.

As we conducted our review, new questions arose. Can general education courses have prerequisites? We decided they could. How many general education goal areas or competencies must a course address in order to be considered a general education course? We decided that each course must address at least one goal area, but preferably more. At what level must a course address the general education goals and competencies? We agreed on three principles: introduction, practice, and mastery. In other words, each course must introduce some general education competencies, provide practice for some competencies, and help students master some competencies.

After defining the criteria for the general education designation, we carefully examined each currently identified general education course and made one of three recommendations: (1) continue to approve the course as a general education course, (2) restructure the course, if necessary, and modify the content summary to more clearly show that it is a general education course, or (3) remove it from the list of approved general education courses (see fig. 1).
Our recommendations were shared with faculty in the affected disciplines, who were given time to respond by making the requested modifications or, in a few cases, developing missing content summaries. Council members served as resources to the faculty who chose to develop course summaries that clearly showed how their courses address general education outcomes.

After several months, recommendations to remove courses that did not meet the criteria from the list of approved general education electives were authorized by the college curriculum committee and executive leadership.

This process resulted in greatly improved course content summaries that explicitly link general education courses to specific general education goals and outcomes, thereby clarifying the student pathways through general education. In general, the faculty agreed with the council’s assessments of their courses and embraced the summary revision process.

The catalog and the degree audit programming were updated to reflect these changes. Workshops provided advisors with the new information.

In addition, this close examination of general education led the college to develop a new category of general education elective that would prove to be useful for success in transfer. Labeled “other” general education courses, the category will include courses that meet the core general education requirement of addressing the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values characteristic of educated persons, but that do not meet the specific disciplinary criteria to qualify as humanities, social science or math/science courses. As a practical matter, these courses will have to transfer readily. Examples would include painting I, beginning Spanish, and applied music courses. The information will be included in the college catalog where it will help students and their advisors select general education electives that do not need to fall into a particular category. By identifying “other” transferable general education courses, we can revise transfer curricula to include general education electives rather than general electives. Student success, especially in terms of transfer preparation, is enhanced by this improved advising.

The new process provides much-needed clarity about how to define a “general education course” and how to map such courses to general education goals and outcomes. As a result of the project, we now have a new protocol for approving general education courses, with student learning at the center.

Faculty who are seeking the general education designation for new courses must map the course content to the General Education Goal Matrix to substantiate the claim.

We are taking every opportunity to communicate general education roadmaps to faculty, counselors, and students. Our programs are all entered into our student information system, so students already can use the “what if” function to explore the use of various courses to complete their degrees.

Additionally, we are seeking ways to help students select the very best courses for their particular employment or transfer plans. We continue to conduct workshops to help faculty advise students about general education. Over the summer, dozens of faculty who had participated in special training served as advisors to hundreds of students, assisting them with their general education choices. To see if all of this training had been effective, we reviewed the thousands of course substitution requests submitted by students over the past four years. It was clear that advisors and their deans are making far more appropriate recommendations now in all areas of general education than they did four years ago.

Through its participation in the Roadmap project, NOVA improved its standards for general education courses, developed ways to map these courses to general education outcomes, and revised its curricula to take advantage of our deeper understanding of general education. As a result, a clear general education roadmap for our students has emerged. Now, we can confidently say NOVA helps steer its students through a comprehensive and well-defined general education experience, providing a critical stepping stone on the road to success.

![Figure 1](image.png)

**Figure 1. The NOVA Council for General Education’s GE Course Recommendations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Education Category</th>
<th>Number of Courses Reviewed</th>
<th>Number of Course Summaries Revised</th>
<th>Number of Courses Removed from List of General Education Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanities/Fine Arts</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social/Behavioral Sciences</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science/Mathematics</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building the Road to Success for Students at Prince George’s Community College

Prince George’s Community College (PGCC) has a long tradition of offering students robust support services and programs to assist them on their journey towards graduation, including multiple mentoring programs, tutoring services, collegian centers, and student clubs. However, recent data from the 2010 Community College Survey of Student Engagement yielded two critical discoveries: (1) while these programs and services greatly assist the students who use them, many of them are being underutilized, and (2) students are often confused and frustrated by what they perceive to be a complex and bewildering web of pathways and services. Students are not sure what programs/services to make use of and when in their academic journey to use them. McClenney and Arnsparger (2012) provide evidence that this is a national problem; indeed, community college students nationwide often find themselves lost and confused on the path to graduation.

As part of Envision Success, the college’s completion agenda, the PGCC Roadmap Team found that the college had to take steps to clarify the road to graduation for students by assisting them in making sound choices and approaching their academic journey in a strategic manner. To achieve this goal, the team began work on three projects in 2010: creating a literal map for students that outlines the pathway to graduation, assisting in the dissemination of newly created course sequences, and creating icons to represent the college’s general education outcomes, which we call Student Core Competencies.

The PGCC Roadmap team began the process of clarifying the road to graduation by holding lengthy team discussions about the range of services currently being offered at the college. The team went on to determine a list of services it considered essential to students at various stages of their journey toward graduation. We then began work on creating a literal map for students that would identify a directed pathway toward graduation and the “stops” they needed to make along the way (fig. 1). The map includes stops at critical junctures on the road to completion: entry, fifteen credits completed, thirty credits completed, forty-five credits completed, and graduation. At each stop, the map directs students to engage in specific tasks, use specific services, or join a particular program. For example, at “entry,” the map directs students to attend orientation and see an advisor.

In an effort to ensure that students are fully informed about the support services and programs recommended at each stop, the back of the map provides a brief description of each stop, including contact information for the appropriate services and programs. The description of each stop contains a corresponding quick response code, which a student can scan with a mobile device to visit the appropriate website for that stop.

The Roadmap team also recognized that students who must enroll in developmental courses face a particularly difficult road to graduation. Thus, an additional path was added for these students. This path directs student to visit the Marlboro Learning Lab, which provides them with extra assistance in developmental reading, writing, and mathematics as...
well as workshops on study habits and other topics beneficial to these students. Also, the path directs students to meet with an advisor every semester regardless of the number of hours they have completed.

While creating the map, the Roadmap team realized that many of the available services and programs identified for each stop would be more effective if they were mandatory for students. While students are strongly recommended to participate in the services, activities, and programs listed at the stops, student orientation is the only program that is currently required. The Roadmap Team is now working on a plan to measure which of the services and programs students are using and their impact on student success. If data reveal that a particular service or program contributes significantly to student success, the team will work to build support for it to be made mandatory.

While the Roadmap team was creating the map to graduation, the college was engaged in a massive overhaul of its assessment process, which involved a comprehensive curriculum mapping process. As part of this process, faculty created a four-semester sequence of recommended courses for each of the college’s programs and certificates. These sequences greatly assisted the departments in aligning their course and program outcomes and in reexamining course prerequisites.

The Roadmap team quickly recognized that these sequences would also be an invaluable tool for students. Before the creation of the sequences, students were provided with a traditional list of course requirements for each program and certificate. While the lists provided all of the necessary program and certificate requirements, many students found them to be overwhelming and not particularly helpful for planning; they neither provided recommendations about the order in which courses should be taken, nor about the general education courses that would best complement a particular course of study.

The Roadmap team’s initial recommendation was to use these sequences as course planning sheets during advising sessions and to distribute them widely to students. However, in the past year, the use and visibility of the sequences have been greatly
expanded. Instead of using the sequences just as paper planning sheets, they are currently being programmed into the college’s online registration system to direct students to specific courses during the registration process. Also, they will be included in the college’s new “student friendly” catalog, which will be produced in fall 2013. Ultimately, PGCC students will no longer see a long list of course requirements when considering a program of study; instead, they will be provided with a concrete two-year plan for completing the program that reflects the clearest path to completion.

Finally, the Roadmap team received data from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement that suggested that PGCC students did not recognize nor understand the benefit of the college’s core competencies: the set of general education outcomes that are infused into courses across all programs to prepare students for further study and the workforce. To address this problem, the Roadmap team developed icons that will be used to brand each of the six competency areas—communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical reasoning, information literacy, culture, and ethics.

In branding the college’s learning outcomes, the team hopes to help students understand that the different courses they take and the services of which they avail themselves all contribute to the creation of a set of primary knowledge, skills, and values.

The icons will be used in multiple ways. To begin to familiarize the students with the icons, an explanation of each icon will be included in the fall 2013 catalog, and the icons will be displayed on posters throughout campus that highlight the core competencies the college is working to instill in each student. In addition, the icons will be used across campus to identify the specific competency area in which learning is occurring. For example, they may be used in marketing materials for extracurricular activities and workshops that foster specific competencies and skills, as well as in the signs that identify tutoring service locations and learning areas. Finally, beginning in fall 2013, each student who completes a targeted part of the Owl Success Track program will receive a T-shirt featuring the icon that corresponds to his or her main area of strength, as identified by the test.

The overall goal of the branding campaign is to help students better understand why multiple courses and programs are all requiring students to read, write, think critically, and engage in discussions about ethics. One of the most valuable by-products of working on these three endeavors has been the creation of strengthened connections and better communication between various areas on campus. In recent years, PGCC, like many other schools, has begun a concerted effort to battle the “silo effect” that is so prevalent in higher education. The Roadmap team, which is made up of personnel from academic affairs, administrative services, and student services, has contributed greatly to breaking down existing silos. Each member of the team brings different insights, knowledge, and expertise to the project, enabling the team more effectively to identify duplicative services, to create projects that reflect the strengths and interests of the various areas on campus, and to understand the ways in which each area contributes to the common goal of student success.

In the end, the goal of the Roadmap project at PGCC is to reconstruct the roadway to completion so that students can take the fast lane to graduation. Through this work, the team has not only helped to clarify the path to success for students, it has increased the college community’s understanding of the important contributions being made to learning across campus.

REFERENCE

AAC&U MEETINGS

NETWORK MEETINGS

GLOBAL LEARNING IN COLLEGE: Asking Big Questions, Engaging Urgent Challenges
October 3–5, 2013
Providence, Rhode Island

TRANSFORMING STEM EDUCATION: Inquiry, Innovation, Inclusion, and Evidence
October 31–November 2, 2013
San Diego, California

GENERAL EDUCATION AND ASSESSMENT
February 27–March 1, 2014
Portland, Oregon

STUDENT SUCCESS
March 27–29, 2014
Chicago, Illinois

ANNUAL MEETING
QUALITY, E-QUALITY, AND OPPORTUNITY
How Educational Innovations Will Make—or Break—America’s Global Future
January 22–25, 2014
Washington, DC

www.aacu.org/meetings

22 AAC&U | PEER REVIEW | SPRING 2013
Queensborough Community College, located in Bayside, Queens, is one of six community colleges in the twenty-three-institution City University of New York system. Queensborough has pioneered a freshman academies initiative that provides enhanced academic and student support for all first-time, full-time students. This flagship initiative led to Queensborough being named one of the twelve leadership institutions in AAC&U’s Developing a Community College Roadmap project. The Freshman Academies initiative was designed with an assessment protocol, which, since the program’s launch in fall 2009, has in turn provided a roadmap for the college community to better understand how the elements of the initiative are working. Through this assessment, Queensborough reports improved retention and graduation rates, and it can also identify the most impactful interventions. The protocol has also become a tool of reflection for the college.

All first-time, full-time students enter Queensborough into one of six academies based on field of major interest. They receive enhanced orientation and advisement from Freshman Coordinators (“relationship guides” who provide support throughout the first two semesters), and they take an Introduction to College Life class. Also, within the first thirty credits, all first-time, full-time students are enrolled into at least two courses identified as providing high-impact practices (HIPs). These experiences include service learning, e-portfolio use, writing-intensive components, learning communities, and first-year experiences. Queensborough aims to infuse the common threads of reflection, interdisciplinary collaboration, and active learning throughout these practices, and it also provides social learning in its extensive and innovative use of cohorts through face-to-face and online collaborations. E-portfolios serve as vehicles to deliver these practices at entrance to the college and throughout a student’s academic career. Faculty coordinators assess HIPs in multi-disciplinary faculty cohorts using rubrics which align with the college’s ten general education objectives. Faculty Coordinators also collaborate with the Freshman Coordinators to design cocurricular...
experiences which align with course and program objectives.

To connect the strands of the freshman academies, Queensborough hired an outside consultant, Derek Price of DVP Praxis LTD, to create the Freshman Academies Assessment Protocol. The protocol serves multiple functions. It sets expectations of how various aspects of the Freshman Academies initiative—primarily the Freshman Coordinators and the use of HIPs—should inform change. It specifies the kinds of beneficial changes that should occur, such as increased faculty and student engagement, increased course success rates, and increased retention and graduation rates. The protocol also defines the ways that research on the academies is to be carried out by specifying data collection methods, such as surveys and focus groups. An important characteristic of the protocol is that it states outcome expectations in very general terms, giving the college the flexibility to specify the details. For example, the Protocol expects that Freshman Academy students will perform better in gateway courses, and the College determines which courses are considered gateway. The employment of an outside consultant provided important advantages, providing an external perspective, freedom within the design process, dedicated time to the task, and expertise in the area of research design. Queensborough chose the fall 2006 cohort as a baseline group with which to compare the cohort of first-time, full-time students who entered the academies in fall 2009, the first year of the initiative. Measures of success, such as course pass rates and retention, have been compared between the baseline fall 2006 cohort and the fall 2009 academy cohort.

The college applied for and received Institutional Research Board approval for the protocol-specified methods of data collection, which was beneficial in multiple ways. It helped to focus those involved in the research process to carefully consider ways to ensure that human subjects would not be harmed. More broadly, it permitted the college to designate the findings within the definition of “research,” and thus it allowed for publication of its results. It also brought into the process a skilled, external group to critique aspects of the research, enabling further refinement of the research plan.

The Freshman Academies Assessment Protocol has been used since fall 2009 to guide the collection and analysis of research data. In addition to providing evidence that the Freshman Academies initiative is associated with benefits to our students, the results have pinpointed which HIPs have been most effective. In certain courses it has revealed where particular practices work best. This feedback from the research findings has led to a continuous improvement process. Queensborough has therefore been able to focus its resources and expand those practices which encourage higher pass rates in gateway courses.

When looking at the effectiveness of HIPs, all students enrolled for a particular course are observed. A comparison is made of pass rates and retention rates between students who are in course sections with and without HIPs. There is a separate analysis for remedial and nonremedial students. According to the Freshman Academies Assessment Protocol, it is expected that the effects of the Freshman Coordinators and HIPs, all in concert, would result in higher retention rates across the academy cohorts.

Retention rates for the fall 2006 baseline group of first-time, full-time freshmen, enrolled before the academies, were used to make comparisons to the cohorts of freshmen who were enrolled within the academies. Half-year and one-year retention rates were found to be higher in the initial cohort of freshmen in the academies than the baseline comparison group. The baseline group of freshmen from fall 2006 had a 65.8 percent one-year retention rate while the fall 2009 Academy cohort had a one-year retention rate of 71.5 percent. The second academy cohort likewise showed high retention rates, with a 72.1 percent one-year rate. Two very important outcomes arose from the findings of the protocol. The most important expected long-term outcome for Queensborough students was increased retention and graduation rates. After three years, Queensborough has data on its three-year graduation rate, which suggests that this initiative has made a difference (see fig. 1.).

The other important finding is that the protocol itself needs to be a constantly evolving and revisited document. Undergoing the very process of continuous assessment through findings of the protocol has led the college to form the academies review taskforce. The Freshman Academies Protocol, the data it produces, and the processes it enacts inform our understanding of the Queensborough student experience, leading to improved, evidence-based decision making.

### FIGURE 1. DATA ON QUEENSBOROUGH’S THREE-YEAR GRADUATION RATE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COHORT</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS</th>
<th>NUMBER GRADUATING</th>
<th>THREE-YEAR GRAD. RATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2006 Comparison Cohort</td>
<td>2,051</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2009 Academy Cohort</td>
<td>3,226</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
E-Portfolios in Student Roadmaps at Salt Lake Community College

▶ David Hubert, professor of political science and e-portfolio director, Salt Lake Community College

At Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) approximately 60 percent of incoming students place into developmental math. Too often, these students are consigned to a slow-start to higher education, when they need a jump-start instead. When designing our SLCC project as part of AAC&U’s Developing a Community College Student Roadmap project, we wanted to make sure that our intervention with students would serve them as much in their general education and major coursework as it did in developmental math. To this end, we took two existing initiatives that apply to all students—a college success course and our general education e-portfolio—and combined them with a new initiative in developmental math, and we tied all three efforts together so they would have the greatest impact on our students.

Our Roadmap initiative takes students who often languish in developmental math courses and gives them the opportunity to accelerate their learning in a high-touch classroom environment. At the same time, they enroll in a college studies course that helps them with note-taking, study habits, time management, academic habits of mind, and reflective pedagogy—while also giving them a solid introduction to learning outcomes and the e-portfolio that they will use in all of their future general education courses.

Students placing into developmental math now have the option to enroll in the Math Emporium instead of taking the traditional sequence of precollege math courses. The Emporium combines lectures with self-paced work in a computerized math lab under the tutelage of faculty and lab aides. We started the Math Emporium with 225 students in spring 2012; it has since grown to 522 students in spring 2013. Our initial data from spring and fall 2012 indicate that over 60 percent of the students who enrolled in the modularized curriculum of the Math Emporium made adequate progress, and that between ten percent (spring) and five percent (fall) of those students passed completely through developmental math in one semester and were prepared for their first college-level math course. We will continue to track all Emporium students and compare their progress with those who took traditional developmental math courses.

SLCC has long had a college success course—EDU 1020 Essentials of College Study—open to all students. We knew from ten years of internal analysis that students who scored in the lowest quartile on our placement exams but passed EDU 1020 within their first three semesters at SLCC had higher GPAs and an increased probability of graduating compared to students with similar test scores who did not take EDU 1020. With statistically significant results like these, we did not hesitate to make Essentials of College Study a corequisite for students opting to take the Math Emporium.
Introduced in the summer 2010, SLCC’s e-portfolio initiative requires students to create an e-portfolio and use it in all of their general education courses. Faculty who teach general education identify one or more “signature assignments” from their courses—assignments other than quizzes or tests that address two or more of our general education learning outcomes—and ask students to put them in the e-portfolio along with reflection about the assignment or about the course.

We intend a student’s e-portfolio to serve him or her as a multifaceted educational compass. The portfolio is divided into several sections that allow students to map personal priorities with essential learning outcomes, as well as to catalog their work in both curricular and cocurricular settings. When students have evidence in their Coursework and Outside the Classroom pages, they can then link those artifacts to the general education learning outcomes on their Goals and Outcomes page. This sort of educational orienteering affords students a chance to make better sense of our general education program and act intentionally to achieve its outcomes. The e-portfolio also requires students to map their unique path through our general education requirements. Reflection plays a key role in this mapping.

For each course represented in the e-portfolio, we want students to take a step back and reflect, putting their work in broader personal or intellectual contexts. We want them to make connections between their work in one course and work they might have done in other courses. We want them to think about the process they went through in completing their assignments, or perhaps interrogate their own thinking before and after the assignment. Faculty design prompts to elicit these kinds of deep reflection. This aspect of the e-portfolio represents a big learning curve for our faculty and our students, but we’re making progress.

Reflection can produce a different kind of roadmap for students—a map of their intellectual journey, informed by metacognition, the interconnection of knowledge, and the relevance of essential learning outcomes. Moreover, this roadmap is one that students create for themselves, albeit mediated by the reflection prompts they encounter in each general education course. They can make meaningful sense of their learning while they are still in school, rather than having to wait years for a retrospective look.

Let’s look at a typical example of meaning-making in one student’s e-portfolio. Danielle “Dani” Wikinsgton recently won a scholarship for using her e-portfolio to demonstrate her excellence. In her e-portfolio she wrote the following:

Everything I was taught in this class made me understand why a lot of things happened during my time in Japan: the mistakes I made, my cultural misinterpretations, my ethnocentrism, but also my triumphs and accomplishments.

When reading this, one can see that Dani is acting as her own educational navigator—she is claiming an education rather than simply receiving one. As Bain put it, metacognition “allows people to engage in a valuable conversation with themselves, exploring their background, questioning and correcting their thinking in process, and pursuing the dynamic power of their minds” (2012, 24).

Can all students make the kinds of intellectual moves that Dani has demonstrated? I think they can, in their own ways and in their own voices. Drawing upon their unique curricular and extracurricular activities—backed up by the lives they’ve led before they walk in our doors—students have demonstrated a remarkable ability to make connections and give voice to their learning through their e-portfolios.

Colleges and universities need to give students opportunities to make those connections. At SLCC, we’re trying to use the Roadmap initiative to create a solid foundation for our students who come to us unprepared in math. Rather than focus just on math, however, we see our initiative as a way to prepare them for the road ahead. A math foundation, knowledge of how to be a successful student, and an e-portfolio to collect and reflect upon curricular and cocurricular work comprise the trifecta of student success at SLCC.

REFERENCE
Assessment of General Education: Adapting the AAC&U Value Rubrics

Kellie C. Sorey, associate vice president for academic effectiveness, Tidewater Community College
Daniel T. DeMarte, vice president for academic affairs/chief academic officer, Tidewater Community College

In 2006, the State Board for Community Colleges, the governing body of the Virginia Community College System, approved seven general education competency areas: communication (oral and written), information literacy, critical thinking, cultural and social understanding, personal development, quantitative reasoning, and scientific reasoning. General education competencies apply to all graduates in both transfer and career and technical degree programs. As a result of being selected by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) as a participant in its Developing a Community College Student Roadmap project, Tidewater Community College (TCC) has made it a priority to assess student learning across the seven general education competency areas.

Historically, the assessment process has neither adequately engaged TCC faculty nor yielded sufficient results to improve student learning. As a result, faculty have not taken ownership of the assessment process and student success has not been fully realized. Despite minimal engagement in previous years, the majority of TCC’s faculty would likely agree that developing student competencies is a goal of their curricula and disciplines. The faculty of institutions where our students transfer and employers should expect that our students will arrive at their classrooms competent in these areas.

TCC’s assessment initiative took significant shape in fall 2012 when a five-year assessment plan was drafted, with the first year planned as a pilot. The college has learned many lessons during this short period and is pleased to be making tangible progress. Involvement from key stakeholders, particularly teaching faculty, has grown significantly and general education assessment is gaining momentum in terms of perceived importance.

ASSESSMENT PLAN AND METHODS
The following outlines the college’s activities and steps in the assessment planning and implementation process.

1. Faculty developed an official course outline for each credit course offered by the college that included elements such as the course description, prerequisites and corequisites, the general education core competencies supported by the course, measurable learning outcomes, and methods of assessment.

2. A web-based curriculum portal was developed and implemented. The portal houses all official curriculum materials for review and use by faculty, staff, administrators, students, and the public, including course outlines, curriculum guides that outline all certificate and degree curriculum requirements, syllabus templates that populate required course outline elements, and general education assessment information (e.g., TCC-adapted VALUE rubrics, the assessment plan, and timeline).

3. At TCC’s 2012 Learning Institute, faculty were encouraged to engage in conversations about the general education requirements and intended learning outcomes. They were reminded that the learning outcomes had to be incorporated in all curricula and disciplines college-wide. At this day-long event, the AAC&U VALUE rubrics were introduced to nearly 200 faculty in attendance. Faculty also adapted VALUE rubrics for written communication, information literacy, and quantitative reasoning for use during the pilot.

4. Fifteen faculty members were recruited to serve as assessment coaches. Assessment coaches are charged with educating faculty in their disciplines and those of related disciplines about the college’s assessment initiative, getting faculty involved in the process, sharing assessment findings, and helping faculty...
develop classroom assignments and projects that promote student learning.

5. In fall 2012, a five-year assessment plan was drafted, shared with faculty at a convocation, reviewed by existing governance committees under the leadership of the Instruction Committee, and approved. At a follow-up Learning Institute in October, faculty were provided the opportunity to shape the college’s plans for assessment of three additional general education requirements: critical thinking, cultural and social understanding, and scientific reasoning.

6. About forty faculty volunteers completed training to assess student learning using the TCC adapted AAC&U VALUE rubrics.

7. According to a recently developed five-year plan and through a predetermined rotation, one to three of the seven learning outcomes are scored each semester by faculty volunteers (faculty assessors) who have received training in using the TCC adapted VALUE rubrics. Assignments used for assessment come from students who are representative of TCC’s degree-seeking population in terms of such things as course format (traditional, hybrid, online) and degree type (career/technical and transfer), and who have earned thirty or more academic credits. Students are identified for participation by the college’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness through a stratified random sample process.

8. In the first assessment semester, fall 2012, the college launched the plan as a pilot project to assess written communication and information literacy. For each general education competency area, fifty students were randomly selected for inclusion.

9. Approximately twenty-five faculty assessors scored the student work products submitted for written communication and information literacy. Each work product was reviewed by two faculty assessors who assigned a score between zero (no display of learning) and four (capstone-level learning) for each dimension constituting a general education competency area. When the score differential was one or less, the two scores were averaged so that the student had a final score for the dimension. If scores differed by more than one on any dimension, a third faculty assessor scored the work product to determine a final score for the dimension.

10. The college has initiated the second phase of the assessment plan by identifying courses for a spring 2013 assessment of quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and scientific reasoning. As done previously, students were selected for inclusion from the identified courses for each general education competency area under study. The college recently started recruiting additional faculty assessors, and training will again be provided.

11. The college recently shared the fall 2012 findings with the assessment coaches and faculty assessors, and is working with both groups to determine how to disseminate the findings with all faculty to promote advancement in the competencies under study. The goal is for faculty across disciplines to apply the findings through informed pedagogical changes. Further, the college has plans to conduct a focus group session with faculty assessors to obtain their feedback on several issues including the scoring process, assessor training, appropriateness of assignments in measuring the intended learning outcome, and recruitment and retention of faculty assessors.

The college anticipates learning a great deal more about the faculty assessors’ experiences and their perceptions of the assigned work products in relation to the VALUE rubrics during the scheduled focus group session. Preliminary findings indicate that some assignments yielded better results in terms of assessing student learning than others. There is much more to learn in this area as the college begins sharing the data with faculty.

**LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS**

College officials responsible for collecting and preparing student work products and notifying and reminding faculty of their responsibilities learned early on that these processes were arduous and could be accomplished more easily through automation. A program has been developed that will send notices and reminders when faculty have not submitted the required work products for selected students. This tool, which automates much of the process and also allows faculty to assess student work products at any time and from any computer, will be available fall 2013.

Another lesson the college has learned is that piloting the process was the right thing to do. Having a larger sample size would have only compounded the arduous nature of this initiative. Once each general education competency has been pilot tested and improvements made based on the first round, the college plans to select a larger sample of students for participation. While the college has only recently begun this journey, it is apparent that we are on the right path to understanding more fully whether our students are learning what we think is important.

**REFERENCE**

The genesis of Gainesville State College’s (GSC) Roadmap Project lay in the work of a large-scale self-study in 2007 under the aegis of the national Foundations of Excellence (FoE) program. Over the last ten years, GSC has maintained its commitment to a “student focused, learning centered” environment through the FOE assessment and other student success projects while experiencing state-funding budget cuts and an explosive 170 percent growth in student headcount. During that same period, degrees awarded increased by 178 percent. While our efforts were serving students in positive ways, participation in Roadmap exploited synergies across programs and created a foundation for enduring practices that would be essential in the coming institutional transformations.

In preparation for AAC&U’s Greater Expectations Institute in June 2010, we studied multiple streams of data, including the general education assessments, the foundations for which had been laid as we were doing the FoE. The stories from our data—that critical thinking was a component in desperate need of address and that our students weren’t staying with us—became the heart of our discussions. We crafted a strategy and cost model steeped in high-impact practices (HIPs)—“Get HIP” became our mantra—and a plan for a group of highly-trained faculty champions who would support efforts to both teach a new first-year experience course and train other faculty in implementing and assessing HIPs. Our shared belief was that faculty successes would promote greater student successes.

The recommendation, however, met with administrative resistance, prompting radical transformations to our design that would prove to be only the first of many. A reconstituted team went to the 2011 AAC&U Institute on High-Impact Practices and Student Success, where we focused our efforts on engaging the synergy available with our coming reaccreditation visit and its associated Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). We also leveraged already present commitments to three HIPs: undergraduate research, diversity and global learning, and service learning. The plan to embed HIPs in one area of the core curriculum soon became the pilot phase of the institutional QEP, and the Faculty Academy, a professional development center, became a codified structure with a budgetary investment from the college to begin in fall 2012. Thus, a year later than we anticipated, we embarked on a more far-reaching plan than we had first imagined.

**Our shared belief was that faculty successes would promote greater student successes**

January 2012 brought with it the most unexpected transformation we had yet encountered. GSC was to be consolidated—by January 2013—with another successful University System of Georgia institution, North Georgia College & State University (NGCSU). By

---

* Both authors began the Roadmap project as academic leaders at Gainsville State College, which recently became part of the University of North Georgia
mid-spring, we knew University of North Georgia (UNG) would be comprehensive, embracing both NGCSU’s selective and GSC’s access and transfer missions. Because NGCSU and GSC shared commitments to the same HIPs and to AAC&U’s LEAP initiative, the newly available synergy allowed for large-scale transformations, including astonishingly fast general education reform that culminated with faculty approval of a new core curriculum eleven months after the consolidation was announced. Our decision in 2011 to focus Roadmap’s efforts on faculty successes within already-existing commitments would prove significant, as it both ensured the survival of our project and provided an avenue for influential discussions regarding large-scale curricular change.

The Faculty Academy and High-Impact Practices

The Faculty Academy involved instructors invited to apply to study and then implement a project on one of GSC’s three previously chosen HIPs—service learning, diversity and global learning, and undergraduate research. These three HIPs had also been written into the NGCSU strategic plan as key initiatives, and thus became significant priorities in the context of the newly formed institution. As a consequence of this convergence, the Faculty Academy selected ten projects to delve into these HIPs and find better and broader assessments to ensure that they truly were being “high impact.” In particular, the projects on undergraduate research benefited from infrastructure already in place at NGCSU and GSC to develop scalable programming and assessment across departments.

The Faculty Academy incorporates research-based pedagogical texts, provides a collaborative approach to plan high-impact projects, and integrates them into the semester’s design. The academy blends face-to-face meetings and online communities to create a robust conversation among faculty sustained over a year. In September 2012, we held a five-hour retreat to provide an introduction to the program and key concepts, as well as to launch cross-disciplinary conversations. Faculty were given an introduction or refresher on Bloom’s and Fink’s taxonomies. Then, they applied these concepts to their project proposals and shared their work in small discussion groups. Most faculty had not practiced the Wiggins and McTighe backward design—a framework that begins with establishing desired outcomes and competencies and then seeks to build learning experiences to achieve them, rather than beginning with just content coverage in mind. We devoted substantial time to these concepts and to their application in implementing high-impact practices.

In October and November, we held a series of roundtables that enabled faculty to exchange their research and ideas on the particular HIP they were in the process of studying. Academy participants and leaders, as well as institution experts in these areas, were invited to participate. Each session considered a range of questions, such as:

1. How might we explain to students the full arc of how the high-impact project integrates into the course as a whole and, of course, their educational goals?
2. What are the learning outcomes for each high-impact project and how do these reflect the range of learning represented in Fink’s taxonomy?

In late November and December, the Faculty Academy leaders met individually with participants to review the progress and planning for the spring projects. As of the spring of 2013, UNG is in the midst of project implementation and collaborative assessment of projects via classroom visits and review of materials.

Reflections

For these academy participants, including both faculty who are new to HIPs and long-time practitioners, the opportunity for reflective (re)design of course projects and assignments has been energizing. This year-long project supports their intrinsic desire to identify and polish effective learning-centered practices and to better assess their efficacy. One major finding thus far is the importance of offering faculty time to “retreat” in order to do the in-depth thinking and planning that such projects demand. We seek to include that reflective time as we move into the next phase.

The Roadmap grant has allowed us to achieve our initial goal of integrating our student success efforts by supporting faculty innovation with targeted HIPs. While we had an admittedly unusual pathway, the surprises offered opportunities for large-scale transformations we had imagined might take place over time to happen in a single intensively-focused year. The intensive faculty development has fostered a wider view of the ways in which high-impact practices are implemented across disciplines, a more nuanced understanding of course design, and a heightened commitment to the importance of crafting aspirational learning outcomes for our students.
Axiety, fear, and shame were just a few of the emotions running through my body as I pondered re-enrolling in college to pursue my dream of working with youth. Did I have what it took to finish? What would people say about me? Many might think that enrolling in community college at 32 years old isn’t the most glamorous path to take. However, I decided that my future and that of my son mattered more than what others might think. After researching Prince George’s Community College (PGCC), I knew I had found the place for me. The location was perfect, the cost affordable, and the online classes provided needed flexibility for my schedule. As I registered for my first classes, I knew that this decision would have a profound effect on my future.

My first semester was both challenging and life changing. The curriculum forced me to think more critically about my assignments and life around me. My nutrition professor had obtained several advanced degrees and instilled in my fellow classmates and me that we had the ability to do the same. After discussing the options, I decided to apply for the position of president. I was encouraged to apply. His encouragement made the difference and, after an intense interview, I was hired for the upcoming school year. At this point my cocurricular journey began, which gave me a full collegial experience. Academics coupled with extracurricular activities helped me develop a multidimensional way of viewing the world. The programs provided by the Office of College Life Services provided me with the necessary training and hands on experience to achieve this goal.

I was invited by the program director of College Life Services to join a leadership program, which I was told would provide skills that are highly sought after by employers. This was yet another moment where staff stepped in and showed me a path directly connected to my vision of success. Living and working with the homeless in Orlando, Florida; scraping soap that would be recycled and given to the poor; and being trained in Atlanta, Georgia, to teach others to work across diverse cultures and faiths to fight social injustices are just a few of the leadership and community service experiences I have had at PGCC. I have not only had the chance to help others, I have also gained skills to develop and execute campaigns that directly impact my community.

As I ponder graduating next semester and share stories of my experiences at PGCC, people marvel at the opportunities available in a community college. I share with them that PGCC is more than a college; it is a community center offering free programs and workshops to county residents. Whether a student is just graduating from high school, attaining certifications for career advancement, or pursuing higher education later in life, PGCC offers opportunity at all levels. Access to education can change one’s trajectory in life. I implore students to dream big and envision what success looks like to them. Then they must take their dreams and hone the skills needed to realize their visions. The world needs what they have to offer.
AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises nearly 1,300 member institutions—including accredited public and private colleges, community colleges, research universities, and comprehensive universities of every type and size.

AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Its mission is to reinforce the collective commitment to liberal education and inclusive excellence at both the national and local levels, and to help individual institutions keep the quality of student learning at the core of their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges.

Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at www.aacu.org.

**AAC&U Membership 2013**

(1,287 members)

- Masters 31%
- Associates 12%
- Baccalaureate 25%
- Res & Doc 16%
- Other* 16%

*Specialized schools, state systems, and agencies, and international affiliates

**Ensuring Quality and Taking High-Impact Practices to Scale**

*By George D. Kuh and Ken O'Donnell*

Building on previous AAC&U reports, this publication presents research on specific educational practices correlated with higher levels of academic challenge, student engagement, and achievement. It features the relationship between these practices and improvements in retention and graduation rates, as well as advice on how to ensure that all students experience multiple high-impact practices. Detailed case studies show how high-impact practices are being delivered more pervasively and systematically across a wide range of institutions.

$15 members/$25 nonmembers/ HIPQUAL

**Using the VALUE Rubrics for Improvement of Learning and Authentic Assessment**

*By Terrel Rhodes and Ashley Finley*

This publication addresses key elements of and questions frequently raised about the development and use of the VALUE rubrics for assessment of student learning. It provides information about rubric-based assessment approaches—including validity, reliability, and rubric modification—and faculty training in the use of rubrics. Specific examples of how campuses are using the VALUE rubrics to improve student learning are also provided. Full case studies from twelve campuses will be available online at www.aacu.org/value.

$15 members/$25 nonmembers/ VALRUBR2
eBook Version Available (PDF)