

Underprepared Students Design Team Recommendations and Responses

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. CONCENTRATION ON QUALITY OF DEVELOPMENTAL INSTRUCTION

The Design Team recommends that a full-time faculty member be hired and committed to teaching and developing the curriculum for each developmental course discipline.

Action – In 2010-11, full-time faculty members were hired to teach full loads of developmental courses in ESL, English, Math, Reading, and Chemistry.

2. ONE PROMISING MODEL: LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Learning communities offer a promising instructional design that addresses students' emotional struggles and feelings of disengagement while promoting academic support and team-based learning. The cohort model provides students the security of a consistent peer group that shares academic challenges and supports a collaborative approach to learning. By taking two or more classes together, students develop mutual goals and a sense of shared problem-solving.

Action – In 2010-11, the support for two pilot learning communities was expanded to develop eleven learning communities, with four being completely focused on developmental education students. In Fall 2011, 14 Learning Communities are scheduled with 9 of those addressing underprepared student needs. Significant professional development has been provided, with learning communities being the primary focus of the January 2011 Institute and more than twenty-five team members have traveled to Kingsborough Community College's summer learning communities summit in June 2009 through June 2011. In addition, four were sent to the Washington Center for a week-long intensive in planning and developing a learning community program.

3. EMPHASIS ON K-16 CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

The team strongly suggests that a carefully-planned curriculum alignment initiative be established with our region's public schools. Elements of this initiative may include:

- Creation of a curriculum alignment summit, which brings together high school principals and discipline specialists for an information-gathering session with college administration and faculty with the goal of communicating freshman course learning outcomes and placement criteria.
- Follow-up individual discipline meetings that provide collaboration opportunities between college faculty and discipline specialists from each area high school to help bridge gaps in learning outcomes.
- Establishment of clear assessment measures to ensure that outcomes of newly-aligned curricula are effectively achieved.

Action – In 2010-11, a pilot English curriculum alignment initiative was created in partnership with Whitesboro and Oriskany school districts. Results of the pilot were reported at the annual superintendents' breakfast hosted by the College. Next steps are in process of being developed as of fall 2011. Math and English alignment is in discussion with VVS District. Placement Testing in the high schools is currently in

place at some schools and is being re-evaluated as we consider shifting to a different placement program.

4. CONCENTRATION OF EFFORT ON DEVELOPMENTAL MATH COURSE REDESIGN

NCAT has established best practices and developed models for developmental mathematics that show promising outcomes. The design team supports the piloting of our team's proposed redesign, and, assuming positive results, the establishment of an across-the board rejuvenated developmental mathematics approach which will improve students' ultimate success in subsequent credit-bearing mathematics courses.

Action – During the summer of 2011, developmental English and developmental Math faculty members attended the nationally-renowned Kellogg Institute to learn developmental education instructional strategies and success measures to bring back and share with their colleagues. In addition, two members of the Math department visited Wayne State University to experience their nationally-recognized MathCorps summer program for inner-city teenagers in partnership with the Detroit Public Schools. Also, a pilot is being run to re-introduce an additional developmental education math class (MA025) for those students who test into the lowest levels of dev ed math. The results will be assessed before this course is considered for introduction into regular curriculum.

5. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR AN EXPANDED, COLLEGE-SUPPORTED LEARNING CENTER

The design team recommends the consideration of additional space to provide the access and academic support needed for all students, many of whom leave the current learning center in frustration since there is simply not enough room to accommodate them. We further recommend that the space allocated be designed to allow for comfortable study areas, small study group and tutoring spaces, and computer-equipped stations that will accommodate our students' diverse needs.

Action – Learning Center support is recognized as an important need to assist students in developmental education. Given current space constraints, relief will come in the form of further developing other study areas that may alleviate some of the traffic and pressure in the learning center. Upgrades will be made to the Utica Campus library; better use will be made of the learning center annex in the IT/Theatre Building; the Jorgensen Center will have a student success space; and changes are being developed to provide more space for students at the Rome Campus.

6. ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPMENTAL TEACHING FACULTY

Since instructors of developmental coursework face different and varied challenges that may not be shared by their counterparts teaching credit-bearing coursework, a professional development program that features sessions designed to explore strategies geared toward developmental learners is warranted. Experts in the field of developmental education should be sought to present workshops at fall, spring and/or summer institutes on campus. In addition, funds should be allocated to support developmental instructors' participation in national and regional conferences, such as NADE and NYCLSA. A professional library of resources for

developmental faculty should be developed on campus to provide a wealth of creative techniques to support instructors seeking to keep abreast of trends and to enhance instruction.

Action – In 2010-11, faculty members attended the Kellogg Institute on developmental education and visited the MathCorps program at Wayne State University. The intent is to have them present along with featured guest presenters at future Institutes to provide expanded enrichment opportunities related to developmental education. A Library Guide (LibGuide) has been created by our library staff to provide resources for those teaching developmental education. In Fall 2011, the holdings in our library will be enhanced based on recommendations of the Kellogg Institute. The Kellogg Institute attendees have already begun sharing their learning with their Center colleagues and are providing instruction for adjunct faculty in the developmental education classes. Members of the Center for Language and Learning Design, including staff of the Learning Center regularly attend NADE conferences and workshops.

6. EXPLORATION OF DEVELOPMENTAL SUMMER PROGRAM OPTIONS

Intensive, cohort-based summer programs have shown some promise among students requiring developmental coursework. For example, Ivy Technical College has established a summer program for students in need of remediation. Ivy Tech's program is funded through a Lumina Foundation grant to support colleges that are involved in "Achieving the Dream" programs: Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count is a national initiative to help more community college students succeed, particularly students of color and low-income students. MVCC should explore similar grant opportunities to fund such summer programs since students may have difficulty securing federal or state financial aid for the summer semester.

Action –In Summer 2011, the college offered two sections of MA050 in an intensive format of two weeks, five and a half days per week, with the expectation that students who test into the higher levels of Dev Ed math may be able to gain or re-gain skills needed to move into academic level math by the start of the Fall 2011 semester. Further, the college is exploring the Summer Boot Camp model from Wayne State and the Composition/Reading Summer Boot Camp at Kingsborough for training and models of potential initiatives at MVCC.