



## Student Intake Design Team

### *Recommendations to Executive Team and Process Review*

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\*These recommendations are based on external research of Amarillo Community College (Amarillo, TX), Cy-Fair Community College (Houston, TX), Monroe Community College, Onondaga Community College and Hudson Valley Community College. In consultation with Dr. Joyce Romano (VP for Student Services) Joan Andrek has submitted information on the intake system at Valencia Community College (FL). The results from mystery shops of the intake process and a student survey were also considered in making the following recommendations.

### **Hours of Operation**

**Recommendation:** MVCC should consider extending hours of operation to provide greater access to the segment of the community who are unable get to MVCC during daytime business hours. This should be done gradually by expanding hours until 8:00 pm on Tuesday and Wednesday, possibly expanding on additional days as needs dictate. The college may also consider offering Saturday hours, initially starting with one Saturday a month. In order to accommodate the students who need to be served during evening hours, placement testing should be offered in the evening as well.

The Rome Campus and the Office for Adult Students provide good examples of the positive impact of employing generalists in a one stop with extended hours. Expanding this model with proper staffing and resources are in line with the Mission of the College.

### **Admission to MVCC**

Amarillo and Cy-Fair have an open admissions policy that allows for **instant admission** to their colleges. While this process certainly makes these colleges highly accessible to any prospective students, the design team recognizes that there are some circumstances that exist in their environments that may allow for instant admission to be more easily implemented. For example, Texas' Education System is more streamlined with the High Schools making it easier for colleges to obtain HS transcripts directly. (In NYS we do not have this direct link with the high schools.)

At Hudson Valley Community College they do not provide instant admission, but upon receipt of a completed application they have implemented some strategies that may expedite the admissions process. The design team feels that these strategies are worth considering as they ultimately work

toward our goal of providing greater accessibility to all prospective students. To that end, we have put forth two options that we feel should be examined further by the executive team and process review.

**Option 1:** MVCC implements an **Instant Admission Policy**. Students applying to the college would be considered *accepted* students upon submitting a completed application. This would essentially allow each student to move forward with the enrollment process immediately and would provide the greatest degree of accessibility. MVCC should consider the possibility of implementing instant admission. It is the consensus of the design team that we submit a list of pros and cons of instant admission as they may be applicable to MVCC for the Executive Team and Process Review to consider.

**Pros:**

- Greatest Accessibility - presents an image that “MVCC is easy to do business with”
- Makes productive use of a prospective student’s first visit
- Establishes an immediate relationship with MVCC by giving the student a “sense of progress”
- Will expedite the enrollment process during critical, high volume periods

**Cons:**

- Limits effective advisement without all records (i.e. HS, college transcripts)
- May produce more work for Admissions staff as they will be required to follow-up with new students to obtain any necessary records to complete application.
- May create additional responsibilities for Financial Aid, Registrar, Advisement and Academic Departments.
- There will be a need for greater support of the intake process during peak times.

**Considerations:**

- Will need to address how (at what point in the intake process, and by whom) we obtain necessary records (such as High School transcripts, GED, other college transcripts).
- Nuances of admission policy are critical with regard to NYS education law as it pertains to home schooled students or students with an IEP diploma.
- Record of HS diploma or GED is necessary prior to graduation.

**Option 2:** MVCC should also consider the option of creating both on and off- campus “**Instant Admission Days**”. With effective advertising students could attend these events prepared to provide the necessary records to enroll at MVCC. Off-campus Instant Admissions Days would be held at feeder high schools. The off-campus days would be coordinated between the college and the high school

guidance offices. With the cooperation of the high school guidance office, official transcripts would be provided the day of the event for all students who attend. This process is very similar to the admissions strategies currently used at Monroe Community College.

The Admissions office remains the collector of data through the college application, verifying high school graduation or earned GED. For students who are home schooled or have an IEP diploma, the Admissions office will continue to guide these students appropriately. To expedite the process, the MVCC application might include a **waiver** signed by the applicant which allows the college to contact the student's high school in order to obtain a transcript when one is not provided by the student upon submission of the application. The waiver should be part of any paper or online application (online application is expected to be operational during the fall of 2008).

Prospective students could complete the application process, placement test, and schedule the day they attend an Instant Admissions Day on campus. Financial Aid, payment, and certificate of residency requirements may also be completed. Those students who indicate they have graduated from high school or have received a GED, but do not bring a transcript with them, will be asked to sign a waiver releasing their educational records to the college. The Admissions office can then contact the high schools for those students while they are taking the placement test and request that transcripts be sent to MVCC (or to at least verify high school graduation which will then be documented).

For those students who have earned a New York State GED, the admissions staff should be able to access the NYS Education Department's GED Testing hotline. If the student indicates a GED was received from a state other than New York, they would then have to meet directly with a member of the Admissions office to discuss appropriate options. Non-GED, non-graduates, IEP diploma recipients, and graduates from non-accredited home school programs would be able to complete the enrollment process provided they meet Ability-to-Benefit requirements. Instant Admission events can be held periodically throughout the calendar year with more frequency at critical times (i.e. a determined time prior to the start of each semester).

Pros:

- Instant Admissions Days would also serve as recruitment opportunities
- The signed waiver will allow the admissions office to obtain transcripts upon receipt of the application, when not accompanied with a completed application
- Requires no additional responsibilities for other offices.

Cons:

- Open accessibility is limited to designated "Instant Admit Days"

- No waiver immediately available for students who apply through SUNY Application
- May delay the intake process for students not willing to waive release of transcripts
- Needs the cooperation of feeder high schools for off-campus Instant Admissions Days

**Provisional scheduling** may be used to advise students who may require advisement, but lack records from previous educational institutions. We would assume that all students are at the remedial or lowest level until they present records that prove otherwise. This would not include Math and English courses as the placement test is used to determine whether the student is ready for college level work in these areas. Students who are at a higher level would likely be motivated to provide us with the corresponding records in a timely manner.

Implementation and enforcement of deadlines for immunization records and admissions applications for upcoming semesters was also discussed. The committee felt that the current system of “ongoing” acceptances of admissions applications is cumbersome, ineffective, and a disservice to the student. In the case of immunization records, it is our understanding that while SUNY allows us to accept shot records up to 30 days after classes begin before withdrawing a student, it is up to the college’s discretion whether or not records should be demanded sooner. The committee feels that announcing a student’s name in class for non-compliance is unprofessional and awkward for both the student and the instructor. It is also too late in the semester for any other students to register for the seats that are taken by students whom we lose in the fourth week due to non-compliance.

**Recommendation:** The committee recommends that we institute an **admissions application** deadline of 4 days before classes begin. Any applications that come in after that day will be held over to the next semester. We also recommend that **immunization records** be given a deadline of one day before classes begin. If immunization records are not turned in by that day, the student will be withdrawn from classes. This will allow the student to receive a 100% refund, will open up seats in the class for students who are in compliance, and will prevent students from having to be removed from class during the fourth week.

\*\*Documentation from students that self identify as **convicted felons** (based on questions from the college application) would require documentation prior to admission to the college.

\*\*To enhance our accessibility to **non-matriculated** students MVCC may consider allowing these students to register without placement or pre-requisite restrictions. This is a point that we did not reach consensus on as this is an academic policy that will likely need further discussion.

### **Document Imaging**

Either the Instant Admission as a set policy or done as a scheduled special event would allow for many students to experience a more streamlined process. In addition to these processes there are technological opportunities for MVCC to streamline the intake process. Specifically, **Document Imaging** would simplify the entire process in a number of ways, beginning with admissions.

Monroe Community College has been using document imaging (*Image Now*) since 2001. They do not have a separate imaging department, but make each area that receives student records responsible for scanning these documents. This translates into a function that falls largely under admissions and would likely be less work than the copying and manual filing that is our current practice.

The advantages to the intake process become more apparent as the student progresses from admissions through placement testing to advisement. When a student meets with an academic advisor, any student records (HS transcripts, college transcripts) would be immediately accessible for the advisor to use. *Image Now* (which is Banner compatible) also allows for users to make notes on student records (i.e. in the case of a credit evaluation) through the use of overlays that would be immediately accessible to any other advisor.

Document Imaging is also valuable when working with students who have separated from MVCC, but wish to return as all previous records would be immediately accessible. This would eliminate the need to search for previous files and request that the student supply us with the necessary records in the event that the file no longer exists. This also eliminates duplicate files for students that may have several breaks in their record. Monroe Community College secured a \$60,000 grant to scan all of their pre-existing records, but based on the fact that MCC has a much larger enrollment; MVCC could likely do this for considerably less.

**Recommendation:** It is the recommendation of the Student Intake Design Team that MVCC strongly consider document imaging as an effective method to streamline intake and advisement.

## Call Center

Amarillo Community College and Onondaga Community College have implemented a call center to handle the incoming phone traffic. This call center is staffed by generalists who have had significant training in policies, systems and procedures relevant to student intake and support. During the month of August, Amarillo Community College's call center took in excess of 20,000 telephone calls, 8,000 of which were financial aid related questions. Their call center, staffed by generalists, was able to field 80% or 6400 of the 8,000 calls.

Valencia Community College also uses their call center to place **outbound calls** to follow up with new students and remind those with approaching appointments.

**Recommendation:** MVCC should put a call center into place that would streamline the accessibility of information to incoming students. With the new VOIP system, we can hold calls in a queue instead of directing calls to voice mail. This would allow us to handle more calls without retrieving voice mail which is quite cumbersome during peak times with high call volumes. As part of the recommendation, the call center should have a staff of four full time employees. To optimize accessibility, the call center should allow for multiple modes of communication with the ability to respond to email and instant messages. This might be achieved by designating certain staff to specific modalities. Both campuses (Utica and Rome) would retain their main switchboard with all student-related calls being transferred to the call center.

One call center could service both Utica and Rome Campuses provided all policies and communications are truly campus-neutral. Every generalist *must* be culturally oriented to both campuses and able to address the specifics of either campus when appropriate.

The call center may also provide a resource for MVCC faculty and staff that may have questions about intake procedures.

## Placement Testing

Placement testing is a vital component to proper advisement. In an effort to make our first meeting with a prospective student as productive as possible, it would be necessary to offer placement testing to accommodate walk in traffic in a manner that does not require a return visit for this purpose alone.

**Recommendation:** Placement testing should be on a walk in basis to further expedite enrollment of prospective students. This would require a dedicated computer lab for Placement. In addition to the Placement Coordinator, this would require a reviewer to score (blue book) writing samples and two PT testing proctors to assist in administering placement tests. ASSET and ATB testing would be scheduled weekly.

This function would also be necessary on the Rome Campus, but due to the lower demand for testing, may be combined with another position in the Rome One Stop.

MVCC has been working with local High Schools to allow for greater flexibility of testing by testing in some area High Schools. It would benefit our students if MVCC were to continue to explore additional ways of administering the placement test.

## One Stop Intake Design

Cy-Fair Community College has implemented a One Stop model for their student intake system. This model consists of an open reception area with a counter staffed by six FT generalists trained to handle the many transactions that are functions of financial aid, registrars, business office and admissions. The front office staff is responsible for all the functions that are available at MVCC through each office's service window. Each staff person undergoes extensive training in each area and has computer access to all appropriate functions. The One Stop opens 1 hour later on Fridays to accommodate staff meetings that are used to address training concerns.

As a part of the one stop Cy-Fair incorporates a professional advisement center that is staffed by nine professional advisors that are available for walk in advisement. As a part of the intake system advisement would include assistance with admissions; choosing a curriculum; facilitation of placement testing; academic advisement; course selection and registration; financial assistance and scholarship information; transfer information; and community education.

**Recommendation:** MVCC should implement a one stop service area. This would allow for a more effective initial contact with each student, while also limiting the number of faculty/staff a student might have to work with to become an enrolled student.

This would optimally include a **front line service counter** that would involve all of the current functions available at the service windows of the registrar, financial aid, business office and possibly admissions (should MVCC determine that instant admission is appropriate). While all these functions are important, who is responsible for these functions is far less important and should be altogether transparent to the student. This front line service counter would have as many as six separate counter spaces to accommodate a larger staff during times of peak traffic. This would include an *express lane* for simple requests (i.e. requesting a copy of a schedule).

The front line service counter would ideally have a staff of at least four full time employees, possibly termed Enrollment Specialists, who would be designated one stop staff. This staff would require an intensive training program that would allow for one stop staff to become well educated in the many functions that the one stop would be involved in. By making the call center a part of the one stop, cross training of call center and front service counter staff would be possible to allow for greater flexibility in staffing and work to minimize fatigue of the staff. The one stop staff should be designated as such and should not be a rotation of the registrars, financial aid or business offices. For effective service to our students there must be a clear division of responsibilities between the staff that handles back office/administrative functions and staff that provide front line service to students. This will allow the service providers to put the priority on service. It is the pressure of the multiple roles (answering phones, administrative functions and service to students) that cause staff to view students as "a distraction from getting work done". The one stop staff may assist in back office functions of these offices during off peak hours at the discretion of the director/supervisor of the one stop. This could also be part of the ongoing training that would be necessary for a successful one stop.

Additionally, the one stop would include a **professional advisement center**. We recommend six full time professional staff that would provide advisement year round. This would provide the means for walk in advisement and would effectively streamline the intake process for each student. Each advisor would be trained as a generalist to effectively handle the bulk of student traffic. This would include financial aid, registration, placement functions and policies to allow for a comprehensive understanding of all intake procedures. Also, each advisor would also develop an area of specialization (such as

departmental specialization). This would facilitate communication with academic departments and provide an effective mechanism to pass on new information on academic programs to the advisement center. This should provide consistency of advisement and be part of the staff development of the advisement center. Additional specializations may include transfer/articulation, career specialist, disability specialist, or adult services as the needs of the college dictate. The one stop can work for potential ESL students if their complex communication needs are addressed, so an ESL specialist with background in ESL is needed to serve as a cultural broker, who could be cross-trained in functions of financial aid, registrar, business office, admissions, and advisement. This person could also serve in a community outreach capacity (for example, with the Refugee Center) and relieve the staffing shortage in ESL instruction by teaching one course per semester in ESL as part of the position. This person could also serve as an intake generalist as need warrants. An alternative solution is to continue to utilize the current ESL faculty for placement and advising for ESL students around their teaching schedules and add a coordinator position for summer and intercession.”

Onondaga Community College is set up as the one stop described above. OCC calls their one stop *Student Central* and uses a number system called **Q-Flow** to avoid cumbersome lines and advance the student through the intake. By using Q-Flow, the student is allowed to move about through the student commons area while waiting for service and during peak times will ease the anxiety a student may experience waiting in lines and provide a more secure area for exchange of personal information with the Front Counter Staff. The student’s number is also carried with them to other services within Student Central to effectively hold the student’s place in line should they need to be referred to another part within the one stop. This eliminates the need for a student to wait in successive lines.

**Recommendation:** It is the recommendation of the Student Intake Design Team that MVCC move toward employing *Q-Flow* or a similar system to expedite students through the intake system.

The One-Stop would ideally play a significant role in retention efforts as well and would ideally overlap with retention efforts.

If implemented correctly the one-stop concept will virtually eliminate a student having to be sent from function to function and would allow them to proceed from placement testing, through advisement to an enrolled student in a single place and possibly in a single trip to MVCC. Again, if instant admission becomes possible, this may potentially take an interested student to enrolled status in a single day. Ideally, the one-stop staff would have the ability to assist the student with most all processes necessary to enroll at MVCC.

This one stop/advisement center could also provide service to currently enrolled students. This is not intended as a replacement for faculty advisement, but an additional support for students who may have difficulty accessing faculty for advisement (due to schedules, etc.).

The Rome Campus would be set up in a similar manner, with two full-time generalists and two full-time advisors (two part-time employees may be substituted for a full-time employee if needs dictate). Most back office functions will be processed on the Utica campus, although it may be determined that there is a need for one back office processor in Rome as well.

## Reporting Structure

**Recommendation:** The one stop should have a clear reporting structure that includes a director and a clear hierarchy of staff that reports to the director. The director should also have a clear reporting structure with accountability to one Vice President, possibly a Vice President of Enrollment Management.

The Rome Campus would also include a director of the one-stop function(s).

## Training/Resources

**Recommendation:** We feel strongly that appropriate resources for training, staffing and proper physical locations must be a priority if a comprehensive one stop is to be effectively put into place on both campuses of MVCC. Also, if we are to put the appropriate technology into place proper resources must also be allocated to support IT in terms of budget as well as staff to support maintenance in addition to the initial implementation.

Necessary Physicals:

- a dedicated placement center
- private offices for professional advisors
- a secure front line service counter that can accommodate multiple staff and take cash payments (similar to bank tellers)
- an adjacent call center
- computers available to students for registration and financial aid
- signage

## Marketing

It would be appropriate if the college would seek input from Marketing to establishing “branding” for any significant change to the intake system. This should include terminology, signage and even possibly layout should physical changes become part of a potential change. We sometimes communicate in educational terms that can potentially be somewhat ambiguous to the student. Consulting with Marketing would potentially help the college establish signage and names that are recognizable and that are easily understood by students.

## Deregistration

All of the schools we interviewed face the same challenges that we struggle with in relation to getting students to follow through with necessary paperwork and payment to secure their classes. While none of these institutions had an easy solution, it appears that effective **communication** is the key to helping more students complete the process. Jennifer has been utilizing her advisement assistants to communicate with students who may be at risk for being deregistered.

Mohawk Valley has attempted to use email as a method of communication with new students with limited success. We have resisted using personal email addresses because they are less secure than the email accounts assigned by the college. Valencia has replaced most all written forms of communication with email. They have successfully accomplished this by utilizing new students personal email accounts

for communication until they have completed placement testing. At that point they notify the student (via email) that all further communication will be through their student email account.

**Recommendation:** The call center staff would be trained to answer questions and would have access to student information. The call center would be responsible for outbound calls during designated time periods. This would not only serve to notify a student that they had not secured their classes, but also give the student the opportunity to ask what step was not yet complete (i.e. financial aid, payment, returned bill with signature) and help direct the student and explore options (i.e. FACTS payment plan).

It is also a recommendation of the Design Team that MVCC consider utilizing email to replace many forms of written communication with students

### **College Calendar**

MVCC approaches the construction of the college calendar from the opposite direction of Cy-Fair Community College. MVCC assigns this task to the calendar committee who then gets initial approval from the College Senate. Once approved by the Senate, the proposed calendar is then passed on to the Executive Team. Cy-Fair begins the process with the Executive level. The calendar will then be given to their constituencies for input. Amarillo Community College coordinates its calendar with that of the high schools within their area.

## Summary of Recommendations

- **Expand hours of operation** until 8 pm to accommodate the large contingent of prospective students within the Utica-Rome area who are unable to access MVCC within our current hours of operation. It may be appropriate to do this gradually, beginning with two days per week and then extending other days as needs demand.
- **Consider Instant Admission or Instant Admit Days** to increase accessibility by making productive use of a prospective student's first visit to MVCC and minimizing initial barriers to enrollment.
- **Implement Document Imaging** to expedite the intake process by making student records immediately accessible to all appropriate faculty and staff.
- Put a **Call Center** into place with a dedicated staff of trained generalists to facilitate communication and assist students with questions on the intake process. By placing waiting calls into a queue we effectively eliminate the cumbersome (and ineffective) task of returning high volumes of voicemail during periods of peak traffic.
- **Placement testing** should be offered on a **walk in basis** to allow for a newly admitted student to progress through the intake process.
- Restructure our current Student Service Center to reflect a **One-Stop** model. This (ideally) requires:
  - **Front Line Service Counter** with a dedicated staff of trained generalists to handle the functions that are currently offered at the various office specific windows within the SSC.
  - **Professional Advisement Center** with a dedicated professional staff giving the newly enrolled students immediate access to academic advisement. The advisement staff would also be trained as generalists in the intake process to allow for assistance requiring sensitive discussion or in-depth assistance. The might also support any future retention efforts.
  - Adopt a call number system such as **Q-Flow** to expedite One-Stop Traffic and avoid crowds at the point of service.
  - The One-Stop should have a clear **reporting structure** encompassing the call center, placement and advisement that report to a single director. The Director of the One-Stop should also have a clear reporting structure with responsibility to one Vice-President.
  - ❖ **Should MVCC decide to move forward with this recommendation appropriate resources for training and staffing, as well as physical and technological needs are critical to the success of a One-Stop model.**