



Westmoreland County Community College

ATD *Info Brief*

March 2016

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The year 2016 marks WCCC's 10-year anniversary as ATD members. The scope of the ATD network has grown over those 10 years to include more than 200 community colleges in 36 states impacting four million community college students.

The decade of work around student success at WCCC has largely been focused on developmental education. A recent report called "Core Principles for Transforming Remediation within a Comprehensive Student Success Strategy" outlines six keys to helping make sure developmental students attain their academic goals. WCCC is at some stage (from considering to full implementation) of working with each of the principles, summarized here:

1. Every student's postsecondary education begins with an intake process to choose an academic direction and identify the support needed to pass relevant credit-bearing gateway courses in the first year.
2. Enrollment in college-level math and English courses or course sequences aligned with the student's program of study is the default placement for the vast majority of students.
3. Academic and nonacademic support is provided in conjunction with gateway courses in the student's academic or career area of interest through co-requisite or other models with evidence of success in which supports are embedded in curricula and instructional strategies.
4. Students for whom the default college-level course placement is not appropriate, even with additional mandatory support, are enrolled in rigorous, streamlined remediation options that align with the knowledge and skills required for success in gateway courses in their academic or career area of interest.
5. Every student is engaged with content of required gateway courses that is aligned with his or her academic program of study—especially in math.

6. Every student is supported to stay on track to a college credential, from intake forward, through the institution's use of effective mechanisms to generate, share, and act on academic performance and progression data.

What follows is a summary of WCCC's current efforts to streamline developmental education and implement a new First-Year Seminar.



Acceleration of Developmental Math

Roughly 59% of entering community college students are referred to developmental math, which has led us to work on different approaches to co-requisite developmental math courses. One of the complicating factors in designing these is the very sequential nature of math instruction. The solution arrived at by our math department this year was to run two pilot cohorts that challenged students to complete two levels of developmental math in one semester by employing a web-based program called Aleks.

The two instructors, Colleen Babilya and Patrick Pirilla, took slightly different approaches to managing these courses, but both reported positive experiences. One group of 11 students signed up for MTH 050 and MTH 052. Three of them earned As, five Bs, two Cs and one withdrew from MTH 050. Of those same students, seven earned Bs in 052, one earned a C and three withdrew. It's not a huge number of students, but we can see that 72% successfully met the full challenge presented to them by completing both courses and 90% successfully completed MTH 050. The other cohort of 22 students took on MTH 052 and MTH 100 in the same semester. Nineteen of them successfully completed MTH 052 and 10 successfully completed MTH 100. There were five Fs, five Ws and 2 Incompletes in MTH 100.

These results may seem underwhelming, but keep in mind that in the best of times, not even half of developmental math students complete their math requirement in two years. From that perspective, these outcomes are remarkable. The department is contemplating refinements to the design and will run the program again in fall 2016.

Acceleration of Developmental English

The fall 2015 semester saw an enormous change in how developmental English is handled at WCCC. We switched from running separate developmental Reading and Writing course sequences to integrating instruction of these skills into one sequence consisting of College Literacy I and College Literacy II. The main feature of these courses is that they provide opportunity for students to advance to college-level courses more quickly than they were able to in the past. In the case of College Literacy I, students who do exceptionally well can advance to College Writing in the subsequent semester. College Literacy II students are automatically co-enrolled in College Writing in the same semester. Course coordinators Brian Hays and Vicky Krug mobilized dozens of full- and part-time instructors, counselors and student support services assistants to implement this wholesale change.

A lot of data was generated that is still being processed and analyzed as of this date, but we know a couple of things: despite a drop in overall enrollment at the college, the number of people who took ENG 161 – College Writing jumped 28% between fall 14 and fall 15. The number of people who passed College Writing went up by 22% over the same period. The pass rate for ENG 161 slipped from 74% to a still respectable 71%, but given the changes, we feel pretty good about the results. We have held discussions with instructors of both College Literacy and College Writing, and we have determined that there are many tweaks we can make for fall 2016 that will improve the experience all around.

First Year Seminar

PDV 160 – Strategies for Academic Success, has received a major overhaul that includes a new name and number as well as an expansion of who will be taking it. Now, joining a growing number of community colleges, the new course, PDV 101-First Year Seminar, is going to take our student success course to full scale by requiring all incoming, first-time, students to participate. Led by the new course coordinator Lynna Thomas, a group of faculty members and staff worked to design the course and establish the following objectives to develop students' knowledge of:

1. The transition to college culture, including academic expectations and social responsibilities, new life skills and assimilation into a learning community.
2. The college's processes, procedures and resources, including learning and communication tools.
3. Personal and academic goals, including an educational plan that will result in successful completion of a program of study at WCCC as well as prepare him/her to enter the workforce and/or transfer to a four-year institution.

We anticipate serving about 950 students with this course during fall 2016.