Suffolk County Community College

Title III Evaluation

Year Three Report

Development Institute, Inc.

2013
Suffolk County Community College
Title III Evaluation - Year Three Report

Suffolk County Community College (SCCC) began its Title III Strengthening Institutions project – *Student Engagement through Informed Support (SEIS)* – in October of 2010. As described in the abstract, the overall purpose of the project is to “dramatically improve the success of students as they transition from their first contact with the College, through the series of heavily subscribed gateway courses, to become accomplished learners.” With one major Activity, the project tackles the need to engage and support students by intensifying and expanding their access to resources and services technologically. To that end, the College will electronically enable enrollment and admissions, reorganize faculty academic advising, institute an early warning and intervention system, develop learning objects to enhance learning support for gateway courses, and unify student support resources through a Virtual Learning Commons. With the focus squarely on student success, the project will increase successful course completion and student persistence, retention and satisfaction. Now at the end of the third year, SCCC will complete development over the remaining two years to fully implement and institutionalize SEIS by September 2015.

During the inaugural year of the Title III project, the College contracted with Development Institute, a Boston consulting firm, with Dr. Katherine German, Vice President, serving as the external evaluator. Dr. German has been involved with the design and implementation of similar programs since 1980 and held a variety of leadership roles within higher education over the past thirty years. She is currently working with numerous institutions in the development and evaluation of Title III projects as well as other change efforts within higher education.

Prior to the initial campus visits of April 25 and 26 and the final visit for the third year on November 13 and 14, 2013, Dr. German reviewed the College’s overall five-year project plan as well as
other related documents and outlined the evaluation criteria specified in the project for the second year of implementation. These criteria, defined by the project objectives and anticipated results, have been incorporated into the evaluation report for use as benchmarks against which to measure the progress of the project to date with each successive evaluation building on the one before to reflect the comprehensive development process.

While on campus for the assessments Dr. German conducted a series of structured interviews to ascertain the progress that had occurred within the elements of the overall activity under development. During these discussions, she met with Dr. Marlene DuBois, the Title III Project Director; Christine Crowe, the Title III Activity Director; Dr. William Tucker, Grants Officer; Alexandra Belanich, Tech Support; Ming Gullo, Portal Developer; Dr. Min Su, the Research Specialist; and Muriel Lanier, the Administrative Assistant regarding overall project organization, management and development. Thereafter, she met with key faculty and staff involved in project development and implementation.

Individuals participating in evaluative discussions during the campus visits included:

- **Al Heraghty**  
  Associate Professor Physical Education, Academic Advising & Mentoring Center Coordinator on the Grant Campus
- **Jeffrey Kluewer**  
  Professor of English, Steering Committee Co-Chair, and Member of the College-wide Faculty Advising Committee
- **Susan Lieberthal**  
  Ammerman Campus Head Librarian and Virtual Learning Commons Team Leader
- **Matthew Pappas**  
  Associate Professor of Earth & Space Science and Governance Representative for the Ammerman Campus and Task Force Member

Overall discussion during the evaluative meetings focused on achievements, issues that have arisen, and plans for the future. Throughout the evaluation process participants enthusiastically described their involvement, accomplishments, and expectations for the project. As part of the reviews, Dr. German shared her perceptions of project implementation with the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Dr. Carla Mazarelli, and the President, Dr. Shaun McKay, as well as with the Project Director, the Activity Director, and the Grants Officer.
**Needs Assessment**

In advance of proposal submittal, Suffolk County Community College faculty and staff engaged in an extensive, highly participatory analysis of the strengths, weaknesses and major problems inhibiting institutional growth and self-sufficiency. The analysis drew from multiple sources including the SCCC Strategic Plan, the Middle States Review, Gardner’s Foundations of Excellence Self-Report, and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement results as well as related internal reports and studies produced by the Institutional Research office.

Building on the institution’s academic, managerial, and fiscal strengths, the project addresses eight critical weaknesses spanning those three areas:

- **Academic weaknesses** include a disjointed enrollment and intervention system, insular instructional delivery, and inaccessible onsite academic support system.

- **Managerial weaknesses** include incomplete enterprise system implementation and integration, inconsistent and underpowered web presence, and technical limitations.

- **Fiscal weaknesses** include an inadequate budget for institutional development and an insufficient institutional endowment.

Taken together, these weaknesses significantly impact the College’s ability to sustain student progress to graduation, producing a single overarching problem to be addressed by the project:

- Entering student academic achievement, persistence, retention and satisfaction are devastated by legacy enrollment, advising and academic support systems that fail to connect with one another or the students they purport to serve.

By enabling enrollment, advising and intervention systems, enhancing gateway courses, and enriching teaching and learning with a virtual learning commons, the project seeks to significantly increase student success and satisfaction.

**Scope of the Project**

A single activity, *Student Engagement through Informed Support (SEIS)* presents a holistic, comprehensive approach to student success by reconstructing the SCCC educational experience, linking
instruction with enhanced support systems. Three interrelated components designed to help students become accomplished learners will improve their success as they transition from their first contact with the College through a series of heavily subscribed ‘gateway’ courses, continuing their studies to graduation.

The first component enables student success through the development of an electronic enrollment, advising and intervention system to streamline records management and coordinate admissions with continuous active monitoring thereafter, enabling timely intervention and mobilizing a refined faculty advising network.

Thereafter, the second component enhances student success through the implementation of on-line learning objects developed by teaching faculty and integrated with the curriculum to enhance academic support for 20 gateway courses.

And finally, the third component enriches teaching and learning through the implementation of a college-wide Virtual Learning Commons which provides a unified delivery system for all of the available resources – on-line and on-site - through a one-stop portal linking all learning resources - libraries, writing, math, and academic skills centers as well as gateway course learning objects - with an early alert and intervention system.

As a result, processes for enrollment, advising, learning, and engaging with the College will be transformed across the institution and student success will increase: both student satisfaction with the college experience and gateway course completion will improve by 20 percent, persistence will improve by 15 percent, and retention will improve by 10 percent. By 2015, the Activity will be fully institutionalized to ensure the continuing vitality of the institution and the success of its students.

**Year One Activity Assessment**

To initialize the project Dr. Charity Welch, Executive Assistant to the President, was appointed as Title III Coordinator; Dr. Jian Zhang, College Associate Dean for Student Success, was appointed to the role of Activity Director; and the faculty and staff of the Title III Task Force were appointed. Shortly thereafter, Muriel Lanier was appointed to the position of Principal Clerk; four Design Teams composed of faculty and staff volunteers were formed and Dr. Marlene DuBois, Assistant Professor of English, was appointed to the position of Faculty Coordinator, a new role established by the President with institutional support to ensure the success of the faculty-driven initiative, and a website was established
to sustain interest and involvement. Meanwhile, searches for the Instructional Media Technologist/Webmaster and the Research Specialist continued into the summer, ultimately resulting in the selection of Tatiana Tchoubar to serve as the Instructional Media Technologist/Webmaster and Dr. Min Su to serve as the Research Specialist. During the year Dr. Charity Welch left the College and was replaced by Dr. DuBois as the Title III Coordinator. By the end of the year SCCC had identified a talented Title III Team which coalesced around the singular, integrated vision of SEIS.

With key personnel in place and announcements about the project made via the College Brief (Number 11, October 4, 2010), plans were developed to host a college-wide Professional Development Day focused on student success, the initiatives included in the project, and the best practices of their colleagues within and beyond the institution. Entitled Preparing Faculty for Student Success in the 21st Century, on March 22, 2011 over 500 faculty and staff participated in concurrent panel discussions on enrollment and admissions, gateway course support, virtual learning commons, and faculty mentoring followed by nineteen breakout sessions and four design team meetings involving all who wished to engage. A comprehensive program provided a wealth of information about the project and the events of the day, providing a tremendous platform from which to launch Activity development.

Three major objectives focus the work of the Activity for the inaugural year:

1. Increase from 0 to 20% the accessibility of enrollment and advising;
2. Increase from 0 to 5 supported gateway courses; and
3. Increase from 0 to 22% the accessibility of the Virtual Learning Commons.

As a result of the first year’s work, e-transcripting software, assessment delivery scripts, and web-enabled applications were to be installed and debugged with 4550 first-time, full-time students enrolling using the web. Additionally, 5 gateway course teams were to select key concepts for support and design or adopt learning objects so that they were ready to pilot during the second year. And finally, site and process maps for the Virtual Learning Commons were to be completed with hardware and software
ready for student use in the fall, including access to the learning objects developed or adopted for the five gateway courses to be piloted in year two.

**Enrollment and Admissions**

The Enrollment and Admissions (E&A) Team is the first of four tri-campus volunteer teams of faculty and staff working on various components of the Activity. This particular Team has undertaken the task of improving electronic workflow, streamlining transcripting and assessment, and improving web-enabled application capability. Professional Development Day speakers from Hudson Valley Community College, the College at Oneonta, and Texas Wesleyan University discussed their unique enrollment and assessment systems and two vendors presented software systems designed to support the enrollment process, all geared to assist the college community in re-envisioning the enrollment and assessment system.

Meanwhile, the E&A team worked through the various steps of the enrollment process to streamline and enable the system across all sites. Components of the streamlined system include an improved central and campus instant admissions process, strategies to enable electronic transcript acceptance, on-line scheduling and scripting of assessment, and e-mail access. Once fully developed, the system will also support electronic distribution of orientation resources and, ultimately, the provision of an extended on-line orientation. Every effort is being made to capitalize on the capabilities of Banner, the College’s enterprise system, the use of the web portal, and the statewide effort to implement e-transcripting.

By the end of the first year, admissions workflow was virtually complete with the three campuses using the same refined process garnering a lot more information, a development the users labeled nothing less than “Fantastic” even as efforts continue to replicate the ubiquitous ‘white card’ in Banner. Concurrently, efforts were successful in implementing e-transcripting using Docufide and Naviance. Under the new system, transcripts are received by the College electronically and scanned...
directly into Banner, allowing students to request a high school transcript via the on-line application located on the SCCC admissions page. Likewise, the enhanced web application includes additional information and provides increased usability, linking directly with the Banner system. As the year concluded the Team was refining the application and creating a summary page for students while also considering the ways in which student access to – and preparation for – assessment might be improved. By the end of the year virtually all entering students used the new system exceeding expectations! The work of the Enrollment and Admissions Team has made students’ and counselors’ lives much easier.

**Gateway Course Support Enhancement**

The second team of faculty and staff known as the Gateway Course Support Enhancement (GCSE) team consists of two discipline-based teams to identify key concepts for support with on-line learning objects to increase student learning and achievement. Again, Professional Development Day presentations played a key role in expanding awareness of the potential that lies in the use of learning objects to augment ‘classroom’ learning. Faculty and staff from Rutgers University, the State University of New York at Empire State College, and Stony Brook University, as well as SCCC colleagues discussed the development and use of learning objects, sharing their best practices with the college community.

During the spring, eight groups of learning objects were developed and/or collected for five gateway courses--two college seminars and three developmental math courses: Freshman Seminar, Personal Growth and College Life, Developmental Math Skills, Pre-Algebra, and Algebra I. Faculty working on the courses were enthusiastic about the materials they created with tools such as Powerpoint, Flash, and Camtasia as well as the open-source materials they were able to provide with links for the students. Course-specific learning objects included explanations, multimedia demonstrations, quizzes, worksheets, and lexicons derived from the web and/or created by the faculty, all of which were linked with the curriculum, uploaded to the website by Tatiana Tchoubar, the new Instructional Media Technologist/Webmaster, and embedded into the instructional process.
By the end of the first year the five anticipated pilots were underway with participating faculty teaching the targeted courses encouraged to incorporate the learning objects in their sections. Students enrolled were accessing the learning objects through the Virtual Learning Commons portal. Those enrolled in the Freshman Seminar used learning objects for such activities as goal setting, while those enrolled in Mathematics used them primarily for the review of specific mathematical concepts and operations. Associated with the use of learning objects, the Mathematics faculty opted to try three different approaches to see which was more effective in encouraging student usage of the newly created support: (1) providing extra credit for use; (2) providing instruction in the use, but no extra credit for use; and (3) providing access but no instructions for use. It will be interesting to see the results of this experiment! Again, the objective was successfully met despite delays in finding the Instructional Media Technologist/Webmaster and limited access to development tools and essential hardware to support the design process, an issue that will be addressed with the new cohort of faculty involved in the effort in year two. It is clear that the strategy is garnering considerable faculty involvement, resulting in a plethora of exciting possibilities in the world of learning objects.

**Virtual Learning Commons**

A third team, the Virtual Learning Commons Team (VLCT), like its counterparts, began work on the Commons with a demonstration of the Live-Brary, a highly interactive website developed for the Suffolk Country Cooperative Libraries, and the development of an inventory of on-site college services to be linked with the Commons, initial steps which ultimately led to the development of preliminary site and process maps to support the VLC. Conceived as both a comprehensive library of learning objects and a service delivery site, the concept of the VLC was featured in the Professional Development Day by presenters from Tufts University, Stony Brook University, Hostos Community College, the University of Hartford and SCCC. Four subgroups addressed the development of specific components of the VLC: web-mapping, Library, Writing and Academic Skills. Additionally, a student event entitled *Virtual
Learning Commons at SCCC – What’s in it for Me? demonstrated the concept and, asking students to move ‘Beyond Facebook’, garnered excellent feedback from students which included enthusiasm for the videos incorporated into the system, a recommendation that the site be accessible using mobile devices, and a concern that their work – especially quizzes designed to test their learning – remain apart from course grades.

During the course of the first year a production site was developed within the Luminis portal, ensuring a consistent look and feel for all support systems incorporated into the Commons. To ensure the accessibility of the Virtual Learning Commons to students engaged in the pilots of the five gateway courses in the fall the Team invested in an on-site effort to improve the usability and aesthetics of the initial production site and worked to capture essential analytics, allowing the Team to monitor student usage and assess impact, both tasks that have been assumed by the Instructional Media Technologist since she arrived.

By the end of the first year the site was accessible to students as anticipated, providing both information on the support services available on each campus while also providing access to the learning objects developed for the first five gateway courses and metrics assessing levels of usage throughout the site. It will be most interesting to see which components of the site were most in demand as efforts to refine the site and build usage continue throughout the second year of implementation.

**Faculty Mentoring and Student Engagement**

And finally, the fourth team, Faculty Mentoring and Student Engagement (FM&SE) worked on redefining the concept of ‘faculty advising’ and ‘faculty mentoring’. Given a traditional model of advising in which the process is defined largely as course registration and scheduling, the FM&SE team began its work by examining the best practices of other institutions and considering the feasibility of using a system such as DegreeWorks, a product that is under consideration by the SUNY system.
Professional Development Day presentations by representatives of the College of Oneonta, Hudson Valley Community College, Texas Wesleyan University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and ACT provided the college community with an expanded view of the possibilities and their impact.

A subsequent survey designed to assess faculty attitudes, experience, and needs relative to mentoring and academic advising engendered considerable conversation across the college. As a result, two potential models of faculty mentoring and student engagement were considered. Model One described students with two or more developmental placements moving through the Counseling Center while their peers with higher placements moved directly into the faculty advising and mentoring system, and Model Two described all students moving into the Counseling Center for initial advisement before making the transition to the faculty advising and mentoring system in the middle of their first semester. In both models, faculty would provide advice and mentoring through an on-going Center, requiring additional staffing and released time for faculty.

With the faculty mentoring/advising certification training scheduled for the next year, the team took the opportunity to reflect on the students’ needs and completely reform the process with the assistance of one Dr. Jayne Drake, past President of NACADA, the National Academic Advising Association. As work on the advising model continued, the Team began the development of an Advising Handbook linked with an Advising Syllabus, each of which address advising at a conceptual level for new students while promoting the development of an advising relationship to provide essential advising information for continuing students through the academic departments. Essentially a developmental advising model, the process would serve as a critical component of the teaching-learning experience. Eventually the Advising Handbook will need to interface with DegreeWorks while access to an electronic appointment system will help ensure the success of the system. Concurrently efforts will begin to expand the student orientation program to include online modules.
To be sure, much was accomplished in the inaugural year of the project, with faculty clearly engaged in the development and implementation process as the College capitalizes on the opportunity the project presents. All of the objectives of the first year were accomplished and more, with the course set for continued development over the next year.

Year Two Activity Assessment

With a successful inaugural year completed, the Title III Leadership Team sought to sustain the energy generated through the collaborative spirit established and focus on efforts to address the development of the technological infrastructure. At the start of the year, Dr. Jian Zhang left the College and Christine Crowe assumed the role of Title III Activity Director. Christine brings a keen organizational eye, an indomitable spirit, and an impressive base of experience to her new role, the impact of which has already become apparent to her colleagues on the Title III Leadership Team. Additionally, Alexandra Belanich joined the team as Tech Support, adding experience and expertise to the effort to develop and manage the technological and components of the project, while Tatiana Tchoubar left the College.

Four major objectives focused the work of the Activity for the second year of implementation:

1. Increase from 20 to 50% the accessibility of enrollment and advising;
2. Increase from 5 to 10 supported gateway courses;
3. Increase from 22 to 48% the accessibility of the Virtual Learning Commons; and
4. Increase from 64 to 76% FT/FT student success in 5 gateway courses with enhanced support.

As a result of the second year’s work, a Faculty Mentoring/Advising model workshop was to be designed with 100 faculty trained and 3 centers equipped to advise 800 First-time/Full-time students. Additionally, 5 gateway course teams were to select the key concepts to support, design or adopt learning objects, and be ready to pilot, while the Virtual Learning Center provided access to the 5 information literacy and critical thinking learning objects previously developed for students in 395 sections, ultimately hosting 10 course object sets by the end of the second year. And finally, 20 sections were expected to pilot on-line learning objects with 9 faculty and 1125 students, resulting in a 20%
increase in the number of First-time/Full-time students finishing COM101, COL101, MAT001, 006 and 007 with a ‘C’ or better.

**Enrollment and Admissions**

This year the Enrollment and Admissions (E&A) Team had two major initiatives, the first improving the functionality of the web application, and the second creating and integrating the advising and testing database into Banner. By the mid-point of the year, the web app summary for students was implemented, so that student could view and receive an email summary of the admissions application before submission, while the staff could automatically place holds on the students’ accounts for advising and testing, immunization, meningitis, and felony, all conditions that can affect their admission.

During the balance of the year the students’ applications were converted to pdfs so that they could be ‘pushed’ into Banner, automatically loaded into X-tender, and ready for viewing by the counselors. A summary page is viewable by Central Admissions or from any campus, to facilitate the processing of the application. All of the necessary information on a single sheet avoids the need to jump from screen to screen in Banner. Now, as the staff says, it all happens “automagically”!

Meanwhile, after analyzing three different software products, the Team recommended the purchase and installation of SARS, a system known for ease of use and capacity, including the availability of an early alert component, which will be implemented in the spring with Assessment and Testing before it is expanded to other areas. A key issue relative to the installation of the system is the development of the interface with Banner, an issue that has been addressed successfully by many other institutions using the same systems. Additionally, ACT was chosen as the non-cognitive assessment tool; anticipating a pilot in the spring of 2013, the tool will be housed in the VLC and linked with the Freshman Seminar. And finally, the College will begin the installation of DegreeWorks next year as well, a tool that should prove quite useful both to the E&A Team and the FMSE Team. Tremendous progress
was made in the streamlining of Admissions and Enrollment systems, and all of their work was developed collaboratively and implemented college-wide, a very difficult task.

As in the first year, the Enrollment and Admissions Team once again not only met its objectives with the accessibility of enrollment increasing significantly for all students, but planned ahead for the year coming. The members of the Team are commended for their foresight and tenacity! Well done!

**Gateway Course Support Enhancement**

The Gateway Course Support Enhancement (GCSE) team consists of discipline-based teams to identify key concepts for support with on-line learning objects to increase student learning and achievement. Last year, eight groups of learning objects were developed and/or collected for five gateway courses, two college seminars and three developmental math courses: Freshman Seminar, Personal Growth and College Life, Developmental Math Skills, Pre-Algebra, and Algebra I.

This year learning objects were either developed or identified for five additional courses by their respective faculty teams: COL 105, PSY101, RDG098 and 099, and BIO101. For example, the BIO101 Team identified six units mapped to course objectives for learning objects along with a quiz for each unit. Objects were initially created in PowerPoint and subsequently converted to Camtasia for uploading to the VLC. The faculty authored the text, figures and animations, using commercial assets only when necessary with two publishers providing required permissions: McGraw-Hill and Pearson. Interactive unit quizzes were also developed in Flash as separate learning objects. Working together, the faculty outlined each unit as a team, with a single team member thereafter assuming authorship. All six units were drafted and refined in preparation for deployment in the fall. Likewise, faculty working on writing emphasized the writing process with a series of engaging activities, while the psychology faculty provided a plethora of rich resources to both engage and support students in their studies.

Faculty working on the courses were enthusiastic about the materials they were creating with tools such as Powerpoint, Flash, and Camtasia as well as the open-source materials they provided with
links for the students. So far, course-specific learning objects included explanations, multimedia demonstrations, quizzes, worksheets, and lexicons derived from the web and/or created by the faculty, all of which were linked with the curriculum and embedded into the instructional process.

Wisely, the objects developed for each course are reviewed by the Department and approved before they are hosted by the VLC, thereby encouraging all faculty in the department to become involved in their development and usage. Some faculty are requiring students to use the objects, while others are noting their availability in the syllabus with little further encouragement of their use. Most are promoting awareness of the learning objects to one extent or another; few faculty are completely disengaged from the initiative – a very decent track record.

As the year concluded, every effort was being made to encourage faculty teaching the 20 courses for which they were developed to inform students of the availability of the learning objects if not actually using them in their courses, a task best undertaken by the faculty themselves with their departmental colleagues. Again, the objective was met handsomely by the end of the year, with 10 Gateway courses now supported by learning objects available through the Virtual Learning Commons. Moreover, for those students who actually use the objects, performance improves. An initial analysis of the inaugural cohort indicated an 8% increase in student achievement, i.e., completion of the course with a ‘C’ or better! Moreover, specific students who used the learning objects through the VLC demonstrate considerably higher performance. Kudos to the Gateway Course Teams!

Virtual Learning Commons

The Virtual Learning Commons (VLC) Team, like its counterparts, worked on the Commons. Building on the development of the first year, the usability and aesthetics of the production site were improved, as was the capacity to capture essential analytics such as student usage and impact, and the site was piloted. Serving six key disciplines, an initial core of student users indicated their preferences as
they put the site to the test in the spring, while faculty themselves learned more about the site, its accessibility and utility.

An analysis of student usage of the VLC over a nine-month period highlighted increased usage as the Commons was promoted through a variety of venues, particularly the College Seminar for entering students, with over 1250 students engaging the site from August through October; going forward the Team will also examine frequency of use and impact on achievement. Additionally, a research study testing student usage and impact of the VLC in the College Seminar and Math paired with a control group provided two critical pieces of information: first, students are more likely to use the site if it is part of the class, and second, use of the site increases student performance. These results were absolutely critical to the continued promotion and development of the site, encouraging both faculty and students to take advantage of the new learning opportunity the VLC provides. As a result, the push was on to publicize the VLC using posters, flat screen TVs, and screensavers in the fall, not to mention the introduction of the site at the students’ initial advising session, in the College Seminar course, and through the Student Activities Day on each campus. The Library, which houses its own learning objects on the site, also promoted the VLC in the 700 classes it taught as well. During the fall, the test continued with increasing numbers of faculty and students using the site for more and more courses. Ultimately the College will move to Luminis 5, which will provide increased opportunity for the development of the VLC and the assessment of its impact on student achievement.

After two years of work, 841 sections of courses have access to enhancements with 10 course object sets available. Across 20 pilot sections, 1068 FT/FT students used the learning objects, with performance improving in every section in which at least one student used the VLC. Moreover, an analysis of the impact of usage on individual student achievement indicated substantially higher performance – 23% - for those students who accessed the learning objects through the VLC versus those
students who did not access them – a significant improvement! Congratulations to both the VLC and GCSE Teams!

As the VLC continues to evolve, load testing will intensify, learning objects will be more fully developed and accessible, and research on the utility of the site will expand. The next iteration of the site is being conceptualized to accommodate increasing numbers of courses in the near future, perhaps by discipline, with coded links to aid in the analysis of student usage. In the next year, the drive to move students to the VLC will go viral as the VLC hosts its first Treasure Hunt and iTunes Raffle! Clearly, the VLC is where the action is – another great collaboration by the Team!

**Faculty Mentoring and Student Engagement**

The Faculty Mentoring and Student Engagement (FM&SE) built on its examination of best practices during the first year with two workshops, one conducted by Dr. Jayne Drake of NACADA addressing Advising as teaching, and the second conducted by counseling and teaching faculty at the College addressing advising strategies and the availability of Advising Tools, such as the Advising Handbook while refining the concepts of ‘advising’ and ‘mentoring’.

The new model for Mentoring and Engagement ensures that all incoming students will receive initial advisement through the Counseling Center, making the transition to the faculty advising and mentoring system in the middle of their first semester. Faculty Mentoring and Advising Centers (FMACs) were then developed at the Ammerman, Grant, and East Campuses. However, each campus created a slightly different approach to the connection between students and faculty during the transition: at the Ammerman Campus, students go from the Center to faculty offices; at the Grant Campus, faculty volunteers staff the Center; and on the East Campus faculty provide arena advising during critical periods. With the key components of the new model defined, the Team made tremendous headway, institutionalizing the Advising Handbook which was reviewed by the Faculty Association (Union) while the Team was initiating faculty training. During the fall, training sessions addressed FERPA, best
practices, transfer, learning disabilities, and special topics such as finding purpose and developing relationships with 91 faculty participating. As the members say, “We’re moving beyond the blue form!”

Clearly much progress was made in rethinking the advising process, creating the FMACs on each campus and providing training – and it worked! Over 800 First Time/Full Time students were advised, exceeding the target! Congratulations! Moving forward work will focus on the continued development of the advising process delivered by faculty requiring considerable faculty engagement in the process while the curriculum for the virtual orientation is refined and a tool is identified for the assessment of student readiness.

Across the board, SEIS made tremendous progress during the second year. Faculty remained fully engaged in the collaborative work of the Teams, a modus operandi that bodes well for the future of the project and the success of the students! In fact, some faculty are clamoring to develop learning objects ahead of schedule – which is terrific – and writing centers have already been established on the Grant and Eastern Campuses – a year ahead of schedule! The students love them! As a result, even at this early stage of development, the impact appears to be accruing. Students in the first cohort of courses developing and integrating learning objects with the VLC were passing their courses in greater numbers! Now each of the four initiatives must be expanded and integrated with the learning process to solidify and intensify the intended impact. Ultimately, the users – students and colleagues – will be the arbiters of the SEIS’ success.

Year Three Activity Assessment

Already through the midpoint of the five-year implementation process, the Title III Leadership Team sustained the energy generated through the collaborative spirit established from the start with giant steps forward technologically and pedagogically. Five major objectives focused the work of the Activity for the third year of implementation:

1. Increase from 50 to 80% the accessibility of enrollment and advising;
2. Increase from 10 to 15 supported gateway courses;
3. Increase from 48 to 81% the accessibility of the Virtual Learning Commons;
4. Increase from 69 to 82% FT/FT student success in 10 gateway courses with enhanced support (2009 – 2010 baseline); and
5. Increase from 73 to 77% the number of students persisting from fall to spring (2007 - 2008 baseline).

As a result of the third year’s work, it was anticipated that 4,550 students would be oriented and assessed with expanded assessment tools, an online orientation, and three staffed Faculty Mentoring/Advising Centers. Meanwhile, the faculty would continue to design - or adopt - learning objects to support key concepts in five additional courses, and new scripts would link Banner D2L and Luminis to enable virtual advising, orientation and tutoring. By this point, it was also anticipated that 718 sections would access enhancements via the VLC across 15 targeted gateway courses. And finally, at this juncture, efforts to assess the impact on achievement and persistence would be initiated, demonstrating that successful course completion increased 20% across 20 sections of the targeted courses - COM101, COL101, MAT001, MAT006, MAT007, COL105, PSY101, RDG098, RDG099, and BIO101 - and second, that persistence, or continuing enrollment from fall to spring, increased 5% across the 2,400 students participating in the full enrollment process, including assessment, orientation and advising. During the year the Title III Team sought to meet each of these objectives with room to spare!

**Enrollment and Advising**

The Enrollment and Advising (E&A) Team has done a tremendous job in its pursuit of systemic improvements in the student experience. During the first two years the Team improved electronic workflow and web-enabled application capability, streamlined transcript receipt and assessment, improved the functionality of the web application, and created an advising and testing database integrated with Banner. This year the team completed its implementation a new online orientation system by creating a self-contained virtual orientation which is housed within the Virtual Learning Commons, ensuring that all students who seek orientation to important information at the College, especially related to co-curricular activities or academic advising—activities tied to successful student
engagement—may do so. As a result, 6,135 students were oriented and assessed using the two options: on-site and online. The virtual orientation provides a strong message on engagement in the learning enterprise and makes a significant link to the available learning object on mentoring also available through the Commons. The expanded orientation is off and running, with additional development anticipated in the year ahead as the Team becomes increasingly familiar with the possibilities for this new venue. Good show!

**Faculty Mentoring and Student Engagement**

The Faculty Mentoring & Student Engagement (FM&SE) Team has done a tremendous job in its pursuit of systemic improvements in the student experience. During the first two years this Team focused on two key initiatives: expanding assessment through the integration of *ACT Engage*, a non-cognitive assessment of student readiness, and developing intensified advising through the implementation of Faculty Mentoring and Advising Centers (FMAC) on each campus accompanied by the redesign of the advising model—no small feat! Best practices related to advising as teaching were considered along with the potential of advising strategies and tools before ultimately refining pervasive concepts of ‘advising’ and ‘mentoring’ respectively. Ultimately, the Team developed a new model for Mentoring and Engagement with all incoming students receiving initial advisement through the Counseling Center making a transition to the faculty advising and mentoring system in the middle of their first semester. With the model defined, the Team evolved to engage more faculty in the process as the model was initiated, the *Advising Handbook* refined and a *Short Guide for Faculty* was created, faculty training was expanded to support implementation, and the entire system was promoted across the institution.

By the end of the year the *ACT Engage* assessment was offered to students enrolled in COL105, the College Seminar, through a subscription-based system. The instrument addresses three major factors:
• Motivation and Skills – the personal characteristics that maintain goal direction, e.g., discipline, determination, commitment, study and communication skills;

• Social Engagement – the interpersonal factors that influence integration and adaptation, e.g., social connections and activities; and

• Self-Regulation – the cognitive and affective processes that monitor, regulate and control behaviors toward learning, e.g., academic self-confidence and steadiness.

While only 98 students participated in the assessment, the results of this initial usage were most informative for the students and faculty in COL 105. As the links with engagement are strengthened and the assessment is brought to scale in the year ahead these assessment results will be more fully integrated with advising to fully inform the process.

Meanwhile, work on the implementation of the advising model itself has made significant progress as evidenced through the establishment of a College-wide Faculty Advising Committee. Faculty Coordinators working with professional staff and colleagues now contribute to the FMAC activities established through Centers on each of the campuses, work supplemented by strong on-line connections and a college-wide AAMC webpage. Armed with computer access and a plethora of advising materials posted throughout the institution, the staff and faculty who advise for the Centers are quite busy, already connecting with over 3,984 first-time, full-time students along with their peers who do not fall into this particular category. During the year 202 of the full-time faculty members across the College have been trained in the new advising model, one that promotes the development of an ongoing relationship in a year-round schedule to support the students to graduation rather than simply building a schedule for the next semester. The faculty are fully engaged and most enthusiastic both about the model and their role in the advising process, a factor that is underscored by the impressive participation rates achieved this year. Reaching faculty on all campuses, the Team will continue to provide additional training as the project moves forward. Clearly this year has produced a ‘sea change’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FT Faculty and FT/FT Students in the Faculty Mentoring and Advising System</th>
<th>Ammerman</th>
<th>Grant</th>
<th>Eastern</th>
<th>Total</th>
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20
Augmenting the on-site advising process is an active online presence with faculty providing support and making linkages with academic support provided through the Virtual Learning Commons and a new mid-term alert system piloted this fall with 227 sections – 6 percent of the course schedule. After extensive research and consultation the faculty opted for a system that is simple, non-punitive, inviting and personal. Available from the third week until the mid-semester withdrawal deadline, faculty encourage students to seek their advice, seek tutoring, or take other action before the midterm deadline. Implemented in the fall, this new alert is inextricably linked with the advising system and virtually faculty driven – another tremendous step forward college-wide to promote student success.

From all indications, the emerging model seems to be working beautifully as preliminary research indicates that students connected to faculty advisors were a full 5 percent more successful in their coursework than those who did not connect – terrific! Moreover, the impact of all of the work completed to date has had an even more impressive impact with student persistence 12 percent higher than the 2007-2008 baseline – more than double the 5 percent target! An 82 percent persistence rate is most encouraging, and should propel the combined initiatives forward over the course of the next year.

Tremendous progress has been made by the Faculty Mentoring & Student Engagement Team, with every initiative developed collaboratively and implemented college-wide, a very difficult task. Now as ACT ENGAGE and DegreeWorks are integrated into the process, the collective will need to determine how to capitalize on these new tools to accelerate student success. Again, the members of the Team are commended for their foresight and tenacity! Well done!

**Gateway Course Support Enhancement**

The Gateway Course Support Enhancement (GCSE) Team consists of five discipline-based teams charged with the identification of key concepts for support with on-line learning objects to increase
student learning and achievement in targeted gateway courses. During the first two years, thirteen groups of learning objects were developed and/or collected for ten gateway courses: two college seminars and three developmental math courses as well as five gateway college-level courses. And this year five more courses were addressed by five faculty design teams: Developmental Writing, Statistics, Spanish, Philosophy and College Algebra.

A review of three specific learning objects provides a window into the thinking behind the design of the learning objects as well as the potential impact:

- The Statistics team developed a very engaging story in which a rather quirky avatar named “Skeeter” engages in a conversation about a sticky statistical concept called the “Z score” with his friendly local bartender, a conversation that subsequently leads into a full explanation and application of the concept. Totally unexpected from the Stat Team, the learning object is both information and humorous – a winning combination, especially in statistics!

- The Developmental Writing Group took a different tack, one which is equally engaging, with the design of a learning object describing the writing process. What is particularly enthralling about this tool is the use of modern film to demonstrate each of the key concepts inherent in the writing process. Developed with clarity and insight, this particular learning object should have utility far beyond the basic writing courses; in effect, many faculty across the disciplines could readily direct their students to this object for writing assistance.

Clearly, the design and the production of these exemplary learning objects demonstrates significant advances in the concept of a ‘learning object’; it is most exciting to see the faculty exercising their creativity with increased confidence, clarity, and skill, seduced, in part, by the opportunity. Now the issue to be considered for existing learning objects is usage; the faculty on the design teams are sold on the objects, but their colleagues less so, an issue of particular concern when courses are taught by faculty, particularly adjunct faculty, who may not be well versed in their utility. It will take a full court press to increase the usage of the learning objects if students are to realize their maximum impact.

In the meantime, however, in an effort to increase faculty involvement in the development of learning objects the Team also created mini-grants – an award of $500 for instructors – individually or in groups - to learn the applications and skills required to create learning objects. This new initiative seems
to have caught on beautifully, with ten topics proposed by faculty designers developed to date: Culinary Arts, Reading Primary Sources, Fundamental Accounting Principles, Astronomy, Benefits of Mentorship, Guided Interactive Self-assessment in Anatomy and Physiology, Functions in Math, Pre-calculus II, Digital Identity Awareness, and Flashcard-based Method of Studying. Perhaps the best example occurred in the field of astronomy where a faculty member created an engaging exploration of the galaxy, noting that students often have tremendous difficulty finding the various constellations in the night sky. The most intriguing aspect of this particular learning object is the layered reveal, much like that of a magician! For students, particularly those unfamiliar with mythology, this learning object will provide invaluable – and it is only in its infancy with the faculty engaged hinting at much more to come! As a mechanism to expand the availability of learning objects, the mini-grant is a winner; now the Team needs to create a similar strategy to recognize levels of usage and assess the comparative impact.

One of the truly exciting aspects of the movement into learning objects is the development of facility with an expanding tool set. At the outset, faculty borrowed learning objects from others and tested the capacity of PowerPoint to engage students and promote learning. Then the tool set expanded with the addition of Camtasia as faculty authored the text, figures and animations, using commercial assets only when necessary. Next, interactive unit quizzes were developed, and then other open source materials were added to the cache and, as an extra added attraction, “IT Genie” (a virtual expert) was hired! Throughout this development process, faculty have worked together enthusiastically to craft explanations, multimedia demonstrations, quizzes, worksheets, and lexicons, all of which are linked with the curriculum and embedded into the instructional process with Departmental approval. All departmental faculty are encouraged to become involved in their development and usage: some are requiring students to use the objects, others are simply noting their availability in the syllabus with little further encouragement of their use, and one is actually challenging his students to create their own – adding to the treasure trove from a peer perspective! Fantastic! In the end, most faculty who have
been involved in the process are promoting awareness of the learning objects to one extent or another; however, every effort will need to be made to eliminate perceived barriers and promote the accessibility of the learning objects, if not use them in their courses, a task best undertaken by the faculty themselves with their departmental colleagues perhaps with some creative reinforcement from the GCSE Team. Kudos to the gateway course teams!

**Virtual Learning Commons**

A third team, the Virtual Learning Commons Team (VLCT) has been working on the Commons. During the first two years the Team created an inventory of the services to be linked with the Commons and preliminary site and process maps leading to the design of a production site complete with analytics to capture usage and impact and hosted six key disciplines for an initial core of student users who put the site to the test. Two critical lessons were learned: first, students are more likely to use the site if it is part of the class, and second, use of the site increases student performance. With that knowledge the press was on to increase student usage via an extensive publicity campaign: signage, posters, flat screen TVs, a student testimonial on the homepage, and screensavers, as well as introductions to the site at advising sessions, in the College Seminar course, through the Student Activities Day, at the Open House, and via the Library, the Advising and Mentoring Centers college-wide, including a second annual VLC treasure hunt. And this year the utility of the site has expanded exponentially, improving the accessibility of support services as well as learning objects college-wide to exceed the project target.

Among the developments underway is the capacity of the Commons to host virtual advising, orientation and tutoring through a central access point for either synchronous - immediate - support via “Connect” or asynchronous - delayed - support. In effect, any area seeking direct support can now use this feature, a boon to the provision of timely student support. Within the Writing Centers, for example, over 1,792 students college wide were assisted in over 5,000 visits to the Centers on each of the campuses, a significant impact in their second year of operation boosted, in part, by the linkage with the
VLC. With the anticipated upgrade to Luminis 5.1, which is well in-hand; the installation of DegreeWorks, which is coming along well; and the potential of Blackboard Collaborate, the prospects for virtual advising and tutoring increase dramatically – exciting new developments to come – soon! Surely the VLC Team can facilitate some creative ways to accelerate development once the tools are in place, particularly now that the Team includes interested faculty and staff actually working on learning objects – good move!

By the end of the third year 15 new sets of learning objects developed through the gateway course and mini-grant programs supporting instructional and advising were hosted by the VLC bringing the total number of courses with learning objects available to 19 and the number of sections piloting learning objects to 706. Overall, 1,325 sections have links to learning objects, and this year, 2,660 first-time, full-time students have used the learning objects over an array of 19 targeted courses, exceeding the project target. Students participating indicate that they want more – more objects and more subjects covered! Not only is the Team eager to respond, but the students are, too, rising to the challenge to design their own learning objects! Why? Because learning is enlivened and achievement is increasing!

Preliminary data for a single semester indicates that students enrolled in ten targeted courses with learning objects saw a 6 percent increase in successful course completion, and if they specifically used the learning objects the increase was 16 percent, bringing the completion rate to 80 percent, a pattern very nearly like that established last year. Moreover, more students are using the objects since last year as the saturation rate increased from 7 percent to 13 percent – enough to prove the concept. Among the 15 major subject areas represented in the VLC, the new VLC Usage Survey indicates that English tops the user list; across the board videos, articles and other readings are by far the most popular (80%) followed by interactive quizzes (19%) and other options:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Learning Object Popularity among Student Users by Subject, Fall 2013</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Area</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
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<tr>
<td>Videos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
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<td>Other Options</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning Centers Guide</td>
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<td>Reading</td>
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<td>Library</td>
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<td>Developmental Math</td>
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<td>College Seminar</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
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<td>English</td>
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<td>Algebra</td>
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<td>Philosophy</td>
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<td>Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virtual Orientation</td>
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</table>

Now as the project continues to evolve toward Luminis 5.1 and ADA compliance, everyone - faculty, staff and students - needs to realize the benefits of the Virtual Learning Commons. Can faculty testimonials and mobile ‘apps’ be far behind? Congratulations to the faculty and staff who have devoted their creative energies to the effort – it has clearly taken flight and is only beginning to make the difference that was imagined with considerably more impact to come!

Year three has been a watershed year! Faculty and staff are fully engaged in each of the Teams within which collaborative development is the norm, a modus operandi that bodes well for the future of the project and the success of the students! Now as the fourth year begins, it will become increasingly important to make sure that each of the initiatives is sufficiently developed and integrated with the learning process to intensify and expand the impact to all students, not just the lucky few!

**Project Management**

SCCC’s Title III project is integrated within the institutional structure with the President of the College, Dr. Shaun McKay, assuming overall leadership responsibility, with the Title III Team fully incorporated into the management of the organization, and with faculty and staff fully involved in the implementation of the Activity. The Title III Project Director, Marlene DuBois, reports directly to the President and works closely and effectively with the Activity Director, Christine Crowe. While the
Activity Director is responsible for and fully engaged in the day-to-day implementation of the project, the Project Director is responsible for the provision of overall guidance for and supervision of project operations; compliance with all relevant requirements at the local, state and federal levels; the establishment of effective communication networks; the approval of expenditures and management of budgets; the maintenance of records and documentation; and the coordination of evaluation procedures culminating in the preparation and submission of required reports as the liaison with the Department of Education and the assigned Program Officer, Pearson Owens.

The components of the Activity are under the purview of project personnel and fully incorporated into the organizational structure under the supervision of appropriate College administrators. A comprehensive Title III Policies and Procedures Handbook guides project implementation and provides direction for all major initiatives to be undertaken. Staff hired for Title III positions are selected in accordance with established hiring procedures at the College with appropriate position descriptions and time-and-effort forms filed for all project personnel. Project records are maintained by Muriel Lanier, the Administrative Assistant, electronically and in hard copy. Additionally, all project expenditures are initiated by the Team Leaders in concert with the Activity Director and subsequently reviewed by the Project Director and the appropriate College officer(s) prior to submission to the Business Office. Both the Title III Project Director and the Business Manager approve each project expenditure to ensure compliance with the approved budget and all federal and state regulations. Program records are maintained in the Business Office under proper standards of accounting with statements available to the Title III Activity Director, the Project Director, and the President.

Through the work of the Research Specialist, Dr. Min Su, a baseline database was developed to include the storage of all relevant data required to provide appropriate benchmarks for use throughout the implementation of – and upon conclusion of – the project; over the course of the project this database has been expanded to include additional measures of importance to the implementation
process as well as the overall assessment of impact. Meetings of the Task Force, composed of key stakeholders across the institution, the President’s Executive Staff, and Governance Leaders, provide opportunities for collaboration and communication as well as planning and problem-solving to ensure the success of the Activity and produce the intended impact of the project. Reports addressing Title III accomplishments are prepared and shared broadly during regular meetings of the Task Force and other appropriate venues. At key events in the calendar of the College, such as the Professional Development Day held each spring, the President, the Title III Project Director and the Activity Director, along with faculty and staff involved in the effort, provide briefings and updates, as well as showcases and professional development opportunities for colleagues throughout the College community. Additionally, a robust website houses all major documents associated with the project, providing ubiquitous access to current information regarding the progress of the Teams working on project initiatives, and this spring a newsletter, SCCC ENGAGE, was inaugurated highlighting accomplishments, a great new addition to the communications roster.

The negotiated budget for the third year of implementation was submitted to the Department of Education to accommodate an award of $399,588; with carryover funds from previous years in the amount of $174,190, $573,778 was available to support the project, of which $449,389 was spent, leaving $124,389 in carryover funds to be added to the year four budget of $399,996. One formal budget amendment was requested and granted by the program officer in Year Three, with a modified budget to increase funding available for personnel and supplies. All other internal reallocations were managed in accordance with the guidelines of the Department of Education to ensure the disbursement of funds in accordance with established Title III requirements.

Conclusions, Commendations, and Recommendations

Student Engagement through Informed Support (SEIS) is an exemplary project. Extremely well organized and effectively managed, the faculty and staff are fully engaged and working collaboratively
across the board to ensure project success. The President, a strong advocate for the Project, is highly invested in the success of the venture; the Executive Staff and Governance Leaders are clearly involved in the effort; and the key components of the organization are fully supportive of the successful implementation of each component, evidence of which lies in the integration of the project with the goals and objectives of the institutional plan. The project leaders themselves are clearly focused, highly organized, and genuinely enthusiastic about the project; their creativity and initiative is proving invaluable to the task of transforming the learning environment. And the faculty and staff involved in leading, designing and implementing each component of the Activity are both enthusiastic and fully steeped in the development process. This level of collegiate engagement is a testament to the strength of the leadership Team.

The first year of Student Engagement built on the legions of faculty and staff who participated in the design process by engaging them in the implementation process. The second year capitalized on that involvement with the development of substantive initiatives with the potential to transform student success. And now the third year has systematically expanded on those initiatives by making critical linkages across enrollment services, teaching and learning, and ubiquitous support systems while integrating new technologies that will ultimately knit the components together college-wide. As a result, each of the Teams working on the various components of the Activity is highly collaborative, engaging all components of the organization, and each of the Teams has made significant progress on the development of its specific initiatives:

- Enrollment and Advising implemented a streamlined enrollment, orientation and assessment process for all new students with improved functionality, effectiveness and efficiency;

- Faculty Mentoring and Student Engagement implemented a readiness assessment, is piloting a new advising model and has an approved Handbook and Short Guide with increased advising training, expanded usage of the Faculty Mentoring and Advising Centers on the campuses, and increased support through the mid-semester warning system;
• GCSE fully implemented the five gateway courses with embedded learning objects, assessing their usage and impact, piloted the second five gateway courses for which learning objects were designed, and designed five learning objects for five additional courses as well as ten mini-grants, increasing the overall sophistication of the products with new tools and techniques while promoting expanded usage; and

• VLC provided expanded access to the Virtual Learning Commons to support the expansion of gateway courses with access to learning objects developed to date - including the new virtual orientation - while simultaneously continuing to expand the site and the tool set in preparation for the move to Luminis 5 and significantly increased accessibility.

Underlying the success of these ventures is the technological infrastructure – the backbone of the project. While it was initially uncertain where the Virtual Learning Commons would reside, during the course of the past year it has become increasingly clear that Luminis 5 will be the new home. With additional tech support provided by the project, the progress of project development has accelerated, ensuring that the system will be scalable and ready to support the Virtual Learning Commons as it expands and matures. And finally, compounding this picture is the implementation of DegreeWorks which will have a major impact on the delivery of advising across the institution. With everyone engaged, the Team is ready to go!

With attention shifting from development to impact, it is quite a testament to the Title III Team that all components have successfully completed the five objectives guiding implementation for the third year:

1. 6,135 ST/ST students were oriented and assessed. 202 FT faculty were trained and ready to advise, with 3,984 FT/FT students advised through the Faculty Mentoring and Advising Center system on each campus - way beyond expectations.

2. 15 supported gateway courses have learning objects residing in the Virtual Learning Commons along with 4 additional courses with learning objects developed through a newly conceived mini-grant program – exceeding the numbers of courses involved.

3. 1325 sections of the 19 participating gateway courses have access to sets of learning objects through the VLC with 2660 ST/ST student users, not to mention others not in the target category – outstripping the involvement anticipated.

4. FT/FT student success in targeted gateway courses increased 6 percent overall, with students in those targeted courses who used the Virtual Learning Commons increasing their success a
whopping 16 percent, meaning that students who used the VLC received considerably more passing grades A through C than their peers – though everyone did better than in the past.

5. FT/FT student persistence from semester-to-semester increased a whopping 12 percent – double the anticipated gain – an amazing improvement.

These results are outstanding, a clear indication that the project is on the right course! Now as the effort moves into the last two years of development, however, the challenge becomes ever more difficult, with ever higher expectations of increases in student achievement, persistence, retention and, ultimately, graduation, so once these results are celebrated, it’s back to work! Going forward it will become ever more critical that all faculty and staff engage with improved services, expanded learning opportunities, and virtual support to meet targets that are even more challenging and complex. Therefore, as the Title III Team continues through the fourth year of implementation, it might prove helpful to consider a few suggestions designed to bring the efforts of each and all of the components together to increase the synergy of their collective benefits:

- The Enrollment and Advising and Faculty Mentoring and Student Engagement Teams will need to collaborate on the integration of DegreeWorks within the enrollment and advising system, inviting all parties to consider the ultimate use of the new system to maximize the impact on student achievement, persistence, and retention to graduation. How, for example, can key student information and assessment – including the new non-cognitive assessment - data be integrated with the system to provide a context for continued support? Could the system actually trigger timely interventions to increase achievement and retention? What role should advisors, counselors, and support staff each play to ensure student progress to graduation? This effort will require a college-wide team composed of faculty, staff and administration examining the potential of the new tool, ensuring its effective integration into the system, engaging all users in essential training and development activities, and assessing the overall impact on student success. While the work may prove challenging as the team seeks to implement a comprehensive enrollment and advising system consistent with the idiosyncratic needs of each campus, the results will be well worth the effort for faculty, staff and students as other institutions have clearly already discovered. Perhaps it would be useful to take the opportunity to consult peer institutions and learn from them, avoiding pitfalls while capitalizing on potential, to make the SCCC system sing! Once the system is designed, creative strategies need to be developed to prepare and encourage all faculty, staff and students actually use the system to improve student progress to graduation.

- GCSE will need to address efforts to expand not only the development, but especially the usage of learning objects during the balance of the year, a task requiring some creative strategies. For example, perhaps all faculty, both full and part-time, teaching gateway
courses could be invited to a specialized training session, engaging them in the creative use of the learning objects developed for their course within their own sections, perhaps demonstrating how faculty could use the learning objects for assignments. Likewise, perhaps departments could sponsor the development of creative ways and means of enticing students to use the learning objects created for their courses across sections, even having a competition to see which courses might realize the most impact. Or perhaps a special effort could be made to showcase the integration and use of learning objects – particularly with the legions of adjunct faculty teaching many of the targeted courses. In short, now that it is clear that students find the learning objects useful and that they achieve higher success when they use them, the effort is to get ALL students using them. Creative support for faculty and staff to promote usage is the key to the success of this challenge.

- VLC will need to be ready to move with Luminis 5 which will present its own challenges as any new system does. Much progress has been made over the past two years, both in terms of providing access to support services and to learning objects, and the Team is ready to move into the stratosphere. Some vexing problems, such as ‘join group’ will need to be resolved, but the key going forward will be to find creative ways and means of using the new portal, DegreeWorks and Blackboard Collaborate to deliver services and support learning across all campuses 24/7. That said, in this process some additional questions will arise. For example: What is required to provide academic and student support services using the system? Are there creative ways in which students might be introduced to the system to increase utility? Will the VLC need to be iPhone accessible to maximize student usage? Integrating the work of each of the teams to expand student access to virtual learning and support will require incredible vision and intense cooperation across all parties, but the Team is clearly up to the challenge and again, it will prove well worth the investment.

Finally underlying each of these initiatives is assessment – what’s working, to what extent, why, and how can we build on it. These are questions that need to be explored together, with open conversation considering the opportunities and implications. When you are at the head of the pack, there is not a clear path forward other than that which you create. The assessment effort can be most helpful in charting the course and engaging more faculty, staff and students with these winning strategies, both within and beyond the institution as peer institutions seek to emulate your winning ways. Perhaps a visual depicting the current and projected ‘landscape’ would be useful in helping the legions of faculty and staff engaged in the project celebrate current success and join in the development of even more strategies to deliver on the targets yet to be approached.

The Suffolk Team working in tandem with the faculty and staff has done a fantastic job with the implementation of Student Engagement to bring it through the mid-point, working collaboratively to
address issues and solve problems to forge the pathway forward. You have everything that it takes to succeed: determination and focus, creativity and energy, tools and investment funds! From the small sample that initial research has provided it is clear that you are headed in the right direction and have only to continue, garnering support, expanding initiatives and creating capacity to intensify impact. Every effort must be made to orient new administrators, faculty and staff to the project, to extend the reach and escalate the collaboration that has already been developed, and to continue to fuse the work of the project with the emerging planning and assessment efforts of the institution. The potential is obvious - now let’s see just how far you can go!

Congratulations on your outstanding success! In your first three years you have accomplished feats that others only imagine; now we’re betting on you to deliver on the impossible: increased retention!