

## **Community College Retention and Recruitment of “At-Risk” Students**

---

In the following report, current best practices are assessed in retention and recruitment of community college students, particularly those deemed as “at-risk.” We begin with a discussion of retention practices designed to support minority students, first-generation college students, and students with disabilities. This is followed by a discussion of strategies employed by community colleges to recruit minority students.

---

## Section 1: Introduction and Key Findings

---

In the following report, current best practices are assessed in retention and recruitment of “at-risk” community college students. The report begins with an examination of practices used by community colleges to improve retention rates of minority students, first-generation college students, and students with disabilities. This is followed by a discussion of practices used to recruit minority students. In addition to discussing literature on these topics, we provide examples of community colleges that have had recent success in employing such retention and recruitment strategies.

The main findings from throughout the report are outlined below. We begin with a list of findings from the **retention section** (Section 2) of the report.

- ❖ According to a 2010 survey of Chief Academic Officers at community colleges across the nation, issues with **academic preparation, job and family responsibilities, finances, or personal motivation** were perceived to be among the most significant reasons why students leave community colleges.
- ❖ As noted in the same 2010 survey, many of the programs believed to make the highest contributions to retention at community colleges focus on **academic support/guidance, targeted interventions for specific student populations, and easing the transition of students to the college environment.**
- ❖ Using the 2010 survey as a framework, our report takes a closer look at **academic advising, first-year seminars and transition programs, summer orientation/bridge programs, and early warning systems** as means of increasing the retention of students. In addition to being well-supported in the literature on student retention, recent examples of community colleges that have employed such programs have displayed documented success in terms of student outcomes.
- ❖ Successful retention programs designed specifically for **students with disabilities** focus on **building self-advocacy skills** in addition to offering targeted academic support.
- ❖ Some community colleges employ strategies that will assist students who have undiagnosed learning disabilities. One set of strategies – **Universal Design for Learning** – focuses on flexible approaches to teaching that can be adjusted to fit the individual needs of learners.

Below is a list of findings from our review of best practices in **recruiting** minority students (Section 3).

- ❖ **Recruit students in “nontraditional settings”** such as community centers, churches, and festivals, among others.
- ❖ **Involve minority students who are already enrolled in college or alumni in the recruitment process.** Such recruiters can provide better insight into minority student experiences at the college.
- ❖ Particularly with regard to Hispanic students, place emphasis on **recruiting the family** as well as the prospective student.
- ❖ Develop **“early outreach activities”** that can increase students’ awareness of college while they are still in elementary, middle, and high school. This can support an increase in the “pool of college-bound minority students” while also increasing name recognition of area institutions.
- ❖ Develop recruitment, admissions, and financial aid **materials in students’ native languages.**
- ❖ Provide **financial aid opportunities** or more flexible financial aid packages targeted towards minority students.

## Section 2: Retention Practices for At-Risk Student Groups

---

Community colleges are designed to be “open door” institutions that enroll a wider variety of students than four-year institutions and therefore face a unique set of challenges within the higher education sector.<sup>1</sup> As the Lumina Foundation for Education points out,

[m]inority students, first-generation college students, students with lower levels of academic achievement in high school, and students from low-income families are all significantly overrepresented in community colleges when compared with their enrollment in baccalaureate-granting institutions.<sup>2</sup>

Although access was a paramount issue during the decades of rapid expansion among community colleges, educators and policymakers have begun to focus more recently on retention efforts as well as recruitment. This relatively recent focus has revealed that community colleges typically have low retention/persistence rates. According to a study by the National Center for Education Statistics, about 50 percent of the students who began a two-year college program in 2003-04 were still enrolled in college (either at the same institution or at a transfer institution) in 2006.<sup>3</sup> An additional six percent of students in the study completed a degree or certificate program and left the institution, while 45 percent left the institution without completing a degree or certificate.<sup>4</sup>

Community colleges cannot always draw straightforward conclusions from such data because of the varying attitudes and goals of their students. As the National Center for Education Statistics report notes, “Many community college students have no intention of getting a degree or other credential; thus...it is important to consider community college students’ academic intentions.”<sup>5</sup> For example, community college students planning on transferring to four-year institutions had higher rates of persistence/attainment than students who intended to complete an associate’s degree or certificate and students who had no intention of earning a degree or certificate.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Bailey, T. R., and M. Alfonso. *Paths to Persistence: An Analysis of Research on Program Effectiveness at Community Colleges*. Lumina Foundation for Education. January 2005. 9. <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED484239.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> “Community Colleges Special Supplement to the Condition of Education 2008.” US Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics. August 2008. 22.

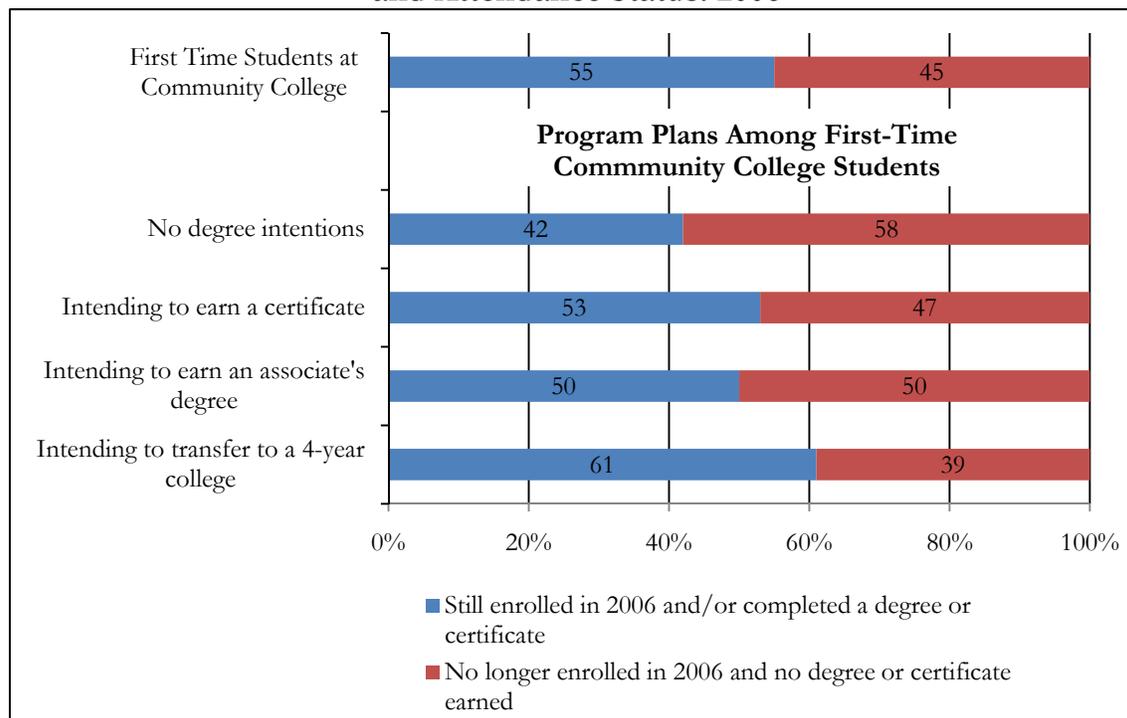
<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2008/analysis/2008033.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Numbers do not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

**Percentage Distribution of First-Time Undergraduates in 2003-2004, By Persistence or Attainment Rate, Control, Program Plans, and Attendance Status: 2006**



Source: National Center for Education Statistics.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond the wide variety of academic intentions among students, two-year institutions enroll a diverse group of students and have a larger percentage of non-traditional, low-income, and minority students than their four-year counterparts, as well as more students requiring remedial education.<sup>8</sup> For example, in the 2003-2004 academic year, the median age of community college students in the United States was 24, compared to 21 at four-year institutions.<sup>9</sup> As for ethnic minority status, 15 percent of community college students were Black, compared to 10 percent at four-year colleges and universities, and 14 percent of community college students were Hispanic, compared to 9 percent at four-year institutions. In that same year, 26 percent of community college students came from families at or below 125 percent of the 2002 poverty threshold, while only 20 percent of students enrolled at four-year institutions were at this level.<sup>10</sup>

Further, a higher percentage of community college students (29 percent) than students at public four-year institutions (19 percent) or private not-for-profit four-year institutions (15 percent) reported taking some remedial coursework during their

<sup>7</sup> "Community Colleges Special Supplement to the Condition of Education 2008." Op. cit., 23.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., iii.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 26.

first year of study.<sup>11</sup> As for first-generation status, the American Association of Community Colleges adds that 42 percent of community college students are the first in their families to attend college.<sup>12</sup>

Given the unique mission of community colleges, the demographic make-up of their student bodies, and the varying academic goals of their individual students, it is important to gain an understanding of the specific challenges faced by these institutions in retaining students. Providing critical insight into this issue, a 2010 large-scale survey of retention practices, conducted by ACT, drew data from 1,104 two- and four-year institutions from across the United States, 305 of which are community colleges.<sup>13</sup> The survey – “What Works in Student Retention?” – asked Chief Academic Affairs Officers a series of questions regarding retention practices at their institutions. As one component of the survey, respondents were asked to rate factors that had the strongest effects on student attrition at community colleges, using a five-point scale:

- ❖ 5 = Major effect on attrition
- ❖ 3 = Moderate effect on attrition
- ❖ 1 = Little or no effect on attrition

Responses to this section of the survey are summarized in the table below.

#### **Attrition Factors with Highest Effect: Community Colleges**

Institutional Characteristic or Compounding Factor	Mean Effect
Level of Student Preparation for College-Level Work	4.3
Student Study Skills	4.1
Adequacy of Personal Financial Resources	4.1
Level of Student Commitment to Earning a Degree	4.0
Level of Student Motivation to Succeed	3.9
Student Family Responsibilities	3.9
Level of Job Demands on Students	3.8
Student Low Socio-Economic Status	3.8

Source: ACT.

More directly related to our topic at hand, it is interesting to note that the ACT report also provides a separate tabulation of results for institutions that have high percentages of minority students. With regard to community colleges with

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>12</sup> The AACC notes that these data are based on the most recent information available as of December 2009. “Fast Facts.” American Association of Community Colleges. <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/fastfacts.aspx>

<sup>13</sup> “What Works in Student Retention: 2010 Study, Community Colleges.” ACT. 2010. 3. <http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/droptables/CommunityColleges.pdf>

enrollments of Black<sup>14</sup> or Hispanic<sup>15</sup> students that equal or exceed 20 percent of their total student population, ACT reported a similar set of factors that have the strongest influence on attrition as those reported for the overall group. The only differences between these lists are indicated below:

- ❖ In addition to all of the factors cited for community colleges overall, institutions with shares of **Hispanic students** that are 20 percent or greater indicated that **“level of emotional support from family, friends, and significant others”** (3.8) and **“amount of financial aid available to students”** (3.9) were also among the factors with the strongest influence on attrition.<sup>16</sup>
- ❖ Representatives of community colleges with proportions of **Black students** that are 20 percent or higher also highlighted the same factors as community colleges overall. The only additional factor that made the list for this subset of colleges was **“amount of financial aid available to students”** (3.9).<sup>17</sup>

As is evident from the findings above, issues with **academic preparation, job and family responsibilities, finances, or personal motivation** were perceived to be among the most significant reasons why students leave community colleges. Many of these factors may be tied to the composition of community college student bodies, with higher proportions of non-traditional, first-generation, and underrepresented student groups, as well as students needing remedial coursework upon entry to college. As we will see in our review of specific practices employed by community colleges to support retention, many institutions are tailoring interventions and other programs to address these issues.

## Overview of Community College Retention Practices

The ACT study cited above proceeded to ask survey participants to identify retention practices employed by their institutions and to rate programs, services, curricular offerings, and interventions based on the degree to which each contributes to student retention on a scale of 1 to 5.

- ❖ 5 = Major contribution to retention
- ❖ 3 = Moderate contribution to retention
- ❖ 1 = Little or no contribution to retention

<sup>14</sup> “What Works in Student Retention: 2010 Study, Community Colleges with Twenty Percent or More Black Students Enrolled.” ACT. 2010.

[http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/droptables/Community\\_BlackEnroll.pdf](http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/droptables/Community_BlackEnroll.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> “What Works in Student Retention: 2010 Study, Community Colleges with Twenty Percent or More Hispanic Students Enrolled.” ACT. 2010.

[http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/droptables/Community\\_HispanicEnroll.pdf](http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/droptables/Community_HispanicEnroll.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>17</sup> “What Works in Student Retention: 2010 Study, Community Colleges with Twenty Percent or More Black Students Enrolled.” Op. cit., 6.

The tables below display the highlights of the survey with regard to community colleges. The survey results provide an **excellent foundation for ways in which institutions can act to improve student retention rates.**

The first table displays practices that received the highest ratings in terms of contribution to student retention at community colleges.

### Practices with Highest Mean Contributions to Retention: Community Colleges

Service or Intervention	Mean Contribution
Reading Center/Lab	4.1
Comprehensive Learning Assistance Center/Lab	4.1
Tutoring	4.1
<i>Mandated</i> Placement in Courses Based on Test Scores	4.1
Remedial/Developmental Coursework (required)	4.0
Increased Number of Academic Advisors	4.0
Writing Center/Lab	4.0
Mathematics Center/Lab	4.0
Programs for First-Generation Students	4.0
Advising Interventions with Selected Student Populations	3.9
Academic Advising Center	3.9
<i>Recommended</i> Placement in Courses Based on Test Scores	3.9
Integration of Advising with First Year Transition Programs	3.9
Supplemental Instruction	3.8
Remedial/Developmental Coursework (recommended)	3.8

Source: ACT.

Providing additional insight into strong retention practices, the ACT report also prompted respondents to provide a list of the **three practices that have made the greatest contribution to retention at their institution.** Of the 94 practices presented to respondents, only nine were selected by 10 percent or more of the represented institutions as being among their top three.<sup>18</sup> The table below lists these nine practices.

### Three Practices with Greatest Contribution to Retention

Service or Intervention	% Selecting as Among Top Three
<i>Mandated</i> Placement in Courses Based on Test Scores	36%
Tutoring	22%
Remedial/Developmental Coursework (Required)	20%
Comprehensive Learning Assistance Center/Lab	14%
Academic Advising Center	12%
Early Warning System	12%

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 8.

Service or Intervention	% Selecting as Among Top Three
Freshman Seminar/University 101 (Credit)	10%
Summer Orientation	10%
Training for Faculty Academic Advisors	10%

Source: ACT.

As illustrated in the tables above, many of the programs believed to make the highest contributions to retention at community colleges focus on **academic support/guidance, targeted interventions for specific student populations, and easing the transition of students to the college environment.** Many such programs are well-supported in the literature on student retention, as we discuss below.

In the remainder of this section, we examine specific retention practices that align with the findings of the 2010 ACT report and appear elsewhere in the literature on community college student retention. In particular, we provide detailed descriptions of **academic advising, first-year seminars and transition programs, summer orientation/bridge programs, and early warning systems.** In addition to a description of each practice, we provide examples of institutions that have had recent success in employing such measures. We begin with a look at retention strategies and practices that specifically target **minority students** and/or **first-generation college students** (though many of these practices can be used to support other traditionally at-risk student groups). This is followed by a separate discussion of additional practices designed to support **students with disabilities.**

### Academic/Intrusive Advising

Many institutions are employing intrusive advising – a **proactive method of academic advising that incorporates intervention strategies for historically at-risk groups** of students, such as academically disadvantaged or underprepared students, disabled students, probationary students, ethnic minority students, and students of low socioeconomic status. Heisserer and Parette (2002) define intrusive advising as:

[a]n intensive advising intervention with an at-risk student that is designed to (a) facilitate informed, responsible decision-making, (b) increase student motivation toward activities in his/her social/academic community, and (c) ensure the probability of the student's academic success.<sup>19</sup>

A program may include systems to monitor academic performance and progress, periodic phone calls to the student, distribution of informative newsletters, and

<sup>19</sup> Heisserer, D. and Parette, P. "Advising At-Risk Students in College and University Settings," *College Student Journal*, Vol. 36. No. 1, March 2002.

signed contracts or study plans that outline student goals and means of achieving those goals.

In a study of intrusive academic advising in a community college setting, Smith (2007) notes, “Nontraditional students may benefit greatly from intrusive advising initiatives because **the approach inherently takes individual needs into consideration and focuses on matching interventions and services to those needs.**”<sup>20</sup> Academic advisors who are well-versed in the support systems and services available to community college students may examine pre-matriculation assessments and other data to identify students who may be at-risk of struggling in the college environment. Through meetings and follow-up sessions with these students, advisors can then work to connect students with support services that are appropriate to their specific needs.<sup>21</sup>

In a 2004 article written for the Office of Community College Research and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Thomas and Minton discussed the use of intrusive advising strategies at **John A. Logan College**, a community college in Illinois.<sup>22</sup> The authors noted that the college’s **Student Success Center** supports historically at-risk student populations, particularly first-generation college students, low-income students, and students with disabilities. Managing the college’s disability support services, tutoring, and federal TRIO program,<sup>23</sup> Student Success Center staff use intrusive advising techniques to support strong retention rates among at-risk student groups.

As the focal point of the article, the authors share the criteria for a successful intrusive advising experience:

- ❖ Advisors are thoroughly **familiar with the college and its available support services**, such as counseling, tutoring, career assistance, disability support, student employment, financial aid, and multicultural programs
- ❖ Advisors not only know the resources available at the college, but also **know the individual staff and faculty members in charge of various programs** in order to provide accurate referrals
- ❖ Advisors should be **widely available** both to schedule formal student/advisor meetings and to field more general inquiries when students drop-in with brief questions

---

<sup>20</sup> Smith, J. S. “Using Data to Inform Decisions: Intrusive Faculty Advising at a Community College.” *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*. Vol. 31. 2007. 816.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas, C. and J. Minton. “Intrusive Advisement: A Model for Success at John A. Logan College.” *Update on Research and Leadership*. Vol. 15, No. 2. Spring 2004.

[http://occr.ed.uiuc.edu/Newsletter/2004/spring/spring2004\\_4.asp](http://occr.ed.uiuc.edu/Newsletter/2004/spring/spring2004_4.asp)

<sup>23</sup> “Student Success Center.” John A. Logan College. [http://www.jalc.edu/student\\_success/](http://www.jalc.edu/student_success/)

- ❖ Advisors should **proactively monitor** a student's academic progress even outside of the regular student/advisor meetings<sup>24</sup>

In addition to the above criteria, Thomas and Minton note that **advisors must receive training in a variety of areas that affect student success**. While they do not need to have the same level of expertise as professional staff in each support department across the college, they need to be familiar with the processes in each department. The authors provide the example of financial aid. If there are penalties associated with a student dropping a class, advisors need to know enough to alert the student to such consequences. As the authors explain, "It is the intrusive advisors' responsibility to inform the student rather than just dropping the class and saying nothing...The advisors must be willing to intervene and to inform the student, thus preventing the failure frequently resulting from 'no one told me and I didn't know to ask.'"<sup>25</sup>

In the article, the authors cite data on the performance of Student Success Center advisees. In particular, they note that advisees demonstrated substantially higher graduation and year-to-year retention rates than the rest of the student population at John A. Logan College. The following table provides student outcomes data drawn from the article for the years 2000-2001 through 2002-2003.

**Student Outcomes – John A. Logan College Student Success Center**

Measure	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003
Retention*	87%	81%	78%
Graduation**	60%	53%	55%
Good Academic Standing***	88%	87%	87%
Average GPA (based on 5.0 scale)	3.730	3.814	3.732

\*Measured from fall to subsequent fall semester

\*\*Graduating within 150% time of normal degree completion

\*\*\*Having a GPA of 3.0 or higher

Source: Office of Community College Research and Leadership.<sup>26</sup>

While the table above represents the most recent, publicly available quantitative data on the Student Success Center, a September 2010 article in a John A. Logan College publication notes comments on the achievements of one of the center's activities: the **federally funded TRIO program**. The program seeks to aid low-income and first-generation college students, as well as students with disabilities through a variety of

<sup>24</sup> Thomas and Minton. "Intrusive Advisement: A Model for Success at John A. Logan College." Op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Taken verbatim from Ibid. Note that the article also provides a chart comparing advisee retention and graduation rates with John A. Logan students who were not advised. While specific data points were not provided, in the years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, Student Success Center advisees outperformed their non-advisee counterparts by a significant margin.

services including mentoring, tutoring, study skill instruction, career counseling, and leadership training.<sup>27</sup> The article notes: “TRIO students have significantly higher retention and persistence rates [compared to non-TRIO students]. TRIO students have higher rates of good academic standing. TRIO students also graduate and transfer to four year colleges in rates higher than their non-TRIO participating counterparts.”<sup>28</sup>

### **First-Year Seminars and Transition Programs**

As noted in the 2010 ACT study discussed above, freshman seminars and first-year transition programs with an advising component were cited as effective retention practices. In an effort to address both academic and non-academic factors that affect retention rates, many institutions have implemented first-year seminars or similar programs to **help make students transition from high school to college as seamless as possible**. Ideally, such programs will introduce newly enrolled students to their peers and members of the faculty and staff. They should also familiarize students with the institution’s academic policies, as well as library, academic support, and career services. First-year seminars often serve as an extension of an orientation program and aim to assist students in the development of both academic skills and college survival tactics, including time and stress management.<sup>29</sup>

Citing a dearth of academic literature on the use of such programs at the community college level, Smith et al. (2008) sought to examine the effects of a **First-Year Experience (FYE) course** at a community college with a diverse population.<sup>30</sup> Employing a quasi-experimental design, the researchers studied 736 first-year community college students in Central Indiana. Among this group, 341 students enrolled in an FYE course (treatment) and 395 enrolled in an English course (control). Among those in the FYE course, 191 were White and 118 were African American. As for the English course, 176 of the students were White and 177 were African American.

The FYE course was offered as a one-credit class, meeting once a week for the first eight weeks of the semester. The class sought to **provide students with information regarding the college’s resources, as well as “study skills, career exploration, writing skills, and information about technology that will enable them to be successful.”**<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> “Student Success Center – TRIO Program.” John A. Logan College.  
[http://www.jalc.edu/student\\_success/trioprogam.php](http://www.jalc.edu/student_success/trioprogam.php)

<sup>28</sup> Bollinger, A. “TRIO Program Helps Students in Their Struggle to Succeed.” *The Volunteer News*. September 23, 2010. <http://www.jalcnews.com/?p=421>

<sup>29</sup> Myers, D. R. “College Success Programs,” *Pathways to College Network*. 2003. 14-7.  
<http://www.pathwaystocollege.net/pdf/CollegeSuccessPrograms.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Smith, J. S., S. Lim, and S. Bone. “Community College Strategies – Assessing the Impact of a First-Year Experience Course on Student Outcomes in a Community College.” *Assessment Update*. Vol. 20. No. 3. May-June 2008.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

During their first class meetings, students in both groups completed a 50-item survey designed to measure students' academic motivation (performance and learning goal orientation, self-regulation, etc.), their knowledge of 12 campus resources (Career Services, Academic Advisement, Office for Student Life, etc.), and academic responsibility (skills and behaviors associated with academic success – creating study schedules, class participation, meeting with academic advisors, etc.). Students in the FYE course were administered a posttest during their last class, while the control group completed it at roughly the same time. Using multivariate statistical analysis, the researchers found that **students who enrolled in the FYE course scored significantly higher on the posttest than students in the English course** with regard to **knowledge of campus resources and academic responsibility**, even when controlling for each group's pretest scores.<sup>32</sup> Further, students in the FYE course had **higher first-semester GPAs** than students taking the English course.<sup>33</sup> The researchers note that such findings provide support for the value of an FYE course in a diverse community college setting.

**El Camino College**, a community college in Torrance, California provides an example of a **first-year experience program** that has been cited for its success in supporting minority students.<sup>34</sup> Designed as a means of helping students transitioning from high school or students who are returning to school after spending time working, the program seeks to provide additional assistance to students acclimating to their first year of college. The program incorporates a wide variety of elements including:

- ❖ **Early Group Registration** – for all ECC classes to help ensure enrollment in desired courses
- ❖ **Orientation** – a variety of special events especially designed to enhance the transition to college
- ❖ **First Year Experience Counselor** – helps students with academic planning, personal counseling, and career development
- ❖ **Learning Community Courses** – which help satisfy general education and elective graduation requirements.<sup>35</sup> The same group of students enrolls in two or more classes that feature integrated subject matter.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 12-13.

<sup>34</sup> Santiago, D. "Modeling Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): Campus Practices that Work for Latino Students." *Excelencia in Education*. 2008. 12.

<http://www.edexcelencia.org/system/files/ModelingHSIsCampusPracticesRv.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> In fall 2010, learning community courses consisted of "Writing the College Essay," "Developmental Reading & Writing," and "Human Development." See: "Fall 2010 FYE Learning Communities." El Camino College.

<http://3cdug.elcamino.edu/student-services/fye/docs/FYE-Fall-2010-Schedule.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> "Spring 2011 Schedule." El Camino College. [http://www.elcamino.edu/student-services/fye/lc/LC\\_Schedule.asp](http://www.elcamino.edu/student-services/fye/lc/LC_Schedule.asp)

- ❖ **First Year Experience Faculty** – a team of faculty dedicated to supporting the success of first year students
- ❖ **Field Trips** – to various University of California, California State University, and private university campuses
- ❖ **Guest Speakers** – the FYE calendar notes that a panel of FYE alumni met with current students to discuss their experiences<sup>37</sup>
- ❖ **Peer Mentors** – second year students who are in good standing with the college, and will be available to answer questions, share experiences, and help first year students transition into college<sup>38</sup>

Students who are accepted into the program are required to make the following pledge:

I will commit myself to the following: Make my education a priority. Do my best to complete the entire school year. Take at least 2 classes per semester. Make a real effort not to miss any classes. Only drop a class after talking to my counselor. Complete my class assignments as required. Participate in occasional evening and Saturday programs.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to services for students, the **program incorporates a professional development component for faculty and staff**. According to a 2008 review of the program, over 1,000 El Camino faculty and staff have participated in conferences, workshops, and seminars related to FYE. These events were designed to help faculty and staff “develop and improve teaching and learning strategies, communication, and collaboration campus-wide to address the needs of first year, Latino, and other minority students.”<sup>40</sup>

It appears that the program has experienced substantial success. As noted by the 2008 review, student retention and pass rates are significantly higher for students who participated in the program compared to first year students who did not participate.<sup>41</sup>

### Summer Orientation/Bridge Programs

Similar to first-year seminars and related programs, summer orientation or bridge programs aim to facilitate smooth transitions from the high school setting to the college campus environment. The programs typically **target historically at-risk**

<sup>37</sup> Note that other examples of guest speakers were not available on the FYE website. “First-Year Experience Alumni Panel.” El Camino College. <http://www.elcamino.edu/uportal/calendar/more.aspx?id=10176>

<sup>38</sup> Reproduced with slight modifications from: “About the First Year Experience Program.” El Camino College. <http://www.elcamino.edu/student-services/fye/about.asp>

<sup>39</sup> “Apply Online to the First Year Experience Program.” El Camino College. <http://www.elcamino.edu/student-services/fye/form.asp>

<sup>40</sup> Santiago. “Modeling Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): Campus Practices that Work for Latino Students.” Op. cit., 12.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

**groups of students who might encounter more obstacles** than the average student during the transition period. In the summer program, students often take courses on basic academic skills, primarily English and math, and become acquainted with the campus, faculty members, and available resources before the fall semester commences.<sup>42</sup>

An example of a summer bridge program for first-generation students is offered by **Hennepin Technical College (HTC)** in Minnesota. HTC's **Tech Trek** is geared towards students who are the **first in their family to attend college** and may not be "fully prepared for the college experience."<sup>43</sup> The four day program, offered over the summer, allows students to:

- ❖ Network with other students
- ❖ Meet HTC staff in an informal atmosphere
- ❖ See how technology is an everyday part of life
- ❖ Tour HTC's state-of-the-art programs and labs
- ❖ Learn about HTC training programs
- ❖ Celebrate completing the program with an activity that takes students into the community<sup>44</sup>

Additionally, students who enroll part-time at HTC following the program and maintain satisfactory academic progress are **eligible for free tuition for six course credits for the fall and spring semesters.**<sup>45</sup> As such, the program offers both a special orientation for underprepared students as well as a means of alleviating the financial burden of attending college.

While the program is largely intended for first-generation college students, first-generation status is not an explicit eligibility requirement. In fact, a newsletter describing the program's inception notes that the bridge program was expected to "attract high school seniors who are first-generation college students and adults in transition..."<sup>46</sup> The 2010 application to the program indicated that Tech Trek applicants must be eligible for a Pell grant and that their placement test indicates that they have scored into developmental level coursework.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Myers, D. R. "College Success Programs," Pathways to College Network. Op. cit. 17-18.

<sup>43</sup> "Future Students – Tech Trek." Hennepin Technical College.

<http://www.hennepintech.edu/future/admissions/trek.htm>

<sup>44</sup> Reproduced with slight modification from "It's Tech Trek at HTC!" Hennepin Technical College.

[http://www.hennepintech.edu/future/admissions/docs/HTC\\_Tech\\_Trek\\_brochure2.pdf](http://www.hennepintech.edu/future/admissions/docs/HTC_Tech_Trek_brochure2.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> "Technology Talk." Hennepin Technical College. 2007. 3.

<http://www.hennepintech.edu/alumni/images/HTC07V2TechTalk.pdf><http://www.hennepintech.edu/alumni/images/HTC07V2TechTalk.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Note that it appears that developmental level coursework placement may have been a new requirement in 2010, as only 63 percent of 2008 Tech Trek participants tested into such coursework and 76 percent of 2009 participants did

A 2009 Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) report notes the program's success. The document claims, "We have learned intensive orientation to college improves retention, personal contact through the year helps students overcome barriers, appropriate advising supports future success and assisting in removing financial barriers is key to student success."<sup>48</sup> The document then proceeds to offer the following data. Unfortunately, these figures are not explained in great detail in the report. Nevertheless, the first two columns appear to represent characteristics of the incoming Tech Trek cohorts, while the "Enrolled in HTC Program" and "Retention" columns offer outcome measures.

### Hennepin Technical College – Tech Trek Data

Cohort	First Generation	Tested Into Developmental Coursework	Enrolled in HTC Program	Retention
FY08 (27 students)	100%	63%	89%	71%
FY09 (59 students)	41%	76%	100%	73%

Source: Hennepin Technical College.

### Early Warning Systems

The ability to identify at-risk students and connect them with advisors, counselors, or mentors in a timely manner is crucial to any student retention program. While students in historically at-risk groups may be identified as early as enrollment or freshman orientation and placed in an early intervention or intensive academic advising program, a student who does not initially fit the bill for an at-risk student but later encounters detrimental academic, financial or personal obstacles might slip through the cracks unnoticed. In an effort to raise the institution's awareness of the entire student body's academic progress and well-being and to **identify students whose habits or personal situations may elevate their risk of drop-out**, several institutions have implemented an "Early Warning System" or "Academic Alert System."<sup>49</sup>

Early warning systems may include a submission form restricted to use by faculty members or, in some cases, open to peer advisors. Reasons for the submission of an academic alert include a student's **difficulties with course material, perceived lack of motivation, failure to complete assignments or attend classes, medical**

so (as depicted in the table below). "Tech Trek Program – Application FY10." Hennepin Technical College. [http://www.hennepintech.edu/future/admissions/docs/Tech\\_Trek\\_Application\\_Final\\_FY10.doc](http://www.hennepintech.edu/future/admissions/docs/Tech_Trek_Application_Final_FY10.doc)

<sup>48</sup> "Academic Quality Improvement Program Systems Portfolio." Hennepin Technical College. September 2009. 27. <http://www.hennepintech.edu/images/AQIPReportSeptember2009.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> Note that a helpful discussion of early alert systems is included in the "Cuseo Collection," a collection of scholarship regarding the first-year experience, maintained on the University of Wisconsin Colleges' Engaging Students in the First Year web site. See: J. Cuseo. "Red Flags: Behavioral Indicators of Potential Student Attrition." <http://www.uwc.edu/administration/academic-affairs/esfy/cuseo/Red%20Flags--Behavioral%20Indicators%20of%20Potential%20Student%20Attrition.doc>

**conditions, financial problems, family or personal life problems, and suspected substance abuse.** The form is generally submitted to a small committee that proactively intervenes to help the student regain a foothold in the college community and succeed in his/her degree program.

**Lake Land College** in Illinois provides an example of such a program. The college's **Early Alert Program (EAP)** was recognized as an exemplary program for supporting underrepresented groups in a 2009 report by the Illinois Community College Board.<sup>50</sup> Beginning in 2002, the college instituted the electronic EAP system through which faculty members may make note of students who "demonstrate high risk behaviors such as low test scores, poor attendance, incomplete homework assignments, or poor comprehension."<sup>51</sup> **Once these observations are recorded, a coordinator reviews the case, contacts the student, and asks to speak with him or her regarding the instructor's concerns.** Similar to the intrusive advising techniques discussed above, the coordinator seeks to match the student with an appropriate support service, such as tutoring, career services, study or test taking skill-building, among others. The faculty member is able to view a record of the contacts between the student and coordinator, as well as the recommendations made by the coordinator. Faculty may further submit updates to the student's record in order for the coordinator to modify or make additional recommendations.

According to the Illinois Community College Board report, students who were included in "pilot classes" using the EAP system earned higher cumulative GPAs than students in "control classes" in fiscal year 2003. Further, students involved in the pilot of the program had higher retention rates and earned more credit hours than their peers in the control group.<sup>52</sup>

### **Programs for Students with Disabilities**

The number of students with disabilities has been on the rise for the last 20 years, prompting institutions to adopt **curricular, pedagogical, and technological accommodations.**<sup>53</sup> Because of the individual attention afforded by community colleges, many of these students have turned to two-year colleges to meet their education needs. Retention and graduation numbers for these students, however, are typically very low.<sup>54</sup> In this subsection, we discuss strategies used by community

---

<sup>50</sup> "Illinois Community College System – Selected Programs and Services for Underrepresented Groups – Focus Area: Academic Achievement Collaborating to Strengthen Progress and Outcomes." Illinois Community College Board, Research and Policy Studies. May 2009. 50. <http://www.iccb.org/pdf/reports/underrepfy08.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Prentice, M. "Serving Students with Disabilities at the Community College." ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges Los Angeles CA. February 2002. <http://www.ericdigests.org/2003-3/serving.htm>

<sup>54</sup> "Equity & Excellence: Universal Course Design to Increase Retention and Completion Rates of Community College Students with Disabilities." Institute for Community Inclusion. [http://www.communityinclusion.org/project.php?project\\_id=49](http://www.communityinclusion.org/project.php?project_id=49)

colleges to address the needs of students with disabilities and increase their prospects of persistence.

The Illinois Community College Board report discussed above cites two cases of institutions employing exemplary programs for supporting college students with disabilities. The first example is offered by **Lewis and Clark Community College's Supported College Transition (SCT)/College for Life (CFL) programs**. The programs are designed to aid students who have severe disabilities in gaining independence as well support their academic and career goals. Through the SCT program, students enroll in both a "mainstream" associates program and a **Life Skills course**. The course "helps students learn to manage a range of functions: personal information, transportation, finances, personal safety, health and nutrition, social and emotional well being, civil rights and self-advocacy, and disability awareness."<sup>55</sup> Further, in their associates program, students are provided the flexibility to repeat courses as necessary.

Rather than for-credit courses, the CFL program provides continuing education opportunities for students with disabilities.<sup>56</sup> Similar to SCT, this program involves a **Self Advocacy Class** "where students learn to assert themselves, locate useful information, complete forms, ask questions and use community based services for assistance."<sup>57</sup>

A 2010 presentation by the college to the Illinois Statewide Transition Conference provides a variety of outcomes data for the Lewis and Clark Community College programs. First, with regard to retention in the SCT program, the college notes that it is "especially interested in retention to the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester as this is when most students begin their career program courses."<sup>58</sup> Between fall 2005 and spring 2009, 52 percent of SCT students were retained to the third semester. The college stated that this figure is particularly impressive, as the college's overall retention rate from spring 2008 to fall 2008 was 49 percent.

---

<sup>55</sup> "Illinois Community College System – Selected Programs and Services for Underrepresented Groups – Focus Area: Academic Achievement Collaborating to Strengthen Progress and Outcomes." Illinois Community College Board, Research and Policy Studies. Op. cit., 46.

<sup>56</sup> Haberer, K. and M. Buck. "Lewis and Clark Community College – Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities: From Transition to Success." Presented at Sixth Annual Illinois Statewide Transition Conference. October 24-26, 2010. <http://www.illinoistransitionconference.org/handouts/Nov10F7.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> "Illinois Community College System – Selected Programs and Services for Underrepresented Groups – Focus Area: Academic Achievement Collaborating to Strengthen Progress and Outcomes." Illinois Community College Board, Research and Policy Studies. Op. cit., 46.

<sup>58</sup> Haberer, K. and M. Buck. "Lewis and Clark Community College – Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities: From Transition to Success." Op. cit., 5.

**Retention Data for Supported College Transition Program  
Fall 2005 to Spring 2009**

Outcome	Number of Students
Retained to Semester 2	81
Retained to Semester 3	50
Retained to Semester 4	31
Still Attending Past Semester 4	28
Total Discrete Students	96

Source: Illinois Statewide Transition Conference.<sup>59</sup>

Beyond these retention data, the conference presentation provided a list of the reasons students did not attend a second semester in the SCT program.

**Supported College Transition Program – Student Reasons for Leaving  
Fall 2005 to Spring 2009**

Reason for Leaving	Number of Students
Moved Away/Attended Another School	6
Got a Job	4
Financial/Grades (Parents Wouldn't Pay for Another Semester)	3
Family/Personal Issues	2

Source: Illinois Statewide Transition Conference.<sup>60</sup>

As for the CFL program, the college presented the following data for fall 2005 to spring 2009.

**College for Life Student Outcomes – Fall 2005 to Spring 2009**

Action	Number of Students
Still Enrolled	45
Left for Supported Employment	20
Left for Financial Reasons	29
Moved to SCT Credit Courses	18
Left Due to Transportation Issues	6
Left for Health Related Issues	2
Total Discrete Students	120

Source: Illinois Statewide Transition Conference.<sup>61</sup>

The second example of a support program for students with disabilities discussed in the Illinois Community College Board report is offered by **Waubonsee Community College**. The college's **First Move program** originated in 2007 as an **optional orientation for incoming first-year students with disabilities**. Similar to the

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Lewis and Clark programs discussed above, First Move was designed to help students **build self-advocacy skills** and boost their academic achievement. Students were provided the opportunity to learn and practice self-advocacy skills through workshops and role playing activities as well as participate in other activities addressing “goal setting, student motivation, time-management skills, self-awareness, accommodations, and developing an increased awareness of available services.”<sup>62</sup>

While the report does not provide detailed retention data regarding participants, it does note that feedback following the program was positive. Responding to a survey after the program, 80 percent of participants “strongly agreed” that they would apply what they learned during the workshops. Further, the other twenty percent of respondents “agreed” that they would do so. In their written comments, students stated that they had gained a better understanding of “college processes, procedures, and protocols; campus resources; and available educational technology.”<sup>63</sup>

Providing an example of what could be seen as both a recruitment tool and a means of helping students perform better in college in the long run, **Project Access** is a facilitative project for high school students with disabilities transitioning to higher education at **Howard Community College** in Columbia, Maryland. The goals of the project include **improving the potential for successful postsecondary experiences, accommodating learning styles, and carrying accommodations through to job placement.**<sup>64</sup>

To achieve these goals, project coordinators planned job fairs and events specifically for students with disabilities, as well as trained faculty and support personnel in effective assistive strategies. For example, the Project Access website has a link to a flyer for the “Project Access Eighth Annual Conference for Parents and Professionals.” Titled “Transitioning Students with Disabilities...Success on the Postsecondary Level and Beyond,” the program featured talks on a wide variety of topics, including:

- ❖ Anxiety and Asperger’s Syndrome
- ❖ The Transition from High School to College
- ❖ Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- ❖ Books in Alternate Form

---

<sup>62</sup> “Illinois Community College System – Selected Programs and Services for Underrepresented Groups – Focus Area: Academic Achievement Collaborating to Strengthen Progress and Outcomes.” Illinois Community College Board, Research and Policy Studies. Op. cit., 46.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> “Project Access High School Transition Program for Students with Disabilities.” Howard community College. [http://www.howardcc.edu/students/academic\\_support\\_services/project\\_access](http://www.howardcc.edu/students/academic_support_services/project_access)

- ❖ Postsecondary Options for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- ❖ Facilitating Transition through High School to the Workplace for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Speakers at the April 2010 event represented a variety of institutions, including research universities, healthcare providers, and K-12 public school systems, as well as Howard Community College faculty.<sup>65</sup>

The Project Access website is also advertising a **2011 Summer Institute for parents and high school students**. This four-week program will **feature reading, writing, and math instruction**, as well as topics such as **study skills, use of the Internet, career development, and drama**. The program further includes two separate components for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders focused on **exploring postsecondary opportunities**. The 11<sup>th</sup> grade component provides participants with instruction in college search skills, helping students to find institutions that will best meet their needs, as well as identify financial aid resources. The 12<sup>th</sup> grade component assists students in the application process – helping them fill out admission materials, coordinating college placement tests, meeting with advisors regarding appropriate course selection, etc. These students are also provided the opportunity to visit college classrooms and interact with faculty to gain a better picture of the college experience. All students involved in the program have access to peer mentors – current college students with disabilities – and are also invited to social events at the college throughout the year.<sup>66</sup>

Providing a final example of an exemplary program to assist community college students with disabilities, **Renton Technical College** in Washington received a grant in 2002 to pilot a **Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Project** from the Department of Education's Demonstration Projects to Ensure Students with Learning Disabilities Receive a Quality Higher Education. In 2005, the grant was expanded, allowing Renton Technical College to partner with other two-year institutions in Washington State.<sup>67</sup>

Instructors participating in the pilot program utilize pedagogical techniques with demonstrated effectiveness in supporting students with learning disabilities. What makes UDL strategies stand out is that they are **offered to all students in the class, whether or not they have diagnosed disabilities**. In this sense, all students can benefit from UDL teaching techniques, a point that is particularly helpful for students who may have undiagnosed learning disabilities and would not have benefited from

<sup>65</sup> "Welcome to the PROJECT ACCESS Eighth Annual Conference for Parents and Professionals." Howard Community College. [http://www.howardcc.edu/students/academic\\_support\\_services/project\\_access/2010conf.pdf](http://www.howardcc.edu/students/academic_support_services/project_access/2010conf.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> "Project Access – Events, News, and Information." Howard Community College. [http://www.howardcc.edu/students/academic\\_support\\_services/project\\_access/Events.html](http://www.howardcc.edu/students/academic_support_services/project_access/Events.html)

<sup>67</sup> "Universal Design for Learning Project." Renton Technical College. <http://www.rtc.edu/AboutUs/DSDPGrant/>

support services offered to students with identified disabilities. Demonstrating the benefits of this approach, an independent evaluator determined that the project was successful, increasing course completion rates for *all students* over the course of the grant, though students with disabilities in UDL classrooms displayed the most significant increases.<sup>68</sup>

The Renton Technical College website directs readers to a series of outside sources that explain the tenets of UDL. One of these is the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST). CAST explains that UDL “provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone – not a single, one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted to individual needs.”<sup>69</sup> The basic principles of UDL are outlined in the table below, as well as guidelines and “checkpoints” related to each principle.

### Principles, Guidelines, and Checkpoints – Universal Design for Learning

Principle	Guideline	Checkpoint
Provide multiple means of representation	Provide options for perception	Options that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Customize the display of information</li> <li>❖ Provide alternatives for auditory and visual information</li> </ul>
	Provide options for language and symbols	Options that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Define vocabulary and symbols</li> <li>❖ Clarify syntax and structure</li> <li>❖ Decode text or mathematical notation</li> <li>❖ Promote cross-linguistic understanding</li> <li>❖ Illustrate key concepts non-linguistically</li> </ul>
	Provide options for comprehension	Options that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Provide or activate background knowledge</li> <li>❖ Highlight critical features</li> <li>❖ Guide information processing</li> <li>❖ Support memory and transfer</li> </ul>
Provide multiple means of action and expression	Provide options for physical action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Options in the mode of physical response</li> <li>❖ Options in the means of navigation</li> <li>❖ Options for accessing tools and assistive technologies</li> </ul>
	Provide options for expressive skills and fluency	Options in the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Media for communication</li> <li>❖ Tools for composition and problem-solving</li> <li>❖ Scaffolds for practice and performance</li> </ul>

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> “About UDL.” Center for Applied Special Technology. <http://www.cast.org/udl/index.html>

Principle	Guideline	Checkpoint
	Provide options for executive functions	Options that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Guide effective goal-setting</li> <li>❖ Support planning and strategy development</li> <li>❖ Facilitate managing information and resources</li> <li>❖ Enhance capacity for monitoring progress</li> </ul>
Provide multiple means of engagement	Provide options for recruiting interest	Options that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Increase individual choice and autonomy</li> <li>❖ Enhance relevance, value, and authenticity</li> <li>❖ Reduce threats and distractions</li> </ul>
	Provide options for sustaining effort and persistence	Options that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Heighten salience of goals and objectives</li> <li>❖ Vary levels of challenge and support</li> <li>❖ Foster collaboration and communication</li> <li>❖ Increase mastery-oriented feedback</li> </ul>
	Provide options for self-regulation	Options that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Guide personal goal-setting and expectations</li> <li>❖ Scaffold coping skills and strategies</li> <li>❖ Develop self-assessment and reflection</li> </ul>

Source: National Center on Universal Design for Learning at the Center for Applied Special Technology.

For specific examples and resources related to each principle, guideline, and checkpoint please see the [National Center on Universal Design for Learning](#) at CAST.

As a part of its pilot program, Renton Technical College implemented UDL strategies and assistive technologies in a specified set of classrooms, while also making such technologies available to all students in the college's Technology Resource Center's Open Lab and Library.<sup>70</sup> Below is a sample of the UDL strategies used by Renton Technical College instructors in the initial phase of the pilot:

- ❖ **Use of Interactive Whiteboard in both lecture and lab classrooms** – Downloading lecture notes and drawings for drafting so that students can review and manipulate
- ❖ **Digitized materials** – Scanning and digitizing text or hand-out materials for students to be able to access on an Assistive Technology work station as well as in the lab
- ❖ **Expanded syllabus** – Creating a visual “road map” for courses with enlarged print, highlighting and bolding to accent important dates, assignments, tests, and test weights

<sup>70</sup> “Universal Design for Learning Project.” Renton Technical College. Op. cit.

- ❖ **CITE Learning Styles Inventory** – Adjusts delivery to meet learning style needs of class based on an assessment of the number of visual, auditory, tactile, social, and individual learners
- ❖ **Teaching with TextHelp Read and Write** – Students use assistive technology to improve reading and writing skills with a word prediction, text-to-speech program
- ❖ **Multi-modal approach to learning top 200 drugs (Pharmacy Technician program)** – Students learn a variety of techniques for memorizing a drug matrix, including mnemonics, research on the internet, drawing or creating pictures, chanting, and using flash cards<sup>71</sup>

Additional UDL strategies employed by Renton Technical College instructors are available through the college's [UDL Project website](#).

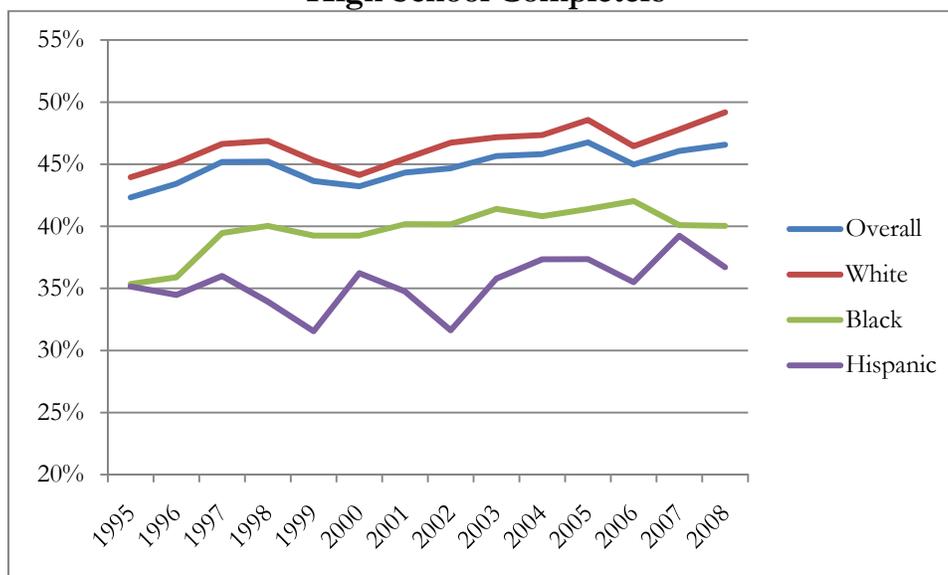
---

<sup>71</sup> Reproduced verbatim from "Pilot Strategies." Renton Technical College.  
<http://www.rtc.edu/AboutUs/DSDPGrant/TeachingStrategies/>

### Section 3: Recruitment of Minority Students

Colleges and universities have made great strides in increasing the enrollment of traditionally underrepresented students. For example, in 1995, 35.2 percent of Hispanic<sup>72</sup> individuals age 18 to 24 who had completed high school were enrolled in college. In that same year, the figure for Black individuals was 35.4 percent. By 2008, these figures had risen to 36.7 percent for Hispanics and 40.0 percent for Blacks. Despite these fairly strong increases, as the figure below depicts, there is still a significant race/ethnicity gap in terms of college enrollment.

**Postsecondary Enrollment as a Percent of All 18- to 24-Year-Old High School Completers**



Source: NCES.<sup>73</sup>

As “open door” institutions, community colleges play a strong role in reducing such gaps. In this section, we discuss ways in which community colleges can boost recruitment of racial/ethnic minorities – in particular, Black and Hispanic students.

#### Overview of Recruitment Practices

In the fall of 2002, the Student Affairs staff of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system reviewed approximately one thousand institutional websites related to the recruitment and retention of ethnic minority students. The search covered a wide range of institutions, from community colleges to research

<sup>72</sup> Please note that the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” are used interchangeably throughout this section of the report, depending on which term is used in the source being described. The same rule applies to the terms “Black” and “African American.”

<sup>73</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. “Table 204. Enrollment Rates of 18- to 24-Year-Olds in Degree-Granting Institutions, by Type of Institution and Sex and Race/Ethnicity of Student: 1967 through 2008.” *Digest of Education Statistics: 2009*. April 2010. [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09\\_204.asp?referrer=list](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_204.asp?referrer=list)

universities. The study concluded, “Despite the differences in the types of institutions looked at, striking similarities emerged in the types of activities undertaken by those colleges and universities that seemed to be most successful in achieving their minority student recruitment and retention goals.”<sup>74</sup> Practices that were related to recruitment in particular are summarized below:

- ❖ **Recruit students in “nontraditional settings”** such as community centers and churches, among others.
- ❖ **Involve minority students who are already enrolled in college or alumni in the recruitment process.** Such recruiters can provide better insight into their own experiences at the college.
- ❖ Particularly with regard to Hispanic students, place emphasis on **recruiting the family** as well as the prospective student.
- ❖ Develop **“early outreach activities”** that can increase students’ awareness of college while they are still in elementary, middle, and high school. This can support an increase in the “pool of college-bound minority students” while also increasing name recognition of area institutions.<sup>75</sup>

As we demonstrate in the remainder of this section, these strategies appeared throughout our own review of other literature surrounding the recruitment of minority students. Additional practices that we encountered include:

- ❖ Develop recruitment, admissions, and financial aid **materials in students’ native languages.**<sup>76</sup>
- ❖ Provide **financial aid opportunities** or more flexible financial aid packages targeted towards minority students.<sup>77</sup>

We discuss these practices in greater detail below, providing examples of specific institutions that have experienced success with these practices where available. Note that we do not offer additional information regarding the provision of financial aid opportunities but rather focus on examining the less straightforward recruitment practices mentioned above.

---

<sup>74</sup> “A Summary of ‘Best Practices’ for Recruitment and Retention of Students of Color.” Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System. 2002. <http://www.academicaffairs.mnscu.edu/studentaffairs/documents/BestPractices.pdf>  
<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>76</sup> Opp, R. D. “Enhancing Recruitment Success for Two-Year College Students of Color.” *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*. Vol. 25. 2001. 81. and Matheson, K. “U.S. Colleges Recruit Hispanic Families Using Spanish.” *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*. February 9, 2010. <http://diverseeducation.com/article/13530/>

<sup>77</sup> Cortez, J. D. and A. Cortez. “Effective Higher Education Recruitment Strategies.” Intercultural Development Research Association. 2004.  
[http://www.idra.org/IDRA\\_Newsletter/August\\_2004\\_Self\\_Renewing\\_Schools\\_Access/Effective\\_Higher\\_Education\\_Recruitment\\_Strategies/](http://www.idra.org/IDRA_Newsletter/August_2004_Self_Renewing_Schools_Access/Effective_Higher_Education_Recruitment_Strategies/)

## Involving Current Students as Recruiters

In a policy brief developed for Excelencia in Education, a Washington, DC-based non-profit focusing on the promotion of higher educational achievement of Latino students, Santiago (2007) examined the college choices of Latino students.<sup>78</sup> The study involved focus groups of Latino college students and graduates, in order to determine what factors influenced their college choices, as well as ask additional questions regarding the institutions in which they ultimately enrolled. While these students attended baccalaureate-granting institutions, the insights uncovered in the study appear applicable to community colleges as well.

As part of the study, students and graduates were asked to provide recommendations regarding ways to improve the recruitment of Latino students. One of the practices highlighted by multiple focus group participants was the involvement of current Latino students in the recruiting process. Santiago elaborates on this recommendation in the following manner:

- ❖ **Have graduates of a particular high school who are currently in college return to the school to share their experiences** and talk to potential students about applying to college. In this way, students would have a better idea of what to expect. It would also help if these students were from similar backgrounds and if they went to different colleges.
- ❖ **Create a mentoring program** between colleges and high schools so that students who have questions about college preparation or options can talk directly – and in a consistent environment – to those involved.<sup>79</sup>

The review of best practices conducted by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system highlighted the employment of a **minority student recruiter at Central Community College** in Grand Island, Nebraska. As a student at the college, the recruiter **worked with a group of minority high school students**. In addition to maintaining contact with the students, her efforts included a full tour of the college “during which two students were admitted to the college.”<sup>80</sup> While this is not the only program employed by the college to recruit minority students,<sup>81</sup> the college has had success in increasing its share of Hispanic students. In 2000, only 3 percent of the student body was Hispanic. By 2009, this proportion had risen to 9 percent. The college’s increase in its proportion of Black students has been less

---

<sup>78</sup> Santiago, D. “Choosing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): A Closer Look at Latino Students’ College Choices.” Excelencia in Education. 2007. <http://www.edexcelencia.org/system/files/ChoosingHSIsCloserLookRv.pdf>

<sup>79</sup> Reproduced verbatim from Ibid., 13.

<sup>80</sup> “A Summary of ‘Best Practices’ for Recruitment and Retention of Students of Color.” Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System. Op. cit. 2.

<sup>81</sup> For example, the college’s website offers admissions information in Spanish. See: “Admissions - En Español.” Central Community College. <http://www.cccneb.edu/igsbase/igstemplate.cfm?SRC=DB&SRCN=&GnavID=155>

dramatic, growing from less than 0.4 percent in 2000 to 1 percent in 2009.<sup>82</sup> However, given that only 1.6 percent of the population of Grand Island, Nebraska is Black, this figure demonstrates that the college is coming closer to matching the demographics of its surrounding population.<sup>83</sup>

### **Recruiting the Family, Native Language Materials, and Nontraditional Settings**

A number of sources reviewed for this report indicated that an emphasis on recruiting students' families, providing admissions and other informational materials in students' native languages, and recruiting students in nontraditional settings are three strong – and related – practices in attracting minority students.

First, through an analysis of a dataset combining IPEDS enrollment data with the results of a national survey of student affairs administrators, Opp (2001) found that the “strongest positive predictor of the percentage of two-year college students of color [a proxy measure of success in recruiting minority students] was that the institution had used recruitment information in the students’ native languages.”<sup>84</sup> In other words, Opp found that **community colleges that offer recruitment material in students’ native languages are more likely to have higher enrollments of minority students.** Opp hypothesized that the use of such materials demonstrates respect for students’ cultures, as well as “sends a powerful message of inclusivity to students whose native languages are not English.”<sup>85</sup>

While Opp’s study was published in 2001, it appears that a variety of higher education institutions are using such strategies to reach minority students. For example, as part of a Florida State Department of Education “Equity Site Review” in 2009, **Hillsborough Community College** posted a variety of its recruiting and admissions materials on its website. Among these materials are a bilingual “Applying for Admission” brochure (English and Spanish) and a Spanish version of the college’s recruitment radio advertisement.<sup>86</sup>

Providing another example, **Front Range Community College** in Colorado is currently advertising an opening for a Bilingual Enrollment and Retention Specialist. The position holder’s responsibilities include (among others):

- ❖ Assist with the development of recruiting materials in Spanish such as letters, flyers, and brochures

<sup>82</sup> IPEDS Data Center. National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/>

<sup>83</sup> See: 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Available through “American FactFinder.” U.S. Census Bureau. [http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en)

<sup>84</sup> Opp. “Enhancing Recruitment Success for Two-Year College Students of Color.” Op. cit. 81.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> “List of Requested Documents – Education Programs.” Hillsborough Community College. <http://www.hccfl.edu/equity/home/list-of-requested-documents/education-programs.aspx>

- ❖ Organize and conduct Get Started information sessions in English and Spanish
- ❖ Provide a parent information session in Spanish for New Student Orientation<sup>87</sup>

The third responsibility listed above leads to another strong practice in recruiting minority students: recruiting the whole family. In her 2007 brief described above, Santiago found that **Latino students strongly believed family to be an important issue in making their college decisions**. Focus group participants suggested that colleges could create a handout that prospective students could offer to their parents, highlighting information such as the college's mission and expectations, academic programs, student services, financial aid opportunities, and extracurricular activities.<sup>88</sup>

Other sources have emphasized the importance of focusing on families during the recruitment process. In a 2010 article published in *The Education Digest* and *Hispanic Outlook*, Gilroy describes the work of Raul Lorenzo, an account director for Bauza & Associates, a marketing firm that works with colleges and universities to recruit and retain Latino students. Lorenzo explains that his firm advises institutions to **“recruit the family,” as many Hispanic students are the first in their families to attend college**.<sup>89</sup> Having not experienced college themselves, the parents of such students are typically unfamiliar with what enrollment entails and what opportunities college will offer their children.

Lorenzo also touches on the language barrier discussed above: “You might be recruiting the Hispanic student who probably speaks English, but you have to sell the college and the student’s aspiration to the family.”<sup>90</sup> In order to address such issues, during his time on the admissions staff of Amherst College, Lorenzo introduced the idea of convening separate open house sessions for Hispanic families and other families from minority ethnic backgrounds in order to create a less intimidating and more inclusive environment. The college advertised the sessions in Spanish and offered bus transportation to students and their families. The sessions featured Hispanic and African-American faculty to meet the students and their families, and to answer their questions.

In addition to the case of Amherst College, a four-year institution, Lorenzo cited the example of a community college client: **Holyoke Community College (HCC)** in Massachusetts. Seeking to increase the Hispanic community’s awareness of the institution and boost enrollment of Hispanic students by five percent, HCC

---

<sup>87</sup> Front Range Community College. “Bilingual Enrollment and Retention Specialist.” *Inside Higher Ed*. Posted on January 2, 2011. <http://www.insidehighered.com/layout/set/popup/career/seekers/posts/view/174421>

<sup>88</sup> Santiago. “Choosing Hispanic-Serving Institutions.” Op. cit., 13.

<sup>89</sup> Gilroy, M. “Tools for Success in Recruiting and Retaining Hispanic Students.” *The Education Digest*. November 2010.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

approached Bauza & Associates to help develop an advertising campaign. Lorenzo devised a campaign titled **“HCC: Passport to My Future and My Family’s Success”** that sought to connect the welfare of the family with college, promoting the college to parents as a “place of opportunity for their children.”<sup>91</sup> The campaign included eight Spanish-language billboards and a radio advertisement.<sup>92</sup> The billboards included messages (in Spanish) such as “Get closer to your dreams!” and “Your future is not that tough!” as well as a phone number with the message “We speak your language.”<sup>93</sup>

Gilroy’s article indicates that the campaign was viewed as successful. While the article does not provide concrete evidence of this success, elements of the campaign – the billboards and Spanish language radio ad – were recognized by the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations in 2006 for communications achievement.<sup>94</sup> Further, according to IPEDS data, the percentage of students enrolled at HCC who are Hispanic increased from 13 percent in fall 2005 (before the campaign) to 18 percent in fall 2009, suggesting that the college met its recruitment goal.<sup>95</sup>

Linked to the practices of recruiting the family and offering recruitment and other informational materials in students’ native languages is the practice of **recruiting students in nontraditional settings**. For example, a 2009 article discussing the efforts of Georgia colleges and universities to boost enrollments of Latino students, highlighted the importance of **going to “where students and their relatives are – churches, festivals, sporting events, and other community gatherings.”**<sup>96</sup> One of the institutions featured in the article – **Georgia Perimeter College (GPC)** – recruits students at cultural events, such as Fiesta Georgia, one of the largest Latino festivals in the state. GPC recruiters set up a booth at the event to provide information regarding the college to festival attendees. Eric Cuevas, one of the recruiters explained that he discussed cost, campus safety, and student support services with Latino families at the event. Further, an important message he tried to impart to these families was that “spending money on college now will help students earn higher salaries later.”<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> “Bauza & Associates Launches New Ad Campaign for HCC.” *HCC Connection*. March 28, 2006. [http://www.hcc.edu/News\\_Events/ConnectionArchives/Connection3.28.06.html#bauza](http://www.hcc.edu/News_Events/ConnectionArchives/Connection3.28.06.html#bauza)

<sup>93</sup> The billboards are featured in the *Hispanic Outlook* version of the article. See: Gilroy, M. “Tools for Success in Recruiting, Retaining Hispanic Students.” *Hispanic Outlook*. May 3, 2010. <https://www.wdhstore.com/hispanic/data/pdf/may3-tools.pdf>

<sup>94</sup> “HCC Brings Home the Gold...and the Silver...and...” *HCC Connection*. November 30, 2006. [http://www.hcc.edu/News\\_Events/ConnectionArchives/Connection11.30.06.html#hccbrings](http://www.hcc.edu/News_Events/ConnectionArchives/Connection11.30.06.html#hccbrings)

<sup>95</sup> IPEDS Data Center. National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/>

<sup>96</sup> “Diamond, L. “Georgia Colleges Recruit Growing Population of Latino Students.” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. October 27, 2009. <http://www.ajc.com/news/georgia-colleges-recruit-growing-175771.html>

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

In addition to the article discussing recruitment practices of Georgia colleges, a “Blue Ribbon Recruitment Task Force” report published by GPC highlights the college’s plans to **increase its participation in “Spanish speaking events”** in order to boost enrollments from the Spanish speaking community. The college laid out plans for its recruiters of Hispanic descent to increase recruitment at religious and other events within the Hispanic community and ESL classes at feeder schools. Linking up with parts of our earlier discussion of recruiting the family, the report also discusses **hosting events specifically for Spanish speakers** and increasing communication with prospective Hispanic students’ parents through in-person meetings, as well as mail and the internet. Beyond these activities, the college discussed signs and billboards written in Spanish that targeted the parents of Hispanic/Latino students with messages emphasizing “the fact that ‘your child will make more money’ after earning a college degree at GPC.”<sup>98</sup>

GPC’s share of Hispanic enrollment has slowly increased over the past decade. In 2000, three percent of the student population was Hispanic. By 2005, this figure had increased to four percent and by 2009 the figure had increased to five percent.<sup>99</sup> While this may not appear to be a large increase, it is important to note that the five cities in which GPC has campuses – Alpharetta, Clarkston, Decatur, Dunwoody, and Covington – have Hispanic populations ranging from 2.7 to 7.3 percent of their total populations.<sup>100</sup> This suggests that the college is coming close to achieving a student body that is representative of its surrounding area.

### **Early Outreach to Minority Students**

In his 2001 study, discussed above, Opp also found **partnerships between community colleges and high schools to be an important factor in minority student enrollment**. In particular, Opp reported that an affirmative answer to the statement “the institution has worked with minority high schools in the design and strengthening of curricula” from student affairs administrators and evidence that the college maintains dual-enrollment programs with such high schools were positive and significant predictors of minority student enrollment.<sup>101</sup> Institutions that had engaged in these activities were more likely to have larger minority student enrollments. With regard to the first predictor, involvement in high school curricular design, Opp notes that collaboration between community colleges and high schools, particularly schools with larger minority student populations, would help increase the “pool of students of color interested in attending college and capable of performing college-

---

<sup>98</sup> Fowler, L. F. Nash, and A. S. Tricoli. “Recruitment Blue Ribbon Task Force.” Georgia Perimeter College. 2007. 52. <http://www.gpc.edu/~presoff/taskforcereports/recruitmenttaskforcereport.pdf>

<sup>99</sup> IPEDS Data Center. National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/>

<sup>100</sup> See: 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Available through “American FactFinder.” U.S. Census Bureau. [http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en)

<sup>101</sup> Please note that the article does not define “minority high school.” It is assumed that this phrase refers to high schools with significant minority student populations. See: Opp, “Enhancing Recruitment Success for Two-Year College Students of Color.” Op. cit., 81-82.

level work.”<sup>102</sup> Such an **increase in the number of interested and capable minority students could then lead to more students applying for enrollment.** As for the maintenance of dual-enrollment programs, such a practice facilitates an introduction of high school students to the “two-year college experience.” This is again likely to bolster their educational aspirations, thereby increasing the pool of students interested in applying to college.<sup>103</sup>

Santiago (2008) echoes these findings in another study, where she examined the institutional practices of 12 colleges and universities with large Hispanic student populations (six community colleges and six public universities). The study notes that each of these institutions maintains programs designed to engage the surrounding community. The **El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence** is one such program. The collaborative represents a partnership between El Paso Community College, the University of Texas at El Paso, and school districts in El Paso County (the vast majority of whose students are Hispanic). Described as a “K-16 initiative,”<sup>104</sup> the collaborative seeks to:

- ❖ Increase the academic achievement of all area students
- ❖ Close the achievement gaps between groups of students
- ❖ Boost high school graduation rates
- ❖ Prepare students for success in college<sup>105</sup>

One of the initiative’s main activities is a “**K-16 Mathematics Alignment**” designed to “align mathematics content, performance and assessment standards and courses” at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels. The activity involves encouraging dialogue between K-16 mathematics faculty regarding college readiness standards, examining data on mathematics alignment and student performance, developing better college mathematics course placement systems, and disseminating information regarding the mathematics alignment process throughout the state. With regard to curriculum alignment, mathematics and engineering faculty from the university and community college met with K-12 classroom teachers to develop “curriculum frameworks for Algebra II, Geometry, Algebra I and Mathematics K-8, which give teachers an organization of topics in matrix form together with cognition levels that are focused, coherent and deep in understanding concepts.”<sup>106</sup>

Through a combination of its efforts, the collaborative has witnessed success, as exemplified by narrowing achievement gaps in terms of race/ethnicity on statewide assessments. Connecting back to Opp’s hypothesis that collaboration between

---

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>104</sup> Santiago. “Modeling Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): Campus Practices that Work for Latino Students.” *Excelencia in Education*. Op. cit., 10.

<sup>105</sup> “About Us.” The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence. <http://www.epcae.org/about.htm>

<sup>106</sup> “K-16 Mathematics Alignment 2000-Present.” The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence. <http://www.epcae.org/work-k16.htm>

colleges and high schools can enlarge the pool of students prepared for and interested in college, the collaborative also reports increased enrollment and pass rates in college preparatory classes, and an increase in the number of community college and university degrees awarded by El Paso Community College and the University of Texas at El Paso.<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> "Results." The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence. <http://www.epcae.org/results.htm>