

Passaic County Community College Wins 2012 Diana Hacker TYCA Outstanding Programs in English Award

Title V Writing Initiative Cited for Fostering Student Success

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Photo by Luis Ruiz

The PCCC Writing Intensive Team:

(Front) **Gregory Fallon**, Associate Dean for Learning Resources and Project Director Title V

Back Row (right to left)

Kenneth Ronkowitz,

Director of the Writing Initiative at PCCC;

Martha Broznya,

Writing Center Educational Specialist;

Elizabeth Nesius, Writing Center Coordinator;

Ken Karol, Technology Resource Specialist;

Passaic County Community College (PCCC) is the winner of the 2012 Diana Hacker TYCA (Two-Year College Association) Award for Outstanding Program in English for Two-Year Colleges and Teachers.

Sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the award is given annually to exemplary programs that enhance students' language learning, helping them to achieve their college, career, and personal goals.

PCCC's "Increasing Achievement and Program Completion through Curriculum Reform"--the Title V Writing Initiative--has been selected as the exemplary program in the category of Fostering Student Success. The program was funded through a five-year \$2.5 million federal grant to PCCC in 2007.

“Our program is being honored "for the creative response to the challenges of educating two-year college students and for demonstrating professionalism in the commitment to educating diverse student populations,” said Kenneth Ronkowitz, director of the Writing Initiative.

Award-Winning Program was Funded by a Federal Grant

The Writing Initiative was established through a five-year, \$2.5 million grant awarded in 2007 through the U.S. Department of Education’s Strengthening Hispanic Serving Institutions Program (Title V), aimed at increasing achievement and program completion rates of Hispanic and other students by integrating critical thinking, information literacy, and technology into college-level writing.

PCCC invested the grant into a five-year comprehensive reform effort that included:

- hiring specialists for the five-member writing staff
- adding 20 writing initiative courses to the curriculum
- supporting the courses with an intensive instructional development component that trains faculty in integrating critical thinking and writing.
- construction of a new Writing Center at the College where students in the writing intensive courses receive targeted instruction and individualized support.

Program Exceeds Goals and Increases Student Achievement

Now in its fifth and final grant-funded year, the program has far exceeded one of its main goals: to increase the number of students who pass the College Writing Exam (CWE) on their first attempt by 20 percent.

“During the Fall 2011 semester, 24 out of 25 students in Writing Intensive classes who took the College Writing exam passed,” said Ronkowitz. The passing rate prior to the grant (2007) was 68 percent.

“In our evaluation of student writing via electronic portfolios, adequate evidence of the use of critical thinking in writing improved from 28 percent of papers in 2008 to 68 percent and 78 percent in the past two years,” Ronkowitz added, a gain he attributed to the initiative.

In other achievements:

- 23 courses have been redesigned as Writing Intensive as of the 2011-2012 academic year
- 74 Writing Intensive sections were offered this academic year
- 72 faculty members have completed training in order to teach Writing Intensive sections
- The Writing Center had 1113 appointments last year with students who were working on papers for Writing Intensive courses.

“The work of the Writing Initiative is permeating the College and transforming the way our faculty and students approach writing,” said Gregory Fallon, PCCC’s Associate Dean for Learning Resources and Title V Project Director.

[The Writing Initiative at PCCC](#)

[The Diana Hacker Award](#)