Achieving the Dream
At
Passaic County Community College

In June 2011, Passaic County Community College joined Achieving the Dream. One of the first major activities was the formation of a Core Group of 22 faculty and administrators representing all sites and all departments. Guided by the five AtD core objectives, and after extensive discussion, examination of data, and planning, the Core Group identified three broad initiatives:

1. Accurate placement of incoming students
2. College Readiness: Developmental Math
3. College Readiness: Developmental English
4. College Readiness: English Language Studies
5. College Success

Since Fall 2011–Fall 2013:

1. Accurate Placement:

As part of the AtD initiative, the College identified students’ lack of preparation for the placement test and their resulting poor performance on the test as one of the obstacles to timely progression through the developmental math and English sequences. In response, the AtD Accurate Placement Team improved the placement testing website to more clearly present information about the placement tests. In addition, the Testing Department developed practice placement tests with links to tutorial websites.

2. College Readiness: Developmental Math

The Mathematics Department initiated several improvements in the developmental math sequence in the past few years. With an increased availability of data through the AtD initiative, those changes were evaluated, expanded and improved.

- **RAMP Program (MA PREP):** Students who score within the lowest range on Accuplacer are required to register for the RAMP program at the start of the 15-week semester. Students receive fifteen (15) hours of remediation. Successful students may register for an MA 010 course in the 12-week semester.
- **Accelerated Algebra Program:** The Math Lab Coordinator runs a five-day refresher course for students who placed into MA 025. On the last day, the students take the departmental final exam. Those students who pass that exam are then able to register for College-Level Math.
- **Accelerated Workshops (MA INT)** “boot camps” are offered to developmental students at the end of each semester. The workshops provide second-chance and acceleration opportunities.

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3. College Readiness: Developmental English

During the academic year 2011 – 2012, the Developmental Studies Department planned and implemented several wide-ranging initiatives based on best practices in the field and evaluation of data.

- **Integrated reading and writing courses** were implemented in spring 2013. Faculty development workshops were held prior to the beginning of the semester to provide guidance and support in teaching the new courses. Workshops for faculty, both full time and part time, are offered bimonthly and a Resource Center has been established to provide a forum for exchange of teaching material, research and methodologies.
- **A 10-day Intensive Workshop** is offered to new and returning developmental English students to assist them in accelerating through Developmental English sequence.
- **An Accelerated Learning Course**, a pairing of special sections of EN 101 and DE 025 has yielded very positive results with a 95% passing rate.

4. College Readiness: English Language Studies (formerly English as a Second Language)

During the 2011-2013 academic years, the English as a Second Department (now the English Language Studies (ELS) Department), redesigned its structure and curriculum.

- **A PREP Workshop**: Upper-beginning students may enroll in an intensive PREP workshop designed to build their language skills sufficiently to enter the academic ELS program.
- **A redesigned curriculum** increases the number of credits per semester and integrates grammar and writing instruction. Reading courses were expanded to include greater emphasis on the development of speaking and listening.
- Through the English Language Studies’ Accelerated Learning Program, borderline students who fail writing classes are invited to attend an intensive workshop allowing them a second chance to take the writing exit exams at each level.
- **Paired courses**, which allow ELS upper-level reading students to take college-level courses, are offered with Sociology, Psychology, Computer Information Systems & Early Childhood Education courses. Additional pairings are being planned.
- **A career track** has developed to create pathways to stackable credentials for ELS students. A bridge and paired course allow ELS students to prepare to take a national credential exam and apply credits towards an Early Childhood Education Career certificate and an AAS in Early Childhood Education. Pathways in other disciplines are currently being explored.

5. College Success

- **An academic tutoring center**, The Gateway Center, was created through collaboration with a Title V grant to address the low passing rate of students in ten gateway courses.
- **Course redesign** to incorporate collaborative learning began in fall 2013 with EN101. Redesign of the remaining gateway courses is planned.
- **Professional development** workshops are offered on a regular basis.
- **Interventions for 40+ credit students** designed to improve success and retention will be developed in the next phase of the initiative.

For more information, contact the AtD Co-Leaders at PCCC:

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