Strategies for Transformative Change

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP

Transformative Change Initiative Overview

Transformative Change Initiative (TCI) is dedicated to assisting community colleges to scale-up innovations that improve student outcomes and program, organization, and system performance.

Transformative Change Definition

TCI defines transformative change as follows: Raising the individual, organizational and system performance of community colleges to unprecedented levels without sacrificing their historic commitment to access and equity.

MoHealthWINs is online at http://mccatoday.org/mohealthwins/.

INTRUSIVE STUDENT SUPPORT AND CONTEXTUALIZED DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

Intrusive Student Support and Contextualized Developmental Education and MoHealthWINS Consortium

The MoHealthWINs Consortium, which focuses on health care education, includes all 13 Missouri community and technical colleges, with urban, suburban, and rural locations. This brief describes two innovations, intrusive student support and contextualized developmental education, as implemented at two colleges: Mineral Area College and St. Louis Community College. Information in this report was gathered from interviews and documents obtained during site visits at Mineral Area College and St. Louis Community College in Fall 2013.

Intrusive Student Support and Contextualized Developmental Education Definition

MoHealthWINs colleges are redesigning developmental education and implementing intrusive student support services. Their model allows for each institution to develop its particular system tailored to the student experience at that college. Changes are underway with developmental math, reading, and writing to include contextualized content within designated developmental units as well as the courses in the programs of study. In addition, colleges are implementing intrusive student support services designed to provide services beyond those traditionally provided to students. The comprehensive support begins with recruiting students to the programs, assisting students with the application process, and assigning advisors/coaches to the student once admitted. Advisors facilitate the development of career blueprints to guide the student experience, address academic or personal barriers, provide referrals, and offer job readiness training.

Major Themes

- **Participatory change.** The community colleges within Missouri responded to the call by the governor to build a consortium, which was led by the Missouri Community College Association (MCCA). Mineral Area College and St. Louis Community College joined their colleagues from across the state to build the Consortium and plan the implementation of their TAACCCT strategies. College administrators acknowledged that the colleges have benefited from the "increased communication between community colleges" that has occurred. Additionally, the implementation of the intrusive student support and changes to developmental education have provided new venues through which faculty and staff within each college work together. Faculty engaged in critical discussions with one another as they made changes to developmental education, they engaged with industry employers to tie the program curricula and support services to workforce skills, and they collaborated with student services colleagues to build programs that would be responsive to students' academic and personal needs.

- **Moving beyond silos.** Through implementation of the new curricula and new systems of support services, the colleges have become engaged in an active examination of the historic "silos" through which courses and services are delivered. With an articulated shared commitment to student success, colleges are examining a number of

policies and practices, including: assigning credit; designating courses to be "academic" or not (Career and Technical, Adult Education); how college-readiness is conceptualized and communicated to applicants; transferring credit; access to services and facilities (identification card, library, tutoring services) for students in credit and non-credit programs; student-advising models (other grant-funded programs, general students, faculty advising); semester-based systems such as admissions and financial aid; the role of all faculty, whether full-time, part-time, or adjunct, in the change.

- **One-stop resource.** The intrusive student support services provided participants with an identified resource person who served as "first point of contact" throughout the program, so the student would "know who to go to for help" at any point. Advisors met initially with prospective students and helped them find the right program fit. Advisors provided hands-on assistance to help individuals complete the steps to be admitted to the program (application, financial aid, Compass or WorkKeys, background check). Once the students were admitted, advisors guided them in developing career blueprints, offered skill-building sessions, and provided assistance in overcoming barriers. These problems included absences, failing assignments, financial challenges (fees, transportation, food, housing), and family issues. Faculty also saw the advisors as partners who helped students identify and address barriers that arose during the program.

Intrusive Advising. Faculty and administrators indicated that the work of the advisors/coaches, described as "walking step-by-step" with the students, has been key to the retention and completion of students. As a result of the early interaction with advisors, students came into the programs with an understanding of the requirements and expectations. Essential to the new system was the development of a relationship between the advisor and the student that allowed for the discussion of highly sensitive issues. Students described the advisors as approachable, trusted resources - "you get respect from coaches."

Within this new system, the use of the descriptor "intrusive" has been discussed, with particular attention to what might constitute an unwelcome action by the advisor. Faculty and coaches acknowledged the importance of building relationships with one another in which they discussed their unique roles in providing student support.

Nathan Thomas, a MoHealthWINs student, and Mark Chmiel, Educational Assistant II, in the Adult Learning Academy at St. Louis Community College.

Role of Faculty. With the advent of intrusive advising, colleges are examining the historic ways in which instructors have advised students, monitored student progress, and collaborated with academic service providers. With the changes to developmental education, colleges have been prompted to consider a number of questions, including where developmental education is located in the administrative and instructional structures, faculty workload, how teaching assignments are made, and how courses can provide contextualization.

St. Louis Community College
- The TAACCCT grant supports two pathways in health sciences. All students complete the Portal program, which includes career and Compass assessment, career blueprinting, and the National Career Readiness Certificate, and are assigned to a Career Pathway Coach. The program offers the Adult Learning Academy (ALA), a Digital Literacy for Healthcare course, and a Culture of Healthcare course.
- The ALA is the redesigned developmental education program for TAACCCT-supported students. The three guiding principles are: semesterless/courseless curriculum; contextualized/integrated material; and immersion/higher touch. The ALA provides a learning space with dedicated faculty and computers. The curriculum redesign was led by faculty and offers math and literacy (combined reading and writing). The ALA combines an expectation for students to commit 4 hours per day, 2-3 days per week with flexibility that includes allowing for "stopping out" as needed. Students work at their own pace and receive one-on-one support. Tests are used as tools for students to see what they've learned and what they need to continue to study. Students decide when they want to test.
- Students have been able to complete more quickly than the historic 1-2 semester sequence (for math the span has been 1-22 weeks). The ALA faculty partner with coaches to support student success, with weekly progress reports to coaches and email communication if problems arise.

"We present it to the students - This is not pass or fail, this is pass and we find out how. You can do this."
ALA faculty member
St. Louis Community College

Mineral Area College. Two programs of study within Career and Technical Education are supported by the TAACCCT grant: Pharmacy Technician, a 12-week certificate program; and Health Care Facility Maintenance Technician, with three certificate programs beginning with an 8-week program (200 hours). Both programs include classroom and lab instruction with internship or clinical experience and each student in these programs is assigned a Program Support Specialist.

"We have found that it has made a huge difference in retention. The minute that they have any kind of barrier…that program support specialist is there to help them work through that."
Beverly Hickam
MoHealthWINs Grant Project Manager
Mineral Area College

- Key to the success of the intrusive student services was "building the right staff," a team of instructors and advisors who worked with employers and college colleagues to initiate and collaborate in the operation.
- Retention was identified as a critical issue at this college. The success of the students receiving the intrusive student support (reported as around 90%) has provided a catalyst for campus leadership to convene a campus-level group. The group will look at "numbers, strategies, and policies," with an interest in developing early-alert systems to identify "at-risk" students and consider how to link intrusive services.
- Campus size and culture have facilitated relationship building between various units. Students and staff are able to "walk down the hall and talk" with resource people in other units. The students enroll as cohorts and their classroom and labs are in close proximity, which has made the experience easier for students who had never been to college or had not been in college in a long time.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AT ILLINOIS