

STUDENT SUCCESS COACHES AT BROWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Broward Community College is taking an intensive and personal “case management” approach to working with its entering students who are the least prepared academically. Broward began by targeting those students who, based on placement test scores (Florida has statewide standardized placement testing), are identified as needing remediation in reading, English, and mathematics, with at least two of those areas at the lowest skill level. Students in need of remediation in all three areas are considered to be at high risk for academic failure; most do not continue their education beyond their first semester. At Broward, one-third of entering students fit this profile.¹

In Broward’s new approach, students enroll in their first semester in a 3-credit student success course with about 25 students. The faculty member teaching the course is also assigned to those students as a success coach. Success coaches work one-on-one with their students to “form a connection with the college” and to address a variety of concerns that have traditionally been considered barriers to success, including “education planning, academic concerns, career counseling, time management, and family/childcare concerns.”² In the first semester of implementation, over 95 percent of this interaction took place face-to-face, often supplemented by email and/or telephone exchanges.³

The program was started in the fall of 2005, a semester that included a two-week closure of the college due to Hurricane Wilma and then significant follow-up on issues related to the hurricane such as changes in the local economy and the availability of employment related to clean-up and rebuilding that drew students away from the college.⁴ Still, early results are just starting to become visible and they suggest that even minimal contact with success coaches resulted in positive outcomes such as higher levels of student re-enrollment in the subsequent semester, more hours earned, and higher GPAs. Interestingly, in some cases the data fluctuate as students have even more contact with coaches. For example, the mean hours earned is 7.21 for students with no contact with coaches. It increases to 7.65 for students with low levels of contact, then drops to 7.03 for students with medium levels of contact, and then jumps all the way to 9.71 for students with high levels of contact with their coaches. This inconsistency has not yet been explained by the research, but may be “reflective of the failure on the part of students to resolve issues” even as they have more contact with their coaches.⁵

¹ Broward Community College Final Proposal for Achieving the Dream. March 25, 2005, Page 21. Accessed July 5, 2006, http://www2.aacc.nche.edu/AtD_RFP/Broward_RFP.pdf.

² Phone Interview with Ted Wright, July 5, 2006. Conducted by Lara K. Couturier; Wright, Ted and Deoraj Bharath. *Broward Community College: Achieving the Dream 2006 Implementation Grant Report and Funding Request*. Fort Lauderdale, FL: Broward Community College, 2006, Page 2.

³ Wright, Ted and Deoraj Bharath. *Broward Community College: Achieving the Dream 2006 Implementation Grant Report and Funding Request*. Fort Lauderdale, FL: Broward Community College, 2006, Page 2.

⁴ Phone Interview with Ted Wright, July 5, 2006. Conducted by Lara K. Couturier; Giegerich, Steve. “Barrier Busters: Hurricanes Add to Colleges’ Challenges and to Leaders’ Resolve.” *Lumina Foundation Focus*, Winter 2006, Page 19.

⁵ Wright, Ted and Deoraj Bharath. *Broward Community College: Achieving the Dream 2006 Implementation Grant Report and Funding Request*. Fort Lauderdale, FL: Broward Community College, 2006, Pages 2-3; “Broward Community College AtD Tracking Cohort: Fall 2005: Analysis of Coaching

Broward issued a call to its faculty for those interested in becoming success coaches, which was answered by faculty hailing from all parts of the college. Participating faculty are required to take a training course, and are required to document their interactions with students so that data is available about how often they interact and about what issues. Coaches are provided with an additional stipend for their efforts.

The program is tracking student progress carefully and using other techniques, such as focus groups with faculty, for evaluation. The data obtained through program evaluation are leading to modifications and improvements in the program. One goal is to use the results to determine the techniques of the most effective success coaches, and to use that data to improve the training of the coaches. Broward is also planning to create learning communities by placing students in the same student success courses and developmental reading courses. The hope is that tools and techniques learned from working with the least academically prepared students can be applied to other students in the future. Broward is already opening up the eligibility criteria, now targeting all students who require developmental education in all three areas (English, reading, and mathematics), regardless of the level of remediation needed. Given how new this program is, it is difficult to know the long-term prospects. However, experts in the field have identified it as a promising practice worthy of notice.⁶

Broward Community College is participating in Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count, an initiative funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education, which is designed to “help more community college students succeed,” particularly “student groups that traditionally have faced significant barriers to success, including students of color and low-income students.”⁷ Broward’s implementation of success coaches is the main focus of its work within Achieving the Dream. Other colleges in Achieving the Dream are also pursuing innovative approaches to improving student success. More can be learned at <http://www.achievingthedream.org/>.

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.broward.edu
www.achievingthedream.org

Data.” Sent via email from Ted Wright [twright@broward.edu] to lara_couturier@brown.edu. “Re: Comments?” July 6, 2006.

⁶ Phone Interview with Kay McClenney, July 5, 2006. Conducted by Lara K. Couturier; Giegerich, Steve. “Barrier Busters: Two-year Institutions Help Students Achieve Their Dreams.” *Lumina Foundation Focus*, Winter 2006.

⁷ “What is Achieving the Dream?” Accessed July 5, 2006, <http://www.achievingthedream.org/>; See also Giegerich, Steve. “Barrier Busters: Two-year Institutions Help Students Achieve Their Dreams.” *Lumina Foundation Focus*, Winter 2006.