Redesigning Developmental Education

Problem Definition

- Over half of all students entering community colleges nationally are underprepared for college-level work (Rutschow and Schneider, 2011). This nationwide phenomenon has reached crisis proportions, and it poses one of the biggest challenges community colleges face in our efforts to increase overall graduation rates.

- According to Dr. Kay McClenny, Director of the Community College Leadership Program (2011), only 28% of first-time, full-time associate degree-seeking community college students graduate with a certificate or an associate degree within three years.

- Approximately, three out of ten students who enter community college with the goal of earning a degree or certificate have met their goal six years later (Rutschow and Schneider, 2011).

- According to Dr. Hunter Boylan, Professor and Director of the National Center for Developmental Education (2012), 51% of entering community college students come from the bottom half of the income distribution.

- According to Dr. McClenny, students who successfully complete one developmental course with a C grade or better during their first semester are more likely to complete their degree than any other group.

- According to the HCC Developmental Education Review Task Force data,
  - a little over 1/3 of HCC first-time entering students need developmental courses.
  - financially needy first-time HCC students are more likely than other first-time students to be assessed into developmental courses.
  - about 30% of HCC students required to take a developmental course move on successfully at HCC.
  - This information equates to a failure rate of about 75% for HCC students who are required to enroll in a development class; and a 25% failure rate for all first-time students.

Hutchinson Community College Triennial Review Process

In Fall 2012, a Developmental Education Triennial Workgroup was formed with the task of examining the state of developmental education and formulating a plan of action based on best practices to improve student outcomes.

The members of the Developmental Education Triennial Review Committee consisted of the following individuals: Dr. Ed Berger, President; Paula Brinn and Dan Pohl, Developmental Writing faculty; Terri Eckhoff, Developmental Reading faculty; Jim Ewert, Student Services counselor; Star Gipson, Executive Director of the Rimmer Learning Center; Dr. Cindy Hoss, Vice President of Academic Affairs; Christopher Lau, Guidance & Counseling counselor; Terri McQueen, Developmental Math faculty; Randy Myers, Vice President of Student Services; Kathy Petz, Coordinator of Adult Basic Education; Trudy Zimmerman and Dr. Tricia Paramore, Department Chairs for English and mathematics.
The workgroup met regularly during Fall 2012 to discuss research, exchange ideas, and develop options concerning the curriculum, delivery, and structure of developmental education. We learned that HCC offers many of the components for a successful developmental education program: an academic resource center that provides academic support and tutoring services; an Advising and Counseling Center; a variety of support services available to students; a sequence of courses in developmental math, reading, writing; and an orientation course designed to prepare students for college-level work—and yet we knew there was much yet to be done.

The components were functioning as independent entities with little or no collaboration. The research on best practices supports the need for a more centralized, integrated, holistic, and collaborative organizational structure headed by a director whose sole task is to oversee the developmental education program. Based on our research and deliberations, the Developmental Education Committee recommends the following:

- 1. A Developmental Education Program that integrates the academic and support services for developmental education students in a cohesive and systematic manner.
- 2. The establishment of a Student Achievement Center, a physical space that provides students with a welcoming and supportive environment.
- 3. The hiring of a full-time Director of Developmental Education to supervise all aspects of the program, coordinate its activities, and report to the Provost.
- 4. The formation of a Developmental Education Advisory Council that convenes regularly to discuss issues pertaining to developmental education and to provide guidance and direction to the director.
- 5. The use of research-based best practices to guide curriculum and pedagogical transformations of developmental classes.

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION PROPOSAL

In What Works: Research-Based Best Practices in Developmental Education, Hunter Boylan performed an extensive study of successful strategies, structural designs, and best practices that improve student success in developmental education, and he made the following observations.

1. Centralized developmental programs have consistently been found to be more successful than decentralized developmental programs (Donovan, 1974; Boylan, Bliss & Bonham, 1997; Roueche & Baker, 1987, Roueche & Snow, 1977)

   A. **RECOMMENDATION for HCC:** Centralize developmental English, reading, math with coordinated leadership to view developmental education as a holistic system

2. Institution needs to identify Dev. Ed. as institutional priority—Kiemig (1983) report that developmental education is most effective when regarded as a responsibility of entire institution rather than a single program or a collection of services

   B. **RECOMMENDATION for HCC:** connect developmental education to college strategic plan and the college catalog as a single entity with a priority budget, operating as a unified whole, integrated with student services and academic support services
3. Articulate common goals and objectives for all developmental courses and services with annual review and modify periodically

C. **RECOMMENDATION for HCC:** Develop mission, goals, objectives that are aligned with The National Association for Developmental Education

4. Successful developmental education programs effectively manage both faculty member and student expectations regarding developmental education

D. **RECOMMENDATION for HCC:** All hired to teach (both full/part-time) developmental education will undergo detailed orientation to mission, goals, objectives, and expectations; those in disagreement will be assigned other teaching duties

E. **RECOMMENDATION for HCC:** develop a definition of success with multiple measures; all program educators will share same goal of developing students' personal and academic skills with high level of integration and communication among courses and services

F. **RECOMMENDATION for HCC:** determine internal communication path for activities—newsletters, program reports, visibility during any/all meetings

5. Review comprehensiveness of developmental education support services—mandatory assessment/placement, intentional advising, study strategies courses or workshops, group/individual tutoring, individualized instruction often supported by computers, learning assistance centers and/or learning laboratories; first-year experience programs, freshman seminars, mentoring, critical thinking courses, learning communities, early alert system, contracts for those on academic probation, and personal counseling

G. **RECOMMENDATION for HCC:** use inventory of services list (prepared for KBOR, Feb. 2014), evaluate effectiveness using a common rubric (yet to be developed), and make plans for improvement

H. **RECOMMENDATION for HCC:** Review advisor checklist of potential barriers to education (financial aid, child care, transportation, textbooks purchases, work schedules) to focus on interventions; update listing of services to help students—social, religious, workforce, daycare, transportation, job placement, . . .

6. A Systematic evaluation of developmental education activities should be multi-faceted

Systematic Program Evaluation (Boylan, Bonham, White & George, 2000)

I. **RECOMMENDATION for HCC:** identify a consistent set of developmental education data elements and evaluate these in comparison) # of courses hours of tutoring and students served, # early alerts, course completion, grades in courses, grades when tutored, progress/grades in the next course, student satisfaction/faculty satisfaction

J. **RECOMMENDATION for HCC:** develop both formative/summative evaluations that assist with long-term outcomes achievement (i.e., grade point average, long-term retention, and graduation rates)
7. Developmental Education programs that emphasize professional development for faculty/staff are generally more successful than programs without such an emphasis (Casazza and Silverman, 1996)

K. **RECOMMENDATION for HCC:** Develop specific Faculty Development days/training (including part-time faculty, counselor/advisors) in an ongoing cycle focused on working with “at-risk” students, esp. how to teach study skills, routinely sharing instructional strategies, read/discuss books/articles in the field. Hold regular sessions between developmental course faculty and services staff to exchange ideas, share strategy, discuss issues, look for alternatives to instructional approach; these are long-term professional development

8. When classrooms and laboratories were fully integrated there is a significantly higher pass rate in developmental courses (Boylan, Bonham, Claxton, 7 Bliss, 1992)

L. **RECOMMENDATION for HCC:** Designate Rimmer basic skills lab area and determine how these collaborative activities support particular courses, relate lab activities to course goals/objectives, require participation as part of course assignments, count lab as part of grade, hold lab in reasonable proximity to courses being supported

9. Quality of classroom instruction is the single most important contributor to the success of development students (Boylan, Bonham, Claxton, & Bliss, 1992)

M. **RECOMMENDATION for HCC:** Begin by surveying teaching methodologies in basic developmental courses; accommodate student diversity through varied instructional methods—using at least 3 different modes to present material in every class, frequent & timely feedback, review, & “readiness” testing opportunities, enhance use of learning communities), self-paced instruction, individualized instruction, peer review of student work, collaborative learning, computer-based instruction, mastery learning, small-group work, active learning techniques, videotapes, manipulatives, Power Point presentations, supplemental instruction, frequent review/testing opportunities, quizzes, verbal questioning, recitation, written papers, reports, class presentations, frequent/timely feedback--some evidence leads to visual and hands as the preferred mode

N. **RECOMMENDATIONS for HCC:**
- Share instructional strategies between developmental and college transfer programs in a regular, planned format, structured into the developmental education program
- teach critical thinking—use logical structures of reasoning to analyze information, to apply these in understanding concepts and solving problems, arrive at reasoned conclusions
- teach learning strategies (including skill, or cognitive knowledge, strategies, and student skills; will, or motivation and self-efficacy for learning; self-regulation, or time management and comprehension monitoring, and academic environment, or social
support available and the nature of the task at hand (Weinstein, Dierking, Husman, Roska, and Powdrill, 1998);

- use active learning strategies—problem solving groups, in-class presentations, discussion/criticism of each other’s written work, journal writing reflecting classroom experiences, coaching in solving mathematics problems, simulation games involving real-life experiences related to course content, preparing for/leading class discussions; interviewing local employers to gain basic workplace skills requirements; writing sample test questions (Perin, 2001; McKeachie, 2002; Wlodkowski and Ginsberg, 1995; Stahl, Simpson, and Hayes, 1992; Young and Shaw, 1999; Langer, 2001; Friere, 1970)

O. RECOMMENDATION for HCC: Review Learning and Study Strategies possibly through an Inventory (H&H Company) and Study Behavior Inventory (Andragogy Associates)

CAUTION: There is an inverse relationship between the amount of computer technology use in a developmental course and pass rates in that course (Boylan, Bonham, Claxton, & Bliss, 1992); if the majority of classroom instruction is by computer, instructors had significantly greater failure rates than those who used computers as supplement to classroom instruction. Best practice institutions use computers for supplementary assistance, tutoring, individual drill, and practice outside of class

10. Match the exit requirements of developmental education and entry requirements for college curriculum (Boylan, 1997; Boylan, Bonham, White, & George, 2000)

P. RECOMMENDATION for HCC: review exit requirements of developmental education courses/pathways and entry requirements for college level curriculum; share syllabi and review annually, look at text readability, have traditional faculty guest lecturers in development education courses; team-teach study skills course