

VALENCIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Starting Right: The Story Continues

Foundations of Excellence Final Report & Recommendations

May 7, 2009



Starting Right: The Story Continues

Foundations of Excellence Final Report and Recommendations

Introduction

Valencia Community College's institutional support for a first-year or new student experience was initially articulated in the "Start Right" goal of our 2001-2004 Strategic Learning Plan: "Ensure that students experience extraordinary learning success in their earliest encounters with the college and establish a solid foundation for success in future learning." This support has been re-affirmed in our "Build Pathways" and "Learning Assured" goals of the Strategic Plan we are currently implementing. These goals represent Valencia's ongoing commitment to the creation of experiences and conditions that we know will lead to improved student success.

Since the mid-1990's, Title III & V grants, Pew Roundtables, the Learning Centered College Initiative with the League for Innovation in the Community College, and most recently the Lumina Foundation's Achieving the Dream (AtD) initiative have boosted Valencia's ability to study and implement promising teaching and institutional practices in order to improve student learning and success. Concrete "products" that have emerged from these efforts include the Student Success course (SLS1122), LifeMap, faculty development support (including the Teaching and Learning Academy (TLA), Destinations, and the Scenarios and Faculty-to-Faculty programs for adjuncts), learning support centers, College Placement Test (CPT) preparation courses, and many, many individual and team initiatives on each campus.

In anticipation of the end of the funding cycle for AtD in July of 2009, the College Learning Council commissioned work in October 2007 to examine our College's progress to date and create plans for continuing improvement. Kurt Ewen, Director of Institutional Assessment, Sonya Joseph, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, and Ann Puyana, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, were charged by the College Learning Council to facilitate

conversation and study about the possibility of developing a formal Start Right or New Student experience at Valencia, one that would assure that all first-time students at Valencia know about and have the opportunity to benefit from a visible, available series of experiences that will support their success. In order to facilitate this process the College Learning Council approved Valencia's participation in *Foundations of Excellence*, a one year self-study with the help of representatives from the *Policy Center on the First Year of College*. This report is a summary of the results of the Foundations of Excellence process at Valencia during the 2008-2009 academic year.

The Foundations of Excellence Process

At the heart of the Foundations of Excellence process is the work done by the nine dimension teams – one team for each of the nine foundational dimensions (Philosophy, Organization, Learning, Campus Culture, Transitions, All Students, Diversity, Roles and Purposes, Improvement)¹. Each dimension has a series of performance indicators on which the dimension team members must evaluate the College using institutional data, publications, the student FoE survey, the faculty and staff FoE survey, and focus group data. This data, combined with reflection and discussion allows the dimension teams to evaluate the College's performance, assign the College a grade, and make recommendations for improvement. The result of this process allowed each dimension team to produce a report. The full report of the Foundations of Excellence process at Valencia will be available online and will include the detailed report of all nine dimension teams.

The New Student

On February 27, 2009 nearly 100 members of Valencia's Foundations of Excellence taskforce gathered on West Campus to discuss the work of the dimension teams and rank their

¹ A description of each Dimension and a list of Valencia Dimension team members can be found under Appendix B.

recommendations. The Taskforce agreed that Valencia needed a philosophy statement and corresponding definition of the New Student that would help guide the implementation of their recommendations.

Philosophy Statement for the New Student Experience

All Valencia faculty and staff strive to ensure that new students have meaningful experiences at the College that establish solid foundations for success in learning and lead to achievement of their academic and career goals.²

Definition of the New Student

Any student who has completed fewer than 15 college-level credits at Valencia³

Global Themes Dimension Reports

The members of the Taskforce reviewed, discussed and ranked the 90 plus recommendations of the 9 Dimension teams. An analysis of this work revealed the existence of six global themes – themes that transcend the conclusions of any one team. The six global themes include the following:

² The *Philosophy Statement* was developed and approved by Valencia’s Foundations of Excellence Taskforce on February 27, 2009 at the recommendation of the Philosophy Dimension Team. This statement is an attempt to make the *Start Right* philosophy statement from 2001 more specific to the new student experience. The term *New Student* should be understood to include students starting at Valencia, transferring into Valencia and / or transitioning within Valencia from one program of study to another (i.e., from the Associate of Arts program to the Nursing Program).

³ The *Definition of the New Student* was developed and approved by Valencia’s Foundations of Excellence Taskforce on February 27, 2009. This definition is intended to include all transfer / transition students until they have completed 15 college-level credits at Valencia Community College.

New Students Transitioning Into Valencia

Coordinated New Student Experience

Learning

Data Collection and Dissemination

Faculty and Professional Development

Communication

A description of each of the global themes follows.

New Students Transitioning Into Valencia

“Build Pathways” is Valencia’s first Strategic Goal and establishes the foundation for the first theme to emerge from the Foundations of Excellence work. In writing the Strategic Goals for 2009 – 2013, we challenged ourselves to go beyond being “just” an open-door institution and being more intentional in constructing pathways that enable new students to build connections to the college from their first interactions. From research, we know a successful transition into the college will most likely result in successful experiences at Valencia.

At Valencia, LifeMap has become the formal channel for new students to get started on the right pathway and to assist in developing life, career and education plans. The first stage of LifeMap, College Transitions, reaches back to pre-collegiate students and offers activities and programs to assist students in transitioning to Valencia. Through Transition programming, Valencia provides excellent resources for students to successfully prepare (academically and financially), apply, and register for college.

Although our Transition programs have been very successful in their out-reach efforts, the Dimension Teams found areas of improvement that could increase the support given to new students and improve the realization of students' career and education goals. One Dimension Team noted, "If Valencia's desire is to address the needs and goals of new students, then this would be the opportunity to develop a targeted First-Year Experience where these goals could be stated and communicated to students and made an integral part of their experience." Valencia has a strong line of communication to the high schools and middle schools for counselors, students, and families; however, we can do a better job at communicating the institutional mission and academic expectations before students enroll.

There are four specific ways that Valencia can better facilitate the transition of the new student into the college environment:

a. Through the Valencia Website:

- Update website to be more user-friendly and accessible for students (better navigability)
- Update regularly for changes in information, policies, and procedures
- Improve website for prospective students
- Provide needed information for enrollment up front, i.e., admissions, financial aid, expectations
- Make website less text-heavy
- Track on-line admission and financial aid application process
- Provide virtual landscape of campuses on Website so new students have a view of our campuses
- Offer a sense of place, a sense of campus on the website; as one high-school counselor remarked on Counselor Day 2008, "If you don't want Valencia to be grade 13, you need to make it look more like a college."

- b. Through Financial Aid:
 - Award financial aid while students are still in high school (award letters should be sent earlier while students are still in HS, in keeping with 4-year institutions)
 - Make all students aware of availability and options, including those for part-time students

- c. Through better preparation for placement testing and placement:
 - Try to avoid spur-of-the-moment testing; make students aware of options to get ready for CPT
 - Continue to examine the effectiveness of the CPT for accurate placement
 - Evaluate writing skills and reading CPT review sessions for each campus; implement a college-wide standard for review sessions
 - Encourage students to take CPT-M: students can be offered targeted instruction/refresher on specific areas of math

- d. By making Valencia look like a college through Student Activities/Student Development programming promotion:
 - Better inform students about campus life, student activities, leadership opportunities, etc.
 - Educate faculty about the possibilities of co-curricular partnership opportunities and funding that support academic learning outcomes
 - Co-curricular programming: infuse out-of-class opportunities into the General Education Program
 - Incentives to students who participate, i.e. co-curricular transcript, scholarships, etc.

Coordinated New Student Experience

As mentioned in the first global theme, LifeMap is Valencia's developmental advising model that helps students to think about and plan their career and education goals. Several Dimension Teams determined that Life Map as a tool was not being used to its full potential by new students and by the faculty who work directly with new students. LifeMap could reach its full potential by serving as the underlying model for a coordinated new student experience. Every department could coordinate “LifeMap” student experiences based on relevant and current data; develop, measure, and prioritize initiatives based upon shared outcomes of LifeMap; and articulate common outcome expectations to the stakeholders (faculty and students) in the process.

Currently, departments who have a direct impact on the new student appear to be functioning in isolation, or as one dimension team put it, “Jigsaw pieces fit together even though unaware of the larger picture.” College-wide collaboration is needed to develop learning outcomes for new students and focus on more global experiences in both curricular and co-curricular areas. The sheer size of Valencia dictates that a complex organizational structure exists to administer the work done in multiple locations and involving hundreds of employees and students. All of the departments involved in a student's enrollment process work collaboratively together to manage processes and solve problems; however, occasional disconnects may occur due to the volume of work and differing outcomes within departments. These disconnects can serve as insurmountable barriers to individual new students who are affected. Where possible, LifeMap outcomes should provide a structure for processes, communication, and outcomes. This coordinated effort based upon a LifeMap foundation should minimize the number of disconnects to maintain a smooth transition into the College and throughout the first year of a student’s experience.

We would be remiss if we did not mention our greatest challenge in making this coordinated experience a reality: continued growth of our student population. Maintaining and enhancing our services for students are constrained by increasing student enrollment and decreasing State funding. As Florida colleges face continued budget cuts due to the current economic situation, Valencia will have to be prudent in managing our budget to continue to offer the necessary support needed to ensure the success of our students.

To develop and implement a coordinated new student experience, we must begin with a few simple steps:

1. Expand research on the profile and challenges of the new student
2. Improve college-wide intra-campus communication between administrative, student and academic departments
3. Identify the specific areas in our professional development and training programs that need a new student focus
4. Enhance first year student advising; awareness of options with respect to data on the new student
5. Develop delivery systems to use outcomes to influence the new student experience.

Once these pieces are in place, the following specific areas and processes can be redesigned based upon the research and established outcomes.

a. Orientation:

- Extend orientation process beyond New Student Orientation activities
- Research other models to learn of unique ways to prepare the new student for transition
- Extend orientation online with Q&A chat with advisor or Financial Aid advisor

b. Student Success: Expand the reach of SLS1122 (Student Success) for new students and infuse SLS (Student Life Skills) skills into high enrollment courses

c. A possible *Life Map Division*:

- Coordinate SLS 1122 course curriculum and delivery

- Coordinate college prep course curriculum, faculty development, success and engagement strategies
 - Integrate LifeMap tools into the curriculum
- d. Advising:
- Develop interventions for student progression points
 - Identify faculty/staff roles and strategies for developmental advising
 - Develop classroom engagement strategies for all developmental courses
 - Develop a “Friend on the inside” program to promote student connection to the college (mentor, coach) (focus on developmental math)
- e. Learning Communities: Develop/expand/maintain high-engagement learning strategies and environments (i.e., Bridges, Learning in Community (LinC), Supplemental Learning (SL), Service Learning)
- f. Early Alert and High-Touch Interventions:
- Expand and standardize college-wide current early alert interventions
 - Pay attention to timing of intervention making sure it is not “too late” in the semester
- g. Enrollment Process: Remove barriers, bureaucracy, time-consuming and repetitive processes
- h. Articulation of Goals and Expectations: describe and make visible the New Student Experience in student-relevant terms
- i. Withdrawal Policies:
- Determine why students leave, stop out, return, withdraw
 - Use data to improve experience and results

- j. Special Populations (i.e., Honors, Students with Disabilities, developmental, English for Academic Purposes, Bridges): Interventions should appropriately target populations with particular needs
- k. Common Experiences: develop explicit common learning goals in both the curriculum and co-curriculum for all new students communicated through orientation and beyond
- l. First-Term Enrollment: limit course load for the first term of a student's enrollment based on their work/family load and on their CPT scores

Learning

At the heart of Valencia's learning-centered work over the past 10-plus years have been two questions: *How will this impact student learning?* and *How will we know?* These questions were formalized most recently in Goal 2 of our current strategic plan, *Learning Assured*, and work is currently underway to establish measureable objectives in order to have some knowledge of our progress. The Foundations of Excellence process has taken us more deeply into questions surrounding student learning and evidence thereof and leaves us with work yet to do. The third identifiable global theme to emerge from the nine dimension reports comes under the heading of *Learning* and includes a focus on curriculum alignment, student learning outcomes assessment, developmental education and student engagement.

Some issues identified under *Learning* (curriculum alignment, student learning outcomes assessment) reflect a student-centered / learning-centered approach to State accountability and SACS accreditation expectations that are already impacting institutional behavior. The College Curriculum Committee, Learning Evidence Team and the newly established Learning Assessment Committee have been working on these issues, and this report reinforces the importance of their current and future efforts. The desire to reform and align developmental education with the broader curriculum in order to improve the possibilities of student success has a long history at Valencia with little sustained institutional focus. The conclusions of the

dimension teams reinforce and support the conclusions of our Achieving the Dream work, the Developmental Education Summit in Fall 2008 and the ideas currently being proposed for the Gates and other grant opportunities – Developmental Education needs to be at the center of our Learning agenda. Finally, student engagement and curricular and co-curricular learning enhancement opportunities outside of the classroom need to be more clearly integrated into the new student experience.

This report identifies ways to ensure that learning is the central focus of a coordinated new student experience.

- a. Align curriculum within General Education and other educational program areas to ensure a coherent and integrated new student learning experience
- b. Renewed focus on the Developmental Education curriculum and the particular needs of college prep students. This work will require that we infuse the Student Life Skills (SLS) curriculum into all developmental education courses. We will also need to review the exit exam cut scores, scoring practices, and usage college-wide
- c. Infuse the SLS curriculum into courses across the curriculum in General Education and other program areas
- d. Assessment of student learning outcomes in a way that is meaningful to faculty and provides curricular coherence to students. The work of the Learning Evidence Team to identify common indicators for learning should continue and the results be disseminated to students
- e. Enhance the coordination for our student engagement efforts and learning enhancement experiences
- f. Attention and study should be directed at courses with low new student success rates

Data collection and dissemination

The Foundations of Excellence process has required that the dimension teams take seriously the role of data in our learning-centered work and required that they clearly identify the evidence supporting their conclusions. The focus on evidence revealed deficiencies in current institutional procedures and practices. The nature of these deficiencies requires that data collection and dissemination be identified as our fourth global theme.

As with the Learning theme addressed above, the desire for improvements in our collection and use of data to improve student learning and success has emerged in other areas within the institution and progress can already be seen. The internally imposed expectation to evaluate the implementation of our current strategic plan by way of measurable objectives is clearly a step in the right direction. The creation and evolution of the Achieving the Dream (AtD) Data Team to better understand the impact of our AtD strategies has required the development of a collaborative processes to clarify the meaning and the decision making implications of the data collected. The collection and use of data associated with our strategic plan and AtD strategies have formalized the partnership between the offices of Institutional Research and Institutional Assessment to promote the collaborative use of data. The Foundations of Excellence dimension teams recommend that we continue our efforts in a variety of ways.

First and foremost, the Foundations of Excellence recommendations require that we take our data collection efforts beyond measures of persistence and completion to the next and more challenging level – the assessment of learning in curricular and co-curricular student experiences. Measuring student learning will require all program areas to articulate measurable student learning outcomes, assess the outcomes, and report the results in a way that is meaningful and actionable to students, faculty, and staff. This work will require the development of uniform procedures for data collection and the development of a shared language to promote meaningful communication about the results.

Secondly, we need to expand our data collection efforts in order to better understand the patterns of student behavior. While students are still enrolled we need procedures that allow for the collection of data associated with the use of College facilities and services in order to more efficiently allocate resources. We also need ways of collecting data that will allow us to better understand the reasons why students withdraw, stop-out, leave and / or return.

Lastly, given the number of students who require remediation before they are ready for college-level work, the college should give more attention to the validity and reliability of our placement procedures for college-prep students. In turn, information about a student's prep level new student status, and other information with implications for their success, should be more effectively communicated to faculty so that intervention and support strategies can be developed and implemented.

In order to improve the new student experience, greater attention should be given to five areas of our data collection and dissemination efforts.

- a. A college-wide commitment to collection of, and reflection on, data associated with the assessment of student learning outcomes in the curricular and co-curricular areas.
- b. The development of a uniform data collection system and, common data definitions and parameters for all areas.
- c. The expansion of efforts to better understand student behavior including why students withdraw, stop-out, leave and, return to Valencia.
- d. Regular reviews of the validity and reliability of placement testing procedures and the impact of these procedures on our students.
- e. The development of an effective means of communicating student identifiers to faculty (FTIC, New Student designation, prep-level, third-attempt, transfer, dual enrollment, returning). These identifiers would allow faculty to better understand and address the needs of new students.

Faculty and Professional Development

As with all efforts to dramatically impact the experiences of students at the College, sustained and coordinated faculty and professional development efforts, especially for adjunct faculty, are central to the recommendations of the Foundations of Excellence dimension teams.

Because of the number of our students requiring remediation before they are ready for college-level work, particular attention should be given to the professional needs of faculty teaching prep courses and front door courses where prep skills still need to be reinforced. In the same way, the needs of Adjunct faculty were also of concern to the dimension teams. They are concerned adjunct faculty are often out of the loop when it comes to Institutional needs and priorities. We also need to ensure that adjunct faculty are prepared from the first day of class and that they have more extensive training before they start (Adjunct Faculty Boot Camp) and regular opportunities to refresh their skills and learn about new initiatives (Leadership Valencia).

All faculty need ongoing professional development activities because of the central role they can potentially play in advising students on their path through the college. These activities should place particular attention on forging clearer lines of communication and collaboration between faculty and student affairs professionals.

Lastly, the College could make better use of the professional development dollars spent on travel to state and national conferences by making information on attendees known in advance and by coordinating the dissemination of knowledge after the fact. Creating a means of disseminating this information online could provide ongoing support for the development of professional learning communities.

The ongoing support for faculty, full and part-time, through professional development activities is essential to a comprehensive new student experience. Greater attention should be given to at least 5 areas.

- a. Ongoing training for Prep faculty and those teaching students with developmental needs.
- b. Address the communication and training needs of Adjunct Faculty. We need a better means of communicating to adjunct faculty who often feel out-of-the-loop when it comes to college needs and priorities. An adjunct faculty *Boot Camp* could be developed where adjunct faculty are required as part of the Associate Faculty Program to participate prior to teaching – this training would include information on the use of online technology (WebCT, Blackboard, GoTo Meeting, etc.).

- c. Develop a training program and training documents to give faculty the tools they need to advise students. The goal would be to promote student use of the LifeMap tools in Atlas and to develop learning experiences that will strengthen the connection between faculty and student affairs.
- d. Provide greater incentives for college-sponsored and college-hosted conferences and provide department-based workshops and seminars through Leadership Valencia.
- e. Coordinate faculty / staff attendance at State and National conferences in order to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and assist in the development of a professional learning community. This work can be supported by the creation of a database or website to house materials and reports from those attending conferences.

Communication

If we want students to share in our vision for them they should know early on what it is we expect from them. A targeted communication plan for all first year students is the best way to ensure that students understand the College's goals and the most effective way to bring the student into the college experience. To successfully implement a communication plan, we will need to create a structure for effective communication and organize (and agree upon) the best system for communication. To bring together all the components into a cohesive unit, both academic and student services departments must be involved. There are pockets of substantial communication reaching some students but several Dimension Teams noted that it is difficult to determine how the learning outcomes of curricular and co-curricular programs are being communicated to students.

To figure out the best way to communicate to students, we must remember that one size does not fit all. The College has attempted to automate much of our communication, but students still value and seek the personal touch. We must seek a balance in reaching out to our students and making sure we are assisting them in making connections to the college.

In addition, a purposeful connection should be made between knowledge acquisition and personal growth that again has roots in the LifeMap model. Our communication should become more intentional in connecting what the student is learning with how the material relates to their career and education goals. It is important for students to understand why they are required to take certain courses and how the courses connect with each other and move them toward realizing their ultimate goal.

We must communicate to new students about:

- a. College priorities, initiatives, goals, and expectations
- b. The New Student Philosophy Statement (ensure new students, faculty, and staff are aware of the philosophy statement)
- c. Flex and Alternative instruction (make the college calendar and Atlas easier to understand when it comes to flex start courses and alternative delivery methods offered)
- d. Interventions and Resources:
 - Use the LifeMap model to create intentional communication at specified credit hour achievement points
 - Use specialized postcards to “advertise” services to students – especially to developmental students who may need the extra contact to encourage them

Our communication must encompass the following groups of stakeholders:

- Full- and Part-time Faculty
- New students – transitioning to Valencia
- Special populations (targeted communication created for special populations)

Recommendations on establishing better communication:

- a. Website:

- Less text-based
 - Easier navigation
 - Look of a “real college” instead of an extension of high school
- b. Refocus Atlas: provide consistent and repetitive training to students, faculty and staff establishing Atlas as a major communication tool
- c. Language:
- Keep communication to students simple without using college jargon
 - Review names of departments and processes to ensure they’re understood by students
- d. Referrals:
- Use technology to assist students with finding appropriate resources
 - Develop better signage to guide students to appropriate offices instead of standing in line at the Answer Center
- e. E-mail Communication: have the same e-mail technology for all full-time and part-time college staff

Implementation Plan

In order to ensure that the recommendations outlined in this document are implemented in a way that has the greatest impact on a coordinated new student experience, the FoE Liaisons propose that the College Learning Council focus its attention on the following infrastructure items in the short-term:

New Student Philosophy and Definition

While Valencia has always had a philosophy statement – and an implied definition for data collection purposes – to guide its *Start Right* efforts, the Philosophy Statement and New Student definition proposed by the Foundations of Excellence taskforce represents a narrower definitional focus so as to effect a greater change in the target population. In order for the new student definition and philosophy statement to have a meaningful impact on institutional decision making it must be clearly and regularly communicated to faculty and staff so that the questions Valencia has been asking for the past 10-plus years will take on a new focus: *How will this impact [new] student learning?* and *How will we know?*

Standing Committee of the New Student Experience

In order to build on the momentum surrounding concerns for new student success and to continue studying issues raised by the Foundations of Excellence, we propose the establishment of a new standing committee reporting to the College Learning Council. The New Student Experience Committee will be co-chaired by representatives of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs and charged with organizing the development of a coordinated new student experience starting with the recommendations of the Foundations of Excellence Taskforce. The membership of the committee should be primarily drawn from those teaching and program areas with the greatest interaction with new students (faculty from the top 10 high enrollment courses, New Student Orientation staff, staff from Learning Success Centers, etc.) so as to be of greater assistance in the prioritization of the items identified above. We propose that the committee be initially co-chaired by Kurt Ewen and Sonya Joseph until a sustainable structure can be established – a process to be completed by January 2010.

Learning Assessment

Central to development of a coordinated new student experience at a learning-college is a focus on student learning outcomes assessment in the curricular and co-curricular areas. Classroom

based assessment of learning has a long history at Valencia but we have little evidence of student learning at the course or program level that would allow us to evaluate our impact on new student learning. The recently completed proposal for the Development Education Initiative, a grant supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundations, focuses particular attention on learning outcomes assessment in developmental education courses. This focus should be extended to include all of the top 10 highest enrollment courses for “new students” (ENC1101 – Freshman Composition 1, POS2041 – U.S. Government, SLS1122 – Student Success, SPC1600 - Speech, MAT0024C – Beginning Algebra, PSY1012 – General Psychology, MAC1105 – College Algebra, MAT0012C – Pre-Algebra, HUM1020 – Introduction to Humanities, and MAT1033 – Intermediate Algebra). This expanded focus on the “front door” can help to establish a framework that supports the transition of developmental students into college-level work and creates the possibility for interdisciplinary faculty conversations about the learning needs of new students.

Learning outcomes assessment in the co-curricular areas should be designed so as to reinforce and strengthen learning experiences in the classroom. Work on the alignment of curricular and co-curricular learning experiences in support of the General Education student learning outcomes is already underway and should continue in ways that promote continuity.

Data Team

The development of a coordinated new student experience and the continued improvement of current student learning / success oriented efforts will require that we expand AtD related data collection and processing efforts. The expansion of the AtD Data Team will allow other efforts at the College to benefit from the lessons learned about data collection and processing and institutionalize our capacity to make data-supported decisions concerning student learning / success. We propose that the current structure of the AtD Data Team be subsumed under the work of the Learning Assessment Committee and fill the spot established by the Learning Council as the *Data Collection and Use Team*. The leadership of the team should continue to reflect the partnership between the offices of Institutional Research and Institutional Assessment,

and the membership of the Team should be expanded to include more faculty and reflect the diversity of student centered initiatives in need of data support. The charge of the *Data Collection and Use Team* should be expanded to include an intentional focus on institutional learning as it relates to the collection and use of data.

Grants and Other Funding Resources

In order to fully implement the recommendations of the nine Dimension Teams, the College will need to seek outside funding and support. While completing the final report, the opportunity arose to participate in a collaborative process of deciding next steps in the College's support of a first-year experience, including an immediate goal of determining the focus of a grant opportunity from the Gates Foundation. The Foundations of Excellence final report draft and Dimension Team recommendations were shared with the Gates Foundation planning team to provide insight into the needs of the first-year student.

Our plan is to continue looking for funding that will build upon the work of the Dimension Teams and determine how we might approach several other funding sources. Though state resources are limited, grant funds are still available and can support our work. Federal funding sources, such as Title V for Hispanic Serving Institutions could lead to significant external funding to initiate those recommendations that the College finds to be successful and that can be sustained. The Standing Committee will continue to collaborate with the Institutional Advancement Office to determine areas of funding to support full implementation of the recommendations.

Conclusion

The Foundations of Excellence process has allowed us to amass invaluable data and enhance Valencia's collaborative spirit. Armed with the knowledge of what our students need, and working together with a shared conviction that these needs can and must be met, we are ready to create a meaningful and coordinated first-year experience for Valencia students. The six global

themes will guide our work and allow us to begin implementing the ninety Dimension Team recommendations. The College and first-time students share a community of interests. We both need a path that is well defined and navigable. We are ready to start laying the foundations of that road to success.

Appendix A – Foundations of Excellence Timeline at Valencia

October 2007

Learning Council commissions Ann Puyana, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Kurt Ewen, Director of Institutional Assessment, with the task of developing a plan-to-plan Valencia's path beyond the Achieving the Dream grant

April 2008

The Learning Council approves Valencia's participation in Foundations of Excellence for the 2008-2009 academic year. Sonya Joseph, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, is added as a third co-chair of this process in order to ensure a structure that envisions a partnership between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs

May 2008

Two college-wide meetings are held to introduce the idea of Foundations of Excellence and to solicit support / participation / leadership. Steering Committee members and Foundation Dimension Teams leaders are identified and recruited

Summer 2008

In order to generate discussion about the needs of new students, seven reading groups are established across the College. Three books are discussed (*No One to Waste* by Robert McCabe, *My Freshman Year* by Rebekah Nathan, and *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* by Ruby Payne)

July 2008

Valencia's Foundations of Excellence Steering Committee gathers for its first monthly meeting

Valencia's FoE Policy Center Liaisons (Kurt Ewen, Sonya Joseph, and Ann Puyana) meet with Susan Kelly and Liz Gombash from the Office of Institutional Advancement in

order to build into the FoE process at Valencia the possibility of getting information needed by grant writers in order to support this work

August 2008

Ten representatives from Valencia travel to Asheville, NC for the 2008-2009 Foundations of Excellence Kick-off. (Ann Puyana, Sonya Joseph, Kurt Ewen, Joyce Romano, Rose Watson, Maryke Lee, Lisa Armour, Jeff Cornett, Roberta Brown, Cynthia Cerrato)

September 2008

Foundations of Excellence Kick-off at Valencia with the help of John Gardner and 2 days of initial conversations

Membership on the nine Foundational Dimension Teams is finalized; the teams begin to meet and continue meeting until February

Meeting with the Valencia Alumni Association in order to figure out ways to include the alumni perspective in the Foundations of Excellence process

Meeting with Valencia's Career Staff Council representatives to explain the Foundations of Excellence Self-Study and learn of ways to include Career Staff in the process

October 2008

Meeting with Valencia's Professional Staff Forum in order to give an overview of the process, explain how to become involved in the self-study

FoE Liaisons participate in Counselor Day 2008 and receive feedback on Valencia's transition processes from high school counselors

October/November 2008

Foundations of Excellence Surveys for students, faculty and staff are distributed. 1245 students and 1008 faculty and staff participate in the surveys

November / December 2008

5 Student Focus Groups with a total of 42 student participants were conducted by the Offices of Institutional Assessment and Student Development in order to get student feedback on key questions raised by the Foundations of Excellence process. (Student Focus Group Top-line Summary can be found on Appendix C)

February 2009

Learning Day presentations (four presentations) on lessons learned during the Foundations of Excellence process

Report to Senior Team on progress and initial recommendations from Dimension Teams

Dimension Teams complete dimension reports, assign grades, and share recommendations at the college-wide task force meeting

March 2009

Dimension Teams receive feedback from John Gardner on final reports and finalize their reports based on feedback received

March/April 2009

Initial recommendations and Global Themes shared with team writing Gates Grant proposal

April 2009

Final report written, shared with Steering Committee, and sent to John Gardner for feedback

May 2009

Final Report and recommendations presented to the College Learning Council

Appendix B – Valencia Community College Foundations of Excellence Taskforce

Steering Committee

Planning Team

- Ann Puyana, FoE Liaison
- Sonya Joseph, FoE Liaison
- Kurt Ewen, FoE Liaison
- Michael Shugg, Faculty Council President 2008-2009
- Rose Watson, Faculty Council President 2007-2008
- Jeff Cornett, Director of IR
- Karen Borglum, AVP for Curriculum and Articulation
- Lisa Armour, West Campus Dean of Mathematics
- Roberta Brown, Assistant Director, Learning Assessment
- Cynthia Cerrato, Director of Standardized Testing
- Kaye Walter, Chief Learning Officer
- Joyce Romano, VP for Student Affairs

Dimension Taskforce Leaders:

- **Philosophy**
 - ✓ Christie Pickeral, Faculty
 - ✓ Al Groccia, Faculty
 - ✓ David Rogers, Faculty
- **Organization**
 - ✓ Danielle Boileau, Counselor
 - ✓ Julie Phelps, Faculty, Faculty, AtD Project Coordinator
 - ✓ Pat Nellis, Director of Faculty Development
- **Learning**
 - ✓ Suzette Dohany, Faculty
 - ✓ Ed Holmes, Counselor
- **Campus Culture**
 - ✓ Michelle Foster, East Campus Assistant Provost
 - ✓ Christian Campagnuolo, AVP Marketing and Media Relations
 - ✓ Ellen Hart, Counselor
- **Transitions**
 - ✓ Jean Marie Fuhrman, Faculty
 - ✓ Donna Kosloski, Technical Director, Information Systems, IR
 - ✓ Brad Honious, Director, Financial Aid
- **All Students**
 - ✓ Nicholas Bekas, Director, Educator Prep Institute
 - ✓ Molly McIntire, Manager, Health Sciences Advising and Outreach
- **Diversity**
 - ✓ Joe Nunes, Coordinator, Policy and Programs Compliance
 - ✓ Gerald Jones, East Campus Student Development Coordinator
- **Roles and Purposes**
 - ✓ Mary Allen, Director of Student Success
 - ✓ Elisha Gonzalez-Bonnewitz, Director, Take Stock in Children
 - ✓ Aida Diaz, Faculty

- **Improvement**
 - ✓ Maryke Lee, East Campus Dean of Mathematics
 - ✓ Daryl Peterson, Faculty Development
 - ✓ James May, Faculty

Data Team

- Roberta Brown, Assistant Director of Learning Assessment
- Melissa Pedone, Osceola Campus Dean of Mathematics and Science
- Michael Bosley, Lake Nona Campus Assistant Provost
- Jeff Cornett, Director of IR
- Kurt Ewen, Director of Institutional Assessment
- Marilyn Curall, Faculty
- Daryl Davis, Institutional Research
- Allison Sloan, Faculty

Summer 2008 Reading Group Leaders By Campus

East Campus

- Philip Bishop, Faculty – *My Freshman Year*
- Jillian Szentmiklosi, Director, Office for Students with Disabilities – *No One to Waste*

Osceola Campus

- Tim Grogan, Faculty – *Understanding Poverty*
- Kevin Mulholland, Osceola Campus Dean of Communications and Humanities – *No One to Waste*

West Campus

- Donna Kosloski, Technical Director, Information Systems, IR – *No One To Waste*
- Gloria Hines, Counselor – *Understanding Poverty*

Winter Park Campus

- Cheryl Robinson, Winter Park Campus Dean of Students – *My Freshman Year*

Support Team

- Jenelle Conner, Administrative Assistant, Institutional Assessment
- Sue Maffei, Administrative Assistant, Student Affairs
- Kathy Adams, Administrative Assistant, Academic Affairs

Dimension Teams

Philosophy

Foundations Institutions intentionally cultivate learning environments for new students that emerge from a philosophy of two-year colleges as gateways to higher education. The philosophy is explicit and easily understood. It is consistent with the institutional mission, reflects a consensus of internal and external constituencies, and is widely disseminated. The philosophy is also the basis for organizational policies, practices, structures, leadership, and resource allocation to support the new student experience.

Dimension Co-Chairs: Al Groccia, Faculty
 Christie Pickeral, Faculty
 David Rogers, Faculty

Dimension Team Membership:

Joyce Romano, VP Student Affairs	Erin Smith, Coordinator, Conferencing Services
Cynthia Cerrato, Director, Standardized Testing	Phillip Graves, Specialist, Office for Students with Disabilities
Landon Shephard Manager, Academic Success Center	Kevin Mulholland, Osceola Campus Dean, Humanities and Communications
Jeff Danser Web Services Manager	Carol Griffin, Faculty
Carol Traynor, Assistant Director, Marketing and Media Relations	Melody Boeringer, Faculty
	Kurt Ewen, Director, Institutional Assessment

Organization

Foundations Institutions provide a comprehensive, coordinated, and flexible approach to the new student experience through effective organizational structures and policies. These structures and policies guide and align all aspects of the new student experience. Through effective partnerships, critical stakeholders such as instructional, administrative, and student services units provide a coherent experience for new students that is enhanced by ongoing faculty and staff development activities and appropriate budgetary arrangements.

Dimension Co-Chairs: Danielle Boileau, Counselor

 Patrick Nellis, Director, Faculty Development

 Julie Phelps, Faculty, AtD Project Coordinator

Dimension Team Membership:

Jared Graber, West Campus Provost	Linda Downing, AVP, College Transition Programs
Dan Geraghty, Osceola Campus Student Development Coordinator	Becky Gallup, Assistant Director, College Relations
Johnny Aplin, East Campus Atlas Access Lab Manager	Beverly Johnson, Career Program Advisor
Samira Chater, Faculty	Tullio Bushrui, Counselor
Bill White, Chief Information Officer	Deymond Hoyte, Faculty
Ty Johnson, West Campus Dean of Students	Amy Love, Career Program Advisor
	Julie Corderman, Winter Park Manager Student Services

Learning

Foundations Institutions deliver curricular and co-curricular learning experiences that engage new students in order to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with the institutional mission, students' academic and career goals, and workplace expectations. Both in and out of the classroom, these learning experiences promote critical thinking, ethical decision making, and the lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

Dimension Co-Chairs: Suzette Dohany, Faculty

Edward Holmes, Counselor

Dimension Team Membership

George Ruiz, Coordinator,
Atlas Student Access

Diana Ciesko, Faculty

Patti Smith, Executive
Director OIT

Christy Cheney, Faculty

Terry Rafter-Carles, Faculty

Steve Tullo, Counselor

Susan Murray, Winter Park
Campus Library Director

Susan Stone, Faculty

Chanda Torres, Director,
Student Development

Bill Gombash, Faculty

Linda Villar, Counselor

Michelle Taylor, Faculty

Heidi Shugg, Osceola
Campus Atlas Access Lab
Coordinator

Noelle Geiger, Faculty

Philip Bishop, Faculty

Joe Sarrubbo, West Campus Answer
Center Manager

Anastasia Bojanowski, Faculty

Mike Bosley, Lake Nona Campus
Assistant Provost

Melissa Pedone, Osceola Campus
Dean of Mathematics and Science

Ruth Prather, East Campus Provost

Russell Takashima, Faculty

Erin O'Brien, Faculty

Leesa Sward, Faculty

Joshua Murdock, West Campus
Learning Support Services Manager

Lisa Macon, Faculty

Bridget Murphy, Student
Development

Campus Culture

Foundations Institutions make new students a high priority for faculty and staff. A culture of responsibility for the experiences of new students characterizes these institutions. This culture is realized through high-quality instruction, services, and support as well as substantial interaction with students both inside and outside the classroom. Campus leaders nurture this culture and support it by appropriate institutional recognition and rewards.

Dimension Co-Chairs: Christian Campagnuolo, AVP Marketing & Media Relations

Michelle Foster, East Campus Assistant Provost

Ellen Hart, Counselor

Dimension Team Membership

Landon Shephard, East Campus
Manager Academic Success
Center

Linda Villar, Counselor

Linda Hidek, Senior
Instructional Assistant

Mia Pierre, Faculty

Angelique Smith, Director,
Learning Technology &
Alternative Delivery

Mary McGowan, Osceola
Campus Valencia Volunteers

Debi Jakubcin, Coordinator,
Fitness and Wellness Programs

Michele McArdle, Winter Park
Campus Dean

John McFarland, Faculty

Russell Takashima, Faculty

Brent Nakagama, Director Staff
and Organizational
Development

Renee Simpson, AVP, Admissions &
Records

Carmen Diaz, Job Development and
Placement Coordinator

Joe Bivins, East Campus Dean of
Science

Dennis Weeks, East Campus Library
Director

David Sutton, East Campus Dean of
Humanities

Yolanda Gonzalez, Faculty

Wendy Givoglu, East Campus Dean of
Arts and Entertainment

Catherine Espenscheid, Career
Counselor

Kim Long, West Campus Dean of
Communications

Vertrilla Hunt, Job Development
Coordinator

Victor Collazo, West Campus Student
Development Coordinator

Transitions

Foundations Institutions facilitate appropriate student transitions beginning with outreach and recruitment and continuing throughout the period of enrollment. They communicate clear curricular/co-curricular expectations and possibilities, and they provide appropriate preparation and support for educational success. They are forthright about their responsibilities to students as well as students' responsibilities to themselves and the institution. These institutions create and maintain communication with secondary and other postsecondary institutions, families, employers, community agencies, and other sources of support for students.

Dimension Co-Chairs: Jean Marie Fuhrman, Faculty

Brad Honious, Director of Financial Aid and Veterans
Affairs

Donna Kosloski, Technical Director, Information Systems

Dimension Team Membership

Lisa Stilke, Director,
Admissions and Records

Tanisha Carter, Coordinator, College
Reach Out Program

Beverlee Andrews,
Coordinator, Grants and
Contracts

Lynn Dorn, Faculty

Liz Gangemi, Coordinator, Atlas
Information Systems

Enid Rosa, East Campus
Career Development
Coordinator

Keith Houck, VP Administrative
Services

Sally Witkamp, West
Campus Orientation Manager

Barbara Shell, Assistant Director,
Community and Alumni Relations

Deb Hall, Faculty

Barbara Walls, Faculty

Jessica Morales, Director,
Transition and Enrollment
Services

Gus Silva, East Campus Student
Services Specialist

Diane Thompson

Suzanne Lynch, Librarian

Kimberly Finley, Academic Advisor

Nicole Valentino, Faculty

All Students

Foundations Institutions serve all new students according to their varied needs. These institutions anticipate, identify, and address the needs of traditional and non-traditional students in response to their individual abilities, backgrounds, interests, and experiences. These efforts are subject to assessment and adjustment as needed. Institutions also ensure campus environments that are inclusive and safe for all students.

Dimension Co-Chairs: Nicholas Bekas, Director, Educator Prep Institute
 Molly McIntire, Manager, Health Sciences Advising & Outreach

Dimension Team Membership

Jeff Cornett, Director, institutional Research	John Stover, Manager Bridges to Success
Dennis Weeks, East Campus Library Director	Rhonda Atkinson, Faculty Rachid Bendriss, Faculty
Trish Anderson, Manger, Students with Disabilities	Celeste Henry, Counselor
Allison Noe, Academic Advisor	Shauna Anstey, Manager, College Relations
Kathy Fedell, Career Program Advisor	Lesena Jones, Manager, Workforce Development Support Services
Della Paul, East Campus Dean of Communications	Carol Thompson, Instructional Assistant
Wendi Dew, Academic Coordinator for Faculty Development	Aditi Batra, Instructional Assistant Derek Harris, Assistant Supervisor, Enrollment Services
Lisa Dennis, Faculty	Priscilla Gray, Library Specialist
Bliss Thompson, International Students Counselor	Jim Belcher, Faculty Marjorie McKillop, West Campus Answer Center Specialist
	Larry Herndon, Faculty

Diversity

Foundations Institutions ensure that new students experience ongoing exploration of diverse ideas, worldviews, and cultures as a means of enhancing their learning and participation in pluralistic communities. Institutions cultivate an open and civil community in which students interact with people from varied backgrounds and cultures. These institutions guide students to reflect on ideas and values different from those they currently hold, and explore their own cultures and the cultures of others.

Dimension Co-Chairs: Gerald Jones, East Campus Student Development
Coordinator

Joe Nunes, Coordinator, Policy and Programs Compliance,
HR

Dimension Team Membership

Roberta Brown, Assistant
Director, Learning
Assessment

Rose Watson, Faculty

Philip Bishop, Faculty

Chris Klinger, Osceola
Campus Dean of Students

CoCo Hutchinson, Faculty

Silvia Zapico, Osceola
Campus Provost

Elisa Rivera-Boyles, Faculty

Sonja Boles-Melvin,
Assistant Director Records

Kim Foster, Career Program
Advisor

Catherine Espenscheid,
Career Counselor

Melanie Price, Manager, New
Student Orientation

La Toya Ward, Assistant Supervisor,
Enrollment Services

Lori Sunday, Manager, International
Students

Jocelyn Morales, Counselor

Elizabeth Jusino, Career Program
Advisor

Gisela Acosta, Faculty

Paul Fernandez, Faculty

Kay Garner, Faculty

Louis Gray, Osceola Campus
Coordinator Admissions and
Records

Roles and Purposes

Foundations Institutions promote student understanding of the various roles and purposes of higher education and those unique to two-year institutions, both for the individual and society. These roles and purposes include learning for personal growth, career enhancement, workplace preparation and retraining, transfer for additional education, engaged citizenship, and serving the public good. Institutions encourage new students to examine their motivation and goals with regard to higher education in general and to their own college. Students are exposed to the value of both a general education and focused study in an academic or career field.

Dimension Co-Chairs: Mary Allen, Interim Director, Student Success

 Aida Diaz, Faculty

 Elisha Gonzalez-Bonnewitz, Director, Take Stock in
 Children

Dimension Team Membership

Jill Szentmiklosi, Director, Office for Students with Disabilities	Mildred Franceschi, West Campus Dean of Business, Behavioral and Social Sciences
Falecia Williams, AVP, Workforce Development	Maiken Murphy, Faculty
Linda Vance, East Campus Dean of Students	Edwin Sanchez, Director, Admissions and Records
Jackie Cole, Program Director, Dual Enrollment	Lester Sandres, Faculty
Carl Creasman, Faculty	David Hosman, Counselor
Scott Launier, Faculty	Areej Zufari, Faculty
Helen Clarke, Director, Teaching and Learning Academy	Nichole McPherson, Coordinator, College and Foundation Relations
	Karen Borlgum, Assistant Vice President for Curriculum and Instruction

Improvement

Foundations Institutions conduct assessment and maintain associations with other institutions and relevant professional organizations in order to effect improvement. Assessment provides feedback to new students to guide their learning, to faculty to guide their teaching, and to the institution to guide planning, resource allocation, decision making, and improvement of programs and policies. As a way to facilitate improvement, these institutions are knowledgeable about current practices at other institutions as well as relevant research and scholarship.

Dimension Co-Chairs: Maryke Lee, East Campus Dean of Mathematics
 James May, Faculty
 Daryl Peterson, Director, Scenarios Online

Dimension Team Membership

Roberta Brown, Assistant
Director, Learning
Assessment

Alys Arceneaux,
Coordinator, Institutional
Reporting, IR

Pedro Rivera, AVP Budget
and Logistical Services

Pya Verrett, East Campus
Coordinator, Admissions and
Records

Brenda Martinez, Assessment
Coordinator

Natalie Ferenc, Coordinator, Special
Events, College and Community
Relations

Akos Delneky, Osceola Campus
Library Director

Ruby Alvarez, Faculty

Melissa Schreiber, Faculty

Agatha Shaw, Faculty

Appendix C – Student Focus Group Top-Line Summary

Valencia Community College

Topline Summary of Response

Foundations of Excellence – The New Student Experience:

Qualitative Discussions with Students

Orlando, FL

December, 2008

Prepared by:

Roberta Brown

INTRODUCTION

Valencia Community College is participating in a one-year self study with the help of The Policy Center on the First Year Experience to consider ways we can better serve our students. Qualitative research was conducted to explore student perceptions about the college and their experiences as a new student at Valencia.

Five, 90 – 120 minute discussions were held with currently enrolled Valencia students at different stages of their matriculation. Students were recruited from Student Government, Peer Educators, and other student leadership programs. Representation was present from all four campuses: East, West, Osceola, and Winter Park. The focus groups were held in November and December of 2008.

The five groups consisted of a total of 42 participants with the following demographic breakdown: 23 females and 19 males; ranging in age from 18 - 50; African-American, Hispanic, Caucasian, and International students. The focus groups were moderated by Roberta Brown, with the help of note-takers and audio recording. The following summary was prepared by Roberta Brown.

Caveat--

The findings presented here are offered on the basis of responses heard from a limited number of students. Qualitative research is directional in nature, intended to uncover and explore issues but not measure their prevalence in the population. Therefore, the findings here are not intended to be projected to the population. Rather, these insights should be considered carefully and in context with other strategic information.

KEY INSIGHTS

Characteristics of Participants

- Students were very willing to share their experiences and feelings during the focus groups, whether positive or negative.
- Students were frank, honest, and well-spoken.
- Variety in length of attendance at Valencia. Some students were in their first semester, while others have completed several semesters.
- Some chose Valencia because of location or cost, some because they did not get into other colleges of choice, while others chose to attend because of reputation or due to suggestion by friends or family.
- The group included a variety of students: first generation in college, returning adults, first time in college, previous dual enrollment students, and international students.

Student Feedback in relation to the Nine Dimensions of Institutional Excellence

- Philosophy
 - Students frequently referred to Valencia as “a better place to start.” This was spoken as their own description of the college or in some cases as the description given to them by others that encouraged them to attend Valencia. Students felt this statement was supported by:
 - smaller class sizes
 - personalized attention
 - close interaction with professors that really care
 - a good student body and social activities to mingle with them

- the opportunity to figure out who you are and what you want in life
- resources and services such as: the career center, the answer center, and advisors
- the opportunity to transfer provided by “direct connect”
- better prepares you to transition to the university setting
- “not treated as client, treated like a resident”
- feeling a good connection between faculty, staff and students
- Organization
 - Orientation and Advising:
 - Many students expressed a desire for the orientation experience to be more consistent, helpful, and informative about topics such as:
 - Placement (CPT, prep courses, etc.)
 - Registration procedures
 - How to choose courses
 - Some students recall receiving assistance with these topics while others recall not being able to speak with an advisor at all.
 - The variation appears to be related to which term they attended orientation, how long ago they attended, and whether they were in a special group such as BRIDGES or international students.
 - However, while most students reported the absence of attention from an advisor at orientation, they recall seeking out an advisor that same day or shortly thereafter and having a very positive and productive experience during their visit.
 - Connecting to campus-based assistance:
 - Students mentioned resources such as the answer center, the career center, tutoring centers, the SPA, and advising.
 - Students discussed being told about these resources at orientation, by professors or advisors, or learning about them in the SLS 1122 course.

- Some students mentioned online resources such as My Education Plan and LifeMap which they discovered by taking the SLS 1122 course or by talking with other students or an advisor.
- Learning
 - Common Learning Goals
 - Valencia’s core competencies were mentioned by some students. They referred to them as “TVCA”, and some students were able to elaborate as to what the acronym stands for: Think, Value, Communicate, and Act. However, most students were not able to explain what they meant or exactly what they are. Students that recalled hearing about them reported that it took place in class from professors or via course syllabi.
 - Appropriate Placement
 - Almost all students described having an experience taking the CPT. Many students expressed a desire to have been better prepared for taking the CPT or better informed as to the importance of the results.
 - Almost all students recall being placed in preparatory classes. Although students were not pleased about the requirement, many students acknowledged the courses were helpful in preparing them or that they were aware of a weakness in that subject area.
- Campus Culture
 - Quality of instruction, services, and support
 - Faculty: students in general gave positive feedback about their instructors. Some did have bad experiences with a particular instructor, but agreed that overall there are caring and qualified professors at the college. Students felt that if they reach out to their instructors for help they would receive it and felt that professors at Valencia really want students to succeed.
 - Staff/Administration: students on every campus were able to identify staff in key areas such as advising and student services that are available and very willing to assist them with questions, goal setting, educational plans, etc. Some student even called by name the Dean of Students on their campus as a resource that was available to them.

ability of security to come to their aid if necessary. In particular students on West campus, desired to see more lighting on campus at night.

- To be noted, however, is that students discussed fear of external threats to safety but did not feel that such threats would come from within the college. They expressed comfort in the college environment amongst other students, faculty, staff and administration. Students also discussed feeling free to express themselves, be open minded, and having freedom of speech and freedom of thought.
- Some students mentioned issues with theft or vandalism.
- Diversity
 - People
 - Most students agreed that the student body was very diverse, and there were many opportunities to interact with other students from different backgrounds.
 - Being involved in SGA and other leadership positions, students described a variety of campus sponsored events and clubs and organizations that expose students to diverse ideas and cultures (with the exception of Winter Park students who reported a lack of such activities). However, students also conceded that most part-time or new students tend to “park, go to class, and leave” and may not be aware of some of these activities or opportunities.
 - Diversity in faculty/staff was not a topic that students mentioned often or described experiencing in detail. Two students mentioned being offended by commentary about their culture or background made by faculty in the classroom.
 - Courses
 - When asked about the opportunity to be exposed to diverse ideas within the curriculum, most students quickly described the wide variety of Humanities courses available. In most of the discussions, this was the only opportunity students described.
- Roles and Purposes
 - Most students identified SLS1122 as the most substantial influence on goal, career, and personal planning. Exposure to the following were helpful:
 - LifeMap

- My Education Plan
 - Degree Audits
 - Career Center
- Students also identified academic advisors as being key in making future plans for career and education.
- Direct Connect was mentioned by most students repeatedly and early in the discussions. The direct paths into university programs were helpful to students in figuring out what they wanted to do and how they could best accomplish it.
- Improvement
 - All students identified assignment, quiz, or test grades as the feedback received to improve academic performance. Some students discussed having one-on-one conversations with instructors about their performance.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

- Involvement or participation in particular groups provides a different experience for students upon arrival at the college. Students involved in BRIDGES, and organizations such as SGA or employed on campus are much more engaged than your average new student. However, the services and support do exist as evidenced by the feedback received from these students. Students acknowledge that there are a variety of services available for students depending on what their needs or desires may be. How well aware they are of these services may vary depending upon their level of engagement at the college or knowledge of friends and family within their own support network.

Additional Findings

- Students do not realize the significance of the CPT and the impact of the results prior to taking the test.
- Most students felt such prior knowledge would have helped them to take it more seriously and be better prepared to take it.

Students that did not already have friends or family that were attending the college felt overwhelmed upon arrival, and did not feel a sense of community or belonging early in their experiences with the college.