

FY 2012 Project Abstracts

Title III Part A Strengthening Institutions Program

San Francisco State University (CA)

Project Title: Metro Academies

The San Francisco State University (SF State) Office of Research and Sponsored Projects respectfully submits to the Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP)/U.S. Department of Education a proposal for \$2.0 million over five years to strengthen our institution by expanding and fully institutionalizing Metro Academies (Metro). Metro is a reconfiguration of the first two years of college, the time when four out of ten high-need/low-income students at our institution drop out. We respond to the competitive preference priority and all three invitational priorities.

Part of the California State University (CSU) system, SF State is a large, urban, public university that is Title III/V eligible. In 2009, six out of ten SF State students received financial aid, and more than three out of ten received Pell grants.

Metro is an existing highly successful college completion program for high-needs/low-income students (more than eight out of ten current Metro students are on financial aid, and three quarters come from families where English is not spoken in the home). In a comparison-group study conducted by an external evaluator, Metro students flipped the achievement gap on its head, outperforming all students in the institutional baseline on many measures. Persistence is the most powerful lever for college success, and Metro students persisted into the fifth semester 18 percent more than all students and 21 percent more than similar comparison-group students.

The three Metro programs now in progress at SF State have the capacity to serve only nine percent of first-time students. By expanding from the current three Metros to add four new Metros, we will build the capacity to serve 25 percent of every incoming class. Most importantly, institutionalization will allow Metro to move from being a *successful program*, to *repositioning itself as a broad reconfiguration of the lower division for high-need / low-income students at SF State and beyond.*

The Metro Academies Initiative has three aims: (a) increase high need/low-income students' persistence, unit accumulation, GPA, and graduation rates; (b) develop faculty mastery of evidence-based high-impact educational practices through a 45-hour program plus Web-based video modules; and (c) make more effective and efficient use of institutional resources. A well-designed cost efficiency study showed that Metro reduces the institution's cost per graduate by sharply reducing 'excess units' that do not lead to graduation. This builds institutional capacity to serve more students, more efficiently.

Metro gives students a personalized educational home. Metro is built around a highly-structured *general education pathway* of eight classes that satisfy graduation requirements in all 241 majors in the statewide CSU system. Working as a cohort, students take two courses together each semester, over four semesters. This *long-duration learning community* builds close supportive relationships among peers, as well as with faculty and academic counselors who follow students over time. Students also receive a range of student services embedded in courses—tutoring, academic counseling, early intervention and personalized access to financial aid advising.

The program has been carefully designed to be sustainable as well as scalable. After SIP's investment in our expansion and institutionalization at SF State, Metro Academies will be poised for broader impact throughout California's giant postsecondary system of three million students, and the nation as a whole.

Valencia College – West Campus (FL)

Project Title: Progression from Enrollment to Degree Completion and Transfer

Valencia College – West Campus (VC-West) is one of four campuses within the Valencia College District. VC-West is located in the Metro Orlando area, in Orange County, Florida. VC-West is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award Associate and Bachelor's degrees. The campus is governed by a state-appointed Board of Trustees and is under the local control of the Campus President, Dr. Falecia Williams. VC-West serves close to 27,000 students, generating 11,609.17 full-time equivalent students (FTEs). The Campus enrollment is 67.4 percent percent ethnically diverse, serving the highest African American student enrollment in the Valencia district (25.7 percent percent), with an average age of 26 years old. Many students are first-generation college students and are financially needy. Through the process of creating and analyzing the Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP), VC-West identified weaknesses within academic programs, institutional management, and fiscal stability that are significantly affecting the institution's student body.

Through this Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP) proposal, VC-West leadership propose strategies to build infrastructure and capacity to achieve an overall goal to **implement a systematic process to provide increased progression from enrollment to degree completion and transfer**. Through funding support from the Department of Education, VC-West will achieve growth and self-sufficiency that will benefit student constituents now and in the future.

To reach the overall goal, the project will achieve the following measurable objectives:

Objective 1: five percent increase from baseline for targeted students enrolled in their first year that complete and persist to second year;

Objective 2: five percent increase of targeted students who graduate within four years and transfer with necessary transcript requirements of university;

Objective 3: five percent increased graduation rates within four years for targeted students;

Objective 4: 90 percent of faculty earning LifeMap certificate integrate developmental advising curriculum into their courses across disciplines.

This project would expand and improve advising services and related technology tools, as well as faculty and staff resources, to more fully meet the needs of the pre-Nursing and Business transfer students. Strategies embedded within this project include: decreasing the advising ratio and creating a spectrum of student interventions collectively called the First Year Experience. Further, strategies related to faculty and staff resources include technology updates; engaging in faculty development to increase faculty advising skills and utilization of the new advising tools; and minor renovations and upgrades to the faculty development and learning technology centers. The comprehensive implementation strategy, supported by evidence from the field, provides a step by step plan. A detailed listing of annual activity objectives and measurable performance indicators provide further guidance for ensuring completion of the project goal within the five year period.

The total cost of this project is 1,884,810, with a matching endowment of \$232,583. VC-West Campus is fully engaged in this project and will work to sustain and integrate strategies in order to build capacity for students to progress, complete and transfer to meet their educational goals.

Saint Joseph's College (IN)

Project Title: Supporting Student Success to Increase Retention and Graduation Rates

Institutional Profile: Saint Joseph's College (SJC) is a private, Catholic co-educational college located in rural Rensselaer, Indiana, approximately 100 north miles of Indianapolis. Named one of the best colleges in the Midwest by the Princeton Review for the eighth consecutive year, the College offers over 70 undergraduate major, minor, and pre-professional programs; Master of Arts degrees in Music; and a Master of Business Administration degree program.

Nationally recognized for its four-year Core Program, the College serves a diverse student body composed of men and women of all races, creeds, and socio-economic backgrounds. SJC is accredited by the Board of Commissioners of the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Student and Faculty Profile: The College's enrollment (fall 2011) is 1,100 (1,001 full-time, 89 part-time undergraduate; 10 graduate). A substantial number of first-time full-time freshmen are low-income (44 percent), first-generation college (29 percent), or academically unprepared (27 percent), and 88 percent of students receive financial assistance. The student-to-faculty ratio is 14:1. The College employs 57 full-time and 56 part-time faculty.

Project Title: Supporting Student Success to Increase Retention and Graduation Rates

Problems: Over the last five years, the College's four-year graduation rates have decreased from 52 percent to 35 percent, and fall-to-fall retention rates have fluctuated between 55 percent and 67 percent since 2007. Inconsistent freshmen advising, inadequate educational support services, and aging instructional technology resources have contributed to these problems.

Goals: Consolidate academic advising and educational support services to facilitate student success and create a technology-rich environment to improve learning outcomes.

Strategy 1: Establish a Student Success Center to consolidate and strengthen academic advising and educational support services using a case management system.

Strategy 2: Strengthen Freshman Seminar with advising training, improved course content, and better coordination with student support services.

Strategy 3: Provide advising training for freshmen advisors and faculty using best practices.

Strategy 4: Facilitate technology-rich teaching and learning through collaborative learning workspaces and curricular innovation.

Key Performance Indicators by September 30, 2017 :

- (1) Increase fall-to-fall retention of first-time full-time freshmen by five percent from 66 percent to 71 percent.
- (2) Increase four-year graduation rates by five percent from 35 percent to 40 percent.
- (3) Increase the number of freshmen advisors and faculty trained in advising from zero percent to 75 percent.
- (4) Increase the number of faculty providing technology-rich instruction by 50 percent.
- (5) Stabilize full-time enrollment through strategies to improve retention and graduation rates.

Funds Requested: \$1,999,990

Somerset Community College (KY)

Project Title: Center for Advising, Retention, and Engagement: C.A.R.E.

Somerset Community College (Somerset CC) is a comprehensive community and technical college serving 10,028 credit students at two campuses and four centers located in the south central communities of Pulaski, Laurel, Casey, Clinton, McCreary and Russell counties of Kentucky. The expanded service area of the College includes 16 rural counties of south central Kentucky. Almost nine of every ten students (89 percent) are considered low-income and 72 percent of entering students must take one or more developmental courses. The College faculty consists of 180 full-time and 159 adjunct instructors. Of the full-time faculty, five percent hold doctorates; 40 percent hold Masters; and 55 percent hold Bachelor degrees, Associate degrees, and/or specialized training that qualify them to teach in terminal career or developmental programs.

The proposed Title III project resulted from a comprehensive analyses using the College's 2010-2016 Strategic Plan developed by a diverse group of faculty, administrators, students, staff and community representatives and data from institutional publications including student tracking reports, SCC Fact Book, student surveys, enrollment management data, and related academic, management and fiscal reports. The data revealed several clear weaknesses that the college must immediately address. The most critical need is to develop innovative support services for first year students with a focus on students who are undecided about a program of study, academically underprepared for college work, and otherwise at-risk of failing to persist.

The proposed activity (**Center for Advising, Retention, and Engagement: C.A.R.E.**) will have two components. The first is the development of a comprehensive "one-stop" **Advising Center** that will focus on the entering and first year student with a comprehensive support system. Support services will include assessment, block course placement in learning communities, intrusive advising, intervention strategies, instruction, and academic and other flexible support services for the at-risk student. The second component is a **College Completion Initiative** that will engage and track students as they work toward earning an academic credential. College team members were assigned to develop the activity narrative and implementation strategies related to the focused institutional weaknesses.

The outcomes for both components through 2016 will be: *1) Improved overall persistence rates for first-year entering students; 2) Increased number of students awarded academic credentials (certificates and degrees); and 3) Improved student progression in developmental and gatekeeper courses.*

The Title III proposal addresses the invitational priorities and the Competitive Priority.

Bay Path College (MA)

Project Title: The Learners and Leaders Project

Bay Path College is a four-year institution dedicated to the education of women. Founded in 1897, the College offers the baccalaureate in 21 majors as well as 11 master's degree programs. In 2011, the College enrolled 2,200 students with 60 percent first-generation and 28 percent women of color. Of the full-time faculty, 70 percent are women, who serve as a role model for the students that they teach. The student to faculty ratio is 12:1.

Significant Problem: The confluence of an outmoded core curriculum, a disconnected undergraduate experience, and fragmented support services compromises student engagement and leads to significant student attrition. To strengthen institutional self-sufficiency, Bay Path College collaboratively developed a response that is designed to significantly strengthen student engagement and academic performance, translating into higher levels of retention and degree completion.

Project Description: The proposed Activity, *The Learners and Leaders Project*, promises to improve student achievement and engagement. As a foundation for the Activity, the redesigned general education core (30 courses) will involve faculty teams who will align syllabi with core learner outcomes, use active teaching strategies and technology, and develop instructionally-based assessments. Second, fundamental to the mission of Bay Path College, an Integrated Leadership and Career Development effort (named Women as Empowered Learners and Leaders [WELL]) will bring together cross-component teams to develop a ladder leadership model across the four years of the baccalaureate designed to engage students and prepare them as 21st century leaders. Finally, configured to promote project-based and collaborative learning as well as offer technology-assisted instruction and skill development, a Learning Commons will consolidate a suite of unified support services to improve persistence from the point of contact through graduation. These initiatives are supported by research detailed in the Competitive Preference Priority as well as the invitational priorities.

Project Outcomes: The project is designed to increase first- to second-year persistence by 10 percent, second- to third-year retention by 15 percent, a four-year graduation rate by five percent, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) benchmarks by 15 points over the 2009-10 baseline by September 30, 2017. These results will not only contribute to institutional self-sufficiency, but respond directly to GPRA's higher education goal and the intent of the Title III Strengthening Institutions Program.

Allocation of Budget: The grant request of \$1,997,734 over five years includes 39 percent in Personnel (including fringe benefits), one percent in Travel, five percent in Supplies, 36 percent in Contractual, two percent in Construction, and 14 percent in Other (stipends). The College will match \$60,000 in endowment funds, managed by Charles Schwab Institutional. Grant funds will leverage an additional in cash and in-kind College contribution of \$1,688,246 to the project. By dedicating institutional and Title III resources to this initiative, the College expects to significantly increase its self-sufficiency and its capacity to educate women as 21st century learners and leaders.

The Learners and Leaders Project addresses the Competitive Preference and Invitational Priorities 1, 2, and 3 as well as GPRA and GEPA requirements.

Central Carolina Community College (NC)

Title-III (T-III) Activity Purpose: To positively impact retention, persistence, and graduation by proactively identifying students' needs early and enhancing the College's capacity to provide intentional support methods.

Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) is a fully-accredited, public two-year institution of higher education in the state-supported North Carolina Community College System. The College is located 35 miles south of the Research Triangle Park and state capital of Raleigh, North Carolina. CCCC served approximately 5,267 curriculum students in over 45 programs in 2010-2011. Student demographics include 64 percent female, 58 percent White, 23 percent Black, 7 percent Hispanic, 1 percent American Indian, and 11 percent unknown. An estimated 65 percent of students are part-time, and 53 percent are under age of 25. CCCC has a 16:1 student to faculty ratio employing approximately 145 full-time and 432 part-time faculty members.

A comprehensive analysis of CCCC's strengths, weaknesses, and problems revealed that: (1) Persistence, retention, and graduation rates are too low; (2) Persistence is especially too low for targeted populations such developmental math students; (3) Dissatisfaction with academic quality has increased too much for students at-risk of dropout; (4) Developmental English success is too low, and students report lower levels of engagement with quality writing assignments even though the Quality Enhancement Plan is focused on writing; (5) CCCC's ability to proactively identify and support at-risk students is too weak; and (6) Local, regional, and state funding is less than needed.

To strengthen the College's capacity to address these problems, three Institutional Goals guide this T-III project: (1) To maximize student access and success through creation of the College Success Center (CSC); (2) To develop and sustain high-performing employees who utilize technology to improve student achievement; and (3) To champion the implementation of effective technologies such as advising/early-alert (EA) software.

Realistic and measurable objectives will be achieved by September 2017 to accomplish project goals: (1a) 50 percent of curriculum students participate in the CSC; (1b) Full-time retention increase of six percent; (1c) Full-time enrollment/persistence of targeted programs increases 7 percent; (1d) Graduation rate increases of four percent; (2a & 2b) 100 percent of CSC and targeted faculty/staff trained in new advising/EA software and faculty in teaching technologies; (2c) 100 percent of peer tutors trained in teaching technologies; (3a) 75 percent of Faculty Advisors use advising/EA software to communicate with advisees and approve Success Plans; (3b) 75 percent of targeted program students create an online Success Plan; and (3c) 10 percent retention increase for first-year, full-time retention students who complete the online Success Plan process.

The implementation strategy for the College Success Center is divided into three components: (1) Enhancing intrusive advising and intentional student support; (2) Developing and sustaining high-performing employees who utilize technology to improve student achievement; and (3) Implementation of effective technologies that improve productivity.

A comprehensive evaluation plan is described that will help measure annual progress for each activity objective leading to achievement of the Institutional Goals. Established procedures will help to analyze data, both formative and summative, to measure success. Faculty and student data will be used, and comparisons will be made to baseline data. Final analysis will help the College to sustain an effective College Success Center that strengthens the institution.

The total request for the five-year T-III budget is \$1,650,159. The budget is divided into the following categories: Personnel - \$1,024,059; Fringe Benefits - \$271,835; Travel - \$63,300; Supplies - \$56,450; Contractual - \$209,140; and Training Stipends - \$25,375.

University of North Carolina at Greensboro (NC)

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), located in Guilford County, North Carolina, is part of the 13-county Piedmont Triad. At 10.2 percent, the area's unemployment rate is one of the highest in the country. UNCG is the most diverse campus in the University of North Carolina System, having a minority population of approximately 33 percent, and serving an even more diverse population than HBCUs. A first-choice institution for African-American, first-generation, transfer/adult, and socio-economically challenged students, UNCG is an acknowledged leader in closing the graduation rate gap between black and white students. With its costs in the lowest 10 percent, UNCG is one of only five U.S. colleges that serve low-income students well. UNCG is committed to creating a learner-centered, accessible, and inclusive community fostering intellectual inquiry to prepare students for meaningful lives and engaged citizenship, but it has faced drastic reductions in state allocations (\$30 million in Academic Year 2012 alone). The project and activities proposed are essential for UNCG to continue toward providing excellent educational services to its low income and diverse population.

Solution 1. Intentional Futures through Advising: Students First Office. The Students First Office (SFO) will address current gaps in UNCG's decentralized advising program by serving as the central academic advising center for at-risk, undecided students at the University. Through its innovative infrastructure, practice of the developmental/appreciative advising model, and collaborative programmatic initiatives with the Faculty Teaching & Learning Commons, SFO will guide students to become self-directed learners able to make intentional connections between the learning they experience both in and out of the classroom. Planned initiatives include the expansion of targeted advising to the undeclared major population, the implementation of the Advising as Teaching Workshop Series, the development of departmental Major Maps, and the implementation of an online, interactive course scheduling software system.

Solution 2. Intentional Futures through Skill Development: Digital Literacy Center. The Digital Literacy Center (to be located inside Jackson Library's Digital Media Commons) will improve our students' communication skills and increase the University's retention rates by providing a comfortable and caring environment where students can access advanced digital technology, work individually or collaborate with their production teams, and consult with professionally trained peers about their digital projects. The DLC will also support faculty and staff as they integrate digital technology into their instruction and design effective assignments that require students to use digital media.

Solution 3. Intentional Futures through Professional Development: Professional Learning Communities. The Faculty Teaching and Learning Commons will collaborate with the Digital Literacy Center and the Student's First Office to create professional learning communities. Through DLC's faculty and staff will learn how to improve their interactions with students by sharing experiences, exploring appreciative instruction and advising practices, and discovering how to leverage digital literacy to maintain more positive, seamless relationships with students. These learning communities will bring together faculty and staff from a range of academic disciplines, roles, and background to work together in promoting Title III goals.

Williston State College (ND)

Project Title: Pathways to Completion

Williston sits atop the Bakken Shale, which will later this year be producing more oil than any other site in the country...the area is like a Gold Rush image in the time of Walmart, McDonalds and Home Depot...hundreds of workers sleep in the hulls of their truck or in temporary housing encampments like soldiers in a war zone. McDonald's is offering workers \$18 an hour plus a 'signing bonus.' All this thanks to the technological leap forwarded represented by hydraulic fracking, a process that allows drillers to blast through under-ground shale rock and pump out oil and natural gas. Projections of recoverable oil are now reaching 500 billion barrels [Stephen Moore. *Wall Street Journal*, March 10-11, 2012, page A-11].

The Applicant: Williston State College (WSC), a small (1,083 students in fall 2011), two-year public community college is the only accessible regional postsecondary option for thousands of square miles in North Dakota and eastern Montana. For many from urban areas, WSC would literally be the *Little College on the Prairie*. It would be impossible to overstate the maelstrom of distracting activity that is going on around and within the College; faculty, staff and students alike sit at ground zero of a modern oil rush.

The Title III Project: Total Five Year Request \$1.99 million

Institutional Problems to be addressed with the Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP) grant are documented and analyzed. These include falling graduation rates; students struggling to pass gateway courses in math and English; a core of required classes that are barriers to progress for hundreds of students; weak infrastructure for faculty development; and under-developed career advising, educational planning and counseling services. Goals for overcoming problems are delineated along with measureable objectives to assess their attainment.

Evidence-Based and Researched Success Strategies are Proposed for Funding to address documented problems and reach goals and objectives.

Activity Title: Pathways to Completion

Component A. Strategies for Improved Success in Math and English Gateway Courses.

Component B. Faculty Development and High Impact Strategies to address student engagement, persistence, and poor success rates in a core of high-risk courses.

Component C. Career Advising and Implementation of Student Educational Plans will be developed and implemented for both online and on campus students.

Strong Personnel, Project Management and Evaluation Plans are included.

Competitive and Invitational Priorities

The proposal addresses all three invitation priorities (Increasing Postsecondary Success, Technology, and Improving Productivity) and responds fully to the **Competitive Preference Priority with a narrative section and required attachments in Appendix D.**

Orange County Community College (SUNY Orange) (NY)

Project Title: Transforming the Student Experience to Increase Engagement, Persistence & Retention

Orange County Community College (SUNY Orange) is a public two-year community college with campuses in the cities of Middletown, and Newburgh, New York. A student-faculty ratio of 17:1 represents 148 full-time and 375 part-time faculty. SUNY Orange's enrollment is at an all-time high, and currently has 7,302 students (2,331 FTE) in 2011.

Key Problem: Low student persistence, retention and graduation are critical issues for the College. Of the first-time, full-time students who enter each year, four out of ten will be gone by the end of the second semester; and only two out of ten will graduate within three years. Disjointed enrollment processes, inadequate support for new students, and outdated technological systems are key areas undermining student success.

Project Description: *Transforming the Student Experience to Increase Engagement, Persistence & Retention* seeks to restructure the College's student services into a single, comprehensive, Web-enabled, one-stop center organized around a customer-service model, Student Services Central. This will integrate the enrollment services of admissions, registration, financial aid, orientation, and advising/counseling into a seamless process with one point of entry for all students. A Transitional Advising Program provides second semester career advising, and multimedia response system provides similar services virtually.

The integration of these systems and processes will simplify and demystify the college experience and provide intrusive wraparound supports for at-risk students, particularly those who are low-income, from ethnic minorities, and/or the first in their families to enter college. Evidence is provided that shows the direct causal impact of the project activities on student engagement, retention, and academic achievement. Title III Activity Goals are to simplify and demystify the college experience and provide intrusive wrap-around supports for at-risk students to bolster persistence, retention and graduation. A new robust portal serves as the host for all engagement services; enabling 24 hour anytime/anywhere access, an intentional message mapping plan to enhance students connection with the College; and will host an archive of academic and student service virtual supports.

Project Outcomes: The overall goal of the proposed Activity is to increase student retention from 50 percent-65 percent, raise graduation from 15 percent to 25 percent, and strengthen student engagement by 13 percent by September 2017.

Allocation of Budget: With the full request totaling \$1,886,481, the funds directly support the activity with 71 percent in personnel and fringe, 21 percent in technology systems/contractual, two percent evaluator/contractual, one percent in travel, and four percent in construction. The College will institutionalize the program at a Year Six expense of \$338,550, and also provide additional resources with staffing, furnished space, internet access, staff, equipment and software.

This project addresses Competitive Preference Priority and Invitational Priorities 1, 2, and 3.

Monroe Community College (NY)

Project Title: Building a Culture of Engagement and Success

Monroe Community College is a two-year, associate degree-granting public institution located in Rochester, New York. The College offers 93 degree and certificate programs. The diverse student body of 37,000 students vary with ability, educational background, income, and life experience. Thirty-four percent of students are minority and 48 percent are Pell eligible.

Significant Problem: Achievement, persistence, and retention are compromised by a disconnected array of student services and outdated developmental education curriculum. An embryonic First Year Experience program has reached a very small portion of transitional studies (developmental) students with ineffectual, disconnected programming and no links to the college orientation seminar, advising or counseling. This coupled with outmoded developmental courses and a “one size fits all” approach requiring a prolonged time investment up to 1.5 years to complete, impedes students’ progress toward completion.

Project Description: *Building a Culture of Engagement and Success*, will create a comprehensive first year experience engaging students in integrated workshops that eliminate barriers to advising and counseling, and provide an innovative redesign of developmental (transitional) courses. The innovative accelerated design model is meant to improve success by reducing the amount of time a student spends in remedial courses, contextualize learning to align developmental course content with college-level courses, and infuse technology into instructional methods familiar to the visually motivated students of today.

Project Outcomes: The project will increase student achievement by 15 percent, fall-to-spring persistence rate by 15 percent, and fall-to-fall retention rate by 10 percent. The results will increase with significant improvements in course completion rates, continuous enrollment, and satisfactory progress.

Allocation of Budget: The grant request of \$2,000,000 will increase self-sufficiency by improving achievement, persistence, and retention. The college will contribute a minimum of \$517,514 to this project.

The MCC Title III project, *Building a Culture of Engagement and Success*, addresses the Competitive Preference and Invitational Priorities 1, 2, and 3, as well as GPRA and GEPA requirements.

Lehigh Carbon Community College (PA)

Project Title: Creating a Culture for Student Success

Lehigh Carbon Community College (LCCC) in Schnecksville, Pennsylvania, is a comprehensive, two-year, publicly supported community college whose mission is “responding to the community by providing affordable, accessible, high quality education.” Established in 1966 as Lehigh County Community College, the institution operates under local control with a 15-member Board of Trustees representing the 13 sponsoring school districts (nine in Lehigh County and four in Carbon County), with two at-large trustees.

Accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, LCCC offers 29 transfer associate degree programs (A.A. and A.S.), 40 career associate degree programs (A.A.S.), 19 certificate programs, and seven specialized credit diploma programs. Academic programs are divided into seven schools: Business; Computer Science and the Arts; Education; Healthcare Sciences; Humanities and Social Sciences; Mathematics and Science; and Technology. Serving Lehigh, Carbon, and Schuylkill counties that encompass urban, rural, and suburban regions in eastern Pennsylvania, the college offers programs at the main campus, three centers, and other locations in the service area. The annual credit enrollment for FY 2010-11 was 11,677 students.

The fall 2011 credit headcount was 7,710, and FTEs totaled 5,030. Less than half of the students attend full-time (35 percent), females (61 percent) outnumber males, nonwhite and multi-racial students account for approximately 25 percent of the student population, 33 percent of all students are 25 years and older (41 percent of degree-seeking students are 25 years and older), and 65 percent of degree-seeking students are enrolled in transfer programs. These students represent a diversity of academic abilities, economic levels, and backgrounds.

Faculty total - 480: 105 full-time; 373 part-time; and two special term/grant funded. The student/faculty ratio is 21:1.

The goals of this Title III project entitled “*Creating a Culture for Student Success*” are to: (1) improve student success in developmental courses; (2) increase student retention and completion; and (3) expand the use of data to support decision making. The single activity has several components: establish a comprehensive First-Year Experience program to help students transition to college; revise the delivery of developmental education to improve success rates for underprepared students; create bridge programs to engage specific populations in progressing more quickly through their programs; and incorporate evidence-based teaching and learning strategies and redesigned courses into academic programs to better meet the needs of diverse learners. To support these components, the project will also provide faculty and staff professional development, expand the college’s information technology infrastructure, and install an administrative enterprise reporting system to transform the college into a “data-driven” institution where faculty and staff have easy access to student performance data for making decisions on strategies to improve student outcomes. A portion of grant funds will be used for endowment investing.

The project will address the Competitive Preference Priority and the three Invitational Priorities.

Community College of Allegheny County (PA)

Project Title: Learning Commons

The Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) seeks to strengthen the institution by improving its capacity to serve low-income, high-need students and improve academic success through an innovative Title III project to create Learning Commons at each of its campuses. This project is based on a comprehensive review of developmental English and Reading programs at CCAC, on recommendations from internal and external consultants, an environmental scan and needs assessment of the English faculty at CCAC's four campuses, and a comprehensive literature review of studies identifying best practices for developmental education and quality learning environments.

The focus of the **Learning Commons** will be to provide **learner-centered engagement spaces** offering tutoring, faculty interaction, and facilitated computer-assisted learning at of four campuses. This project focuses on the **needs of developmental students** who are high risk of failure in CCAC's developmental English courses, ENG 089 and ENG 100. Currently at CCAC:

- The successful completion rate of ENG 089 is 65 percent and the successful completion rate of ENG 100 is 64 percent.
- The successful completion rate for a college-level gatekeeper English course for students who began in ENG 089 is only 15 percent within two years, while the successful rate for students in ENG 100 is only 37 percent within two years.

The project also focuses on closing the **achievement gap** between African-American male students and all other students in developmental English and Reading courses, where African-American males currently have significantly lower success rates.

Built in 1966, CCAC's facilities do not meet the current needs of 30,003 credit and 30,064 non-credit students currently enrolled at the College, or the types of learning spaces that are conducive for 21st Century students. The Learning Commons will strengthen CCAC and provide improved student attitudes toward, reading, writing, and English; provide space for facilitated learning and engagement with facilitators, faculty, and student peers; encourage interdisciplinary course work; and improve success rate and performance in developmental English and Reading courses. The Learning Commons will provide a comfortable, socially engaging, learner-centered atmosphere with current technologies for study, research, and learning. Program objectives and outcomes will provide evaluation of the academic progress and success of students through a carefully monitored Evaluation Plan. Results will be shared with other institutions of higher learning in an effort to improve student achievement through new strategies of engagement and instruction.

CCAC's Learning Commons project meets the **Competitive Preference Priority** of supporting programs and strategies for which there is strong evidence for effectiveness. It also aligns with all three of the **Invitational Priorities** by: 1) Improving Postsecondary Success; 2) Improving Student Learning through Technology; and 3) Improving Overall Productivity.

Renton Technical College (WA)

Project Title: Student Success and Entry Pathway

Renton Technical College (RTC) is a public two-year technical college in Renton, Washington. RTC's service area encompasses the entirety of South Seattle and South King County, an area with significant racial and cultural diversity and a concentration of people with low incomes.

The Fiscal Year 2010-11 headcount at RTC was 11,675. Of full-time (36 percent) and part-time (64 percent) credit students, 41 percent are female, 59 percent are male. Fifty-four percent are students of color as compared to just 24 percent in 2000. Fifteen percent identify as African/African American, 19 percent as Asian/Asian Pacific Islander, 15 percent as Hispanic and one percent as Native American. Among Caucasians, many are immigrants from Eastern Europe who are nonnative English speakers.

A dedicated and talented team of 88 full-time and 161 part-time faculty provide instruction in 36 associate's level degree programs, including 11 transfer associates degrees and 61 certificate programs across four professional technical and one academic division. A sixth division, Basic Studies, serves English Language Learners and students pursuing General Education Development test preparation. The student to faculty ratio is 20:1.

Request: \$1,961,566

Key Institutional Goal: By 2017, Renton Technical College will measurably increase both student academic success, engagement and satisfaction and the fiscal sustainability of the institution, by: (1) establishing a comprehensive, integrated Student Entry and Success Pathway; and (2) progressively increasing the number of students participating and completing this pathway, as well as the number of participants persisting to completion or through their first 45 credits.

The **Student Success and Entry Pathway** will result in a college much better able to serve the high percentage of low income, low skilled adults who make up the RTC community. Over the five-year grant period, the College will maximize engagement and success of new students by: adopting a comprehensive Developmental Advising system; supporting intentional student career and academic planning; implementing early warning systems for intervention when students are struggling academically; making registration and advising and the financial aid process easier to understand and access; establishing clear, consistent assessment and placement protocols that include a precollege quarter for those who need college success, computer literacy, reading, writing or math support to create structures that get more students off to a strong start.

Redesigning services based on the proactive and holistic Developmental Advising model so that students receive timely front-end services (e.g., orientation, advising, financial aid rules, financial literacy, career assessment etc.) will reduce the need for later intervention. Developing online and in-person learning modules for successful personal responsibility; financial literacy; degree, career and life planning; college success; and a graduated system of interventions for struggling students will create flexible, just-in-time access to crucial information and needed support for students. Implementing these changes will help more first-year students succeed in achieving their academic and career goals.

Fairmont State University (WV)

Institutional Profile: Fairmont State University is located in the Appalachian region of north central West Virginia (WV) and enrolls over 4,500 students in more than 90 baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate degree programs – the third largest enrollment among the eleven West Virginia colleges and universities (4,268 undergraduate and 349 graduate students). Fairmont State University, a 120-acre main campus in Fairmont, is part of the state’s growing high technology corridor with a metro area of 56,586 residents.

State/Service Area Profile: Fairmont State draws students in West Virginia where the education capital is severely low. The state ranks at the rock bottom among all Appalachian regions (13 states) for bachelor degree attainment (*Appalachian Region Commission, 2012*).

Student Profile: Among Fairmont State first-time entering students, more than half (60 percent) are first-generation college (based on self-reporting and demographic data) and low-income (66 percent eligible for Pell grants). Over one-third of entering freshmen (39 percent) are not academically prepared and the bachelor’s degree completion rate is very low: 34.8 percent within six years and 15.5 percent within four years. Retention in two key programs, School of Business (51 percent) and College of Science and Technology (53 percent) is lower than the overall University rate (66 percent).

Project Activity: To address key institutional problems and weaknesses (low student persistence and low academic success in two key programs), Fairmont State requests Title III funds to help support the following development activities to strengthen the institution:

Redesign High-Risk School of Business Courses as Collaborative/Experiential and Technology-Rich and Provide Peer Mentoring

- Develop a Business Learn Lab and Peer Mentoring services
- Redesign high-risk business courses as collaborative/experiential and technology-rich
- Provide access to new technologies to support tech-rich learning in and beyond the classroom
- Convert traditional, low-tech classrooms to Smart classrooms
- Provide faculty training in collaborative/experiential and technology-rich teaching and learning practices

Redesign High-Risk STEM Courses as Collaborative/Experiential and Technology-Rich, Develop Undergraduate Research, and Provide Peer Mentoring

- Develop Peer Mentoring services for math, science and engineering technology majors
- Redesign high-risk STEM courses as collaborative/experiential and technology-rich
- Develop undergraduate research component for biology, chemistry, physics and engineering technology
- Provide access to new technologies to support tech-rich learning in and beyond the classroom
- Convert traditional, low-tech classrooms to Smart classrooms
- Provide faculty training in collaborative/experiential and technology-rich teaching and learning practices

All three Invitational Priorities are addressed: Increasing Postsecondary Success (curriculum redesign); Improve Productivity (in-class technology resources); Technology (lecture-capture).

Competitive Preference Priority: *Supporting Programs, Practices, or Strategies for which there is Strong or Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness.* Two key components (Collaborative Learning and Undergraduate Research) are supported by strong evidence.

Funds Requested: \$1,995,816 [Endowment Match Request - \$110,000]

[9/17/2012]