

Title III Part F Strengthening Institutions Program
FY 2013 Project Abstracts

Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas (**Phillips**) is a two-year, public, open-admission, comprehensive college serving five counties in the Mississippi Delta of eastern Arkansas. Disadvantage is widespread and severe: **26 percent** of residents are impoverished, **49 percent** are low-income, and median family and per capita incomes are only about two-thirds of the nations. Unemployment exceeds **11 percent** in two counties, and four counties have among the highest rates in the state. Poverty is even greater—**39 percent**—for the **47 percent** of residents who are African American. Economic development has brought opportunity to our historically agricultural area, but few residents have the education they need to participate: **21 percent** of all and **34 percent** of Black adults do not hold high school diplomas; **85 percent** of all and **91 percent** of Black adults do not have Bachelor’s degrees.

The only college in the area, Phillips participates in *Achieving the Dream* to help more students succeed, especially those of color and low income. With steady growth through 2008, though, Phillips’ enrollment has since dropped 17.5 percent, and student failure and attrition are alarming. Among today’s high-value fields here—as everywhere—are science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), and STEM courses are among all degree-seeking students’ requirements: just **ten** frequently-required STEM courses enroll nearly **1,700 students** each year. Yet, with as few as 41 percent of students earning grades of C or better, these ten and 11 other courses present daunting barriers to success. Another 14 courses’ low enrollment further demonstrate STEM’s challenges: for example, only two students have earned Associate of Science transfer degrees in each of the past two years.

2012 Student Profile	
Fall headcount	1,980
Fall FTE	1,123
Degree-seeking	1,037
Part time	68%
First generation (estimated)	80%
Female	65%
Average age	23
Minority	50%
African American	49.1%
Underprepared	85%
Pell-eligible (degree-seeking)	72%
STEM enrollments	1,893

Phillips therefore proposes a project titled **Increasing STEM Success and Enrollment** to strengthen the college by **strengthening instruction in STEM**. First, we will improve the ways we teach STEM through faculty development, instructional and lab equipment upgrades, and course revisions to increase engagement in learning; revised courses will have greater interactivity, collaboration, and hands-on learning reinforced in Student Research Projects and Summer Academies. We will also improve STEM advising, for many failures trace to inappropriate course choices, and stronger advising will also support students with interest in STEM who need encouragement to pursue fields that define the future.

The project will be phased to develop, pilot-test, and evaluate new practices and improvements in Math, Life and Physical Sciences, Chemistry, and Computer and Renewable Energy Technologies. A STEM Success Center will be created to house services and support. The main campus STEM instructional area will be renovated to improve safety, accessibility, and instructional effectiveness. Outcomes include additional STEM course enrollments and ten percentage-point increases in students’ grades and fall-to-fall re-enrollment. In addition, we will study outcomes by race and gender, examine interaction effects among new practices, and compare participants’ outcomes to those of carefully matched control groups. The project addresses the **purpose of Title III, to increase colleges’ self-sufficiency and expand their capacity to serve low-income students by improving and strengthening academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability**, Title III **Program Performance Measures (enrollment and retention)**, and the **2013 Part F Absolute Priority** for projects with *demonstrated evidence of effectiveness*. The five-year budget request totals \$4,196,355.

The Lake-Sumter State College (LSSC) Title III Strengthening Institutions Program application was planned and designed to strengthen the academic quality of mathematics programming at LSSC. The overarching goal is to facilitate partnerships to accelerate high school students to college-ready status, while providing them with the skills and abilities to participate in dual enrollment college credit courses before high school graduation. Along with admitting higher quality students to LSSC, the purpose is also to increase students' retention and degree completion by transforming the traditional math class into a new modularized, technologically-enhanced curricular approach that fully supports a more individualized learning modality.

The data presented in the Comprehensive Development Plan explicitly outlines the College's deficient record of student performance in developmental and lower college-level math gatekeeper courses and highlights this as one of the most persistent barriers to degree completion for LSSC students. The Plan also outlines how LSSC intends to strengthen math programming to remove this barrier to student success.

To solve the college's deficient record it was determined technology is the answer, particularly, technology associated with the National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT) math emporium course-redesign fundamentals. One of the major activities is a math curriculum and instruction revitalization process foundationally conceived based on the past 11 years of NCAT math redesign efforts and research.

Another planned activity for improving student math performance was uncovered during the investigation phases of the Comprehensive Development Plan. The planning team discovered that a significant number of students from the Sumter School District not only come from families whose demographics put them at-risk, but performance data shows they are also struggling to meet the standards of math college-readiness and are not retaining to college graduation. The team believes that fewer students would need math remediation upon entrance to college if LSSC took a more active role in facilitating the transition of students from high school to college. This belief prompted LSSC and the Sumter District to partner in developing the summer bridge program called The RISE Summer Math Academy. The aim of the academy is to accelerate the "academic middle" tenth and eleventh grade students to college-ready status while providing them with the knowledge and skills to accelerate to dual enrollment college credit math courses before high school graduation.

To demonstrate success in achieving the stated goals and objectives, the evaluation plan is designed to gather performance data to determine the validity and efficacy of the progress of LSSC students engaged in the course-redesign math emporium classrooms as well determine the success and progress of students who enroll in the RISE Summer Math Academy. Collected data will be analyzed regarding both groups' progress in math from high school through the first two- years of college. Data on student performance will be collected using multiple measures at varying intervals of their education. Analyzed data results will be used to improve the program and actions that will positively influence students' math success.

LSSC and the partnering Sumter School District, have a desire to carry out the activities outlined in this application, with the desire to contribute and enhance the current body of research, while improving high school and college students' outcomes that ultimately lead to earning a college degree.

East Arkansas Community College (EACC) is a fully accredited, public, comprehensive two-year college serving five Mississippi River Delta counties in Arkansas. The area is rural and extremely disadvantaged: **25 percent** of the population is impoverished, and median family incomes are just **78 percent** of a state’s whose median family incomes are second lowest in the nation. Levels of education are low as well: only **73 percent** of area adults have high school diplomas or more and **11 percent** hold Bachelor’s or higher degrees compared to 85 percent and 29 percent, respectively, for the nation. Disadvantage among the area’s African Americans, **42 percent** of the population, is even greater: **36 percent** live in poverty, just **64 percent** have high school diplomas or more, and only **3 percent** have Bachelor’s or higher degrees. Yet a range of economic development measures are improving conditions in the Arkansas Delta, and opportunity is increasing, both here and in commercial centers nearby.

Student Profile 2012	
Fall Enrollment	1,463
Annual Enrollment	2,119
African American	41%
Caucasian	57%
Female	67%
Part-time	51%
Average Age	29
First Generation	63%
Underprepared	80%
Pell-eligible	64%

EACC has served the area since 1974, and our graduates have high praise for the educations they have received. However, the College’s **enrollment has been steadily dropping**, and other indicators are poor as well: fall – fall re-enrollment and degree / certificate completions lag below state averages and well below national means. Yet online enrollments are **growing** as students seek to balance work, family, and college. EACC has built a modest offering of online courses (wholly or primarily delivered online), but it does not include full degree and certificate programs, so many students who prefer online education still have limited flexibility as they attempt to complete college. Furthermore, major gaps in Web-based services deny them—and their on-campus peers—the support

they need to succeed.

Unpredictable and declining revenues have prevented EACC from creating online degree and certificate programs and services or expanding infrastructure to support them, yet we know they would benefit not only our students but the institution as well. Students would be more able to build class schedules that meet their needs and reduce college-going costs; increased enrollment and retention would strengthen EACC’s funding base and operating efficiencies would stretch our resources. Therefore, we propose to renovate an underused storage space in a centrally located classroom building for a Distance Learning Resource Lab where faculty will convert classroom courses to online formats to complete **seven high-value degree programs** for online delivery—Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science in Business (ASB), Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT), General Technology Drafting (GTD), Administrative Office Technology (AOT), Medical Assisting Technology (MAT), and Associate of Science in Criminal Justice (ASCJ), two with intermediate Certificate programs, and add interactive elements to existing online courses to improve their effectiveness. We also propose to create **Web-based student services** to support both online and on-campus students’ success: orientation, admission / registration, financial aid, assessment, career / educational planning, early alert / referral, advising, and progress / degree tracking. We will upgrade our online delivery platform to Blackboard Collaborate™ for increased interactivity, install lecture-capture equipment to support online development and Virtual Receptionists to support Web-based service delivery, and upgrade our student information system, fiber optic network, and wireless capability for expanded online access. The project addresses the **purpose of Title III, Title III Program Performance Measures, and the 2013 Title III Part F Absolute Priority** for projects with *demonstrated evidence of effectiveness*. The five-year budget request totals \$4,001,618.

Lyon College, located in Batesville, Arkansas, a small town on the eastern edge of the Ozarks, defies easy categorization. While it is a Carnegie Category I, selective, private liberal arts college, about a third of its academically-capable students are low income and about three-quarters are the first in their families to go to college). More like a community college in its student demographics, Lyon suffers low freshman and sophomore retention and low graduation rates compared to its Carnegie I peers. High attrition translates to lost enrollment-related revenues (over \$1,704,760 a year) which, when combined with decreased gifts to the College during the extended national economic downturn, threaten Lyon's fiscal stability.

Eighty percent of Lyon students are from Arkansas, where only 19.1 of adults have a bachelor's degree or higher (49th in the nation), median family income is \$48,491 (just 77 percent of the national average), and 23.6 percent of families with children under 18 live in poverty (American Community Survey, 2011). Lyon's five-year average for fall-to-fall retention is only 65.8 percent, compared to a national average for private liberal arts colleges of 78.3 percent. Its six-year graduation rate for the 2006 cohort was 48.4 percent, compared to a national rate of 69.5 percent (ACT, 2012). Data from the National Survey of Student Engagement, Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, and a locally-developed survey indicated low levels of engagement, especially student to student.

Lyon will address these problems by providing the following:

- Faculty and staff professional development in best practices in pedagogy and student services: faculty training for redesign of Core 100 (freshman seminar supporting college success) and infusion of engaging practices into instruction. Staff training in customer service. Faculty and staff training in understanding and working with low-income students.
- Expansion of a small pilot Supplemental Instruction program: providing out-of-class support for students in courses with historically high failure rates, thus increasing their success.
- Increased opportunities for student engagement: making classes more engaging through active learning; redesigning Core 100 to incorporate service learning, identified by research as a "high-impact" pedagogy that supports retention; and increasing and broadening the scope of campus activities to encourage student socialization and bonding.
- Integrated campus-wide focus on retention: Lyon will join the Gardner Institute for Excellence's Foundations of Excellence First Year program (FoE) to enhance learning and retention as well as set resource allocation priorities. A campus audit of the first year experience will culminate in strategic actions linking multiple components of the first-year student experience.
- Increased staffing to lead activities that will increase retention, student engagement and data-based decision-making.

By the end of the grant period, Lyon expects to see the following changes: fall-to-fall retention of first-time, full-time freshmen will be at least 75 percent; fall-to-fall retention of sophomores to their junior year will be at least 85 percent; and graduation of the Fall 2013 cohort within four years will be at least 60 percent. Stronger engagement of students with both their coursework and their peers will drive this improved retention, which will translate to additional enrollment-related revenues.

This proposal complies with the required Absolute Priority.

Overall grant request for the five years: \$3,117,478, which includes \$623,496 (20 percent of the total) for endowment.

Western Iowa Tech Community College (WITCC) is a comprehensive, public, two-year institution located in Sioux City, Iowa, and serving the greater tri-state Siouxland region which encompasses sections of northwest Iowa, northeast Nebraska, and southeast South Dakota. The College's student catchment area extends across 11 counties with a total population of 234,847. WITCC's main campus is located in Sioux City (population 82,684) with two rural campuses and two attendance centers in locations across the service area.

WITCC sits as a beacon of hope in a community grappling with socio-economic hardships. The rate of service area families living in poverty exceeds the state average of 14.9 percent and rises to as high as 21.3 percent in Dakota County. Economic struggles are accentuated among Hispanic families with 28 percent living in poverty. Educational attainment remains low with just 19.3 percent of adults having completed a bachelor's degree (compared to 24.9 percent for Iowa and 28.2 percent for the United States).

Recent plant closing displaced hundreds of low to medium skilled workers, contributing to WITCC's 16 percent enrollment growth since 2008, further straining WITCC's ability to respond adequately to the needs of an increasingly low-income and academically at-risk student body.

Student Characteristics: Among WITCC's 6,424 students (Fall 2012), 18 percent are minority, average age is 23; 60 percent are first-generation in college; more than half receive federal financial aid; three-quarters work at least part time; 68 percent are enrolled part-time; and more than 85 percent begin college deficient in at least one basic skills areas. Once enrolled, up to 57 percent fail developmental courses and of those who do complete their required remediation, up to 55 percent fail subsequent college gateway courses. Not surprisingly, WITCC's fall to fall persistence of first-time full-time students is low (50 percent; compared to 56 percent nationwide), retention of part-time students is just 23 percent.

To alleviate significant institutional problems exemplified by high student failure and attrition rates, limited faculty development, inadequate support mechanisms, and inconsistent/ incomplete student data compounded by strained fiscal resources, WITCC has designed a comprehensive Title III project. We propose a single activity focused on ***Transforming Instruction and Support Services for Improved Student Success***.

Project design was influenced via analysis of extensive research including studies which comply with the definition of "*strong or moderate evidence of effectiveness*" in accordance with the **Absolute Priority** of this Title III, Part F Competition. Two of the most promising regression discontinuity studies are included in this application as requested in the guidelines and examine the causal effects of developmental course redesign and developmental course placement on student outcomes as measured by persistence to the second year and long term.

We request a **total of \$5,019,242** over five years to: (1) Strengthen Developmental Education through curricular revision inclusive of compressed/accelerated courses, contextualized coursework, peer-to-peer coaching, and individualized/self-paced instruction; (2) Increase course success through comprehensive faculty development for all major academic disciplines and focusing on multimedia instructional modalities; (3) Infrastructure build-up to support faculty development, academic support systems, and facilitate improved student data management; and (4) Expanded support services via supplemental instruction, tutoring, and academic/career advising services utilizing Pathway Navigators to provide case management services for at-risk students. The project also includes personnel to ensure data gathering and analysis that will allow for effective measurement of student outcomes as well as facilitate dissemination of research results for broad audience use, knowledge-building and further improvement.

The project budget also includes a request for \$500,000 in endowment funds, to be matched by private dollars raised by the WITCC Foundation. A portion of the interest gained from endowment funds will be utilized, in future years, to provide scholarships for high-need students and assist with institutionalization of initiatives developed via this project.

Metropolitan Community College (MCC) is the largest institution of higher education in the greater Kansas City area, serving more than 32,000 students annually. With a robust mission of *preparing students, serving communities, and creating opportunities*, MCC's five campuses offer more than 92 associate degrees, including eight transfer degree options, in numerous disciplines ranging from art to veterinary technology. MCC is especially known for specialized centers such as the Francis Institute for Child and Youth Development, the Institute for Workforce Innovation, and the Western Missouri Public Safety Institute, which partners with agencies to deliver crucial training to first responders. Our community, however, is one of extremes. Despite a few more affluent areas, for numerous neighborhoods, poverty is the norm, with up to 37 percent of families with children living in poverty. Nearly 84 percent of the students in the Kansas City School District are eligible for free/reduced lunch.

Each semester, MCC enrolls more than 20,000 students, of whom 62 percent are part-time. Most face significant challenges to postsecondary success: 61 percent are first generation, 40 percent are Pell-eligible and 62 percent are underprepared for college coursework. Required to successfully complete as many as three semesters of developmental courses before enrolling in freshman-level courses, too many students languish and fail at the pre-college level. Many leave before completing even their first year of college, let alone graduating. MCC's 50 percent fall-to-fall retention rate falls below the national average of 55 percent for public two-year colleges (*ACT, 2012*).

To meet our students at their point of need and to substantially increase student success and retention across the entire college, MCC proposes **Project FOCUS (Fundamentals for Outcomes, Completion, Understanding & Success)**, a comprehensive activity underpinning curricular improvements with enhanced student services. A robust quasi-experimental evaluation plan has great promise for contributing to the knowledge base of how to improve student success in developmental courses.

We will target both developmental (mathematics, writing and reading) and key college-level courses (gateway courses, which can be an obstacle to students on their path to a degree) and redesign them to use instructional strategies informed by best practices in improving the success of underprepared students. The plan calls for us to add new **modular, mastery-based options** to enable improved student learning and accelerate progress through essential pre-college level courses and infuse interactive, active learning strategies into selected gateway courses. Supplemental Instruction, professional development, and technology resources will support and enhance curricular strategies.

Parallel to the curricular element of our activity is developing a comprehensive First Year Experience (FYE) with a redesigned orientation, intrusive advising and an array of wrap around services. High-need students need these services and support to successfully navigate the many challenges that threaten their persistence to graduation. A much-needed student data information system will enable us to track and predict student performance and to perform the evaluation.

This application addresses the Absolute Priority established for this competition.

Total five-year budget request: \$8,307,319