

PBI APR FY15 Executive Summary

Essex County College is an open-door public community college that is committed to providing quality educational programs and life-long learning activities at the most affordable cost. Essex offers a wide range of associate degree programs, academic certificate programs, and certificates of completion through the following academic divisions: (1) Bilingual Studies, (2) Biology & Chemistry, (3) Business, (4) Engineering Technologies & Computer Sciences, (5) Humanities, (6) Mathematics & Physics, (7) Nursing & Allied Health, and (8) Social Sciences. Its students are diverse, representing over 50 different countries, and they have a wide variety of backgrounds and abilities.

The foundation of the college's strategic plan consists of 7 strategic directions—(A) Student Success and Completion, (B) Supporting High Quality Faculty, (C) State of the Art Technology and Support Services, (D) Modernized Facilities, (E) Collaborative Partnerships with the Community, (F) Organizational Culture, and (G) Resource Development. The main campus is located in the heart of University Heights in Newark, New Jersey. The West Essex campus located in West Caldwell, New Jersey, meets the educational and training needs of people who live and work in the western part of Essex County. Essex also has a Police Academy located in Cedar Grove, NJ.

The PBI formula grant has enabled Essex County College to expand its capacity to serve students. With the support of the PBI formula grant, Essex County College implemented seven activities during October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015:

1. Center for Academic Foundations Supplemental Developmental Education
2. Graduation Math
3. Supplemental Instruction in Math
4. Intensive English Workshops
5. Completion Project
6. Online Learning
7. External Assessment

1. Center for Academic Foundations Supplemental Developmental Education

The PBI grant funds supported the development of an adaptive/self-regulated learning model in developmental math courses for 2014-2015. The specific courses that were supported were Introductory Algebra (AFM 083) and Elementary Algebra (MTH 092). The new learning model is composed of two components: self-regulated learning and adaptive math technology. The self-regulated learning curriculum reflects the latest research from a number of research centers and was implemented for the first time in Fall 2013 with 450 developmental math students and has been offered every semester since then. One of the biggest challenges with teaching developmental math is the wide range of abilities of the students. The advantage of adaptive technology is that it can analyze the work each student has done correctly, the mistakes each one has made, and based on that history predict what each student is ready to learn and serve

that to them so they are never bored and never lost. So, a key advantage of technology is that it individualizes learning.

2. Graduation Math

The Graduation Math courses were originally designed for math repeaters whose graduation and progress was delayed by either the need to repeat Math 092 and/or a college level Math. Later, the name was changed from Repeaters Math to a more positive name—Graduation Math. Instead of focusing solely on repeaters, avoiders were added, since it was clear that anyone who waited until the last couple of semesters to tackle math and some very high levels of anxiety and were dreading the math requirement. The goal of Graduation Math is to increase the number of graduates and improve retention by offering students who are struggling with math more tutoring and smaller class sizes; reducing their anxiety levels to improve their success. Graduation Math successfully increased the number of graduates and students eligible for graduation by moving them from developmental placement to satisfaction of their college level general education math requirement. Graduation Math classes are unique because the class sizes are small; Teaching Assistants are assigned to the specific courses and shadow the professor; and the developmental math requirement of Math 092 is waived for students taking Math 101 and 103. The Graduation Math student is part of a highly motivated cohort close to graduation.

3. Supplemental Instruction in Math

PBI funds enabled Teaching Assistants (TAs) to be used to enhance student academic success in their Math 100 class. Results from the Student Perception/Attitude Assessment Survey administered to all students enrolled in Professor Figueiras' and Dr. Gauden's Spring 2015 MTH 100 classes revealed the following: 100% said they would recommend other MTH 100 students use the PBI tutors; 97% said the tutoring 'absolutely' or 'somewhat' improved their performance in MTH 100; 79% said they felt more comfortable going to the tutoring since they knew at least one tutor; 76% and 62% said they went to tutoring for help with WebAssign homework and for help with math topics presented in class, respectively; and 64% said the tutoring hours were not convenient for them and many students expressed a need and desire for more tutoring hours. At least two of the TAs are now aiming to become math teachers. The others have become better professionals, more mature and responsible, and have honed their interpersonal, communication and math skills as a result of working as PBI grant-funded MTH 100 TAs.

4. Intensive English Workshop

The goal of the Intensive English Workshop (IEW) project was to have 200 incremental students enroll in the Intensive English Workshops and Tutorial Program. However, 500 students ended up participating in the program. While initially the program struggled to enroll students, more than 500 participants ended up signing up for the workshops by the end of 9/30/2015. This was

made possible because of the implementation of new creative strategies to maximize enrollment.

- a. The Mid-Term Intervention Workshops are designed to help students who are struggling to pass ENG 085 & ENG 096. Students are recommended by their instructors to get help to target areas that they are most deficient at.
- b. In-between semesters IEW are geared towards students who are misplaced or felt they could have done better on placement tests had they been given another opportunity to brush up on their essay and writing fundamentals. The above are all non-credit workshops.
- c. Two combined ENG 085 & ENG 096 credit courses were piloted in the Center of Academic Foundation in Summer II 2015 as a result of our partnership with the department.

The student success rate is an end result of the implementation of effective and sound strategies in the classroom that are conducted by seasoned faculty, supplemental instructors, and one-on-one tutors. Also, the workshops use the latest technology to cater to the needs of our students with different learning styles, particularly visual students.

5. Completion Project

The overall goal of the project is to increase the number of students who graduate within three years of joining the Completion Project. Students signal their participation in the project by signing the Completion Pledge. Completers are assigned Academic Advisors, Graduation Coaches and Retention Specialists who work with the student to create an academic roadmap that allows the student to graduate in three years or less. Personnel track their students on a weekly basis, offering resources, intrusive advisement, and timely interventions as required. As the objective is to help participants graduate in three years or less, this year, we did not add additional pledges. Rather, the project is focused on

- a. moving previous participants to graduation (this is the third year of the completion project)
- b. identifying best practices developed as a result of this grant, and
- c. integrating completion project best practices into our overall institutional practice and policy

In the past, we monitored fall to fall and fall to spring completion rates for our incoming cohort. As we are focused on moving existing pledge signers to completion, this year we have adjusted the performance measurements to focus on tracking graduation rates and progression towards graduation.

The Completion Project exceeded all PBI performance measurements. Graduation rates for the project participants is 33.1 points above the PBI target. Retention rates for advisement weeks were improved by the additional of target-specific programs. Importantly, the College has begun to shift some of the grant-related costs to college lines. This early shift demonstrates the move to institutionalize this program.

6. Online Learning

The Office of Academic Affairs was charged with Developing and implementing online coursework and degree programs. Essex was using course shells and content from an outside institution/3rd party vendor until Spring 2014. The course content did not match our syllabi, nor did it resemble the face to face courses. In addition, some instructors voiced concerns about the course content and difficulty with the online course shells. The purpose of the original proposal was to provide faculty with stipends to develop courses for the institution based on our current text books and publishers. The use of these funds have allowed this office to compensate full and part time faculty for developing course shells and content and to gain additional professional development experiences as a result. More importantly, this funding secured the successful development of a new area.

The new ECC Online Faculty Training Certification was developed and continues to be administered. Through our partnership with Pearson Publishing, we have identified and launched 10 Virtual Learning Environment modules as a part of our Online Instructor Certification Program.

Professional development enabled staff to effectively create a new department, processes, procedures, course work and also implement training. The Course Developer and Associate Dean, were able to develop and implement workshops on an ongoing basis for all online and face to face faculty dealing with the specific functionalities of Moodle and Best Practices in online education. In addition, Power Point slides and other conference information, materials were disbursed electronically and also embedded into the Moodle course shell where appropriate.

7. External Assessment

The grant period October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015 began with a continued relationship with the past external evaluator--the Rutgers University John Heldrich Center for Workforce Development Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. The evaluator met with the Acting Vice President for Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer. Also the Acting VPAA/CAO, and six activity heads subsequently held a conference call with the evaluator and her supervisor to provide feedback about prior assessment and to give input about assessment going forward. However the evaluator went out on maternity leave and her supervisor sent an email stating that the Heldrich Center could not do any additional work for Essex County College at the time. Thus, during the Spring 2015 semester a new external evaluator had to be found, briefed, met with (first with the Acting VPAA/CAO, and then with the six activity heads), and subsequently recommended for contracting by the Acting VPAA/CAO and approved by the Board of Trustees. Therefore the external assessment is still currently being completed.

The replacement external evaluator is Dr. Deborah Hecht who is Senior Evaluator and Project Director at The Center for Advanced Study in Education, City University of New York Graduate Center. She earned a PhD in Educational Psychology with a specialization in Psychoeducational Measurement, Research and Evaluation, at New York University.