2009
ANNUAL REPORT

Massachusetts Community Colleges Executive Office

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Massachusetts Community Colleges

From The Executive Director

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

This past year the fifteen Massachusetts Community Colleges were designated as the Governor Foster Furcolo Community Colleges by the Massachusetts Legislature in October 2008. The passage of the amendment to the laws of the Commonwealth occurred fifty years after Governor Furcolo signed into law his bill which established a system of community colleges for Massachusetts. Governor Furcolo was a passionate advocate for the expansion of the public higher education system that would serve students of all socioeconomic backgrounds across the state. Today, fifteen community colleges are providing a solid learning experience for over 225,000 students annually. Now more than ever community colleges provide affordable access to higher education and prepare students to earn an associate degree, transfer to a baccalaureate program, or provide vital training to enter or advance in the job market.

On the following pages I want to call your attention to many valuable programs and opportunities that have been developed and expanded in collaboration with the campuses, governmental agencies and not-for-profit organizations.I have highlighted some new initiatives that were launched with Department of Transitional Assistance to further serve their clients and the increasing number of homeless in the community. The Executive Office continues to look for opportunities which capitalize on the strengths of our Community College system throughout the Commonwealth.

Also included is a sample of ongoing relationships with many partners across the state. Most significant is the research conducted and analysis reported in the *Developmental Education Best Policy and Practice Audit*. It was initiated by the Massachusetts Community Colleges Executive Office with financial support from Jobs for the Future. This year-long audit has revealed some critical findings from across the fifteen Massachusetts campuses. A sample of the findings that follow will help promote achievement among academically under prepared community college students in the Commonwealth. The full report will be released in late July 2009. Finally, I want to acknowledge and thank faculty and staff members for all their contributions especially for their work and commitment to the completion of the report. We plan to spend next year implementing the recommendations issued in this report.

The Massachusetts Community Colleges Executive Office remain both a resource and an advocate for the campuses and the students they serve.

Janice C. Motta

Massachusetts Community Colleges
Developmental Education Best Policy and Practice Audit

Pursuant to the desire of Massachusetts community colleges to focus on the improvement of the performance and attainment among students entering the colleges under prepared for college-level coursework, the Massachusetts Community College Executive Office collaborated with Jobs for the Future, Inc. to initiate a system wide Developmental Education Best Policy and Practice Audit. The ultimate goals of the study were to: 1) synthesize and present research-based developmental education best practices and policies; 2) determine the extent to which practices and policies intended to increase achievement among developmental learners in Massachusetts community colleges align with best practices and policies advanced through the literature; 3) gauge the extent to which Massachusetts community colleges document and utilize student outcome information to improve student success in and beyond developmental education programs and courses; and 4) provide a current system wide information base and resource for Massachusetts community colleges seeking productive solutions to the challenge of increasing the attainment of students who enter college academically under prepared for college-level study.The creation and implementation of the ensuing study included some unique features:

É The Inventory that was sent to the individual colleges, as well as the data-gathering and reporting process that was implemented, benefited from input by chief academic officers at the fifteen community colleges.

É Separate inventories were sent to department chairs with responsibility for developmental Math, developmental Writing, and developmental Reading to facilitate analyses that could discriminate by basic skill area.

É Chief Academic Officers completed an Inventory with separate questions relating to college-wide policies and practices. Some of the questions posed tochief academic officers were also posed to department chairs to enable comparisons between and among developmental education academic leaders.

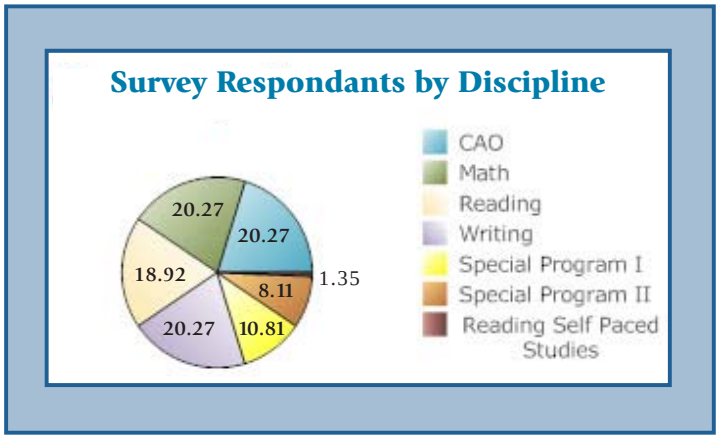
É The Math department Inventory contained add-on items relating to developmental Math course placement course sequencing, intended as a follow-up to the 2006 *100% Math Initiative.*

É Each college had the option to include up to two additional "Special Program" departments as participants in the Audit. Participating Special Program departments, designated by their respective college, represented a cohort of programs specifically designed to foster achievement and success among academically disadvantaged students.

É Extensive follow-up Campus Interviews were conducted at each college to clarify Inventory responses and gain additional insights regarding college efforts to promote achievement and success of developmental learners.

É In response to the extraordinary interest of individual and cohorts of college personnel to learn about successful and emerging practices and policies at other Massachusetts community colleges, a great many examples from individual campuses were included in the Final Report.

The Audit included the participation of approximately 180 individuals. Seventy-nine completed extensive Inventories; more than a hundred, with responsibilities that included aspects of instruction or service for developmental learners, participated in Campus Interviews. Those who were responsible for completing Inventories on behalf of their departments were distributed as follows, providing a fairly even balance among the participating disciplines and/or areas of responsibility:



The study itself is quite detailed with respect to specific findings for various respondent cohorts relative to issues ranging from organizational structure and professional development to specific instructional and support service practices and outcomes assessment. While the Final Report for the Audit will not be complete until July 2009, the preliminary conclusions include the following:

É The colleges' stated commitments to developmental education as a priority are widespread and strongly communicated.

É The commitment to developmental education does not necessarily translate into wide circulation of information about the colleges' progress in or achievement of student success goals. Analysis and utilization of student success data and/or developmental education outcomes as a basis for goal setting or ongoing improvement is limited.

É Placement testing utilizing the CPT (College Placement Test) *Accuplacer* exam is a common thread that runs through all of the institutions. While placement policies are quite similar, practices do differ in both formal and informal ways from college to college. In addition, there is great interest within academic departments in exploring assessments (e.g. *Advancer* and *ALEX)* that can supplement CPT assessment results by offering diagnostic information for targeted and individualized skills enhancement and instructional modes that match students' specific needs.

É College staff see curriculum articulation with area high schools as a critical step in reducing the number of students who begin community college at Math, Writing and Reading proficiency levels that do not qualify them for college-level courses. Given the persistence and achievement gaps between college-ready students and those who must complete developmental coursework as a pre-requisite to college-level study, reducing the number and array of pre-college courses students take is an important goal. The majority of colleges currently administer the *Accuplacer* exam in area high schools. Many have utilized testing as a precursor to advising, financial aid counseling, and/or aggressive basic skills initiatives for high school students aspiring to college. A small number are engaged, as well, in formal basic skills curriculum articulation efforts to align basic skills objectives and outcomes at the secondary school level with those needed to pursue and succeed in college-level study at the community college. A number of others have expressed the need to move forward with similar efforts.

É There is a great deal of interest throughout the system in the Learning Community model, so often employed by programs that have well-documented, strong student persistence results. Several colleges are currently piloting student success initiatives that rely heavily on the Learning Community model, which, by design, exploits the student-to-student and student-to-faculty connections that are known to support persistence. In a number of instances, Learning Communities structured for developmental learners embed or incorporate college success skills, specific forms of tutoring, and intrusive advising. A few colleges are seeking ways to bring about a sustained commitment between dedicated Learning Community advisors and developmental students over a time period that exceeds the semester in which they initially come together as a Learning Community.

É Online developmental courses are relatively rare and offered primarily in Math. There is significant interest among those not teaching developmental courses online about the effectiveness of online developmental courses in the system.

É There is much interest and activity relative to "Fast-Track" Programs that allow under prepared students to move through and out of their developmental coursework as expeditiously as possible. Supported by data that indicates that the longer a student remains in developmental education courses, the less likely s/he is to complete a degree or certificate; several colleges are piloting ways of engaging students in developmental instruction that does not depend upon a fixed semester-by-semester pathway. All of the existing programs or pilot ventures are limited in scope and/or size. Some colleges have altered policies to facilitate further development of such initiatives.

É The practice of utilizing skills labs within or alongside developmental courses has grown and is well represented within at least one basic skill discipline in each college. While mandatory, integrated labs are still in the minority, they are currently under consideration at several colleges. A majority of campuses report having incorporated *Course Compass* programs such as *MyMathLab, MyCompLab,* etc. into developmental courses or academic labs. *MyMathLab* appears to have gained the widest acceptance and utilization in a variety of instructional formats.

É Colleges that are structuring efforts to achieve stronger student success are finding that some of their greatest challenges relate to quality advising, the element considered to be the linchpin to the success of many of the Massachusetts programs with the strongest student attainment outcomes. College staff wrestle with ways to reconcile faculty-advising provisions of the MTA/MCCC Collective Bargaining Agreement with highly effective intrusive advising practices and procedures. In addition, none of the colleges has determined, thus far, how to preserve an official advisor-advisee relationship throughout a student's tenure at the institution, unless the student is part of an externally funded project that is designed to provide for a more sustained relationship. Bringing productive advising models to scale will, to a great extent, depend upon re-considering the role and expectations for advisors, be they faculty, staff, or a combination thereof.

É There are significant differences between the practices utilized consistently within *Special Programs/ Achieving the Dream Colleges/ Colleges with Recent Title III-funded Student Success Projects* and those in most consistent use within college departments and support areas that are not involved in or responsible to these projects and programs. For the most part, programs grouped together as "Special Programs" require more time-on-task and interpersonal involvement for at-risk students. They also emphasize and blend a number of student support (advising, mentoring, counseling, tutoring) best practices and provide for continual monitoring and feedback to students, faculty and staff regarding student achievement and progression within the college. These programs boast the strongest documentation of student success outcomes; the implementers of most are accountable for the attainment of specific performance measures, as a condition of external funding sources.

É There are large numbers—and a broad array— of best practices in place, most fueled by relevant research and proven models. The Audit Report references many as exemplars of current directions and approaches within speciþc Massachusettsõs community colleges.

É Student success/ college experience courses and content, demonstrated within many community college studies to have a positive impact on student persistence and success, are achieving increased acceptance among developmental educators in Massachusetts. The lionõs share of the current debate centers around whether such courses to be implemented as a þrst-year requirement—and, if so, for which students.

Department of Transitional Assistance Programs
Welfare to Work

As we near the end of our thirteenth year of coordinating Welfare to Work programming, we cannot help but reflect on the exciting changes that have occurred this year. The most notable change was the Department of Transitional Assistance's (DTA) recognition of the successes of the community college programs at meetings and workshops throughout the state where the community college programs were used as examples of good programming. In view of this, DTA made a decision to wrap all three of our programs (Education that Works, Health Services – Vocational Educational Training, and Shelter to School Self-Sufficiency Initiative) into one contract (Education that Works), thus eliminating the 'pilot status' which made two of the contracts more vulnerable in terms of budgeting. The successes within the two pilot program contracts in terms of job placements and retentions exceeded goals and made the change possible. Since the purpose of our contract is to transition DTA recipients off welfare and into the workforce, the combination of our contracts along with an increase in enrollment numbers over the past two years has resulted in the community college programming playing a larger role in decreasing a person's reliance on entitlements and increasing their employability. As we look towards FY10 and how we might enhance or increase our role, five new campuses accepted our proposal to offer additional DTA programming. Negotiations are under way with DTA and other potential funders to make this expansion a reality.

Education that Works

In FY09, the total contract for Education that Works was $1,154,896. This performance-based contract was written to serve 313 enrollments during FY09. Six campuses are now involved: Bristol, Cape Cod, Holyoke, Middlesex, Roxbury, and Springfield Technical Community Colleges with a total of 7 programs. Within these 7 programs, there are many different training options including: human service/social service assistants, direct service caregivers, certified nursing assistants, phlebotomy technicians, customer service representatives, call center representatives, general office/computer skills, early childhood education, and medical office skills. These are all full-time programs of at least 30 hours per week, and some of the programs

offer certificates or college credit. A campus that offered college credit within their program saw 75% of their graduates enroll in community college classes to continue their education. And, with continued case management from campus program staff, 50% of these students successfully completed classes. Another campus enrolled their students into online courses during the job search phase of the programming. Staff was able to monitor the students' progress while assisting them in their transition to employment. Despite our difficult economic environment, and lack of available entry-level jobs, all of our campuses have met their goals for FY09.

In fact, several campuses exceeded expectations in terms of job retentions of 90 days or more. Our DTA contract holds us to a 70% success rate, and for FY09 some campuses are approaching 100%. Our successes were rewarded by DTA protecting our allocation during FY09 budget cuts, and commitment to level funding for FY10.

Heading Home Initiative

This year we teamed up with Heading Home, Inc. of Cambridge to provide programming for homeless families. This was a result of last year's pilot, Shelter to School Self-Sufficiency Initiative (now included in Education that Works contract), where residents of the Waltham homeless shelters enrolled in programming at Middlesex Community College. Heading Home, along with COMPASS *for homeless families*, and MCCEO responded to a new request for resources, which was formally accepted late in 2008 by DTA. In FY09, the contract totaled $71,855 for 35 enrollments. In FY10, the contract will total $174,505 for 85 enrollments. The program will be sited at Roxbury Community College where students have options of enrolling in GED, ESOL, Customer Service, and Human Service tracks. Students are traveling from Malden, Dorchester and Roxbury where Heading Home shelters are situated. In addition, COMPASS provides on-going case management, as well as life skills workshop instruction, to assist the homeless families work towards their self-sufficiency goals. A by-product of the program is the positive effects on the children within the families. As one mother so proudly put it, "while I was living in the Waltham shelter, my child was having lots of behavioral problems… there was talk of keeping her back. Now, she has a great attitude, and her teachers are amazed at the transformation. She's earning all A's and B's now."

Ongoing Partnerships

ABE Transitions

Working to make the transition from ABE Programs-to-College more successful.....

All-State Academic Team

Competing nationally with outstanding academic achievement and distinguished leadership by Massachusetts Community College students.....

Massachusetts Community College Trustees' Association

Advocating on behalf of the largest segment in public higher education.....

Joint Committee on Higher Education, Executive Office of Education *and* Department of Higher Education

Collaborating with legislative leaders and education officials to strengthen the mission of community colleges.....

DMR Direct Support Certificate Program

Increasing the knowledge and skills of those who work directly with our Commonwealth's most vulnerable populations.....

One Family, Inc.

Providing additional resources to expand and refine programming on campuses leading individuals to self-sufficiency.....

PCA Quality Home Care Workforce Council

Providing skills trainings for Personal Care Attendants to handle on-the-job health emergencies.....

Workforce Training & Competitiveness Associations

Leading the discussion, responding to market needs and providing a future for the workforce.....

Executive Office Memberships

External Committees

ABE Strategic Plan Taskforce
ABE-to-College Transitions State Policy Taskforce
Achieving the Dream Policy Committee
BATEC Advisory Board
Bay State Works Partners
DHE Nursing Initiative Statewide Advisory Council
DHE Performance Measurement Taskforce
Career/Vocational Technical Education Advisory Committee
Certificate of Occupational Proficiency General Advisory Committee
City of Lowell 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness Executive Committee
City of Lowell's Homelessness Implementation Plan's Subcommittee on Asset Building and Education Connecting Activities
Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group
Community College Survey of Student Engagement National Advisory Committee
Compass Community College Collaborative Advisory Board
Council for Resource Development
DLWD Mature Workers Taskforce
DTA Workforce Strategies Group
Dual Enrollment Advisory Team
Early Education and Care Advisory Committee and Workforce Development Taskforce
Early Education for All Campaign Advisory Committee
High Performing Workforce Investment Boards Advisory Board
Governor's CORI Interagency Taskforce on Pre/Post Release Training and Education
Head Start State Collaboration Advisory Board
Heading Home Advisory Board
Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Committee
Massachusetts Society for Medical Research Advisory Board
Massachusetts Interagency Committee
Massachusetts Learning Team Network
Metro North Regional Employment Board
Metro North Youth Council
Molly Bish Institute for Child Health and Safety Advisory Board
Commissioner's Council of Presidents Committee
New England College Council Executive Committee
New England College Council Policy Committee
New England Workforce Network Steering Committee
P21 Steering Committee
Public Education Nominating Council
Statewide Tech Prep Committee
Vocational Technical Advising Council
Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund Advisory Committee
Workforce Investment Board Association
Workforce Solutions Group

Internal Committees

Alumni Affairs Council
Business and Industry Directors
Chief Financial Officers Council
Council of Presidents
Experiential Education Committee
Healthcare Deans Collaborative
Labor Relations Committee
Marketing Collaborative
Mass Colleges Online Executive Committee
Trustees' Association

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