

DANVILLE AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS REPORT 2019: ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, & COMPLETION

Institutional Practice/Topic #1: Understanding the Under-Resourced Mindset to Improve Student Success: Educating Students & Staff on Bridges Out-of-Poverty/Getting Ahead Initiatives

Purpose, Goal, or Objective

DACC scaled-up our efforts to improve student success rates for under-resourced students. Strategies for under-resourced students are focused on students living in poverty and first-generation college students. The College scaled-up education initiatives by continuing to widen the resource circle with faculty/staff and community members. Efforts were aimed at growing a systemic approach to address the devastating effects of generational poverty on families and individuals in our community; to define strategies for change that are based on research; and to outline specific community roles and responsibilities for creating a sustainable community.

Date of Implementation

- Getting Ahead Curriculum Infused with Success in College INST 101: Began in Fall 2015 and continued at the Danville Housing Authority through Spring 2018
- SPENT Exercise: Fall 2017 In-Service on 8/16/17 followed by plans for the COPE Cost of Poverty Experience

Description of Program Elements or Strategies that Make the Program Successful

The **Getting Ahead** curriculum, part of Ruby Payne's aha! Process, guides students through an investigation of the impact of economic class on their lives. It helps them build resources to successfully navigate the complex worlds of college and the workplace, plan for a brighter future for themselves and their families, and contribute to a sustainable community. Individuals who grow up in generational poverty learn to understand and adopt successful life strategies and function effectively in the middle class environment of education and employment. Students work to understand the mental models of generational poverty, along with the mental models of the middle and the upper mindsets, and learn to apply these concepts to their own environment.

SPENT Exercise for Faculty & Staff: Developed by McKinney, SPENT challenges players to make it through the month on their last \$1,000. Changes in employment, housing, medical costs, and other expenses force the SPENT player to make difficult choices that often compromise the health, safety, or integrity of their families. Unfortunately, this game is the reality for many of the students DACC serves in District 507.

Evidence of Success

Overall, the outcomes documented include individuals from generational poverty learning how to function effectively in the middle class education/employment settings and the employment/educational support provided by the community and DACC employees learning how to reframe policies and procedures to meet the students' needs while maintaining high standards. The curriculum has influenced the mindsets and actions of everyone involved - the students in poverty, social service agencies, the college, community leaders, and businesses and employers. Additional outcomes include the following:

- A total of seven INST 101 Courses incorporating the Getting Ahead curriculum have been completed, serving 64 students. Twenty-three percent (23%) of the students continued on to one of the College's program of study after completing the course.
- Seventy-six percent (76%) of DACC faculty and staff reported a stronger understanding of the barriers to success for students who are under-resourced economically.
- DACC faculty, staff, and administration recognize the performance gaps and have implemented various strategies inside and outside the classroom. Examples include lowering textbook costs, further research, and further training.
- Faculty, staff, and administrators show greater understanding of mindsets and barriers with probing questions when assessing services, policies and procedures. During FY18, policies were updated (drop/withdrawal policy grace period added), programs introduced (Bonus Course Waiver), and mentors provided to all first-time, full-time students.
- Trainings have scaled-up to include local church groups and community organizations who recognize the disconnect between middle-class policies/services and poverty-minded customers.

Institutional Practice/Topic #2: Operation Graduation

Purpose, Goal, or Objective

To meet retention, persistence, and completion goals, the College collaborated on several student success efforts that worked toward systemic change. One impactful initiative is Operation Graduation. Overall, the goal of the initiative is for the entire campus to focus on the College's graduation rate of first-time, full-time students degree and certificate-seeking students.

Date of Implementation Spring 2017

Description of Program Elements or Strategies that Make the Program Successful

To get new fall students off on the right foot, Academic Advisors engage first-time, full-time students through a series of phone calls during the fall and spring semesters. First, students are greeted early in the semester, told of the Welcome Back to Campus event, asked how their classes are starting out, and reminded of college policies, such as the drop/refund policy. A second call is made later in the semester checking in, reviewing their academic plan, and letting students know of tutoring resources, Financial Aid options, scholarship application deadlines, and the upcoming registration period. Starting in the spring term, student progress is tracked and documented.

Each cohort is monitored yearly to see which students are continuing the next year, have transferred or graduated, or have withdrawn from the College completely. A chart on cohort progress and comparisons to previous years is shared across campus to see if gains are occurring. The chart follows students for three years, as the three year graduation rate is the most commonly used and shared with third-party stakeholders. In the cohort's fourth year, the Director of Admissions & Records/Registrar reviews all students who are close to attaining a degree or certificate and contacts them via letter, e-mail, or phone call to make sure they have filled out their graduation paperwork or have registered for any remaining classes they may need.

Demographics of the fall cohorts are reviewed by departments and committees to identify and introduce strategies, reduce the performance gaps, and increase successful completions. For example, the College has identified significant performance gaps between PELL vs. Non-PELL students and with disparities among ethnic groups with white students (males and females) graduating with a 39.5% graduation rate versus African-American students with a 20.5% average between males and females. Through institutional focus, the College is able to utilize training resources, in-service time, and campus committees to work on reducing the gaps.

Evidence of Success

- Overall Graduation rates for the Fall 2013 cohort and Fall 2014 cohort increased from 36% to 38% between the Spring 2017 and Spring 2018 terms.
- While our overall retention and persistence rates are increasing, and we saw a notable increase in African-American student retention from 2016 to 2017, many of the achievement gaps between our white and minority students, as well as our Pell and Non-Pell students continue to be an area of concern.
- After one year, the College did see a rise in the graduation rates for African-American males and females, but it was not maintained. While low enrollment numbers for minority groups assist the highs and lows, the College continues to search for the most effective recruitment and retention strategies for minority district residents.
- It was determined that more effective and personal strategies need to be applied to help African-American males succeed at DACC. Research was conducted and plans were made to start a new mentoring group that will pull from the Operation Graduation cohorts.
- Several departments utilize the Operation Graduation cohort lists to inform and apply their services for students in need. Perkins staff in Career Services focus on the non-traditional career students, inviting them to special functions and advisement. Financial Aid reviews the list to see who has completed their financial aid applications and paperwork, contacting students when they identify unused aid.
- Operation Graduation was paired with the College's Mentoring Program to assign College personnel as Mentors to the students in the cohorts.
- Faculty and staff continue to ask for and receive training on how to remove barriers for students.