

Section I. Annual Report Narrative

1. Culture of evidence and inquiry

a. **Did you analyze any new quantitative and/or qualitative data this year to deepen understanding of student success issues? If so, summarize the key findings and how you have applied them in your work.**

MECC Achieving the Dream (AtD) committees and subcommittees analyzed additional quantitative data. The Developmental and the Learning Communities/Active Learning Committees reviewed productive and unproductive grades in developmental math, developmental English, and college level English courses according to age, gender, and EFC codes. They reviewed data on developmental class success by academic division (Arts & Sciences for transfer students; Business Technology, Industrial and Engineering Technology and Health Sciences for occupational-technical students), and by placement into developmental courses and subsequent completion of the courses assigned. They reviewed the success of students in developmental classes in relation to their success in subsequent 100 level courses. The Developmental Committee plans to focus its revisions first on the developmental classes with the lowest rates of student success. The Developmental Committee used data on the success of students testing into the Compass decision zone to refine the cut-scores used to place students into developmental classes.

The pattern of low pass rates for Industrial and Engineering Technology students in English 3 and English 111 (and the current patterns of late student enrollments in these courses) built the case for creating a new learning community for ADJ 107 (an Industrial and Engineering Technology class), English 111, and Sociology 200.

The Orientation Subcommittee analyzed three sets of data. Using '02, '03, and '04 cohort data sets, the committee determined the enrollments and pass rates of students taking the Orientation class their first semester, and compared the retention/success of students taking Orientation and not taking Orientation. Using the '04 and '05 cohort data, the committee compiled the same data as above for higher-risk students, except that only retention/success rates were available for '04 data. Using the '05 cohort, the committee surveyed students on the need for orientation to college prior to the start of classes.

These quantitative data were analyzed along with faculty interviews and a literature review and provided the basis for this subcommittee's recommendations. Extensive discussions between the Subcommittee Chair and the IR personnel were held on data analysis, combined with discussions of the findings among the committee members. A major limitation of the data was the small numbers available to make definitive decisions. Data collection and analysis will continue through fall 2006, which will involve an experimental study using the orientation classes.

b. Upgrading the college's institutional research capacity this year.

MECC purchased WEAVEonline software this year. This software will be used to integrate the retention and graduation goals of AtD into the annual administrative and academic program planning and evaluation processes of the entire college. The WEAVEonline software will help the college to effectively and efficiently collect, retrieve and report on data from all areas of the college.

Has there been a change in the college's use of data in institutional decision-making this year? If so, please describe your new practices and their impact (if any) to date.

There has been an increased use of data for making decisions across the campus. In addition to increased use of data as an expectation for division/departmental planning this year, committees are now requesting that data be used as the basis for decision-making. The Distance Education and Information Technology Committee recently recommended the use of a readiness test and the analysis of the scores before allowing students to enroll in certain courses. The impact from this recommendation can not yet be reported because this recommendation was only made in March.

2. Stakeholder involvement

a. How has the college involved stakeholders- both internal (students, faculty, staff) and external (the broader community) in designing, refining and/or implementing your strategies this year? What techniques have been most helpful?

Internal stakeholders have been involved in AtD in many ways. At the start of the fall and spring semesters (and at the end of the academic year), the chairs of committees reported to the campus on AtD activities, accomplishments and future plans. Twenty-nine faculty, administrators, and staff served on the AtD committees and subcommittees, in addition to the 18 full-time employees, a part-time employee, and a

student who served on the Core Team. Twenty-one employees participated in AtD-funded travel for training or investigation of best practices at other colleges. Most of the student involvement was obtained through the First Year Student survey conducted by the Orientation Subcommittee.

College employees helped the MECC Foundation raise the matching funds for the Dreamkeepers Emergency Assistance Program, which is closely linked to MECC's AtD initiative. A total of \$3,873 was raised from personnel in 2005 and \$5,319 was raised in 2006, with a 69% participation rate from full-time employees in 2006 (the highest rate ever achieved.)

A number of external constituency groups have been involved in AtD. The college's Advisory and Foundation Boards received progress reports and assisted with Dreamkeepers Emergency Assistance Program fund-raising. The President communicated with the local Superintendents of Schools regarding AtD. The public schools are helping implement Compass testing in grades 10-12 to aid in dual enrollment course placement. At some point, the test results could be used to initiate discussions about addressing basic skill deficiencies prior to high school graduation.

MECC personnel are participating in a community group called "Concerned About Our Community", which is focused on increasing services for at-risk children (primarily K-12). This group would like to construct a community facility on the MECC campus to promote wellness and offer childcare. MECC is making this group aware of how college students could also benefit from this facility because MECC has no indoor recreational facilities and no campus-based childcare services.

All of the above-named methods of building stakeholder relationships have been effective.

3. Implementation of student success initiatives

a. Please refer back to your work plan for the year and describe how actual implementation differed from your plans. What shifts in emphasis or direction occurred and why? What aspects of the work proceeded substantially faster or slower than expected, and why?

The Developmental Committee's initial workplan included the implementation of a summer bridge program in either the summer or fall of 2006. The Developmental Committee recommended to the Core Team that prior to the development of the bridge program, MECC upgrade its testing procedures, expand

developmental instruction options for students close to the cut scores, and that the new bridge program be created in the summer of 2007 after further study of bridge programs in the summer of 2006. The Core Team approved these recommendations and the committee has accomplished its adjusted year 1 plan.

The Developmental Committee led the transition in spring 2006 from using a DOS Compass version of Compass to using web-based and Windows versions with the added capabilities of a drop down calculator (for student use) and diagnostics (for college personnel use in identifying students' specific basic skill deficiencies.) The committee is beginning to analyze how the diagnostics can be used to focus instruction.

The Developmental Committee is standardizing the message that students receive before and after taking the Compass test. The Committee is contracting to have a brochure and presentation developed to inform students about the purpose of the placement test and how important is it to take the test seriously. The presentation will be shown in advance of testing. The Committee is contracting to have a second presentation developed to be shown to students after they have received testing results and they have tested into developmental courses. This presentation will explain the purpose of developmental courses and will include testimonials from students who have used developmental courses to be successful in future courses.

A member of the Developmental Committee developed an arithmetic fast track course (MTH 2 as a one credit hour option) and a elementary algebra course (Math 3 as a 2 credit hour option) that are being piloted in the summer of 2006. The courses are designed for students who need a quick review of basic concepts before enrolling in the next course in the math sequence. The algebra fast track course may be a component of the bridge program to be offered in the summer of 2007.

The Developmental Committee recommended that students who are close to the cut score in developmental English and math be provided the option to upgrade their skills through independent study. The Core Team approved the establishment of an Academic Resource Center to allow students to work on

the specific skills determined to be deficient on the placement test. During the summer of 2006, MECC math and English faculty will be securing materials to be used in the Academic Resource Center.

The Learning Communities and Active Learning Committee's plan for year 1 included reviewing data on patterns of success in developmental courses, developing a process for screening proposals for the development of learning communities/expanding active learning, assessing the technical capabilities of the SIS for registering and managing learning communities, and coordinating training for faculty who will be developing learning communities/expanding active learning, and collaborating with other Virginia AtD colleges on the development of learning communities/active learning strategies. All of these activities are underway and the pace of the work has proceeded according to the workplan. Proposals have been approved for incorporating active learning strategies in ENG 3 and MTH 3, and a proposal was approved for the creation of a learning community incorporating ADJ 107, English 111, and Sociology 200.

The Learning Community/Active Learning Committee is encountering difficulties in identifying cohorts of students who enroll in classes with lower rates of success that are of a sufficient size to be organized into learning communities. This challenge is a function of the college's size. The Committee and Core Team are evaluating the potential of using other strategies to create linkages across the curriculum and to build academic support for students. Some of the options being evaluated include a broader use of active learning strategies in individual classes, encouraging project work across the curriculum (rather than in linked courses), or the use of learning forums (such as the ones utilized at Cedar Valley College in Texas) as an alternative to learning communities.

The subcommittees of the First Year Experience Committee completed most of the tasks in the Orientation, Early Alert, and Advising work plans, and achieved the desired integration of ideas in the design of a First Year Experience Pilot. This committee had the most difficult role because the focus on first year students could potentially involve everyone at MECC. Even though there were differing views on

possible approaches, consensus was reached on a First Year Experience Pilot that was approved by the Core Team to be conducted in year 2.

The Orientation Subcommittee accomplished its three major tasks: 1) reviewing data to determine whether mandatory orientation in the first semester should be instituted for high risk students, 2) developing and conducting a survey to assess the best methods for involving family/parents of high risk students in the orientation process, and 3) analyzing the question of whether to require orientation in the first semester. The subcommittee used data to develop recommendations on each of these questions. The subcommittee recommended that: 1) the college should wait until data is available from the 2005 cohort and the First Year Experience Pilot before deciding whether to require orientation in the first semester; 2) the response rate to the survey of the 2005 cohort of first-year students was too low to make conclusions about parental involvement in the orientation process for high risk students; and 3) a number of curricular changes should be made to the orientation course. These curricular changes were approved by the Core Team to be piloted in the First Year Experience Pilot.

The Early Warning Subcommittee accomplished its four major tasks, including: 1) benchmarking other colleges with integrated systems for early alert and that used technology to manage human and data resources for student tracking, 2) evaluating the capabilities of MECC's student information system to support case management and determine if there are other systems available that could better meet this need, 3) designing an early alert and evaluation plan, and 4) and recommending interventions to be offered to students prior to registration, by the add/drop date, and after grades are released. The recommended interventions from the Subcommittee were approved by the Core Team and have been incorporated into the First Year Experience Pilot.

The Advising Subcommittee had responsibility for: 1) developing a checklist of issues to help advisors be intrusive in working with students, 2) evaluating and making recommendations on how technology could be used to enhance advising and whether to block enrollment in inappropriate courses; 3)

providing recommendations on how to enhance contact with students; and 4) determining if there is any information that advisors are not obtaining that is necessary to good advising. After these assignments were completed, the President's staff was to address a number of human and financial issues related to advising.

The President articulated to the Core Team his vision for transforming MECC's advising processes from one of course advising to one of student success advising. This vision, and the need to address the structural problems that exist (limited staffing in the summer and the high proportion of students who are self-advising as a result of the establishment of on-line registration), made the specific tasks assigned to the Advising Subcommittee seem secondary to the broader goal of structural change. The Subcommittee submitted a plan for structural change and recommended that the other tasks be performed during the summer. The Core Team approved assigning the responsibility for the development of a summer advising plan to the First Year Experience Committee in year 2.

The Advising Subcommittee's plan for advising would increase advising responsibilities for some full-time faculty members during the academic year and extend these faculty members' contracts in the summer at considerable expense to the college. The plan that was adopted by the Core Team for the First Year Experience Pilot, which is not specifically a pilot for advising, involves faculty members in teaching orientation classes and providing advocacy services to first year students. The "student advocate" role that is described in the pilot could be a role assigned to some faculty members in their advising role or to other employees in the future if the pilot is successful.

The First Year Experience Pilot will involve full-time and adjunct faculty members in teaching orientation classes and serving as "student advocates" for orientation class students throughout the period of the first and second semester. The role of the student advocate will be to facilitate linkages to available services, monitor student progress, and maintain records of contacts with students. There are four experimental sections of orientation that have student advocates in the First Year Experience Pilot.

Students will receive these services without regard to whether they are assessed as “higher risk” or “lesser risk” using the risk assessment tool developed by MECC. The curriculum to be used to teach the experimental sections of the orientation course will be the same as in years past.

The pilot will provide the quantitative and qualitative data on whether having full-time and adjunct faculty members perform the student advocate role improves outcomes for first year students. The data from the pilot will inform future decision-making regarding the expansion of this strategy and potential future assignment of full-time faculty members and other employees to work with first year students.

The First Year Experience Pilot will involve two administrators (counselors) in piloting a revised curriculum for four sections of the orientation class. The experimental sections of orientation will require students to meet with academic advisor during the first three weeks of class, develop written career goals as part of class assignments, register online with the MECC Career Center, and complete surveys at the beginning of class to determine awareness of student support services. In addition, the course will use MECC Diplomats to promote support services in classes and provide seminars on coping skills and goal-directed behaviors outside of class.

The results of the pilot of the four sections of orientation with student advocates, and the pilot of the four sections of the orientation course utilizing the revised curriculum, will be compared to the seven sections of the orientation course in which there will be no new interventions. At the end of the pilot, MECC will assess if there are statistically significant differences in the outcomes of the experimental and control groups of students, including first-time, dual enrollment and summer, part-time and full-time, as well as students who are assessed as being “higher risk” and “lower risk” using MECC’s risk assessment tool.

b. What has been your greatest accomplishment this year? What led to this success?

There were three important accomplishments: 1) reorienting developmental instruction from a one-size-fits-all model of semester-long courses, to one that is more responsive to students’ skill levels, previous instruction, and desires to minimize time spent in developmental studies; 2) establishing

processes through which the success of gatekeeper courses are analyzed and improvement strategies (as well as training/release time for course revisions) are targeted those with lower rates of success; and 3) developing an experimental design and securing staffing for the First Year Experience Pilot. The key to these successes was the commitment of a large number of individuals and their willingness to assume additional duties to improve outcomes for students.

c. What obstacles has the college faced? How are you dealing with them?

Maintaining communication about AtD with the entire college has been a challenge since most of the initiatives are being planned in committees, subcommittees, and the Core Team. All faculty members are informed about AtD, but they need to become more deeply engaged as the campus considers changes to advising and instruction to improve student outcomes. To foster discussion about learning communities/active learning among full-time faculty members, the Learning Community/Active Learning Subcommittee Chair scheduled and led an exercise during division meetings on establishing learning communities. In these meetings, the faculty organized themselves into small groups to discuss how courses could be linked around a theme. The exercise was very successful in creating more interest and understanding about learning communities.

A new website dedicated to AtD has been created on the college's website. AtD work plans will be posted in the college's annual plan using WEAVEonline software. By increasing access to AtD plans and documents, personnel across the campus can become familiar with college data and track the progress of AtD implementation.

4. Evaluation

a. What is the current status of your evaluation? What obstacles have you faced in designing or conducting the evaluation? Who is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of your Achieving the Dream student success initiatives?

The Office of Community Relations and Institutional Research will evaluate and report the effectiveness of the AtD initiatives. MECC felt it was important to devote all of its AtD grant resources to implementation and it did not hire an external evaluator. Teams of college employees, using support from

Institutional Research, are designing evaluation activities as each of the pilot projects is being created. External advice on the design and evaluation of the pilots is being obtained from the data facilitator and the coach. To date, MECC has not faced any major obstacles in designing its evaluation processes. The biggest obstacle MECC has faced has been obtaining sufficient information from students to evaluate possible interventions. (A case in point was the orientation survey, which was mailed to 392 first year students and 50 returned the survey form.)

b. Please summarize any feedback to date from your evaluation.

Because the implementation of strategies in the MECC workplan do not begin until the summer and fall, MECC has not collected any evaluation feedback to date, but will begin collecting data and feedback this summer.

5. Institutionalization

a. In what ways have you aligned and integrated your Achieving the Dream work with core activities, processes, and policies at the college?

AtD core activities are already included in some of divisions' annual plans for next year. Because division planning was occurring at the same as Year 2 AtD planning and involved different teams of people, some of the AtD workplans are not yet integrated into division plans. This integration will occur during the summer.

MECC is analyzing and revising existing processes to make them more effective (such as the processes used in Compass testing.) Changes in instructional processes are "building in" opportunities for more intrusive contact between students and faculty members, and increasing interaction between students to improve success. Interventions are being integrated into courses so that the problems in reaching students outside of class are minimized. Having the First Year Experience Pilot organized around the already successful orientation class is expected to aid the college with institutionalization. If the new strategies that are being tested (the First Year Experience Pilot, fast track courses, the Academic Resource Center, learning communities/active learning strategies) are found to be effective, strong consideration will be given to taking them "to scale." During this past year, there have been no new policy changes.

b. Are you ready to scale up any initiatives that were piloted this year? If so, please present the evidence that these initiatives are effective and describe your plans for expanding them.

MECC will begin implementing pilot initiatives this summer and fall and will consider whether to expand them at this time next year.

6. Modification of work plans

a. Based on this year's experience, what changes do you propose for next year? Why do you believe the proposed changes will produce better results? Attach updated work plans and not any change in short-term or long-term goals.

Next year, the subcommittees of the First Year Experience Committee will be merged into a single First Year Experience Committee to monitor the pilot and continue developing a new system for advising. The merging of the committees will allow redeployment of resources to those involved in implementation, and encourage integration of ideas. Over the coming year, the Core Team will consider how it might further integrate its pilots across the three committees (Developmental, Learning Communities/Active Learning, and First Year Experience.) The discussion might begin by further examining the pairing of the one-hour orientation course with gatekeeper courses, or pairing the one-hour student leadership course with gatekeeper courses. Another focus of discussion might be the facilitation of project work across courses when learning communities are not feasible.

This intentional facilitation of integration will not be accomplished without more opportunities for discussion and planning between the committees. This year, the Core Team felt that it was important to subdivide the work so that different groups could focus on small parts of the whole. The Core Team met on a bi-monthly basis to provide the committees and subcommittees adequate time to conduct their work. MECC will have more frequent meetings of the Core Team next year to enhance communication and integration. Revisions to the workplan are described in the attached documents.

7. Communication

a. How are you keeping stakeholders abreast of lessons from your Achieving the Dream work? Please note any workshops or presentations you have made or papers or articles you have disseminated at local, state, or national levels.

The processes used to keep the college's Advisory Board, the Foundation board and the Superintendents of Schools abreast of lessons from AtD have already been described. In addition, information has been shared with local civic clubs and with the local media.

MECC is already sharing lessons from AtD with other Virginia AtD colleges and will be sharing lessons with other colleges in the VCCS. In May, MECC faculty will participate in an active learning conference on the PHCC campus. In July, other colleges will be invited to MECC for training on learning communities. MECC representatives will be participating in VCCS-sponsored events with other Virginia AtD colleges in June and in the fall to discuss project activities, policy issues, and determine ways of spreading lessons learned across the VCCS.

Persons holding leadership roles with MECC's AtD initiative have made presentations about AtD work at out-of-state conferences and retreats. These meetings have included a retreat of campus leaders from Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College, national conferences of the Rural Community College Alliance and Community Colleges of Appalachia, and the third annual West Virginia College Student Retention Conference sponsored by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission and state Community and Technical College System. MECC's involvement in AtD was featured in the Lumina Foundation's *Focus* publication. The publication was distributed nationwide by the Lumina Foundation this winter and copies were also distributed locally by MECC.

SECTION III. *REVISED TIMELINE AND ACTION PLAN FOR YEAR 1-4*

(complete this form for each priority area; add rows to the work plan as needed)

Priority Area: Improve overall student success “pass rates” in developmental math and English, while reducing the disparity found for lower-income and younger students.

Evidence/Rationale: The 2002 and 2003 cohorts contained 1,143 students and 862 of these students took all three placement tests (math, reading, composition). Seventy-two percent of these students (620) assessed into at least one developmental course. A total of 528 students finally enrolled in developmental courses. Only a small percentage of the students who did not pass these courses (0-10%, depending on the course) were successful (with success being defined as retained with a GPA of at least 2.0 and successful completion of 2/3 of credits attempted.)

The 2002 and 2003 cohorts had low pass rates (51-57%) for all developmental math courses. Rates of success in developmental math, as in other courses across the curriculum, show a great disparity of success for the College's lowest income students (with EFCs of 0.) Students with an EFC of 0 passed Math 02 at a rate of 55%, as compared to a 64% for those with higher incomes. Students with an EFC of 0 passed Math 03 (Algebra I) at a rate of 36%, as compared to a 60% for those with higher incomes. Students with an EFC of 0 passed Math 04 at a rate of 40%, as compared to a 67% for those with higher incomes.

The pass rates in all developmental English courses were low, with 31% - 66% successfully completing the courses. The lowest income students have the lowest success rates. Students with an EFC of 0 passed English 1 (Preparation for Writing I) at a rate of 42%, as compared to a 60% for those with higher incomes. Students with an EFC of 0 passed English 3 (Preparation for Writing II) at a rate of 53%, as compared to a 65% for those with higher incomes. Students with an EFC of 0 passed English 5 (Reading Improvement II) at a rate of 54%, as compared to a 76% for those with higher incomes. The relationship of income to success did not hold true for the developmental English course with the smallest enrollment and least prepared students, English 4 (Reading Improvement I.) In this course, students with a 0 EFC passed at a 38% rate, as compared to 20% for those with higher incomes.

Faculty loads are heavy and there is little time for curricular reform and planning. The English faculty teaching developmental courses plan to establish at least one pilot learning community, which will require considerable time for planning. Math faculty will need time to plan for curricular changes in each developmental Math course, based on best practices (using findings from such projects as Pathways to Algebra, and the recommendations of researchers who have documented learning improvements through learning communities, active learning strategies, contextualized learning, and supplemental instruction). A bridge program will be planned during the 2006-2007 academic year and offered for the first time in the summer of 2007.

The bridge program will be targeted to young developmental students, particularly the 17-18 year olds attending right out of high school who comprise half of the students completing developmental courses. Student Services reports that a high proportion of these students register just before classes are to begin and they are often unclear about career goals. The college will either conduct this program as a cooperative partnership within the public schools to increase student college-readiness before graduation (using a model similar to the Bridge Partnership funded by the Lumina Foundation), or it will be conducted as a summer program on the MECC campus for recently graduated students who need developmental instruction, as well as opportunities for career exploration, college orientation, parental involvement, and part-time employment prior to the first semester of college. If the summer program is selected, students will be employed part-time through the work study program and will complete service learning projects in teams to build community and encourage the development of friendships for peer-to-peer learning. The proposed summer program will be piloted in 2006 with 20-30 students. A particular emphasis will be made to target students with the lowest incomes (i.e. EFC of 0 if students have already graduated from high school.) If the in-school bridge program is piloted, the first program will be conducted during the 2006-2007 academic year in a high school with high levels of poverty.

Measurable Changes after Two Years: Students who participate in a summer bridge program will achieve the course completion goals described on page 7 of the narrative, as specified by income levels. Based on success of the program in year 1, it will be revised, expanded and continued in subsequent years.

Measurable Changes after Four Years: The overall success rate in developmental courses will increase by 5 percent and the disparity in success for students with an EFC of 0, compared to those with higher incomes, will be reduced by 10 percentage points, as compared to 2002-2003 cohort data. The specific goal for increasing success in each developmental course is described on page 7 of the narrative.

	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Lead Staff
Original Work Plan (Year 1)					
A Coordinator will be appointed to work with the Developmental math and English Committee. The Coordinator will call meetings of the faculty teaching developmental courses at least six times during the academic year, outside of Division meetings, to review developmental course data and implement the multi-year workplan.	X				Rhoda Bliese
Two faculty members will be provided release time and technical assistance during the 2005-2006 academic year to plan the bridge program with counseling and Enrollment Services staff. If the summer option is selected, the program will begin to be marketed in February 2006.	X				Bridge program development was deferred until summer 2006
Modified Work Plan (Year 1)					

The Developmental Committee will contract with a consultant to develop a presentation to be shown to students before the Compass exam to describe the purpose and use of the results.	X				Qualified contractor will be identified; liaison will be Developmental Committee Chair
The Developmental Committee will contract with a consultant to develop a presentation and a brochure to share with students after they have completed the Compass exam and tested into developmental classes.	X				Qualified contractor will be identified; liaison will be Developmental Committee Chair
This Developmental Committee will develop fast-track courses in developmental arithmetic and Algebra I in the spring of 2006 and pilot the courses in the summer of 2006. These will be concentrated, short-term courses specifically for students who need a refresher course, rather than the entire semester-long course.	X				Sylvia Brown
The Developmental Committee and the developmental faculty will work with the Learning Communities Committee to develop a Summer Bridge Learning Community for the Summer of 2007. The learning community will include one or more developmental classes. The program is projected to follow the Summer Bridge criteria delineated in the Lumina grant.	X				Rhoda Bliese, Developmental Chair will lead
The Developmental Committee will create an Academic Resource Center, where students who have a minimum number of deficiencies may work independently on skills covered by the Compass math, reading, and English tests. This center would be available in the summer for students who take the Compass Test, have a developmental course recommendation, test close to the cut-off for the next level course, and who wish to work on skill development outside of a classroom atmosphere. Math and English faculty will develop review modules which correlate to skills on the Compass Test. These review modules will be matched to the Compass Diagnostics. Students who complete review modules correlating to their respective deficient skills will be given an opportunity to retake the Compass Test.	X				Rhoda Bliese, Developmental Chair will lead English; another faculty member to be identified for math
Modified Work Plan (Years 2, 3, and 4)					
A bridge program will be piloted in the summer of 2007. The bridge program will be organized as a learning community. A coordinator will develop and organize the bridge program, with the help of an English faculty member and another faculty member.		X			Faculty to be identified
Faculty members teaching developmental courses will meet six times during the		X			Rhoda Bliese and all

academic year, outside of Division meetings, to review developmental course data and implement the second year workplan.					developmental faculty
<p>MTH 3, ENG 1, and ENG 3 will be the subject of review and revision this year.</p> <p>Developmental faculty members who are not responsible for the implementation of the bridge program will receive three credit hours of release time to review best practices for developmental instruction, using findings from such projects as Pathways to Algebra and research regarding the efficacy of such techniques as learning communities, using active learning strategies and providing opportunities for study groups, use of contextualized learning, teaching study skills as a component of developmental courses, supplemental instruction, and using diagnostic and tutorial software (such as ALEKS) to identify and remediate topics in which they are weak. Two faculty members will receive a semester of release time to participate in professional development (which may include visiting other colleges using best practices) and planning course revisions. A written plan for revising two developmental courses to include new curricular improvements will be submitted to the Division Chair and Co-Directors of Achieving the Dream. The plan will include strategies for improving outcomes for all students, but especially low income students.</p>		X			Faculty to be identified
The summer bridge program will be evaluated. Data will be gathered on retention from summer to fall, student success in completing developmental courses during the summer, and reductions in the disparity in success based on income. An additional measure will be success in enrolling students in the next developmental course in the sequence, or in college-level courses in fall semester.			X		Faculty member and Sharon Fisher, Kevin Lee
Faculty members teaching developmental courses will meet six times during the academic year outside of Division meetings to review developmental course data and implement the fourth year workplan.			X		Rhoda Bliese and all developmental faculty
Three faculty members will pilot revisions from second year planning. The Office of Institutional Research will assist faculty members in establishing an "experimental group" and a "control group" (if possible) to compare outcomes for new practices versus current practices. Data on student outcomes will be collected and analyzed.			X		Faculty to be identified
MTH 3, ENG 4, and MTH 2 will be the subject of review and revision this year.			X		Faculty to be identified

Three developmental faculty members will receive three credit hours of release time to review best practices for developmental instruction and plan course revisions as previously described. The course improvement plans will to be submitted to the Division Chair and the Co-Directors of Achieving the Dream will include strategies for improving outcomes for all students, but especially low income students.					
Three faculty members will pilot the second year course improvement plans. The Office of Institutional Research will assist faculty members in establishing an "experimental group" and a "control group" (if possible) to compare outcomes for new practices versus current practices. Data on student outcomes will be collected and analyzed.			X		Faculty to be identified
Bridge program will be improved and expanded based on pilot year results.			X		Faculty to be identified
Faculty members teaching developmental courses will meet six times during the academic year outside of Division meetings to review developmental course data and implement the fourth year workplan.				X	Rhoda Bliese and all developmental faculty
ENG 5 will be the subject of review and revision this year. One developmental faculty members will receive three credit hours of release time to develop a course improvement plan and pilot the improvements. The Office of Institutional Research will assist the faculty member establish an "experimental group" and a "control group" (if possible) to compare outcomes for new practices versus current practices. Data on student outcomes will be collected and analyzed.				X	Faculty to be identified
Bridge program will be improved and expanded based on results from first two years.				X	Faculty to be identified

Priority Area: Create an intrusive, integrated first-year experience.

Evidence/Rationale: The literature suggests that an integrated first-year experience, with intrusive services, have a positive effect on persistence through the first year. Good advising and orientation, and effective early warning systems help this academic and social integration to occur and to identify students who are having problems that could result in dropping out of college.

Large numbers of employees cited advising deficiencies as a “barrier to student success” and all of the faculty members in a focus group agreed that personal contact with advisees had been reduced over time. These faculty opinions were supported by student responses to two surveys. Ninety-six percent of orientation students surveyed indicated they had used MECC Online (a service for on-line registration implemented this year); only 76% had used advisors. In a separate survey of second year students, 93% cited MECC Online as helping them to continue at MECC; only 68% cited advisors as helping them to continue.

The college’s data reveal a higher level of success for students who complete orientation (52%) than those who do not (44%). The Core Team determined that a good orientation program could be further improved to bring College services to students. The Early Warning System developed in 1998 lacked coordination and was never fully implemented. All of these indicators, plus those included in the narrative, suggest a need to improve the consistency of advising, enhance orientation and enroll more students in orientation during first semester, and improve the early warning system.

Unlike in the college’s first early warning system initiative, in this initiative, at-risk students will be identified and appropriate interventions will be implemented to increase chances for student success.

Measurable Changes after Two Years: The following benchmarks will be achieved through advising/orientation/early warning system:

1. Standards for excellent advising will be developed and adopted for an advising recognition program.
2. 60% of all first year students will utilize at least two support services other than financial aid. Support services to be tracked include: advising, GAIN/tutoring, orientation, summer bridge program, learning community, work study, math lab, emergency assistance, or organized study groups associated with a class.
3. Creation of an operational early warning system which focuses on intrusive contact for students at higher risk of failure.

Measurable Changes after Four Years: MECC will increase overall fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention rates for first-time students by 10%. Over the four year period, 80% of all students of all first year students will utilize two or more support services other than financial aid.

Original Work Plan (Year 1)	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Lead Staff
A Coordinator will work with the Advising, Orientation and Early Warning	X				Mike Cook, First Year

<p>System Subcommittee Chairs for planning and monitoring of activities. A representative from the Core Team will work on each of the Subcommittees, along with volunteers from throughout the campus.</p> <p>The First Year Experience Committee will work with GAIN Program, Student Services Program, Financial Aid, and Office of Institutional Research to develop a central database to capture information on a variety of support services provided to students through various offices on campus (e.g. work study, tutoring, mentoring, emergency financial assistance program). This database will be used to track success in reaching benchmarks for use of support services.</p>					<p>Experience Committee Coordinator; Gary Bumgarner, Advising Subcommittee Chair; Mary Phillips, Orientation Subcommittee Chair; Perry Carroll, Early Warning Subcommittee Chair</p>
<p>The Advising Subcommittee will work with the Office of Institutional Research to establish instructions/guidelines for advisors who will be piloting the Student Risk System.</p> <p>The Subcommittee will also: 1) develop a checklist of issues to help advisors be intrusive in asking questions and soliciting information from students, 2) evaluate and make recommendations on how technology could be used to enhance advising, including establishing “blocks” to enrollment in inappropriate courses by at-risk students and notifying advisors of students dropping courses on-line, 3) gather data from other colleges on how to enhance contact with students who are registering for the first time on-line so that goals for face-to-face contact with advisors are achieved, and 4) determine if there is any information which advisors are not obtaining that is necessary to good advising (advisee lists, information on student progress on the SIS, etc.)</p>	X				<p>Gary Bumgarner, Sharon Fisher</p> <p>Committee Members: Regina Massey Jerry Ramey</p>
<p>The Orientation Subcommittee will make recommendations regarding whether the college should require orientation in the first semester. The subcommittee will revise orientation so that students interact with each other academically and socially; students complete group work to solve problems and share ideas; access is provided to a counselor, faculty, GAIN staff member, student mentor; a strong career development component is included; students are exposed to a repertoire of active coping strategies.</p>	X				<p>Mary Phillips, Sharon Fisher</p> <p>Committee Member:s Kim Dorton</p>

The Orientation Subcommittee will work with the Office of Institutional Research to assess student opinions about how to effectively involve families in orientation/College activities. This information will be used for summer orientation planning in year 2.					
The Early Warning System Subcommittee will: 1) benchmark other colleges with effective early warning systems, 2) establish guidelines for implementing the early warning system with integrated roles of teaching faculty, advisors, orientation teachers, tutors, counselors and peer members, and 3) develop a plan/technical capacities for using the SIS to support an early warning system that is both "high tech and high touch." The early warning system will be implemented at three critical points: a) prior to registration (if the student registers before the start of classes), b) by the add/drop date, and c) after grades are released.	X				Perry Carroll
The President's Staff will: 1) assign on-going responsibility and timetable for updating advising manuals; 2) develop policy for summer advising; 3) assign responsibility for providing consistent advisor training; 4) schedule in-service at times that will minimize student difficulties in meeting with advisors; 5) develop rewards and recognition system for advising.	X				Terry Suarez
Additions to the First Year Work Plan					
Create an experimental design for a First Year Experience Pilot that integrates the recommendations of the Orientation, Early Warning, and First Year Experience Subcommittees. The pilot will be implemented in Year 2.	X				Mary Phillips, Sharon Fisher, Donna Stanley, Carolyn Reynolds, Gary Bumgarner, Mike Cook, Perry Carroll, Terry Suarez
Reassign teaching assignments so that individuals who have agreed to lead experimental orientation class sections can lead those sections.	X				Linda Childress, Ann Davis
Contract with a full-time faculty member in the summer of 2006 to update the advising resources available on the web for faculty in the fall; other assignment will include 1) developing and posting on the web a checklist of issues to help advisors be intrusive in asking questions and soliciting information from advisees, and 2) assessing and reporting to the Core Team whether there is any information that advisors are not obtaining that is	X				Tami Penley

necessary for good advising					
Contract with consultants from other community colleges that have developed case management systems and have them come to MECC during summer of 2006 for planning.	X				To be identified
In the summer of 2006, design the case management tracking log and define data collection expectations for case manager(s); develop a calendar for encouraging specific interventions.	X				First Year Pilot Committee, Ann Davis, Linda Childress
In the summer of 2006, work with individuals/offices to develop new interventions recommended by Early Warning Committee.	X				First Year Pilot Committee, Ann Davis, Linda Childress
In the summer of 2006, determine a methodology for consolidating student information available for student advocates(s), including method for faculty referrals of students with poor class attendance.	X				First Year Pilot Committee, Ann Davis, Linda Childress
Modified Work Plan (Years 2, 3 and 4)					
In August 2006, the Advising, Early Warning and Orientation Subcommittees will be merged into the First Year Experience Committee to monitor the implementation of the First Year Experience Pilot and continue the implementation of advising, early alert, and orientation recommendations.		X			Mary Phillips, Carolyn Reynolds, Sharon Fisher, Donna Stanley, Ann Davis, and others
In fall 2006, the First Year Experience Committee will further consider and make recommendations regarding blocking on-line registration for at-risk students (first year and other). Begin discussions about continued alert tracking for students beyond the first year who have low GPAs.		X			Mary Phillips, Carolyn Reynolds, Sharon Fisher, Donna Stanley, Ann Davis, and others
In fall 2006, the First Year Experience Committee will make recommendations concerning a staffing plan for summer advising.		X			Mary Phillips, Carolyn Reynolds, Sharon Fisher, Donna Stanley, Ann Davis, and others
In February 2007, the First Year Experience Committee will make preliminary recommendations and report findings based on the First Year Experience pilot during first semester.		X			Mary Phillips, Carolyn Reynolds, Sharon Fisher, Donna Stanley, Ann Davis, and others
In February 2007, based on preliminary results of the pilot, the Committee will recommend an orientation schedule for fall 2007.		X			Mary Phillips, Carolyn Reynolds, Sharon Fisher, Donna Stanley,

				Ann Davis, and others
In February 2007, based on preliminary results of pilot and decision on taking pilot to scale next year, the committee will recommend a data collection/management system for expansion.		X		Mary Phillips, Carolyn Reynolds, Sharon Fisher, Donna Stanley, Ann Davis, and others
In February 2007, based on preliminary results of pilot and decision on taking pilot to scale next year, the Committee will make recommendations on training personnel to be involved in expansion of First Year Experience implementation in fall 2007		X		Mary Phillips, Carolyn Reynolds, Sharon Fisher, Donna Stanley, Ann Davis, and others
In February 2007, based on preliminary results of pilot, the committee will further consider and make recommendations on mandatory first semester orientation for first year students (carried over from 2005-2006.)		X		Mary Phillips, Carolyn Reynolds, Sharon Fisher, Donna Stanley, Ann Davis, and others
If a decision is made to scale up the First Year Experience Pilot, the individuals who will be assuming leadership for new roles will be trained for these roles in the summer of 2007. The First Year Experience Committee will oversee this process			X	Individuals unidentified
In fall 2007, if the First Year Pilot is expanded, the First Year Experience Committee will work with IT personnel to develop and implement a computer-based data collection/management system to assist student advocates in tracking services used by first year students and any additional students who are identified as needing intrusive support.			X	Mary Phillips, Carolyn Reynolds, Sharon Fisher, Donna Stanley, Ann Davis, and others
By November 2007, the First Year Experience Committee will recommend roles and responsibilities of faculty advisors and standards for advising, based on the First Year Experience Pilot.			X	Mary Phillips, Carolyn Reynolds, Sharon Fisher, Donna Stanley, Ann Davis, and others
By November 2007, the First Year Experience Committee will recommend standards for excellent advising to be used in faculty recognitions. The advising recommendations will extend beyond course scheduling to helping students be successful in achieving their educational goals (completing their program and either transferring to another college, or seeking employment). The standards will include responsibilities for advisor roles in implementing the early warning system.			X	Mary Phillips, Carolyn Reynolds, Sharon Fisher, Donna Stanley, Ann Davis, and others

By January 2007, the President's staff will have acted on the recommended roles and responsibilities of faculty advisors and the standards for excellent advising to revise the college's advising plan and to develop and offer recognition for advising.			X		President's staff
By March 2007, the First Year Experience Committee will lead the implementation of training/scheduling of faculty advisors serving in a redefined role in fall 2007			X		Mary Phillips, Carolyn Reynolds, Sharon Fisher, Donna Stanley, Ann Davis, and others
The First Year Experience Committee will evaluate 1) any third year expansion of the First Year Experience Pilot (if expanded), and/or 2) satisfaction with outcomes and any redefined faculty role in advising or implementation of monitoring of first year students by other employees. The data collected will be used to determine success in meeting goals for measurable change after four years.				X	Mary Phillips, Carolyn Reynolds, Sharon Fisher, Donna Stanley, Ann Davis, and others

Priority Area: Create Learning Communities, targeting gatekeeper courses or other courses with lower levels of student success.

Evidence/Rationale: Twenty-nine percent of the 2002 and 2003 cohort attend MECC part-time. Part-time students, and many full-time students who have many outside responsibilities, are unable to participate in campus activities that foster academic and social integration. When 148 “upperclass” students (including 75% attending full-time and 25% attending part-time) were asked what helped them continue at MECC, 73% percent cited “faculty involvement with students” as being a significant factor. Fewer than three in ten students cited services designed to support social and academic integration, including orientation (29%), personal counseling (cited by 29%), GAIN/tutoring (cited by 27%), Career Center (cited by 26%), work study program (cited by 26%), math lab (cited by 23%), and clubs and organizations (cited by 14%).

These data suggest the need to maximize the use of classroom “capture time” to build student engagement with the subject matter, faculty members and other students, and increase academic and social support, particularly in classes that have low success rates. Learning communities will be proposed by faculty to achieve this goal. No learning communities currently exist and faculty/administrator knowledge of how to create and manage learning communities is limited; substantial professional development will be needed to develop learning community capacity. MECC will collaborate with PHCC and DCC in a learning community consortium to share professional development resources/knowledge and experience on learning communities.

Measurable Changes after Two Years: MECC will have at least two learning communities planned, advertised, and students will be enrolling. Active learning strategies or other strategies for learning enhancement will be piloted in two gatekeeper courses with low levels of success.

Measurable Changes after Four Years: MECC will have conducted at least three learning communities. Learning communities or active learning strategies will have been piloted in six gatekeeper courses with low levels of success. (The six are in addition to the three learning communities.) Quantitative data (student grades, retention rates) and qualitative data (student assessment of the learning environment) will be collected to determine comparative outcomes of learning communities versus instructional methods previously used in courses. Success rates for the same courses completed by the 2002 and 2003 Cohorts will be used as a basis for comparison.

Work Plan	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Lead Staff
A Coordinator will be appointed to work with the Learning Community and Active Learning Committee and to provide administrative support to learning communities	X				

for a period of four years. A member of the Core Team will serve on the committee, along with faculty members who volunteer to be involved in the development of the first learning communities.					
The first phase faculty team/administrators to be involved in development of learning communities will participate in professional development. Faculty will select partners for planning, submit proposals around a theme, and gain approval for tentative plan for learning community. Faculty will plan in-class and out-of-class activities to achieve learning community goals, with joint selection of course materials, as needed. Baseline data for grades and retention will be obtained for evaluation purposes. A meeting of the three-college learning community consortium will be held during first and second semesters.	X				Jim Burns, Learning Community and Active Learning Coordinator Core Team members: Karen Carter, Donna Stanley (others to be recruited)
Gatekeeper courses with low rates of success will be identified and two faculty members will explore best practices to enhance success in two courses with three hours of release time. Plans for course improvement will be submitted to the Vice-President of Academic and Student Services for approval.	X				Jim Burns, Sharon Fisher, others
Addition to the First Year Work Plan					
MECC faculty (5) will participate in the summer Active Learning Institute to be conducted by Patrick Henry Community College in preparation for course revision activities.	X				Faculty to be named
MECC will provide campus-based training on Learning Communities for faculty who will be developing learning communities in 2006-2007 for first availability to students in fall 2007.	X				Jim Burns & Ashlee Brant from Southwest Texas Community College to lead
Modified Work Plan (Years 2, 3 and 4)					
First Semester: By the end of the first semester, the Learning Community/Active Learning Committee will gain approval of the plan for the learning community to be offered in fall 2007. By that time, the Committee will also develop and submit to the Vice President of Academic and Student Services proposed policies for registering students. The second phase group of faculty to develop learning community(ies) will begin professional development and planning (including selecting courses to link, levels of integration, and theme.) A meeting of the three-college learning community		X			Jim Burns, Learning Community and Active Learning Coordinator (Others to be recruited)

consortium will be held during first and second semesters.				
<p>Second Semester: The plan for the learning community to be offered as part of the Developmental Committee's summer bridge program will not be submitted for approval until spring 2007 and will be offered in summer 2007.</p> <p>In Spring 2007, all personnel involved in registering students for the summer and fall learning communities will be trained about the planned learning communities and the students most appropriate to enroll; advisement materials will be updated to include information about the learning communities. Information about the first learning communities will be published in the Fall Schedule; students will register for all learning communities.</p> <p>The second phase group of faculty to develop learning community(ies) will plan in-class and out-of-class activities to achieve learning community goals, with joint selection of course materials, as needed. Baseline data for grades and retention will be obtained for evaluation purposes.</p>		X		<p>Jim Burns, Learning Community and Active Learning Coordinator, Rhoda Bliese</p> <p>(Others to be recruited)</p>
Campus-based training will be scheduled throughout the year on the topic of active learning and learning communities. The training will be led by the Learning Community/Active Learning Committee Chair or external consultants, as needed		X		Jim Burns, Jim Burns, Learning Community and Active Learning Coordinator
Gatekeeper courses with low rates of success will be identified and two faculty members will explore best practices to enhance success in two courses with three hours of release time. Plans for course improvement will be submitted to the Vice-President of Academic and Student Services for approval.		X		<p>Jim Burns, Learning Community and Active Learning Coordinator</p> <p>(Others to be recruited)</p>
Two faculty members who planned improvement to gatekeeper courses in year 1 will pilot improvements. Two faculty members who planned improvement to gatekeeper courses in year 2 will implement pilot improvements.			X	Faculty to be determined
<p>First Semester: First learning communities will be piloted, data will be gathered on the results. The second phase faculty will observe first cohort of faculty teaching in learning communities. The final plan for the second phase learning community(ies) will be</p>			X	Faculty to be recruited

approved by VP of Academic and Student Services, as well as Curriculum and Instruction Committee for inclusion in the schedule for the following fall. A meeting of the three-college learning community consortium will be held during first and second semesters.					
Second Semester: Policies governing learning community registrations and success of marketing of learning communities will be evaluated. Faculty who led learning communities will evaluate what was learned in the first year. Information about new and previously offered learning communities will be published in the Fall Schedule; students will register for fall learning communities.			X		Jim Burns, Learning Community and Active Learning Coordinator
Gatekeeper courses with low rates of success will be identified and two faculty members will explore best practices to enhance success in two courses with three hours of release time. Plans for course improvement will be submitted to the Vice-President of Academic and Student Services for approval.			X		Faculty to be recruited
First Semester: The second phase learning community(ies) will be piloted. The first phase learning communities will be repeated, after revisions. Data will be gathered to evaluate results. A meeting of the three-college learning community consortium will be held during first and second semesters.				X	Faculty to be recruited
Second Semester: Second phase faculty who led learning community(ies) will evaluate what was learned during previous semester.				X	Faculty to be recruited
Two faculty members who planned improvement to gatekeeper courses in year 3 will pilot improvements.				X	Faculty to be recruited

