Since fall 2011 RCC has been an Achieving the Dream Leader College, making us one of 52 schools nationwide which have demonstrated broad engagement and use of evidence to improve programs and services. Leader colleges are systematically managing their change in effective ways. We are wrapping up the final year of this grant, but our relationship with the initiative remains vital.

In the 2011-2012 academic year the grant continued to improve delivery of developmental mathematics, English, and science, sponsoring several teacher development projects and supporting these departments as they refined curricula. We also brought increased attention to other aspects of the student experience, working with staff in offices (registrar, admissions, financial aid, business, advising) so they can coordinate better, and recognizing the educational role these employees play when working with students. In a series of focus group discussions we asked students about their experiences with these offices and services; an independent analysis of the results has informed the work of these areas. A separate study group brought together the academic support areas (tutoring, Writing Center, etc.) to unify their work.

In summer 2012 we are exploring ways to improve coordination of the various orientation experiences for new students (orientation, College Experience, advising); there is a lot of good support for students, but we aren’t certain that the pieces work together optimally, so we are asking ourselves these important questions. A new series of short video clips present many aspects of orientation on demand. See www.youtube.com/roxcommcollege.

In Fall 2012 RCC will host a two-part faculty forum on The Role of Textual Evidence in Student Reading and Writing, which will bring together teachers from local GED programs and three community colleges. Based on last fall’s successful interaction with public school teachers, participants will explore ways to help students integrate information from readings into their writing, while building co-curricular readiness skills such as project management and collaboration. This will be the last AtD-grant-funded activity at the College.

As an AtD leader college we were eligible to apply for and in Summer 2012 received a Walmart Press Grant (Persistence, Retention, and Student Success), which aims to broaden engagement of both faculty and staff with institutional change. With this support RCC will increase faculty involvement in placement testing, provide intrusive success coaching, and offer section-specific peer tutoring in some gatekeeper courses.

As the grant period of our relationship with AtD comes to an end, these are just a few of the specific capacity building activities that RCC has recently undertaken. Effective in Fall 2012, RCC’s involvement with Achieving the Dream will be overseen by Mark Garth, Dean for Student Success, who has played a key role in much of the work throughout the period of the grant. The College is more data driven than ever before and shares with him a mission of keeping student success at the forefront of everything we do.

Submitted by Sterling Giles, Outgoing Coordinator of Achieving the Dream at RCC
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