

Learning

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Pathways
To
Success



TRINITY VALLEY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Quality Enhancement Plan
submitted to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
in Partial Fulfillment of the Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Engaged Learning: Pathways to Success
*Improving reading comprehension through
the enhancement of student engagement*



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submitted to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
in Partial Fulfillment of the Reaffirmation of Accreditation
September 10, 2006

**Submitted to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges in Response to the
Report of the Reaffirmation Committee**

SIGNATURES ATTESTING TO COMPLIANCE

By signing below, we attest to the following:

Trinity Valley Community College has conducted an honest assessment of compliance and has provided complete and accurate disclosure of timely information in the following responses to the *Quality Enhancement Plan Report* regarding compliance with Core Requirement 2.12 of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges.

Accreditation Liaison: Jeremy McMillen, Dean of Planning and IE

Signature:



Date: September 10, 2006

Chief Executive Officer: Ron Baugh, President

Signature:



Date: September 10, 2006



**Trinity Valley Community College
SACS Leadership Team**

The Commission on Colleges requires that institutions establish a Leadership Team to manage and validate the internal institutional assessment of compliance with all Core Requirements and Comprehensive Standards.

The responsibilities of the Leadership Team include, but are not limited to:

- Coordinating and managing the internal review process, including developing the structure and timelines for ensuring the timely completion of all tasks and attending the orientation session conducted by the Commission on Colleges.
- Overseeing the institutional review of the extent of compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* and the documentation of evidence supporting the extent of compliance.
- Developing the Focused Report, if the institution so chooses.
- Overseeing the development of the QEP.
- Ensuring that the institutional community is engaged in the review process and is informed of the progress of the review.
- Overseeing arrangements for the on-site visit.
- Ensuring that the appropriate follow-up activities are in place to address compliance issues and to monitor the progress of the QEP.

Members of the Trinity Valley Community College SACS Leadership Team include:

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Executive Summary

Trinity Valley Community College's (TVCC) Quality Enhancement Plan, "Engaged Learning: Pathways to Success," emerged from discussions with faculty, administrators, staff, and students. Those discussions began with the question, "if you could do one thing to improve student learning, what would that be?" As patterns emerged, the vice president of instruction appointed the QEP Task Force, a select group of faculty and staff charged with more narrowly focusing the QEP. The Task Force included numerous master and outstanding teachers. Early efforts were facilitated by the dean of planning and institutional effectiveness. In June 2005, TVCC appointed a full-time director of the QEP. TVCC added a full-time secretary in September 2005. For marketing purposes, the project was renamed from QEP to the Learning Initiative.

The Learning Initiative has become an ongoing part of the institution's activities beyond the requirements for the QEP. The current focus of the QEP is ***to improve students' reading comprehension through the enhancement of student engagement (August 2006 version)***. This is in line with the institution's new mission statement, which indicates that TVCC is a "learning-centered" college.

In spring 2005, TVCC initiated a significant effort to collect baseline data to create a snapshot of where TVCC stood in relation to reading comprehension and student engagement. Data collection efforts include results from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE), and an evaluation of reading comprehension through the administration of the reading portion of the Texas Assessment of Skills Program (*Pre-TASP*). The CCSSE and CCFSSE compared TVCC to other community colleges in the nation on five benchmarks (Active and Collaborative Learning, Student Effort, Academic Challenge, Student-Faculty Interaction, and Support for Learners). The Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (*LASSI*) 2005 and the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (*CAAP*) were also administered.

These efforts were conducted under the direction of the Learning Initiative Assessment Team. The results of those assessments led to the initiation of several new projects at TVCC, each aimed at improving reading skills and engagement of both students and faculty. Student Networking Groups are being piloted to enhance student engagement, while the Learning Academy Scholars Project, Lunch and Learn, and Learning Day are in place to further the discussions of how to shape an environment that engages learners. The development of the reading enhancement projects include *Discipline Specific Reading Tests*, an Open Learning Lab, study sessions offered by faculty (*PODS*), Great Explanations, and textbook websites. As the results of these projects are revealed, faculty and staff are helping to shape the pathways to student success.

Introduction

***The purpose of a Quality Enhancement Plan is “to lead to a course of action for institutional improvement by addressing a question or questions that contribute to institutional quality with special attention to student learning”
-- (Principles of Accreditation)***

Trinity Valley Community College (TVCC) has struggled to make meaning of this statement from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' *Principles of Accreditation* since gearing up for its effort to seek reaffirmation of accreditation. In early 2004, TVCC administrators began to give thought to this new Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) process, with the earliest ideas centering on retention. The campus soon decided that retention, while important, was only a secondary measure of student learning.

The dean of planning and institutional effectiveness conducted focus groups with administrators, faculty, and students in spring 2005 to determine the ultimate goals of the QEP. Group participants were asked to consider what one thing could be done to improve student learning at TVCC. A number of issues emerged; however, student engagement and better reading skills were identified as the major issues that needed improvement in order to accomplish TVCC's goals.

In fall 2005, the Learning Initiative was officially launched in order to reaffirm a campus-wide commitment to student learning with a special emphasis on engagement and reading. The current focus of the Learning Initiative, which is TVCC's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is, ***to improve students' reading comprehension through the enhancement of student engagement (August 2006 version)***. The Learning Initiative is dedicated to identifying student needs and developing programs to support student learning.

History

TVCC has provided quality education and training for both students and residents in its service area since its founding in 1946. During that time, the College grew from a single campus of 311 students and 12 faculty members, primarily from Henderson County, to a four-campus district with 5,732 students and 130 full-time faculty in fall 2006 (See TVCC organizational chart, Appendix). In late 1945 a group of civic leaders in Athens, Texas, founded TVCC as Henderson County Junior College. The first courses were offered at Athens High School in the summer of 1946, with the current Athens campus beginning operations in the fall semester, 1946. The College began developing into a multi-campus institution in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This was begun by initiating programs with the Texas Department of Corrections in the Coffield, Beto I, Beto II, and Michaels Units located in Anderson County. Expansion continued with the opening of the TVCC-Palestine campus in 1972, the TVCC-Terrell Campus in 1973, and the TVCC-Health Science Center in Kaufman in 1983. As a result of the continued regional expansion, the

Board of Trustees approved a name change from Henderson County Junior College to Trinity Valley Community College in September, 1986.

Today, the service area consists of 28 independent school districts covering Henderson, Anderson, Kaufman and Rains counties, as well as part of Van Zandt County. Sixteen of these school districts are part of the TVCC tax-paying district. The total service area population has grown from a base of 256,978 persons in 2000 to 283,740 in 2004. During this period, Rains County increased by 21.1% (9,139 to 11,066), Kaufman County increased 19.7% (71,313 to 85,377), 8.1% in Henderson County (73,277 to 79,184), 8% in Van Zandt County (48,140 to 51,996), and 1.8% in Anderson County (55,109 to 56,117). Projections for growth mirror the patterns of the recent past, with the largest total growth among the college-age population occurring in Kaufman County. Rapid demographic changes occurring in Texas, which include the population within the state surging by 24.3% in 2015 and 41.7% by 2025, from a base of 20.8 million in 2000 (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB] 2004), make our actions more important.

TVCC is uniquely positioned to meet the constantly changing needs of students in our service area, including preparing students for transfer to a university and providing opportunities for students to obtain basic skills, take refresher courses, participate in non-credit courses, and earn certificates and associate degrees. With an open-door admissions policy, the College strives to provide programs which will enhance learning for all students.

Between fall 2000 and fall 2006, TVCC experienced growth of 24.9% and increased contact hours by 27.7%. The Athens campus enrolled 2,680, TVCC-Terrell enrolled 1,117 students, TVCC-Palestine enrolled 1,062, the Texas Department of Corrections location enrolled 537, the TVCC-Health Science Center in Kaufman enrolled 357, and the remaining students enrolled at other locations. In fall 2005, 80% of students were Caucasian, 12% African American, 7% Hispanic, and 1% were of other ethnic origin. Sixty percent of TVCC students are female.

According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's (THECB) statewide plan, *Closing the Gaps*, Texas currently lags behind the 10 most populous states in enrollment of its college-eligible population (p.5). The *Closing the Gaps'* enrollment target is 5.7% of the college-eligible population for both two- and four-year schools. The stated expectations of the THECB in *Closing the Gaps* indicate that TVCC and other community colleges will serve as the vanguard in reaching out to our community by continuing to offer high quality, affordable education and training.

Throughout its five-county service area, TVCC is the leading college of choice among college-eligible students compared to other community colleges and universities (THECB). Three of the five counties within the service area, Henderson, Kaufman, and Van Zandt, surpassed statewide targets. The prospect of higher enrollment poses many challenges to outreach, given the recent budgetary challenges in Texas. Additionally, increasing numbers of service area students who are economically and/or academically disadvantaged indicates that TVCC will need to provide more with less. The number of students in service area schools identified as economically disadvantaged has risen over the last 10 years with the largest growth being at Athens ISD (17.9 % growth from 39% to 56.9%) and Palestine ISD (17.1 % growth from 49% to 66.1%). In fall 2005, 29.2% of

currently enrolled TVCC students were classified as economically disadvantaged and 28% received need-based financial aid.

Meeting the needs of students in this growing and changing population will be a challenge, as 34.2% of all currently enrolled TVCC students need remediation, as do 41% of new TVCC students. These pressures have already stretched resources and will pose challenges to student learning by forcing faculty to create new cognitive structures, or innovative teaching practices, to address changing learning styles and values based upon socio-economic status (Payne, pps. 119-125). By offering multiple learning opportunities in traditional as well as non-traditional settings, targeting highly needed programs in the job market, and strategically increasing overall enrollment, TVCC stands ready to facilitate student learning and enhance the socio-economic climate of the service area. Creating such opportunities heightens the need to redouble the focus on student learning. TVCC is committed to its mission as a learning-centered college that will adapt to the changing trends in higher education to serve the citizens of its service area.

Mission

A new mission statement, which reflects the major emphasis on learning, was developed by administrators, faculty and staff and accepted by the Board of Trustees in spring 2005.

Trinity Valley Community College is a learning-centered college that provides quality academic, workforce, and community service programs to meet the educational needs of our students and the citizens of our service area (revised April 25, 2005).

In 2005, the Strategic Planning Committee began research to compile a four-year plan for TVCC that is consistent with the unique history and needs of the College as well as the statewide strategic plan for colleges and universities (See Strategic Plan Outline, Appendix). The plan for TVCC identifies four critical goals that include fostering a *learning culture* that values quality of instruction and committing to *outreach* among local communities while ensuring *success* of students by providing a *diverse* learning environment.

LEARNING - Trinity Valley Community College will place student learning as the primary design principle in every College policy, procedure, plan, and action.

OUTREACH - Increase the outreach of TVCC through a variety of affordable services and programs, while ensuring that resources are available to meet the needs of students and faculty.

SUCCESS - Identify and support the success of TVCC students through retention and graduation.

DIVERSITY - Trinity Valley Community College will provide a learning environment that supports and encourages diversity.

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), as well as a focused effort to identify a project to enhance student learning that would serve as a model for TVCC's initiative to become a learning-centered institution, emerged from these discussions. TVCC's commitment to this is reified in the focus of the QEP, which provides promise for enhancing student engagement and reading comprehension.

Earliest ideas of the learning-centered community college may be traced to O'Banion (1997), who stated "The call has gone out for building a new kind of college – *A Learning College for the 21st Century* that will focus the full resources of the college on student learning." O'Banion (1996), as the Executive Director of the League for Innovation in the Community College, coined the term *learning college* to describe colleges that were revolutionized by the *learning revolution* that occurred in the 1990s. This revolution included college mission and value statements that were being refocused on the learning process, as institutions transformed their structures into learning-centered enterprises. Students were placed in the center of learning-centered enterprises with a focus on student achievement and what students need to achieve (Learning College Project, 2002). The ultimate goal of a learning-centered enterprise was to help students achieve desired learning outcomes, which led to realignment of teaching, research, and support services. The guiding principles of a learning college are as follows:

- The Learning College creates substantive change in individual learners.
 - The Learning College engages learners in the learning process as full partners who must assume primary responsibility for their own choices.
 - The Learning College creates and offers as many options for learning as possible.
 - The Learning College assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities.
 - The Learning College defines the roles of learning facilitators in response to the needs of the learners.
 - The Learning college and its learning facilitators succeed only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for learners.
- (O'Banion, 1997, p. 45)

Harvey-Smith (2003) proposed a seventh learning college principle, which "serves as a nexus from which the original six principles can be implemented: Create and nurture an organizational culture that is both open and responsive to change and learning" (para. 2). Creating a campus culture in which faculty and administrators are expected to learn about student-learning as a component of their daily work evokes a healthy level of collective cognitive dissonance, which, if sustained over time, sparks individuals to be interested in fostering a learning college for the improvement of student learning.

Student learning is the centerpiece of TVCC's mission, and the College will seek innovative ways to provide enhanced student learning to students. This greater emphasis upon learning places a higher premium on learning results for students both individually and collectively. It also creates new challenges for instructors, administrators, and TVCC as a whole to create a culture that transforms students into engaged learners. For TVCC, the learning-centered model stresses the internal development that takes place for learners as a result of experiences in the learning environment. TVCC will emphasize effecting changes in students by engaging them as full partners in the learning process through the creative application of a variety of learning options by forming and participating in collaborative learning activities, defining

roles to correspond to the needs of learners, documenting improved learning, and nurturing an organizational culture or environment that is receptive and reactive to change as it relates to learning (O'Banion, 1997, pp. 204-207).

TVCC values outreach to its community as an important means to attract students and to enhance the college's relationship with the community. The promise to be a learning-centered college is realized when students are successful in attaining their educational goals and meeting the economic, social, and cultural needs of the region. Other indicators of student success may also include retention and graduation. These measures serve as an initial point of inquiry into TVCC's success. These areas are indirect measures of student learning and serve as a barometer for the College to evaluate its success in meeting student needs. Delivering on the promise to provide quality learning experiences and being an innovator in higher education will secure the future for students and the community.

The emergence of Texas as a minority-majority state is well documented in educational literature, census projections, and public school reports. Over the last 10 years the TVCC service area has experienced unprecedented growth among minority groups. Higher education participation rates among college-eligible black and Hispanic students from the service area fall below participation of other ethnic groups. The trends of our service area are similar to those of the state. As these groups become a larger segment of the available labor and leadership pool, failure to recruit, retain, educate and graduate minorities invites an uncertain political and economic future. Steve Murdock, demographer for the state of Texas, estimates that "if Texas does not close its education racial gap, the average state of Texas household in 2040 will be about \$6,500 a year poorer than in 2000. By then, the poverty rate among family households could increase by three percent" (Reed, 2005, para. 18). TVCC will embrace the diversity challenge as an opportunity to make Texas and its service area a better, economically vibrant place through the recruitment, retention, and graduation of a diverse student body for the creation of an effective learning environment.

Culture Change

Undertaking a transformational change initiative as large as becoming a learning-centered community college requires an intense focus on core values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. TVCC is aware of the challenges ahead.

Peterson (1998), speaking of school culture, stated, "[s]chool cultures vary considerably, some positive, ... [student] oriented, and growth producing, and others negative, teacher oriented, and stultifying" (p. 252). Nichols (1995), and later Birnbaum (2000), observed faculty resistance as the key roadblock to institutional quality enhancement projects. The learning paradigm emphasizes the value of everyone's contribution to the learning environment with a belief that everyone (including students) has a shared responsibility for student learning. Peterson and Deal (1998) observed that reform efforts falter if the principles of the vision presented by the innovation are not internalized within the culture of the college.

In spite of the blanket statement that cultures in higher education are resistant to change, some campuses are adaptive to change. In fact, some campuses openly embrace the challenges of quality initiatives and learning outcomes enhancement

(O'Bannion, 1997, 1999; Rouche, 2001). Institutions that are successful at becoming learning-centered colleges, such as Alverno College, have noted a long and difficult journey of organizational change (Doherty, Riordan, & Roth, 2002; Loacker & Mentkowski, 1993).

Many colleges engaged in the process of transforming their campuses to learning-centered organizations reacted to external demands of state coordinating boards, trustees, legislative bodies, and accrediting agencies by *only* submitting the requested outcomes-assessment reports. Yet, some colleges became proactive learning-centered campuses by implementing effective learning outcomes enhancement processes that moved learning to the center of campus improvement efforts (Banta, 1990). The research suggests that the success or failure of a given institution in its movement toward a learning-centered community college hinges upon the dynamics of the culture of the institution.

In 1983, Porras and Robertson (1983) discovered that fewer than 40% of change initiatives represented in change literature produced positive results. In addition, Beer, Eisenstat, and Spector (1990) found that two-thirds of the organizational change efforts they studied were actually perceived to have made the situation worse. In comparison with other organizations, Peterson and Deal (1998) demonstrated that reform efforts falter if the culture fails to internalize the principles of the vision presented by the innovation. The pressure is rising for community colleges to demonstrate increased student learning.

Ruben (1995) indicated that the unique culture of higher education resists quality enhancement initiatives more than corporate cultures. However, the research on culture in higher education indicates resistance to re-organization of learning outcomes enhancement priorities due to political, social, and long standing cultural pressures against such quality enhancement initiatives. The League for Innovation in the Community College has facilitated several efforts to develop learning-centered community colleges by assisting "community colleges in developing policies, programs, and practices that place learning at the heart of the educational enterprise, while overhauling the traditional architecture of education" (League for Innovation in the Community College Website, n.d.).

Many recent League projects, including The *Learning College* project and the *21st Century Learning Outcomes Project*, had learning outcomes enhancement as their focus. Cynthia Wilson, the project director of these two projects, stated that much work has been done in relation to the *21st Century Learning Outcomes*, but more research is needed to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the improvement of student learning through the development of coherent learning outcomes in the community college (personal communication, 9/22/2004). Given the clash of these opposing perspectives between the culture of the larger society and the culture of TVCC, the institution has developed a plan that would foster internalization of the aims of the Learning Initiative so that the long-term institutional change could be realized.

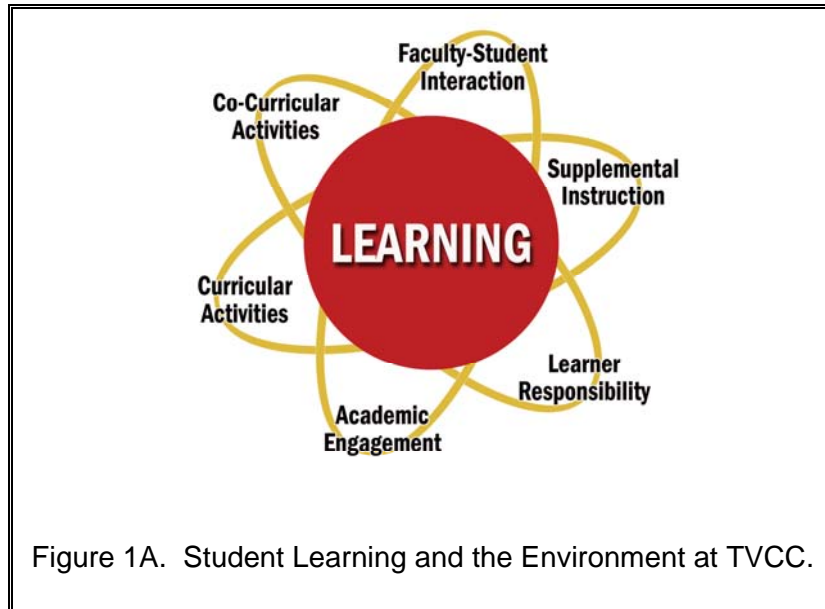
O'Banion and Milliron (2001) have noted that community college faculty care deeply about whether students learn, and the faculty and staff at TVCC are no different. Learning outcomes enhancement efforts at TVCC have developed from a common passion – student learning. This dialogue has created excitement on campus and

individuals are curious about how they can contribute to the organization's transformation to a learning-centered institution.

The Larger Context

The public has increasingly called on community colleges in North America to demonstrate learning among more than 10 million students. *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) focused attention on educational results, and educators began looking at ways to measure student achievement, to test the effectiveness of quality improvement measures, and to deal with organizational change in the increasingly demanding environment. *An American Imperative* (Wingspread Group, 1993) called educators in higher education to task by demanding higher expectations for higher education. Hersh (2005), co-director of the Collegiate Learning Assessment project sponsored by the Rand Corporation, commented on the state of accountability in higher education, stating that "in an era when the importance of a college diploma is increasing while public support for universities [and all of higher education] is diminishing, [assessment of student learning] is desperately needed" (p. 140). The Commission on the Future of Higher Education recommended reforms are poised to intensify accountability by once again reinforcing the expectation that colleges will provide evidence of enhanced student learning.

To define student learning we turn to the literature. Angelo (1993) posited that "[h]igher learning is an active, interactive, self-aware process that results in meaningful, long-lasting changes in knowledge, skills, behaviors, beliefs, attitudes... that can *not* be attributed primarily to maturation" (p. 4). Supporting Angelo's definition of learning, Stiehl and Lewchuck (2002) stated that learning "is a task that builds personal capacity learning for the rest of life" (p. 28). In defining student learning, Astin developed a concept of talent development that emphasized "the institution's responsibility to nurture and promote the personal growth of each student toward his or her maximum potential" during the collegiate experience (in Banta, 1995, p. 215). The promotion of maximum growth of a student for the long-term requires college faculty and administrators to gather specific understanding of how learning is influenced by experiences on their campus through the systematic investigation of learning outcomes. The figure below delineates these relationships as envisioned at TVCC.



Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) summarized numerous smaller studies of learning outcomes enhancement spanning the research since the early 1970s in *How College Effects Students*. Their review of the literature indicated a positive relationship among student engagement and knowledge acquisition and cognitive development. They discovered a positive relationship between academic experiences that provide for challenge and integration, which increased the likelihood of change in a wide variety of areas. A positive relationship between generally recognized effective teaching strategies and increased student learning was also noticed. In addition, a positive relationship between sequential course-taking patterns and overall learning outcomes was observed. However, they concluded that there was a need for ongoing research into the influence of disparate learning experiences and environments on student learning at *individual institutions*.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) provided a snapshot of the literature on a variety of gains experienced in cognitive growth, student learning, and other change dimensions that can legitimately be attributed to the undergraduate experience. They observed that students change in a myriad of ways, including “statistically significant gains in factual knowledge and in a range of general cognitive and intellectual skills; they also change in a broad array in value, attitudinal, psychosocial, and moral dimensions” (p. 557). Further, they noted modest gains in general verbal and quantitative skills between the freshman and senior years and more substantial gains in knowledge in their major. Evidence also suggested that seniors became more effective speakers, writers, and critical thinkers than freshmen. Seniors were more proficient in abstract reasoning, reflective judgment, and conceptual complexity, which makes students more adaptive to the challenges of their post-collegiate life (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). College experiences, not rival explanations (such as maturation), were credited as significant contributors to nearly all of the changes in the cognitive dimensions of student learning between the freshman and the senior years.

Coping with the combined external and internal demands for improvement of student learning by undergoing the organizational changes necessary to become a learning-

centered institution is a challenge faced by many community colleges today. The findings of cognitive and non-cognitive growth are promising for higher education overall; however, Pascarella and Terenzini noted deficiencies in the research at the institutional level. Bok (1992) indicated that an institution's ability to weather the demands for greater accountability will relate directly to "how well they clarify their purpose and how well people work together to clearly demonstrate that the programs provided bring value to the people they serve" (p. 18). TVCC is using the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) process to renew the institution's commitment to student learning.

Learning-Centered College Movement

Simultaneous to increased accountability demands for enhanced student learning, community colleges were also being called upon to move from being *teaching-centered* institutions to becoming *learning-centered* institutions in the early 1990s (Barr, 1993; Barr & Tagg, 1995; O'Banion, 1997). In their landmark article in *Change* magazine, "From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education," Barr and Tagg wrote:

A paradigm shift is occurring in American higher education. In its briefest form, the paradigm that has governed our colleges is this: A college is an institution that exists to provide instruction. Subtly but profoundly we are shifting to a new paradigm: A college is an institution that exists to produce learning. This shift changes everything. (1995, p. 12)

In a monograph entitled *Launching a Learning-Centered College*, O'Banion (1999) outlined a *learning revolution* that occurred during the 1990s, which focused attention on the process of learning and attempted to transform curricula and cultures into *learning-centered* enterprises. This shift places student learning as the central focus of assessment efforts, so that colleges discuss quality and excellence on the basis of learning outcomes (such as critical thinking, writing, and problem solving), rather than inputs into the educational process (such as number of faculty, number of courses, or number of new students).

Describing this new paradigm, McClenney stated, "...every choice, every decision—about staffing, resource allocation, everything—gets subjected to a simple screen: How does this improve learning?" (Boggs, 1999, p. 5). Within this new paradigm, many colleges have refocused their priorities and placed greater institutional focus on student learning in order to become more learning-centered (McClenney, 2001). The learning-centered shift described by Barr and Tagg provided a coherent core from which TVCC is refocusing organizational efforts. The nexus of the learning-centered paradigm and accountability demands currently provides TVCC with a unique opportunity to transform the foundational beliefs, values, and assumptions that drive organizational behavior.

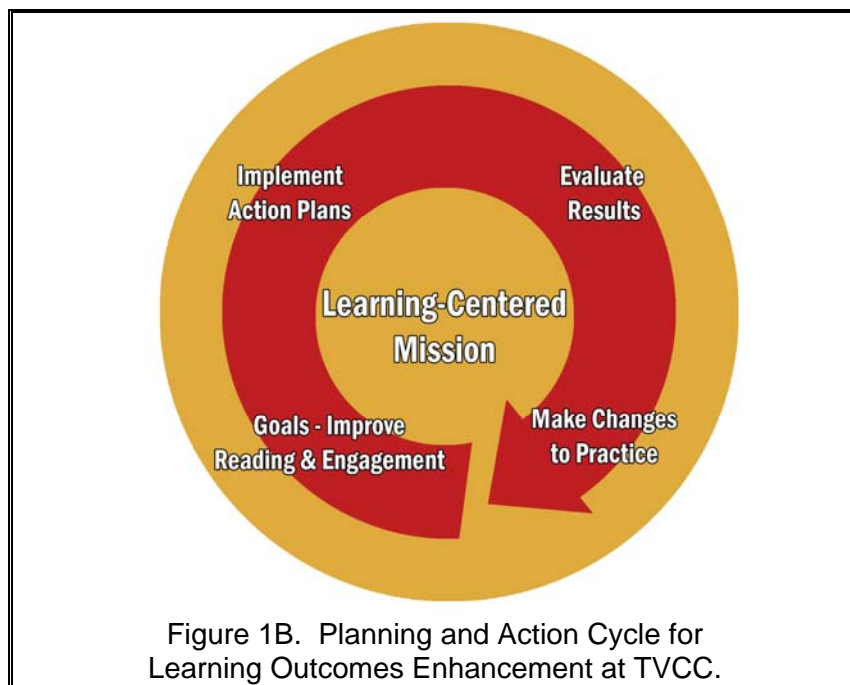
TVCC, as a part of the institution's mission, has declared that it will seek to discover ways in which to manage the transition to a learning-centered community college through a focus on learning outcomes enhancement. The QEP has spawned additional inquiry into how TVCC can effectively make the transition to a learning-centered institution. In this spirit, TVCC has embarked on an unprecedented inquiry into student learning to obtain the necessary information to make decisions that lead to institution-wide enhancement of the learning environment. The Learning Initiative is envisioned as a golden opportunity to develop a model project that will demonstrate to the institution,

students, the Board of Trustees, the residents of TVCC's service area, and the accrediting Southern Association of Colleges and Schools that TVCC is serious about undergoing organizational change toward becoming a learning-centered institution.

Learning Outcomes Enhancement

The National Research Council (2001) indicated that learning outcomes assessment activities grounded in learning theory gave institutions the best chance of making appropriate inferences from the data that will influence future student outcomes. Banta (1995), discussing the importance of learning outcomes at individual colleges, stated, "[w]e must identify the individuals and groups that we serve, learn more about them, and be more responsive to their needs. We need to know the learning styles of our students and how to address those" (p. 217). To gain an understanding of student learning, TVCC has embarked on a focused and continuous process of assessing students' current knowledge about reading and how students engage in the learning environment, the amount of educational capital they gain while in college, and the types of experiences that lead to these gains. While assessment of student learning is a positive step in the direction of increasing student learning, the simple assessment of outcomes alone does not effect future student knowledge attainment.

To communicate the need for praxis in quality enhancement, TVCC embraces the concept of learning outcomes enhancement described by McMillen in *Learning Outcomes Enhancement, Campus Culture and Change in the Learning-Centered Community College* (2006). Learning outcomes enhancement is both the documentation of evidence of student learning through an educationally appropriate assessment process *and* the action of utilizing learning outcomes assessment results for the improvement of student learning at the student, course, program, and/or institutional level. The focus is on doing something with assessment results, rather than engaging in assessment for the sake of assessment.



The elements identified as key characteristics of learning outcomes enhancement are widely identified in the research (Banta, 1995; Nichols 1995). McMillen (2006), in a Delphi study of experts on learning outcomes enhancement, delineated the key characteristics of learning outcomes enhancement as “(a) focus on the *process* of learning outcome enhancement, (b) the importance of *identifying learning outcomes*, (c) the primacy of *faculty involvement* in the process, and (d) the importance of taking *action based upon assessment data*” (p. 100). McMillen noted the characteristics of an ideal culture supportive of learning outcomes enhancement, which included “(a) an *overall campus climate that supports change*, (b) a *belief in the organization’s capacity to change*, (c) the identification of a set of *behaviors that foster buy-in* (including leadership and resources), and (d) the development of *shared responsibility for learning*” (p. 109). Additionally, he noted organizational changes that were necessary to develop a culture supportive of learning outcomes enhancement, which included “(a) a focus on *learning*, (b) *shared responsibility for learning*, (c) a *shift in the environment*, (d) a set of *beliefs to support learning outcomes enhancement for the future*, and (e) a culture that uses *data-based decision making*” (p. 118).

The paradigm shift toward the learning paradigm and the learning-outcomes enhancement model includes inquiry into what causes changes in student learning as well as demonstrated action based upon those results. Peter Senge (1990) stated that a learning organization is “a group of people continually enhancing their capacity to create what they want to create” (p. 4). A learning organization is an organization in which “people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together” (p. 3). In the learning-centered model, individuals are active contributors to the creation and re-creation of an emergent culture, and each shares responsibility for enhancing student learning.

It is clear that a lack of knowledge about the key characteristics of learning outcomes enhancement does not hinder community colleges from becoming learning-centered institutions (McMillen, 2006). Therefore, TVCC must pay attention to the larger cultural implications of a change effort such as the Learning Initiative. It is with this knowledge that TVCC departs on this journey of institutional transformation to a learning-centered college. It is a long and arduous journey that involves engaging the entire campus in a genuine dialogue about the fruit of the work of community colleges—student learning.

Organization of Remaining Sections

The presentation of this study is comprised of 11 sections. Following the introduction contained in Section 1, Section 2 – Development of the Plan – details the development of TVCC’s Quality Enhancement Plan and Section 3 lists the desired learning and administrative outcomes from the implementation of the QEP. The structure of TVCC’s Learning Initiative and a description of the subgroups contained within that structure are the focus of Section 4 – Learning Initiative Structure.

Student engagement is the focus of Section 5 – Engagement. That section describes the assessment tools used by the College to determine the levels of faculty and student engagement and the results of those assessments. Also, the actions being implemented

to improve TVCC's level of student and faculty engagement are described in this section.

The same type of information in Section 5 is contained in Section 6 – Reading. However, the focus of this section is reading. Various data collected by TVCC and the action planned to improve student reading is contained in Section 6.

Assessment techniques and goals for those assessments are outlined in Section 7 – Assessment Plan. Since future assessments cannot be conducted without financial support, the levels of financial commitment and the personnel added in order to achieve implementation of the QEP are the content of Section 8 – Institutional Capacity. The tools used by the College to communicate the proposed changes to the student body, faculty and community are detailed in the final section of the narrative, Section 9 – Communicating Change. The final section of this document contains references and appendices.

Development of the Plan

Section 2

The Learning Initiative is a TVCC project designed to increase students' reading comprehension through the enhancement of student engagement. (August 2006)

The current focus of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is captured in the statement above; however, the College's journey to identifying this focus has been a reflexive activity in which several iterations of the focus were formulated. This process has been one in which the discussion has expanded through brainstorming periods, followed by periods of solidification of the focus in order to move forward. The focus identified above is something that TVCC is currently committed to, and the College is now calling for continual brainstorming of tactics to affect the outcomes identified in the QEP focus.

In early 2004, the administrative leadership at TVCC had identified retention as a focus to explore for the QEP. As the institution began to dig deeper into the issue of retention, they discovered that this was only a secondary measure of student learning and that there was a need to do something that focused more closely on learning rather than enrollment behavior. Additionally, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools had begun to indicate that retention was not an acceptable topic for a QEP unless it specifically focused on student learning – or what students could do, know, or demonstrate as a result of attending college. The work on retention was not altogether abandoned, as the institution had identified courses that were difficult for students to complete. Additionally, student services staff began to envision ways in which they could enhance the learning environment. Therefore, the institution sought to identify a specific learning outcome that could enhance student learning in measurable terms.

In spring 2005, the dean of planning and institutional effectiveness conducted focus groups with administrators, faculty, and students to determine the ultimate focus of the Quality Enhancement Plan. Among all TVCC faculty, 75% participated in focus groups to discuss one question: "If you could do one thing to improve student learning, what would it be." Initial discussions of this new vision of learning outcomes were a challenge for some to comprehend; however, faculty were able to identify obstacles that impacted their ability to create an environment that maximized learning. A summary of faculty focus group results was compiled, and the primary areas of concern included:

***Student Academic Engagement** – Faculty expressed a desire to have students take responsibility for their learning by engaging more deeply in the academic process. Areas in which faculty said they would like to see students grow included: preparation for class activities, utilizing effective study skills, balancing life situations with school in an effective manner, etc. A need was expressed for an early identification system for all issues effecting engagement.

***Reading Comprehension** – Students need to enhance their ability to read for understanding and engage in critical reading of texts. This is viewed as a

foundational problem to the perceived inability of students to engage in effective written communication, and the inability to “learn to learn.”

***Writing Ability** – Students need to demonstrate more effective written communications skills throughout the academic process at TVCC. Students need to enhance their ability to write sentences, paragraphs, essays, and coherent arguments at the collegiate level. Writing is an issue in all areas of the curriculum, and each area of study warrants a different style of writing (technical vs. persuasive literary analysis).

Critical Thinking – Students need to enhance their ability to think critically about course content, attempt to relate content of courses across the curriculum, and solve problems without explicit directions.

Scientific Reasoning – Students need to be able to transfer the knowledge gained in science to practical applications.

Mathematical Reasoning – Students need to be able to enhance their quantitative reasoning ability. Faculty identified this as a concern because several students experience failure in mathematics-centered courses.

**Every Faculty Focus Group mentioned these items.*

The dean conducted a focus group with the Committee on College Planning, which is made up of TVCC administrators. Administrators were asked “If you could do one thing to improve student learning at TVCC, what it would be?” Responses were similar to that of faculty; thus the results from the faculty focus groups were distributed for further discussion of future directions. Administrators recalled the early interest in student retention, and discussed that the research had yielded information on difficult learning experiences (courses), which included courses with a high drop out/failure rate (>25% drop/failure) or more than 10 or more students who have attempted the course more than two times. The top courses of concern that had an average enrollment of greater than 300 each fall and spring include:

<u>Course</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>
COSC 1301 - Microcomputer Applications	1537
ENGL 1301 - English Comp. and Rhetoric	1383
ENGL 1302 - English Comp and Literature	1151
HIST 1301 - United States History to 1877	1101
MATH 1314 - College Algebra	1042
GOVT 2301 - American and Tx. Constitutions	963
PSYC 2301 - General Psychology	763
GOVT 2302 - American and Tx. Government	746
BIOL 2401 - Human Anatomy and Phys.	586
BIOL 1406 - General Biology	579
MDCA 1313 - Medical Terminology	409
DEVL 0307 - Developmental Reading II	337

BIOL	2402	-	Human Anatomy and Phys.	334
ECON	2301	-	Principles of Macroeconomics	333
BIOL	2421	-	Microbiology	321
DEVL	0306	-	Developmental Reading I	70

This group recommended that the focus of the QEP be narrowed with the consideration of these difficult courses being addressed.

After getting buy-in on the overall direction of the QEP from TVCC’s SACS Leadership Team, a QEP Task Force was named by the vice president of instruction. Initially, the dean of planning and institutional effectiveness provided the leadership for this Task Force. Membership of the Task Force included master teachers and outstanding faculty and staff representing the Athens, Terrell, Palestine, and Kaufman campuses. Task Force meetings began in March 2005, with the following goals being outlined soon thereafter:

- Develop 15-25 specific learning outcomes to focus on in the QEP.
- Identify best practices in higher education related to our chosen topic.
- Design and implement a plan to capture baseline data for student learning outcomes for the QEP (fall 2005-spring 2006).
- Design and implement a pilot project designed to determine if our efforts produce changes in student learning outcomes (fall 2005-Spring 2006).
- Continually evaluate the progress toward the stated goals of the QEP on an annual basis for at least five years after the on-site visit.
- Revise the QEP focus as TVCC learns more about student learning in the area identified on an annual basis.
- TVCC will provide a *QEP Impact Report* to SACS five years after the SACS on-site visit.

The QEP task force began to meet regularly in order to narrow the QEP topic. In the initial meetings, the task force summarized the focus group responses and developed a graphic that represented all of the ideas held by the faculty as well as some possible suggestions for improvement (see Figure 2A below). The major focus of initial ideas included enhancing student engagement, as well as improving skills in reading, writing, math and scientific reasoning.

TVCC, as a participant in the Small Texas College Consortium, was provided grant funding to administer the *Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)* in spring 2005. The Houston Endowment grant came at a perfect time for TVCC. The CCSSE was administered to 711 students and the *Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE)* was administered to 71 faculty members in spring 2005. The grant will provide support for additional CCSSE administrations in spring 2007, 2009, and 2011. TVCC faculty and staff were excited about the possibility of measuring student engagement, as engagement was identified as an area of concern by faculty.

Additional issues include quantitative reasoning and critical thinking. Initial tactics proposed included supplemental instruction (labs), changes in residential life, changes in student activities, etc... The Task Force was encouraged to think of how all of these various items might be assessed, and to generate ideas on where baseline data may be available if one of these topics was chosen as the QEP focus. The figure below

provides a graphical summary of the recommendations from faculty and administrative focus groups as discussed by the QEP task force.

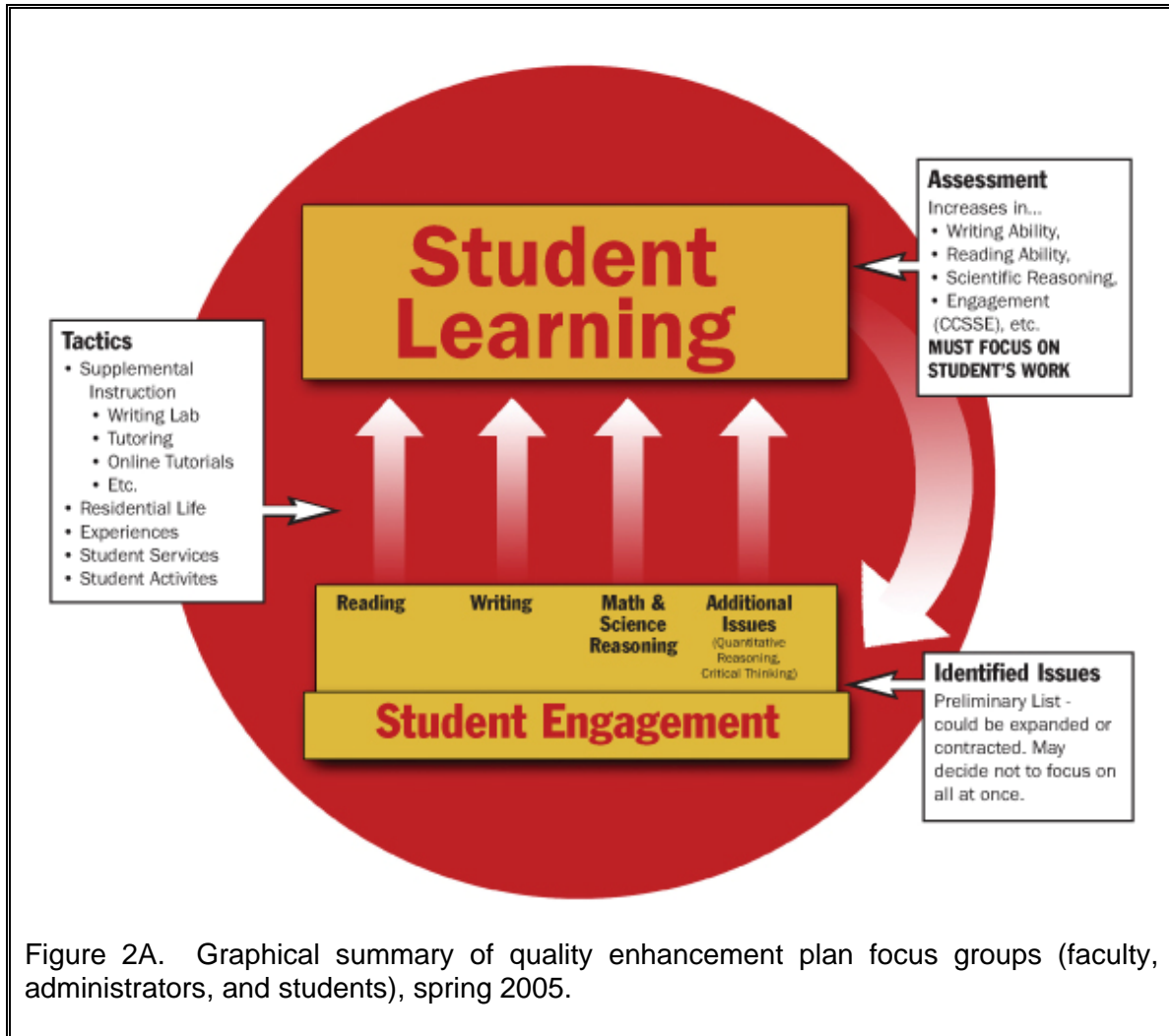


Figure 2A. Graphical summary of quality enhancement plan focus groups (faculty, administrators, and students), spring 2005.

To initiate discussion, an initial QEP statement was chosen by the dean to serve as a guideline during development. To provide further focus, the Task Force was provided the following statement as the beginning QEP idea:

TVCC will initially focus on enhancing student learning in difficult learning experiences by focusing on engaging students to effectively increase their ability to _____(choose one: read effectively, write effectively, critically think, engage in scientific reasoning, engage in quantitative reasoning). (March 2005)

The task force agreed that focusing on one learning outcome while considering engagement as a confounding factor would help to reify the QEP, which would then help to direct future campus discussions regarding specific tactics on enhancing the chosen student learning outcome. The Task Force went back to the focus groups and determined that reading, very much like engagement, was a gateway skill that would

become a key to enhance learning in the other areas (e.g. writing, math and science reasoning, critical thinking, etc...).

Faculty and staff focus group results were discussed extensively and the Task Force requested that focus groups be held with students. A total of 83 students were questioned on a variety of topics, such as the learning environment at TVCC and whether the educational process at the College prepared students for their education and career goals.

The determination was made to develop the QEP in a phased approach. The QEP would focus on student engagement and reading in the first phase. TVCC would use the information learned from this phase and apply it to future phases of the QEP. After much discussion of the second and third phases, the Task Force determined that writing would be second and critical thinking would be third.

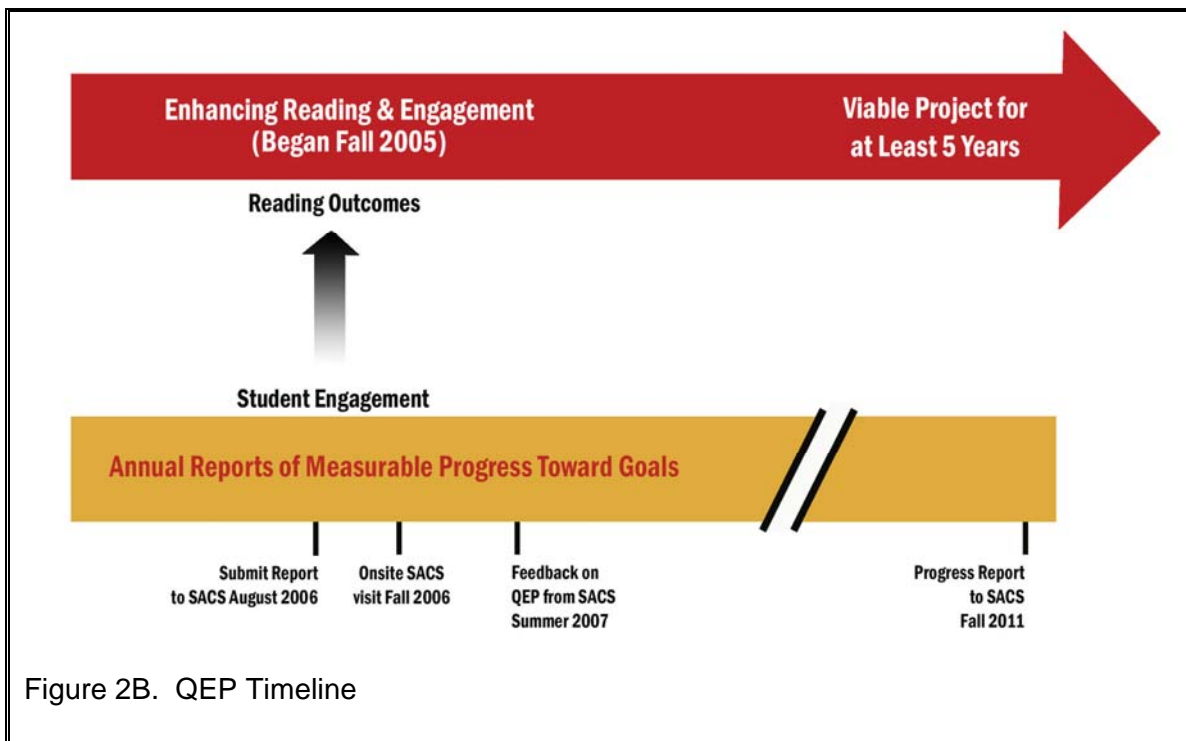


Figure 2B. QEP Timeline

The second statement of the QEP was that,

TVCC will focus on increasing students' ability to read and write in crucial learning experiences by enhancing student engagement. (August, 2005)

This version of the statement reflected the discussions of the Learning Initiative (LI) Council (see below for information on development of Learning Initiative Council), and included the close relationship between writing and reading. The literature supports that writing encourages readers to reflect upon their comprehension of a subject, thus helping them to engage in self-checking and meta-cognition. Therefore, the early view was that writing and reading were two sides of the same coin.

As a result of further discussions among the Council, as well as the challenges of assessing both reading and writing as a significant focus of this new institutional effort, the LI Council decided to revise the focus of the QEP by removing writing as a component. This does not mean that TVCC has decided that writing and reading are not related or that focusing on writing is not an important aspect of the college's activities. In fact, TVCC views writing as a tactic that will enhance students' ability to read. For practical reasons, the institution intends for the focus of the QEP to be reading for the purposes of accreditation. Additionally, the Learning Initiative has become a part of the culture of TVCC, and efforts will be made in the future to focus on learning outcomes outside of reading. Nevertheless, the focus of the QEP is,

To improve students' reading comprehension through the enhancement of student engagement. (August 2006)

Therefore, the five year follow-up report is envisioned to include results of the Learning Initiative as it relates to reading and engagement.

Evolution from QEP to the Learning Initiative

The QEP Task Force, after much questioning about what "QEP" meant by their colleagues across campus, began to consider how to best market the QEP in order to effectively involve other faculty and staff in this new initiative. The task force decided on a distinctive name for the QEP that would be meaningful beyond the SACS visit. After discussion amongst the group, the Task Force named the project "The Learning Initiative." The Task Force became known as the Learning Initiative Council (LI Council).

On June 1, 2005, a member of the LI Council was appointed as a full-time permanent director of the Learning Initiative. Additionally, a temporary full-time secretary began on the same date, with this position becoming permanent beginning fall 2005 (See job descriptions for director of the Learning Initiative and secretary, Appendix). Office space in the Liberal Arts Building was remodeled to accommodate Learning Initiative staff.

In order to formulate action plans that included broad input, yet met the requirements of a project with demonstrable outcomes, the LI Council developed six action teams: Assessment Team, Engagement Team, Learning Academy Team, Reading Team, Update Team, and Technology Team. The next section outlines the purpose of each team and the relationship of each team to the Learning Initiative Council. With this emerging structure, the Council met through the summer and developed plans to present the Learning Initiative at the fall 2005 in-service program. The topic of Launching the Learning Initiative was chosen for in-service and a Power Point presentation was prepared as the Council mapped out plans for the coming year. By this time, the QEP statement was "TVCC will focus on increasing students' ability to read and write in crucial learning experiences by enhancing student engagement."

By spring 2006, the Learning Initiative efforts had yielded baseline data on reading and engagement. This information was shared with faculty and staff during the in-service program in January and pilot projects were initiated based upon this data. By fall 2006, results of pilot projects were available, and adjustments were being made to our assessment plans, current implementation strategies, as well as the development of new ideas.

Desired Outcomes

Section
3

Learning Outcomes

Learning Goal #1: Enhance student reading comprehension at the developmental as well as college levels.

Learning Outcome 1.1 (LO 1.1)

Reading performance gains will be observed from the beginning of a semester to the end of a semester.

Learning Outcome 1.2 (LO 1.2)

Reading performance gains will be greater for students who are enrolled in more courses at TVCC.

Learning Outcome 1.3 (LO 1.3)

Reading performance gains will be greater for students who are rated as “more engaged” at TVCC.

Learning Outcome 1.4 (LO 1.4)

Students with gains in reading performances will have a higher GPA and success of course completions in courses that have been identified as ‘difficult courses.’

Learning Goal #2: Enhance student engagement.

Learning Outcome 2.1: (LO 2.1)

Ratings of performance on the *CCSSE* will increase in the area of Academic Challenge by one decile in each *CCSSE* measurement year 2007, 2009, and 2011. (National Measure)

Learning Outcome 2.2: (LO 2.2)

Ratings of performance on the *CCSSE* will increase in the area of Student Effort by one decile in each *CCSSE* measurement year 2007, 2009, and 2011. (National Measure)

Learning Outcome 2.3: (LO 2.3)

Ratings of performance on the *CCSSE* will increase in the area of Faculty-Student Interaction by one decile in each *CCSSE* measurement year 2007, 2009, and 2011. (National Measure)

Learning Outcome 2.4: (LO 2.4)

Ratings of performance on the *CCSSE* will increase in the area of Active & Collaborative Learning by one decile in each *CCSSE* measurement year 2007, 2009, and 2011. (National Measure)

Learning Outcome 2.5: (LO 2.5)

Ratings of performance on the *CCSSE* will remain stable in the area of Support for Learners in each *CCSSE* measurement year 2007, 2009, and 2011. (National Measure)

Local Measures

Learning Outcome 2.6: (LO 2.6)

There will be marked gains in engagement from year to year on local measures of student engagement. (Local Measure)

Learning Outcome 2.7: (LO 2.7)

Comparisons of engaged and non-engaged students performance gains on reading assessments will be conducted to determine if differences in gains exist. (Local Measure)

Administrative Outcomes

Administrative Goal 1:

Create campus awareness of the activities of the QEP:

Administrative Outcome 1.1 (AO 1.1)

Increase campus-wide awareness of overall levels of student engagement. Awareness by all professional staff and faculty by FY07, and 100% awareness by all other personnel by FY08.

Administrative Outcome 1.2 (AO 1.2)

Increase campus-wide awareness of overall levels of student reading proficiency. Awareness by all professional staff and faculty by FY07, and 100% awareness by all other personnel by FY08.

Administrative Goal #2:

Increase faculty and staff activities related to enhancement of reading and engagement.

Administrative Outcome 2.1 (AO 2.1)

Increase involvement of faculty and staff in learning-centered initiatives related to enhancing student engagement. At least 25% of full-time faculty and 15% of professional staff will be involved in LI professional development activities each year.

Administrative Outcome 2.2 (AO 2.2)

Increase involvement of faculty and staff in learning-centered initiatives related to enhancing student reading proficiency. At least 25% of full-time faculty and 15% of professional staff will be involved in LI driven professional development activities each year.

Administrative Outcome 2.3 (AO 2.3)

Increase involvement of faculty and staff in faculty development activities directly related to reading and engagement. At least 10% of full-time faculty will be involved in Learning Initiative driven faculty development activities related to both reading and engagement each year. At least 8% of professional staff will be involved in LI driven professional development activities each year.

Administrative Goal #3

Commit to learning about student engagement and reading by collecting *and* using relevant artifacts that will more clearly guide our progress.

Administrative Outcome 3.1 (AO 3.1)

Develop local measures of student engagement for administration in FY06 and annually thereafter. Local measures will be validated by the end of FY07.

Administrative Outcome 3.2 (AO 3.2)

Delineate a clear definition of reading proficiency for TVCC graduates. Definition will be revisited yearly as a part of the administrative processes of the Learning Initiative.

Administrative Outcome 3.3 (AO 3.3)

Delineate a clear definition of reading proficiency in disciplines that appear among the difficult course listing. Definition will be revisited upon the initial creation of and the subsequent revision of discipline-specific tests.

Administrative Outcome 3.4 (AO 3.4)

Explore, through qualitative analysis, dimensions of student engagement experiences for TVCC students. At least one qualitative study will be conducted annually (focus groups).

Administrative Outcome 3.5 (AO 3.5)

Develop supplemental instruction methods to facilitate learning in crucial learning experiences. Current supplemental instruction methods (*PODS*, Learning Labs, and Great Explanations) will be evaluated at the end of FY07, and each subsequent year thereafter. New innovations will be evaluated annually as well.

Administrative Outcome 3.6 (AO 3.6)

Develop supplemental instruction methods using information technology. One supplemental instruction method that utilizes technology will be implemented each year. Appropriate assessment of the innovation will occur each year.

Administrative Outcome 3.7 (AO 3.7)

Develop collaborative learning environments for students to become more engaged. Evaluation of current innovations (Student Networking Groups) will be conducted on an annual basis. Additional innovations will emerge as it becomes apparent that they are necessary. Appropriate assessment of innovations will occur each year.

Administrative Outcome 3.8 (AO 3.8)

Develop standards of student responsibility for learning at TVCC (student group appointed). Standards of student responsibility for learning will be drafted by spring 2007, and will be in the FY08 catalog for implementation.

Administrative Outcome 3.9 (AO 3.9)

Develop standards of academic challenge for learning environments at TVCC (student and faculty group). Standards of academic challenge will be drafted by spring 2007. Standards will be discussed in FY08, and will be implemented by FY09.

Administrative Outcome 3.10 (AO 3.10)

Develop support structures for students and faculty in this new learning environment. Support structures will be developed and evaluated using appropriate assessment procedures for the innovation. Additionally, information from *CCSSE*, the graduating student survey and other local instruments will indicate that there is a supportive learning environment.

Learning Initiative Structure

The Learning Initiative developed from a campus-wide discussion regarding the most urgent needs that could be addressed to enhance student learning. The foci became reading and engagement. The Learning Initiative Council made a decision to produce a committee structure that would be able to deal with the necessary research, benchmarking, brainstorming, action, and evaluation of results for the initiatives that would be undertaken as a part of this project. The Council developed the following six teams: (a) Learning Academy Team – focused on engaging faculty and staff through professional development activities, (b) Assessment Team – focused on gathering and interpreting data on student learning, (c) Reading Team – focused on developing ideas on enhancing reading, (d) Student Engagement Team – focused on developing ideas and developing action plans to enhance engagement, (e) Technology Team – focused on developing ideas and action plans to leverage technology to enhance reading and engagement, and (f) Update Team –focused on developing communication flows that keep all stakeholders informed of the activities of the Learning Initiative. Further description of the charge, current level of activity, and primary membership of each of these teams is provided below.

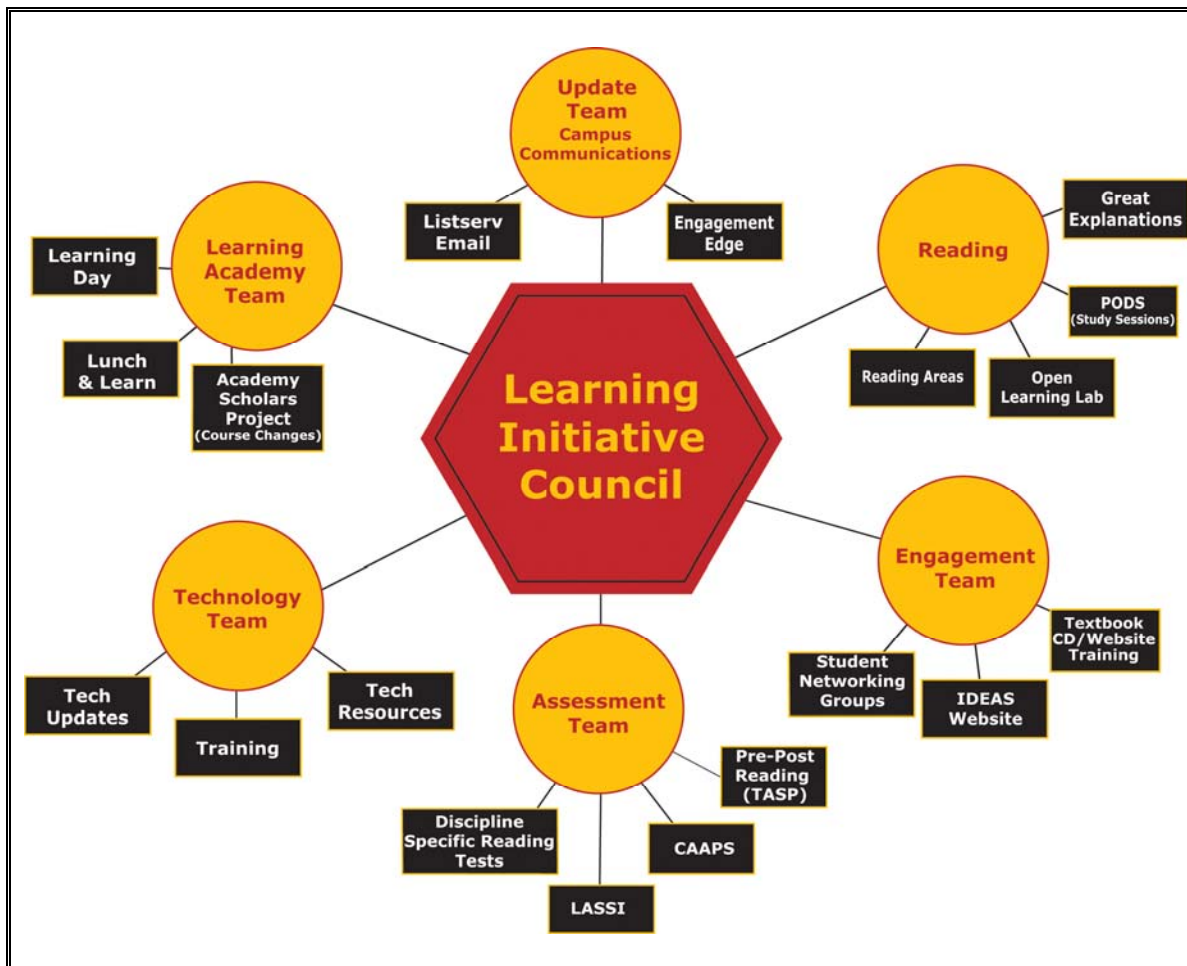


Figure 4A. Learning Initiative Structure

Learning Initiative Council

This council plays an active role in shaping the activities of the Learning Initiative (Quality Enhancement Plan), evaluating its accomplishments, and providing input into the long-term direction of the project. The current focus of the Learning Initiative is to increase reading comprehension through enhancing engagement.

Current level of activity:

Since formed in mid-spring 2005, this group has become closely bonded and functions well as a leadership unit for the entire QEP effort. They have been the “think tank” and “advisory board” for the process. The Council has laid the foundation for the Learning Initiative and has been the campus liaisons.

They continue to have oversight of all six major teams and the implementation of plans devised for these teams.

Primary Team Membership:

Jeremy McMillen, Co-Chair
Dean of Planning and Institutional
Effectiveness, SACS Accreditation Liaison

Kay Pulley, Co-Chair
Director of the Learning Initiative

Judy Callicoatt
Nursing Professor

Wanda Mayes
Reading Professor, Developmental
Coordinator, Reading Team Chair

Vicki Dossett
Counselor, Assessment Team Chair

Eric Moseley
Music, Speech Professor, Update Team
Chair

Linda Gann
Business and Marketing Professor,
Learning Academy Team Chair

Rob Risko
History Professor

Janet Lumpkin
English, Psychology, Speech, Humanities
Professor, Student Engagement Team Co-
Chair

Russell Self
Mathematics Professor, Developmental
Coordinator, Student Engagement
Team Co-Chair

Terry Spurlock
Director of Distance Learning, Technology
Team Chair

Student Engagement Team

The overall charge of the engagement team is to develop projects that will encourage student-faculty interaction, academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, and student responsibility. The current projects emerged after analysis of information on student engagement from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI). Both assessments indicated a need for more student engagement in academic life.

Current Level of Activity:

The Engagement Team initiated discussions on effective ways to increase engagement for students. The concept of Freshman Interest Groups (*FIGs*) was addressed repeatedly, but since much of TVCC's students do not live on campus and often have jobs and families, *FIGs* were ruled out as impractical. The team began to focus on something inside the classroom to increase engagement. The Team began to consider adaptations of the *FIGs* model and the concept of "Student Networking Groups" was born.

The Team turned its attention to something to increase engagement outside of the classroom and chose to cultivate textbook website use among students.

Both projects mentioned continue to be the focus of the Student Engagement Team.

As the *LASSI* was being given in the fall 2005 semester, the LI Council began to have questions about assisting any students who asked for help after assessing their learning and study strategies. The guidance office, through Carl Perkins monies distributed by a workforce dean, ordered booklets that addressed issues such as time management, test anxiety, and how to study. Four different booklets were ordered and housed in the guidance center on each campus for students to access. These scriptographic booklets covered the following subjects: Put Time On Your Side, Manage Stress for College Success, Test Anxiety, and About Making the Grade at College. If a student who took the *LASSI* inventory needed help, they requested assistance from the counselors in the guidance center who would determine which of these resources would benefit the student.

Pilot projects have been undertaken, including the development of student networking groups, as well as textbook website/CDs.

Primary Team Membership:

Janet Lumpkin, Co-Chair
English, Psychology, Speech,
Humanities Professor, Terrell

Russell Self, Co-Chair
Mathematics, Developmental Coordinator,
Athens

Elizabeth Starek
Tutor Coordinator, Student Support
Services, Athens

Angela Woodard
English, Business Professor, Palestine

Ray Hargrove-Huttel
Nursing Professor, Kaufman (HSC)

Mike Peek
Director, Student Activities, Athens

Reading Team

The charge of the reading team is to oversee reading assessment initiatives, provide universal support for reading outcomes, and provide ideas for institutional reading intervention strategies.

Current Level of Activity:

The Reading Team started as part of the Assessment Team, but the need to expand their responsibilities became apparent in fall 2005. The TVCC developmental reading

coordinator was head of the reading part of the Assessment Team and simply became chair of the Reading Team.

To encourage a culture of reading, this new team began by creating enjoyment reading areas on the Athens campus. As a result of this, magazine racks have been placed in the Gibbs Academic Building and the Student Union Building on the Athens campus. These racks are constantly stocked with magazines from the Learning Resource Center. The Team then began to investigate the benefits of an open Learning Lab for the campuses and opened three labs in fall 2006. This group continued to work closely with the Assessment Team to start the process of developing the first five Discipline-Specific Reading Tests. Eight such tests are being piloted as of fall 2006. Direction on future reading enhancement steps is continually sought from this group.

Primary Team Membership:

Wanda Mayes, Chair
Reading, Developmental Coordinator,
Athens

Sherri Myer
Assistant to Dean of Information
Technology Services, Athens

Janice Sutton
Director of Learning Resources, Athens

Lola King
English, Developmental Studies
Professor, Terrell

Marianne Leeper
History, Political Science Professor, Athens

Ella Faye Carlile
English, Reading, Nutrition Professor,
Athens

Alvis Montrose
Welding, Division Chairperson, Athens

Learning Academy Team

The charge of the Learning Academy Team is to develop and facilitate the activities of faculty and staff who will implement Learning Initiative ideas in and out of the classroom.

Current Level of Activity:

In fall 2005 a group of 11 TVCC faculty/professional staff began The Learning Academy Scholars Project led by the Academy Team Chair. They met 11 times for at least one-and-one-half hours in the fall and spring semesters. Innovative techniques were shared at each meeting and they were challenged to use a new method in at least one course. A portfolio of their work was due by mid-summer and they will provide leadership for a new in-service day known as Learning Day in fall 2006.

A new group of TVCC faculty/professional staff is being recruited as the fall 2006 semester begins. The goal is to continue the process yearly until the majority of faculty/professional staff have been a part of the Academy.

The Academy is also responsible for planning and hosting a series of hour-long in-service programs called Lunch and Learn throughout 2006-2007.

Primary Team Membership:

Linda Gann, Chair
Business and Marketing Professor,
Honors Director

Judy Callicoatt
Nursing Professor, Kaufman (HSC)

Floyd Brigdon
English Professor, Terrell

Michael Carlisle
Biology Professor, Athens

Technology Team

The charge of the Technology Team is to develop innovative ways to utilize technology to encourage student engagement, which would allow faculty to increase academic challenge while supporting learners for success. Through leveraging technology, TVCC envisions the opportunity to enhance student learning anytime, anywhere, and any place.

Current Level of Activity:

Technology certainly had to be considered in the concept of changing the culture and fulfilling the (QEP) Learning Initiative goals. A Technology Team was necessary because of the need for continually learning about new and advanced programs that would help facilitate TVCC programs. The Team chair gave explanations and demonstrations about blogging (on-line journaling), RSS (Real Simple Syndication), *Web CT*, and the information about the license to use and limitations of use for *Web CT* to the Council members so that they could in turn inform other faculty and staff. This Team should form heavily as TVCC approaches some of its goals for the 2006-2007 academic year.

This team has been less active than many other teams, as many of the ideas hinged upon having a technological infrastructure that could support innovation in student learning. The main challenge was having available licenses for TVCC's course management system, *WebCT*. Through summer 2006, TVCC was at capacity in the *WebCT* modules within it's normal course operations; therefore, there was no capacity to develop additional modules that might support supplemental instruction through the use of technology.

Having said this, TVCC has developed technology outside of the instructional medium that has enhanced services to students. Developments include the implementation of early registration via Kiosk (fall 2005-summer 2006), and more recently the availability of registration totally online (fall 2006). Additionally, TVCC will have unlimited access to *WebCT*, beginning fall 2006. These developments will make it possible to develop new tools for student learning. Ideas that have been discussed include supplemental materials being available outside of class, the availability of synchronous or asynchronous tutorial services, the development of self-sustaining student networking groups outside of class, or the development of hybrid courses for those students who may benefit from distance courses yet may want the student-student and/or student-faculty interaction.

Primary Team Membership:

Terry Spurlock, Chair
Director of Distance Learning, Athens

Tina Rummel
Senior Research Analyst, Athens

Thomas Hainze
Computer Science Professor, Athens

Richard Davis
Computer Science Professor, Palestine

Donnie Fulford
Drafting Professor, Athens

Brian Allen
Computer Science Professor, Terrell

Assessment Team

The charge of the Assessment Team is to design and implement an assessment system that clearly focuses on learning outcomes. The value of any assessment technique lies in the acquisition of actionable information; therefore, it must be an ongoing part of the activity being assessed. This is key to sustaining an organizational culture that uses data for improving the learning environment and student learning. Neglecting the value of systematic evaluation and documentation of learning outcomes leaves colleges guessing about the effectiveness of their learning improvement efforts without sound conclusions that result from research on learning in their specific environment.

Current Level of Activity:

The assessment Team was to select the reading assessment tool to be used for pre and post tests in fall 2005. Permission was granted to use the *Pre-Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP)*.

This team also recommended piloting the *Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI)* test. The *Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)* was selected to be given to AA graduates in the fall and spring.

At the advice of a reading assessment specialist from Texas Central College (Dr. Sharon Pate), plans were implemented to develop *Discipline-Specific Reading Tests*. As of fall 2006, developmental reading classes are preparing to give *Pre-TASP*, eight disciplines are giving the first round of *Discipline-Specific Reading Tests*, and *CAAP* will be offered before graduation in December.

Primary Team Membership:

Vicki Dossett, Chair
Counselor, Athens

Barbara Gosnell
Adult Education Coordinator (Retired),
Athens

Brian Baumgartner
Biology Professor, Athens

Jim Guillory
Science, Mathematics Professor, Athens

Roberta Walden
English Professor, Athens

Carol Pendland
Mathematics Professor, Palestine

Cindy Akin
Testing Coordinator (Retired), Athens

Gayla Roberts
Dean of Community Services, Athens

Update Team

The charge of the Update Team is to ensure that the Learning Initiative is marketed effectively to all constituencies. This involves both communicating information about the process and receiving information. The update team will help to develop or otherwise advise the leadership of the Learning Initiative on how to effectively provide communication on the goals of the project. Additionally, the update team is responsible for providing feedback on how well the information is understood by TVCC stakeholders.

Current Level of Activity:

Providing communication has been accomplished through a variety of methods, including departmental meetings, campus meetings, distribution of newsletters, communications with the board of trustees, articles in the student newspaper, and informational e-mails (*Engagement Edge*). Additionally, the Learning Initiative Council has discussed the Learning Initiative in keynote messages at the fall 2005 and spring 2006 in-service meetings with all faculty and at the fall 2006 in-service meeting with all faculty and available staff. The director of the Learning Initiative and the dean of planning and institutional effectiveness have made two specific appearances at the request of faculty and/or staff who were seeking clarification of the Learning Initiative (Palestine Campus visit, student services retreat). The Update Team has been responsible for many of the items listed above; however, communicating the culture change that is required for implementing a project such as the Learning Initiative requires the interaction of many people involved in the project. Therefore, the communication process is on-going.

Primary Team Membership:

Eric Moseley, Chair
Music, Speech Professor, Palestine

Deanna Thompson
Librarian, Terrell

Kathy Lewis
English Professor, Palestine

Brian Spurling
Graphic Artist and Print Design
Coordinator, Athens

Gayla Roberts
Dean of Community Services, Athens

Jennifer Hannigan, Public Information
Officer, Athens

Engagement

Section 6

From the stage to the sidelines, students at Trinity Valley Community College (TVCC) have built a reputation of excellence in many vital areas of college life, both academic and extracurricular. TVCC ranks in the top five among community college districts in Texas in the number of students receiving degrees and certificates annually. Also, the Iota Alpha chapter of Phi Theta Kappa honors society has won numerous top awards in the international conference over the past eight years and was ranked third out of 1,200 chapters worldwide in 2004. The Cardinal Cheerleaders, Cardettes, Cardinal Regiment and Choir have performed around the country and internationally. Also, TVCC athletic programs have numerous national titles to their credit.

All of these accomplishments led the faculty and staff to believe many students were engaged in college life, both at the academic and extracurricular levels. In fact, these honors gave TVCC a high level of pride in student accomplishments. However, when students were questioned about their attitudes, beliefs, study skills and other areas specifically geared toward student engagement, the results were startling and drastically changed the course of planning at TVCC.

Engagement Data

TVCC participated in three key assessments that provided baseline data on student engagement, including the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE), and the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI). Data from each of these is summarized below.

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement

The CCSSE served as the initial data source for inquiry into student engagement at TVCC. The Houston Endowment provided funding to the Texas Small College Consortium, which supported TVCC's administration of CCSSE in spring 2005 as well as spring 2007. Additionally, TVCC intends to participate in the CCSSE in 2009 and in 2011. This will be made possible with a matching grant from the Houston Endowment during each of those two administrations (estimated value \$6,000).

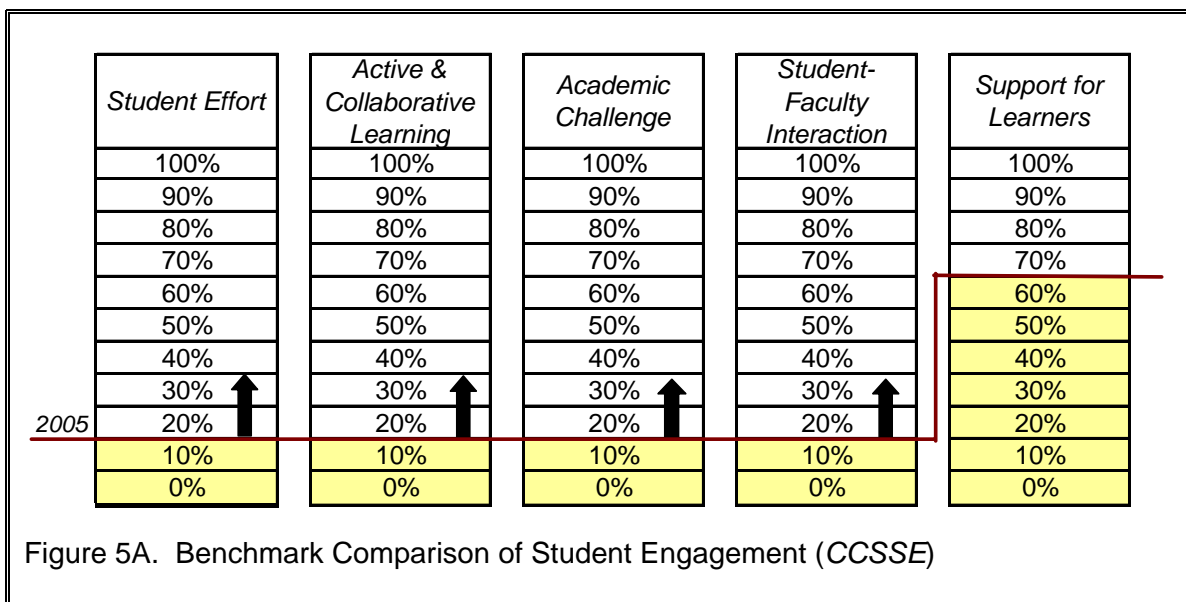
When benchmarking against medium sized colleges, TVCC students were more likely to declare an intent to transfer to a four-year university. TVCC scored below the mean when compared to medium colleges on the following items:

- Made a class presentation
- Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in
- Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources
- Worked with other students on projects during class
- Used the Internet or instant messaging to work on an assignment
- Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor
- Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory
- Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences in new ways

- Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Using information you have read or heard to perform a new skill
- Number of written papers or reports of any length
- Using computers in academic work
- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to your program)
- Frequency of use of computer labs

*Mean Differences are only reported when there is a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$), and the Effect Size exceeds (+/-) 0.20.

CCSSE measures five dimensions of student engagement, including student-faculty interaction, active and collaborative learning, academic challenge, and student effort. When TVCC received the results of the 2005 administration of the CCSSE, it was clear that the College had significant room for improvement in four of the five dimensions. In each of these cases, the benchmark scores of TVCC were below the norm when compared to colleges that participate in the Texas Small College Consortium, medium colleges (CCSSE defined), rural colleges, as well as all CCSSE surveyed colleges. In fact, TVCC was in the bottom decile on four of these measures. The only dimension that TVCC compared favorably in was support for learners.



The Learning Initiative (LI) Council has analyzed TVCC performance on each of the five dimensions while developing the plan for the Learning Initiative. This data has provided the LI Council as well as the campus with a common base from which to discuss possible action. Additionally, it has helped to serve as a catalyst for opening discussions within the larger culture, as faculty and staff were reluctant to believe change was necessary. An overview of the benchmark areas is provided below, with more detailed data being available in the Appendix, as well as online (<http://www.tvcc.edu/LearningInitiative/Data/>).

Support for Learners

TVCC is committed to the success of its students, and believes that support should be provided to promote positive relationships among groups on campus. This is supported by our successes in the areas of student activities and with Phi Theta Kappa. Additionally, CCSSE data support this commitment to our students. Researchers at CSSE further describe *active and collaborative learning* as follows:

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relationships among different groups on campus.

It has already been noted that TVCC is in the sixth decile when compared to other community colleges. Table 5.1 provides TVCC performance on individual items that make up this dimension.

Table 5.1. Comparison of Performance on Individual Survey Items, Support for Learners

	TVCC	Consortium Colleges ¹	2005 CCSSE
<u><i>How much does this college emphasize:</i></u>			
Providing the support you need to help you succeed at this college	2.85	2.91	2.90
Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	2.39	2.44	2.40
Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	1.87	1.94	1.88
Providing the support you need to thrive socially	2.06	2.10	2.04
Providing the financial support you need to afford your education	2.51	2.42	2.37
<u><i>During the current school year, how often have you used:</i></u>			
Frequency: Academic advising/planning	1.68	1.76	1.74
Frequency: Career Counseling	1.43	1.52	1.43

¹*Small Texas Colleges Paid for by the Houston Endowment*

TVCC has set a target to improve on this dimension of CCSSE by one decile in 2007, and by an additional decile in each 2009 and 2011. This relates directly to the Learning Initiative's Learning Outcome 2.5.

Academic Challenge

Challenging students in the academic environment is noted as encouraging learning. Cognitive dissonance or creating unease between what is known and what is to be known encourages transformation of thoughts and beliefs; therefore, academic challenge is the cornerstone of encouraging the growth that we portray as so important at community colleges. Researchers note that the most challenging component of learning is unlearning, as this requires students to temporarily suspend their beliefs about a field of study, the workplace, or society. Challenging these notions is the first step toward creating deep learning, and increasing the complexity of cognitive tasks as lower level tasks are mastered is one means by which students continue to grow. Researchers at CSSE further describe *academic challenge* as follows:

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Ten survey items address the nature and amount of assigned academic work, the complexity of cognitive tasks presented to students, and the standards faculty members use to evaluate student performance.

It has already been noted that TVCC is in the lowest decile when compared to other community colleges. Table 5.2 provides TVCC performance on individual items that make up this dimension.

Table 5.2. Comparison of Performance on Individual Survey Items, Academic Challenge

	TVCC	Consortium Colleges ¹	2005 CCSSE
<u><i>During the current school year, how often have you:</i></u>			
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations	2.46	2.49	2.51
<u><i>How much does your coursework at this college emphasize:</i></u>			
Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory	2.63	2.72	2.79
Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences in new ways	2.47	2.63	2.66 *(-0.21)
Making judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods	2.37	2.46	2.51
Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	2.35	2.52	2.59 *(-0.26)
Using information you have read or heard to perform a new skill	2.48	2.69	*(-0.22) 2.70 *(-0.23)
<u><i>During the current school year, how many</i></u>			
Number of assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or book length packs of course readings	2.62	2.77	2.84 *(-0.21)

Table 5.2. Comparison of Performance on Individual Survey Items, Academic Challenge (cont.)

	TVCC	Consortium Colleges ¹	2005 CCSSE
Number of written papers or reports of any length	2.46	2.63	2.78 *(-0.28)
<i>Mark the box that best represents the extent to which</i>			
Your examinations during the current school year have challenged you to do your best work at this college	4.92	5.07	5.02
<i>How much does this college emphasize:</i>			
Encouraging you to spend significant amounts of time studying	2.81	2.93	2.92

¹*Small Texas Colleges Paid for by the Houston Endowment*

TVCC has set a target to improve on this dimension of CCSSE by one decile in 2007, and by an additional decile in each 2009 and 2011. This relates directly to the Learning Initiative's Learning Outcome 2.1.

Active & Collaborative Learning

Active involvement by both faculty and students encourages a environment that maximizes learning. Often, this leads the collaboration among all players in the learning environment. Researchers dating back to John Dewey have observed a positive relationship between active and collaborative engagement of a subject and deep learning. TVCC strives to increase deep learning through active and collaborative learning, and the CCSSE data has provided TVCC with a baseline from which to work. Researchers at CCSSE further describe *active and collaborative learning* as follows:

Students learn more when they are actively involved in their education and have opportunities to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings. Through collaborating with others to solve problems or master challenging content, students develop valuable skills that prepare them to deal with the kinds of situations and problems they will encounter in the workplace, the community, and their personal lives.

It has already been noted that TVCC is in the lowest decile when compared to other community colleges. Table 5.3 provides TVCC performance on individual items that make up this dimension.

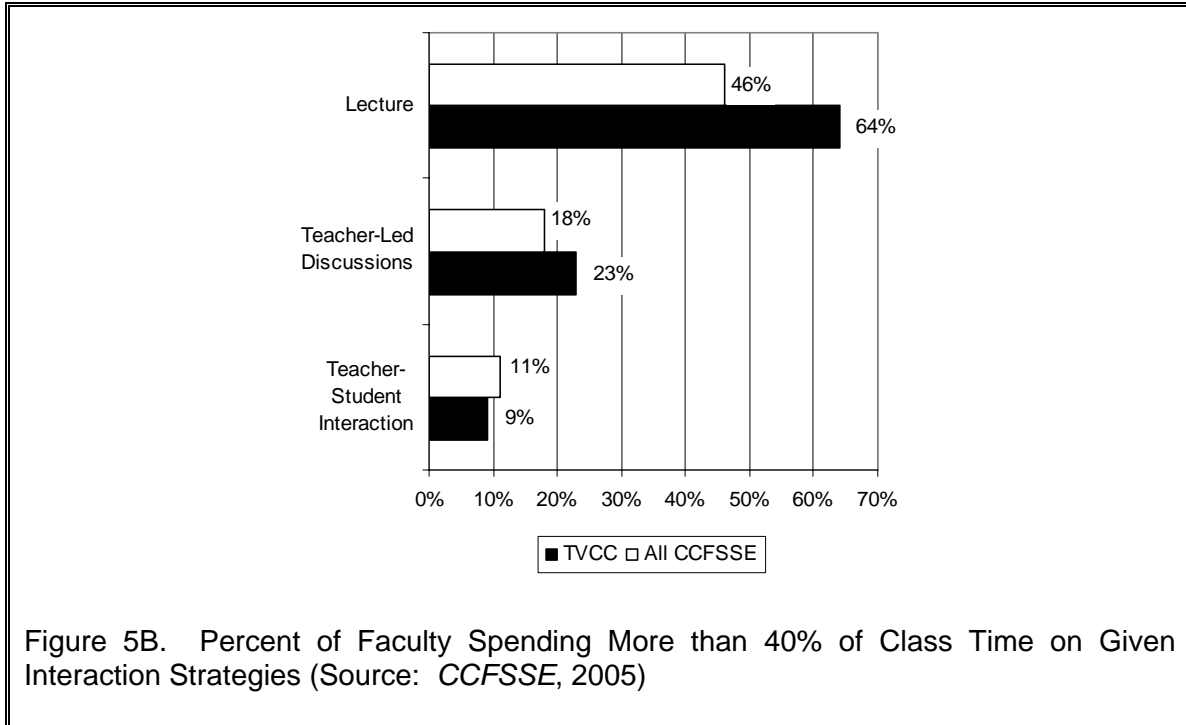
Table 5.3. Comparison of Performance on Individual Survey Items, Active and Collaborative Learning

	TVCC	Consortium Colleges ¹	2005 CCSSE
<i><u>During the current school year, how often have you:</u></i>			
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	2.73	2.80	2.91 *(-0.21)
Made a class presentation	1.74	1.97 *(-0.26)	2.00 *(-0.29)
Worked with other students on projects during class	2.21	2.41 *(-0.22)	2.45 *(-0.27)
Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	1.85	1.87	1.83
Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	1.40	1.39	1.36
Participated in a community-based project as a part of a regular course	1.29	1.27	1.27
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others	2.48	2.55	2.55

¹*Small Texas Colleges Paid for by the Houston Endowment*

TVCC has set a target to improve on this dimension of CCSSE by one decile in 2007, and by an additional decile in each 2009 and 2011.

TVCC participated in the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement, which compares student perceptions with that of faculty. Seventy percent of TVCC Faculty responded to the CCFSSSE, and were compared to responses from 35 community colleges. The CCFSSSE indicated that TVCC faculty are much more likely to lecture in the classroom when compared to other CCFSSSE participating institutions (see Figure 5A below). Research indicates that lecture is the least likely method of instruction to encourage active and collaborative learning; therefore, TVCC is re-imagining how the College can capitalize on instructor's oratory skills while also encouraging more student faculty interaction.



TVCC has set a target to improve on this dimension of CCSSE by one decile in 2007, and by an additional decile in each 2009 and 2011. This relates directly to the Learning Initiative’s Learning Outcome 2.4.

Student-Faculty Interaction

Student interactions with faculty are the foundation of any college or university – this provides the building blocks for *what we do*. The nature of those interactions and their frequency have great influence over student learning. Exposure to experts in the field is how students learn their chosen enterprise. Researchers at CSSE further describe *student-faculty interaction* as follows:

In general, the more contact students have with their teachers, the more likely they are to learn effectively and persist toward achievement of their educational goals. Through such interactions, faculty members become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, lifelong learning.

It has already been noted that TVCC is in the lowest decile when compared to other community colleges. Table 5.4 provides TVCC performance on individual items that make up this dimension.

Table 5.4. Comparison of Performance on Individual Survey Items, Student-Faculty Interaction

	TVCC	Consortium Colleges ¹	2005 CCSSE
<i>During the current school year, how often have you:</i>			
Used email to communicate with an instructor	1.84	2.13	*(-0.29) 2.24 *(-0.24)
Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	2.49	2.46	2.47
Talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor	1.91	1.99	1.97
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class	1.58	1.69	1.70
Received prompt feedback (written or oral) from instructors on your performance	2.47	2.57	2.63
Worked with instructors on activities other than coursework	1.33	1.37	1.38

¹*Small Texas Colleges Paid for by the Houston Endowment

TVCC has set a target to improve on this dimension of CCSSE by one decile in 2007, and by an additional decile in each 2009 and 2011. This relates directly to the Learning Initiative's Learning Outcome 2.3.

Again, Figure 5A in the section above indicates faculty at TVCC are more likely to use lecture as a primary instructional tool; further verifying the need for different methods of student interaction.

Student Effort

Shared responsibility for student learning is a cornerstone of learning-centered community colleges (McMillen, 2006). TVCC could theoretically have the most stellar faculty, services, and support for students – but without student effort, the learning environment will not have the same effect on student learning. Student effort is a key component of this shared responsibility. The TVCC faculty handbook states, “(l)earner success is at the center of all College endeavors. Students are responsible for their learning *and* quality teaching is expected, recognized and rewarded” (TVCC Faculty Handbook, 2005, p. v). Therefore, the CCSSE data provide TVCC with valuable baseline data on this component of student learning. Researchers at CSSE further describe *student effort* as follows:

Students' own behaviors contribute significantly to their learning and the likelihood that they will successfully attain their educational goals.

It has already been noted that TVCC is in the lowest decile when compared to other community colleges. Table 5.5 provides TVCC performance on individual items that make up this dimension.

Table 5.5. Comparison of Performance on Individual Survey Items, Student Effort

	TVCC	Consortium Colleges ¹	2005 CCSSE
<u>During the current school year, how often have you:</u>			
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	2.27	2.39	2.47
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	2.39	2.59	*(-0.21) 2.66 *(-0.29)
Came to class without completing readings or assignments	1.83	1.94	1.87
Number of books read on your own(not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment	2.10	2.03	2.08
Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to your program)	1.66	1.77	1.88
Frequency of use: Peer or other tutoring	1.41	1.49	1.44
Frequency of use: Skill labs (writing, math, etc.)	1.70	1.81	1.70
Frequency of use: Computer lab	1.86	2.10	*-0.30 2.10 *(-0.30)

¹*Small Texas Colleges Paid for by the Houston Endowment*

TVCC has set a target to improve on this dimension of CCSSE by one decile in 2007, and by an additional decile in each 2009 and 2011.

TVCC has set a target to improve on this dimension of CCSSE by one decile in 2007, and by an additional decile in each 2009 and 2011. This relates directly to the Learning Initiative's Learning Outcome 2.2.

Overall, the results of CCSSE will provide support for documentation of the following learning and administrative outcomes. The utilization of CCSSE data will assist the institution in communicating the need for change, as well as where we stand.

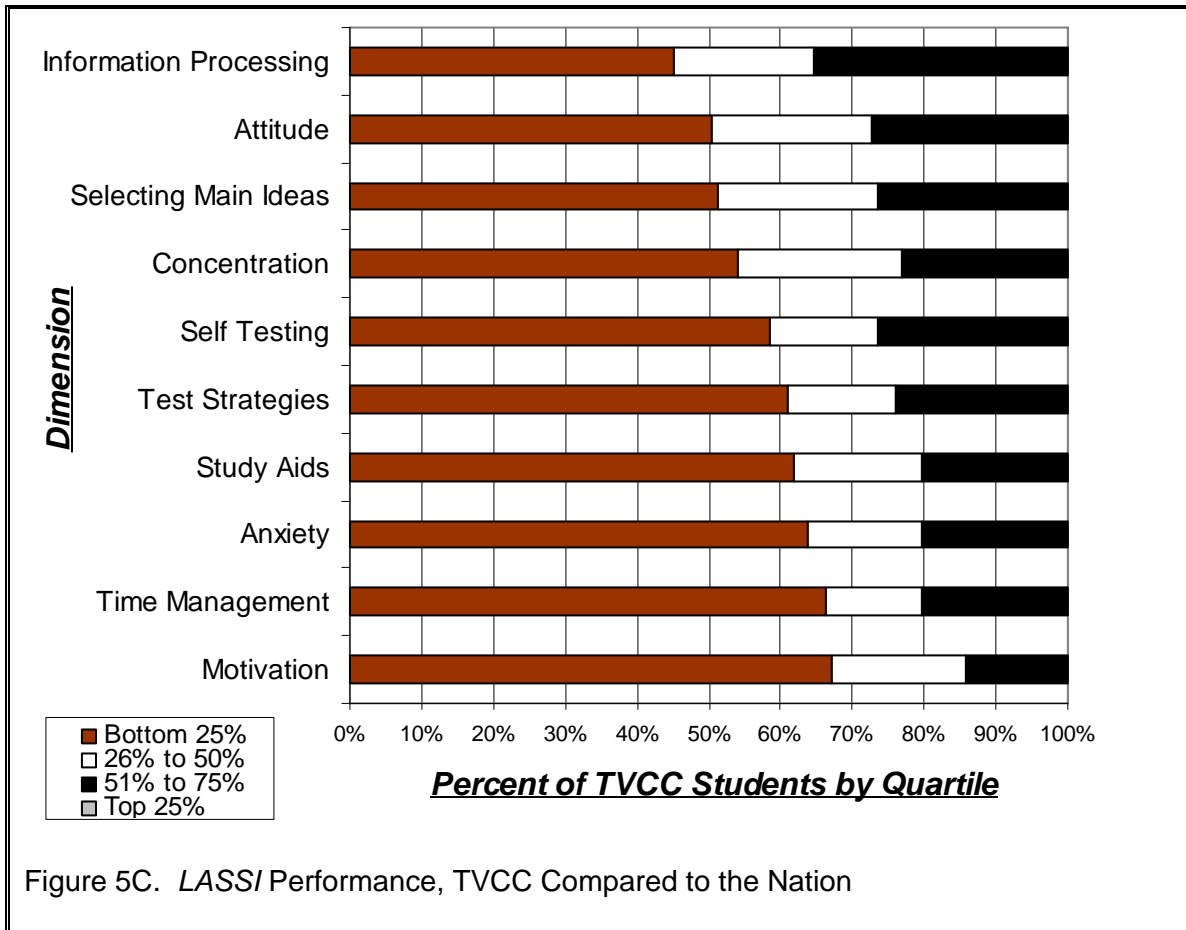
Learning Outcomes: LO 2.1, LO 2.2, LO 2.3, LO 2.4, LO 2.5, LO 2.6, LO 2.7
 Administrative Outcomes: AO 1.1, AO 2.1

Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI)

At the advice of an assessment and reading specialist from Central Texas College, TVCC administered the LASSI to 115 students to gauge where TVCC students rated on this important national instrument. The LASSI is a 10-scale, 80-item assessment of students' awareness about and use of learning and study strategies related to skill, will, and self-regulation components of strategic learning. The LASSI, developed by

Weinstein, Schulte, and Palmer, is an instrument that diagnoses study skill strategies and prescribes suggestions for remedying deficiencies. It provides students with a diagnosis of their strengths and weaknesses, compared to other college students, and feedback about areas where students may be weak and need to improve their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and skills. The *LASSI* provides standardized scores (percentile score equivalents) and national norms for 10 different scales, including: anxiety, attitude, concentration, information processing, motivation, self-testing, selecting main ideas, study aids, time management, and test strategies. More description of each of these dimensions is provided in the Appendix.

LASSI participants responded positively to the interest TVCC was showing in their learning. Overall, the students seemed to be impressed with the idea that issues such as anxiety, attitude, motivation, and time management were being considered by their instructors. However, if TVCC utilized the advice of the designers of the *LASSI* instrument, no single student who completed the *LASSI* is without need of improvement. In fact, at least 75% of all TVCC students fell below the 50th percentile in 9 of the 10 items, which indicates that students need to improve their skills to “avoid serious problems succeeding in college.” The area in most need of improvement by TVCC students is motivation, followed by time management, anxiety, study aids, test strategies, self testing, concentration, selecting main ideas, attitude, and information processing. No TVCC student who participated in the *LASSI* evaluation fell in the top 25% of all *LASSI* participants nationwide.



As the *LASSI* was being given in fall 2005, the LI Council began to have questions about responsibility toward students who asked for help after assessing their learning and study strategies. The guidance office, through Carl Perkins Grant monies distributed by the workforce dean, ordered booklets addressing issues such as time management, test anxiety, and study methods. Booklets were housed in the guidance center on each campus for students to access. If a student who took the *LASSI* inventory requested assistance, then the Guidance centers would determine what resources would benefit the student.

The *LASSI*, since it is a diagnostic evaluation instrument, will be utilized as a means to assess student needs and to place them in appropriate student support experiences. This should enhance student effort (Learning Outcome 2.2), as well as to explore the dimensions of student engagement experiences for TVCC students (Administrative Outcome 3.4).

Engagement Action

Faculty and administrative focus groups revealed some concerns regarding engagement in the classroom, yet the institution could point to a number of items that indicated students were engaged outside of class (PTK, student activities, athletics). When the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (*CCSSE*) was administered at TVCC in spring 2005, hopes were high. Faculty and staff believed the results would further the perception that TVCC was an outstanding institution with an engaged, dedicated student body and a culture which fostered advanced learning.

The results of the *CCSSE* and the focus groups belied expectations. During focus group discussions, administrators and faculty spoke freely about student absences, lack of student commitment, and the general “uncaring” attitudes of students. Student focus groups revealed complaints of insufficient academic challenge, as well as uneasiness about whether TVCC was preparing them to meet the challenges of a university upon transfer. Also, students who were not involved in extracurricular activities complained of feeling “alienated.” However, students also expressed feelings of responsibility for their own success and named “motivation” as a key to success.

Despite open discussion of concerns in these focus groups, the *CCSSE* results were unexpected. Needless to say, the administration, faculty, and staff immediately became defensive and argumentative, but the figures were ultimately convincing. It was immediately determined that change in both employee and student culture was needed at TVCC. In addition, it was clear that a change in faculty and staff culture must occur in order to initiate changes in student culture. Thus, the *CCSSE* became the catalyst for change at TVCC. A need for change had been introduced and discussed, but *CCSSE* results became the mandate for change.

TVCC came to realize that levels of student effort, coupled with the current TVCC learning environment, was leading to engagement only for the highly motivated. The Learning Initiative Council began working with faculty members to enhance student effort. Oftentimes, we believe, students have a desire to be engaged in the learning process, but lack the skills to accomplish the goal. At this point, the LI Council believed that efforts focused on academic challenge, active and collaborative learning and student-faculty interaction should elevate levels of student engagement. If you raise the

bar, students will perform to that level. For this to occur, students must do their part. Therefore, the LI Council has challenged them to “choose their path,” a theme of the Learning Initiative marketing efforts.

To create change in the areas of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, and student-faculty interaction, faculty and staff must develop innovative strategies to enhance the learning environment. This institutional approach to learning is embedded in the learning-centered mission of the college. Expecting student learning to occur, measuring when and where it does, and taking action to remedy any shortcomings is the focus of the Learning Initiative.

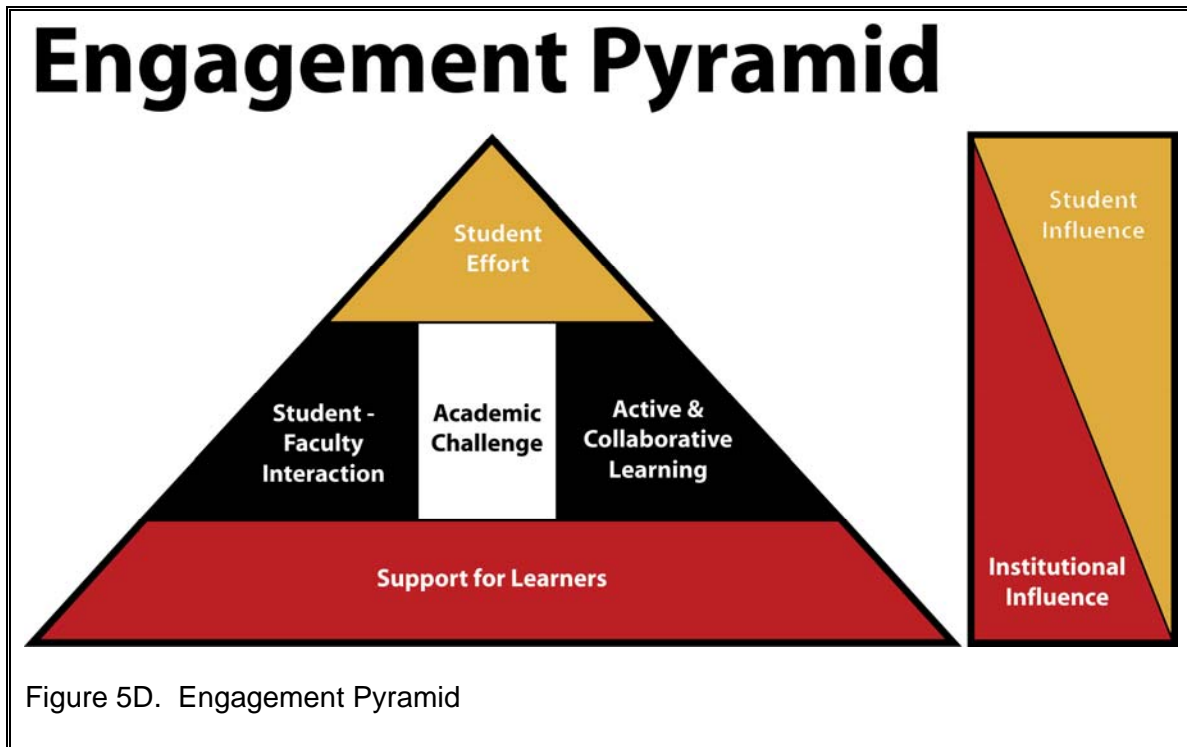


Figure 5D. Engagement Pyramid

The figure above delineates the overall model of student engagement, with the foundation being support for learners—an area of strength for TVCC.

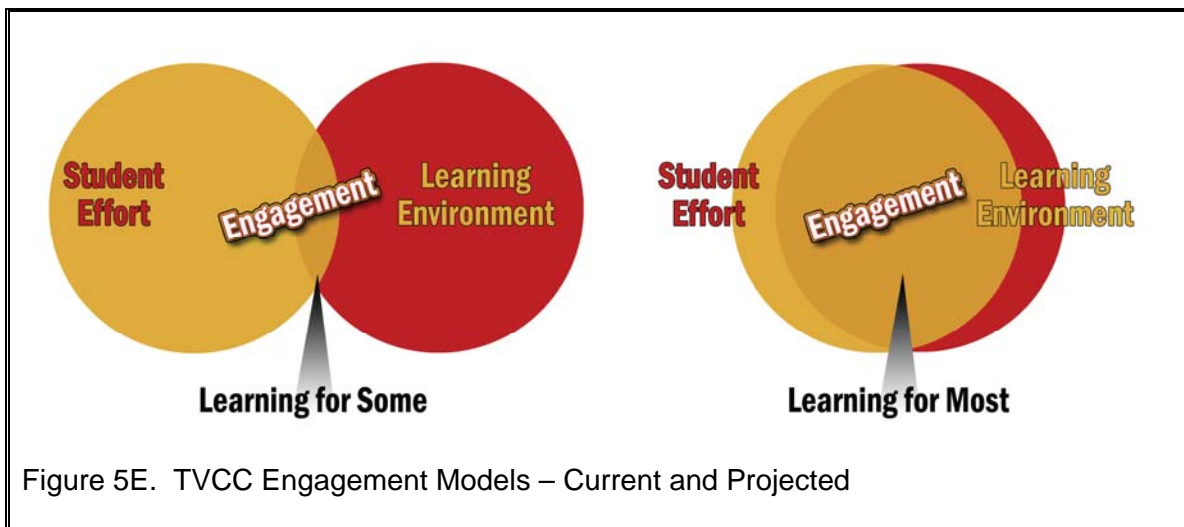
The center level of the pyramid is an area in which the College and students share responsibility. The institution has more control over this area. As you move up the pyramid, the responsibility for learning shifts to students with shared responsibility occurring on the second level. In the center of this level is academic challenge, the center of all learning activities. On either side are active and collaborative learning and student-faculty interaction. Certainly academic challenge will create more activity in student-faculty interaction, but the nature of that interaction is important. Active and collaborative learning techniques are envisioned as powerful tools for enhancing the learning environment, and work in this area is already under way.

When faculty members are encouraged to focus on the areas illustrated in the middle level of the pyramid, the expected outcome is that students will engage in learning. By requiring things such as multiple drafts, the use of multiple sources, time in computer

labs, and outside readings, teachers will create the necessity of “time on task.” Also, by encouraging interaction between students, both faculty and students will become more involved in the learning process. Any successes to this end will facilitate a culture of deep learning, both for the institution and for students.

The last benchmark, student effort, is an area more directly influenced by students. The *CCSSE* uses “time on task” as a key indicator and emphasizes time used outside of the classroom. Though college students are responsible for themselves and ultimately their individual effort, faculty can embed student effort engagement requirements. This building of the pyramid and the scale of student/institution influence (right of Figure 5C) led to the recognition of a balance between institutional and student influence.

Asking faculty to initiate a shift in their teaching styles or telling students they must put forth more effort is inadequate to affect true change. Therefore, TVCC is embarking on a journey to discover what works. It is clear that the current learning environment leads to learning for some (see left image on figure 5D). Should our efforts prove successful, the environment of learning at TVCC should begin to resemble to the figure on the right (see Figure 5D). Determination of progress will be measured based upon *CCSSE* results in 2007, 2009, and 2011.



Engagement Action (Students)

Based on the results of the *LASSI*, the *CCSSE* and the focus groups, the Learning Initiative Council began to develop several courses of action for the institution to begin enhancing student engagement.

Student Networking Groups

In reviewing the best practices for enhancing student engagement and student learning, the Learning Initiative Council was exposed to the literature on Freshmen Interest Groups (FIGs). This concept had worked very well as a way to encourage students at other institutions. Various models for FIGs have emerged in practice, including students living in the same dorms, taking the same block of courses, participating in tutorials together, attending cultural enrichment activities as a group, enrolling in on-line hybrid

courses, and often spending much of their social time together. The course groupings would center on a themed topic, such as terrorism or family. After significant discussions of each component's potential for application at TVCC, it was decided that a traditional application of the FIGs model would have significant logistical challenges when applied to students.

Creating FIGs would be a challenge for our students, as many are commuting students who also work and have families. As such, a FIG model could only impact a small number of TVCC students, such as residential students on the Athens campus (~350 students). The LI Council worked to devise plans to create an adaptation that would help students in spite of their busy and full lives. The idea of Student Networking Groups emerged as a workable solution.

With Student Networking Groups, faculty would structure their classes to divide into working groups that would function to foster student to student interaction. Teaching methods would encourage active and collaborative learning amongst students while simultaneously encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning. The Engagement Team co-chair began to read and research the best practices in college class group dynamics and put together a student networking manual for teachers who were interested (available online at http://www.tvcc.edu/opie/LearningInitiative/SNG_Manual.pdf).

In reviewing the literature the LI Council was well aware of the paradigm shift that would be required in order for this new pedagogical approach to be adopted by faculty. The Council realized that this was more than moving the chairs around in the room. Rather, this shift would require significant effort on the part of faculty, even amongst those who saw this as a promising practice. Relinquishing the traditional approach to teaching at TVCC would require overcoming the fear of not being the sage on the stage.

Additionally, the student networking model requires that more responsibility for learning be released to students. In shifting this responsibility, faculty participating in the project also began to realize that it was different to provide instruction (which was traditionally lecture) than to provide a learning environment that enhances student learning. This focus, and the requisite measurement of student learning outcomes, has brought into focus the benefits and shortcomings of each pedagogical approach. Early results from student networking groups reveal that there is growth in student reading performance and in student self-reported engagement in courses where networking occurred.

Volunteers were sought at the spring 2006 in-service and, though a number of teachers responded to the mini-training session, only four were able to run the pilot. The initial plan was for teachers who instructed the same course in two different sessions to implement the networking groups in one group and not the other. Comparing the two classes would provide the faculty member with a comparison of the impact on engagement and reading. Both groups were to be tested so that a data oriented outcome evaluation could be done. Plans to continue this project are well under way.

To build upon these early efforts, faculty development is being provided to further expand the application of Student Networking Groups. Those interested in seeking additional faculty development in this area will be asked to attend the Networking Workshop introduction on Learning Day in September and meet through the fall 2006

semester three times (~1 hour sessions). After exposure to the methods and practices used to effectively engage in student networking groups, faculty will submit a new course syllabus which will incorporate learning outcomes, group activities, and assessment criteria, which will serve as start-up for participation in the Expanded Networking Pilot Project, spring 2007.

Three Networking Workshops will be conducted at the Terrell, Athens, and Palestine campuses for faculty interested in participating in the Networking Pilot Project. The hope behind the Networking Workshops is to increase faculty knowledge of collaborative learning, encourage participation in the Networking Pilot Project, and widen support of the Learning Initiative. The purpose of Networking Workshops during the fall semester is to demonstrate various techniques of collaborative learning through networking. Additionally, the three meetings will cover various topics (see below). The following will provide the basis for learning:

- *Philosophy of Teaching.* Three teaching frameworks of Content, Competency, and Learning-Centered Outcomes (from *The Outcomes Primer*) will be compared; participants will describe their current and desired frameworks.
- *Philosophy of Learning.* Assumptions and biases will be examined; participants will describe their underlying views of learning.
- *Networking Activities.* Participants will demonstrate an active knowledge of the *Student Networking Group Manual* through performance on a group test.
- *Instructional Design.* Through a re-written syllabus focused on learning-centered outcomes, participants will demonstrate preparedness for the Networking Pilot Project.

The goal of these discussions is to lead faculty who are interested in participating in the Networking Pilot Project. Participation in the Networking Pilot Project would require faculty to:

- Select a course they teach both fall 2006 and spring 2007.
- During the fall 2006 semester, they will promise to use no networking techniques in that selected course.
- The spring 2007 section of that class will be structured to fully utilize networking techniques.
- The “regular” fall 2006 course will be compared to the “networking” spring 2007 course for differences in engagement, reading, attendance, retention, and grades.

Workshops will continue into the spring 2007 semester if faculty are interested, These sessions would be less structured meetings; emphasis would be on support, discussion, and problem-solving.

Additional innovative strategies that directly relate to student engagement will continue to be sought as TVCC continues through the QEP

Assessment of the activities of Student Networking Groups will be conducted by administering reading and engagement assessments at the beginning and end of each semester that groups are formed. A control group of the same course taught by the same faculty member will be selected for comparison purposes. The control group will be selected either from a semester prior to the administration of Student Networking

Groups, or a course taught during the same semester without using groups. In the case of comparisons, reading and engagement assessments will be used in both courses. This should help to evaluate the future effectiveness of Student Networking Groups.

In addition to evaluation of Student Networking Groups, TVCC envisions that these activities will influence the Learning Initiative outcomes listed below.

Learning Outcomes: LO 1.1, LO 1.2, LO 1.3, LO 1.4, LO 2.1, LO 2.2, LO 2.3, LO 2.4, LO 2.5, LO 2.6, LO 2.7
Administrative Outcomes: AO 2.2, AO3.1, AO 3.4, AO 3.7

Engagement Action (Faculty and Staff)

Travis, Outlaw, and Reven (2001) noted that most faculty lack sufficient pedagogical training beyond the observation of their instructors during their studies within their academic discipline. Additionally, the systematic application of strategies for learning outcomes enhancement does not regularly occur in most community colleges. Banta, writing in 1995, argued that institutions hopefully could overcome the limitations of the current environment, even with the limited distribution of expertise in learning outcomes enhancement practices. She stated,

Despite the fact that few campus leaders who have guided assessment programs have backgrounds in educational research, the improvements undertaken in response to assessment findings are the very actions that decades of research show are most likely to improve student learning. (p. 216)

Given this observation, the practical advice of just getting started seems to have served some institutions well.

TVCC has a history of establishing communities of practice focused on enhancing teaching and learning, including the Faculty Retreat, the Innovator of the Year Award, and an Administrative Internship. However, TVCC realizes that these elements have been in place for a number of years and the impact of these efforts were reflected in the recent data on student learning. TVCC initiated several communities of practice among faculty and staff as a part of the Learning Initiative to further influence student learning. These include the Learning Academy Scholars Project, Lunch and Learn, and Learning Day.

Learning Academy Scholars Project

The characteristic identified by experts as central to learning outcomes enhancement in a learning-centered environment is the assumption that everyone is a learner (McMillen 2006). If asked, most community college faculty would say that their institution is a learning-centered institution and will summarily dismiss the need to *transform* into a learning-centered college. Although community colleges may appear to place student learning at the center of all decisions, that does not necessarily make them learning-centered institutions that are committed to learning outcomes enhancement. Therefore, placing learning first is more than rhetoric; it is real work that requires a great deal of sensitivity to the culture of a community college. To reiterate Barr and Tagg (1995), institutional transformation from the instructional paradigm to the learning-centered

model is a monumental shift that “changes everything” (p. 12). With this in mind, it became clear that faculty development was a necessary component of the change proposed by the Learning Initiative.

The development of the Learning Academy Scholars Project served as the basis for additional faculty development. With the collaboration of the Chair of the Learning Academy Team, the director of the Learning Initiative and the dean of planning and institutional effectiveness, the Scholars Project was created.

Learning Academy Scholars Participants are required to meet every three weeks during the fall semester. Each meeting includes at least one-and-one-half hours of energetic, exciting, and engaging discussion on student learning. While each meeting may cover multiple areas, the following topics are the theme of discussion in the fall term.

- *Philosophy of Learning* – Participants identify the various philosophies of learning and develop a personal statement of their philosophy of learning.
- *Philosophy of Teaching* – Participants identify the philosophies of teaching and will develop a personal statement of their philosophy of teaching.
- *Instructional Design* – Participants identify concepts of instructional design to facilitate active and collaborative learning and student engagement. Participants should redesign at least one course (or substantial learning experience) to apply these techniques in the spring semester.
- *Classroom Assessment* – Participants identify and apply multiple Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) to foster an environment in their classroom for active and collaborative learning and student engagement.

Academy Scholars who participated in FY06 were particularly appreciative of classroom assessment techniques. Angelo and Cross (1993) developed a handbook that delineated a variety of classroom assessment techniques designed to provide faculty and students with insights into what is needed to improve learning *in situ*. Classroom assessment techniques (CATs) are simple methods “faculty can use to collect feedback, early and often, on how well their students are learning what they are being taught” (Angelo, 1991). In 1992, Bateman and Roberts demonstrated that using the one-minute essay (one of many CATs) to ask each student what was the most important thing they learned at the end of a class session led instructors to improve their instructional approach during the semester (in Banta, 1995, p. 214). Examples of improvement suggestions from the one-minute-essay included students’ stating, “they did not need to cover material read in advance in detail in class,” which led to instructors moving on to more salient material rather than simply re-covering the reading assignments (Banta, 1995, p. 215). The ultimate result was faculty and students communicating with each other as to where learning had occurred, and where improvement was needed. Therefore, it is important that participants engage in discussion of classroom assessment and instructional design.

By the spring semester, participants are expected to have significantly reengineered a student learning experience as a result of what they learned in the Learning Academy Scholars Project during the fall term (a class, a student activity, etc...). Once again, meetings are held approximately every three weeks with each lasting at least one and one half hours. In addition to discussions of successes and/or failures of the reengineered learning experience, the following are discussed:

- *Classroom Assessment Techniques* – Participants suggest at least two new classroom assessment techniques for the group.
- *Instructional Design Technique Effectiveness* – Participants document their own learning about learning as a result of the reengineered learning experience.
- *Project Portfolio* -- Participants complete a project portfolio designed to be the culmination of their entire learning experience for the Learning Academy Scholars Project. This portfolio includes documentation of the completion of the stated learning outcomes identified above. Due by July 15th following the spring term of class participation, the portfolio takes numerous forms, including a paper copy, an interactive web portfolio, a video portfolio, or a combination of the above.
- *Learning Day* – Participants document their progress toward these outcomes by providing evidence of such growth in their Project Portfolio and by presenting the results of their attempts to apply these concepts in their courses. These are to be shared with the entire campus during the Learning Day in the following fall semester.

As an example of an attempted improvement, a science professor tried an experiment during the course of the Learning Academy Scholars Project which demonstrated much about engagement and learning. A counselor and former psychology faculty member came to his biology class and trained students how to handle the college textbook effectively. This was done after the first exam, which many students had not done particularly well on. Comparisons of student test grades from their first exam to their second exam revealed dramatic improvement. When compared to the gains of the previous year, grades appeared to jump nearly one letter grade (7%). The Learning Academy Team has taken note of this, and is planning to expand faculty and staff professional development opportunities through the Learning Academy Scholars Project, Lunch and Learn, and Learning Day to include train-the-trainer sessions on providing students with guidance on how to read a variety of textbooks.

A class of Learning Academy Scholars is targeted to include 10 to 15 faculty or staff. Depending upon demand there will be one Academy Scholars Project per year. The idea is that a significant portion of our faculty and staff will become graduates of the Learning Academy Scholars Project, thus creating a culture where openly talking about teaching and learning is valued.

Forty-five professional development hours are awarded to faculty who complete the Academy's Scholars Project. The primary goal is to expose faculty to new methods of teaching and learning to allow them to share ideas that would support the development of the learning-centered culture. One staff and 10 faculty members started and completed the fall semester activities for the FY06 Academy. Due to conflicting schedules, demands for additional courses, life events and other difficulties, only five were able to complete the FY06 class.

Efforts have been made to garner additional support from division chairs and deans to have faculty and staff participate in the FY07 Learning Academy Scholar's Project for the entire year. As an added incentive, faculty will receive two books as a result in Academy participation, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences (Fink)* and a book of their choice. Thus far, 12 faculty have expressed an interest in the FY07 class with eight making a commitment (the others did not commit to the class because of conflicting

schedules). The Learning Initiative anticipates 10 faculty/staff participating per year, yielding 70 Academy alumni by 2011.

An evaluation of faculty will be conducted yearly to determine the impact of the Academy Scholars Project and the impact on their courses. Additionally the Learning Academy Scholars project will influence movement in the following outcomes.

Learning Outcomes: LO 2.3, LO 2.4, LO 2.5
Administrative Outcomes: AO 1.1, AO 1.2, AO 2.1, AO 2.2, AO 2.3, AO 3.5, AO 3.6, AO 3.7, AO 3.10

Lunch and Learn

In order to allow faculty members to be exposed to the precepts of the QEP during the course of the school year, the LI Council developed Lunch and Learn, to be implemented beginning in the fall 2006 semester. A series of faculty/staff in-service activities have been planned for the 2006-07 school year. Because of complicated scheduling it was decided by the Learning Initiative Council that these meetings would be called Lunch and Learns. The concept here is that faculty/staff can attend an in-service during a lunch hour and gain significant input into new classroom engagement innovations. A number of local faculty/staff members have been contacted to prepare presentations about innovative methods that would be of benefit to students as TVCC becomes more learning-centered.

Lunch and Learn will allow small groups of 20 to 50 faculty and staff to gather and receive training during the school year, not just on regular in-service days. The Learning Academy Team is responsible for planning Lunch and Learn programs so that more faculty than just those involved in the Scholars Project can gain information and insight from colleagues.

Lunch and Learn activities are designed for all faculty, and they focus on a single topic deemed appropriate for advancing the enhancement of student learning. A meeting room near the cafeteria on the Athens campus has been secured and attendees will be encouraged to either bring a lunch or purchase a meal. This will provide a convenient time for introduction to available materials and services designed to enhance learning. This will also provide a time for much-needed interaction between faculty and staff and allow the free flow of ideas and unique concepts. This activity will be spearheaded by the Learning Academy Chairman and will occur approximately three times a semester. Lunch and Learns will be time allotted as professional development by the vice-president of instruction.

Topics of discussion during the coming months include Student Networking Groups, how to utilize Web CT, proper use of available technology in order to enhance learning, and how to teach students to get the most out of textbook readings.

Although participants may decide to continue to discuss items beyond the activities of the Lunch and Learn session, these sessions are designed to be one-time sessions. Certainly, the Learning Academy Team would accommodate additional requests if there was a demand to have a sequel to the session and/or to repeat the session. Sessions covering multiple topics will be scheduled every few weeks during the semester.

Lunch and Learn will be evaluated informally to determine the percentage of faculty involved and the effectiveness of the learning dialogues. Lunch and Learn will affect the culture of TVCC and should influence the following outcomes.

Learning Outcomes: LO 2.3, LO 2.4, LO 2.5, LO 2.6 Administrative Outcomes: AO 1.1, AO 1.2, AO 2.1, AO 2.2, AO 2.3, AO 3. 10
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Learning Day

In addition to the Learning Academy Scholars Project and Lunch and Learn, a Learning Day has also been implemented as a way to gain support for the Learning Initiative. Learning Day is a day dedicated to sharing the results of the Learning Academy Scholars Project as well as to allowing faculty and staff to participate in a series of activities designed to encourage faculty/staff engagement. As the desire to increase the engagement of TVCC students mounts, the desire to increase the engagement of the TVCC faculty/staff/administration also increases. The goal is to launch this as an annual or bi-annual activity. The administration has backed the Learning Day plan and is rewarding professional development hours for the day's activities.

This newly established day of in-service programming will be held for the first time Sept. 22, 2006. Classes have been canceled for that day in order to allow all faculty and staff to attend. This forum is open for the participation of all faculty; however, the Academy Scholars are expected to organize, facilitate, and participate in the day's activities. During Learning Day, those involved in the Scholars Project will share both their successes and their failures. Local faculty, staff and administration will provide various activities, which will include three general sessions and three break-out sessions. Learning Academy members will be responsible for providing a panel discussion based on their year of work with the Academy.

During the scheduled Learning Day in 2006, faculty will be presented with a 45-minute introduction to networking, based on Elizabeth F. Barkley's *Making Group Work Work* from the CCSSE Workshop in Austin, May 2006. Various workshops will be conducted on Learning Day and will include the following topics: Why students are reluctant to talk in class, how networking helps engage students, networking compared to traditional methods, first class day activities and how to form groups.

Multiple break-out sessions will be offered at separate times so that those in attendance will have numerous opportunities to hear information on pertinent learning topics. Sessions are being planned to cover key issues, including: how to develop student networking groups; teaching students to successfully read college textbooks; assisting students with time management, test stress, and lack of motivation; developing effective assessment tools; and changing from the teaching to the learning paradigm. Learning day will be evaluated each year and its success will be assessed based upon the proportion of participation in Learning Day and subsequent Learning Initiative activities. The Learning Day will affect other learning outcomes as listed below.

Learning Outcomes: LO 2.3, LO 2.4, LO 2.5, LO 2.6 Administrative Outcomes: AO 1.1, AO 1.2, AO 2.1, AO 2.2, AO 2.3, AO 3.5, AO 3.6, AO 3.7, AO 3.8, AO 3.9, AO 3.10

A study of high performing teachers in public schools found that “[n]ot a single teacher among high performers interviewed . . . mentioned supervisors as a powerful source in improving teaching quality and contributions to the school” (Hart 1994, p. 465).

Speaking about the best work designs for teachers, Hart observed,

[w]hen teachers judge their new tasks to be trivial or disconnected from their core teaching tasks . . . they express contempt for new work designs; when they see new tasks contributing to quality instruction and core teaching and learning activities, they praise them. (p. 467)

Sensitivity to the core values of those experiencing change provided an opportunity to obtain a deeper understanding of the cultural knowledge base. Community college faculty care deeply about whether students learn (O’Banion & Milliron, 2001); therefore, attempts to enhance student learning provide a natural forum for dialogue about what individuals can contribute to the organization. TVCC will continue to seek out additional strategies that are tied to the core teaching and learning activities that are central to our culture.

Through self-examination of the educational process at Trinity Valley Community College and research of reading as a direct influence on the learning experience, the Learning Initiative (LI) Council identified enhancing reading skills as a priority. During discussions with student and faculty focus groups, reading was addressed as an area of concern. Research of reading as a learning discipline revealed that concerns about students' ability to read and comprehend material is not only a concern for TVCC, but also for many students who attend community colleges. Paul (1987) noted,

In the 21st century two trends in particular affect postsecondary learners: (a) the accelerated evolution of knowledge in all fields, which implies the necessity of extensive reading to keep up; and (b) growing awareness of the importance of multiple perspectives and dialogical reasoning. (in Pugh, Pawan, & Antommarchi, 2000, p. 25)

In order to give students the tools they need to read and comprehend the material they will encounter, the Learning Initiative Council has been exploring methods to help students improve their advanced reading skills. Increasing reading skills can enhance the education of students and prepare them for the changing landscape of an electronic and fast paced world. Lack of literacy skills has been a growing area of concern in the United States. Clifford (1984), noted

[w]hat holds constant over changing technologies is the Western academic definition of literate individuals as those who are able to synthesize, organize, and interpret ideas as well as apply information gained from reading to new situations. (in Pugh, Pawan, & Antommarchi, 2000, p. 27)

Thus, as educators, we must strive to teach reading skills in order to enable our students to synthesize, organize, and interpret reading resources. Therefore, TVCC has sought to define the issues regarding reading and literacy to be addressed aggressively during the next five years.

Reading and the Community College Student

Among the concerns of TVCC faculty was the need to address reading and the internet. Pugh, Pawan, Antommarchi (2000) observed,

[n]ew ways of reading texts have entered our educational institutions through the increasing use of the internet for publication and for research. Now written sources seem limitless to the reader. Links presented in a document can lead to other relevant sections, selections, and authors and weave a seamless net of interconnectedness that ends only when the reader consciously decides to put a stop to it. Each link allows for the kind of exploration and critical, independent thinking that we want to encourage on the part of our students. (p. 36)

The challenge of reading is a nationwide issue. According to the ACT report, *Reading Between the Lines: What the ACT Reading Test Reveals About College Readiness*

(2005), only half of the nation's ACT- tested high school students are ready for college-level reading. The report cites two main factors contributing to this situation: State standards in high school reading are insufficient, and too few high school teachers are teaching reading skills or strategies. Although ACT's data suggest that the readiness of high school students for college-level reading is far too low, they also show that students are not demonstrating the ability to comprehend complex texts. Students who attend community colleges are less likely to take the ACT, and are more likely to lack the foundations necessary to be successful in college, including reading. Therefore, the proportion of students who are ready for college-level reading at TVCC is likely less than the half described in the ACT report.

While those needing developmental reading are certainly a component of this population, college-level reading goes beyond the basic reading needs that are enhanced through a developmental education sequence in reading. Developmental reading needs are an altogether different level of reading. TVCC faculty working specifically with reading students expressed concerns about students, stating:

- “The college students of today were raised in an age of technology explosion.”
- “There was never a time without video, television, cell phones, computers, and quick fix solutions. These are the students with little patience, and they are used to things that provide instant gratification. They grew up with the push of a button as a quick-fix.”
- “It takes time to read a book. Why should they use their valuable time to read books when they can rent a video, DVD, or go to the movies for entertainment.”
- “Reading for these students is not entertainment; it is a chore that takes time. It involves a thought process that they have not practiced.”
- “In this computer age they spell check and grammar check, so why waste time using a dictionary.”

When asked about the consequences of reading, faculty suggested the following:

- “There is no time to read directions about assembling things, but they spend more time correcting their mistakes than it would have taken to read the directions.”
- “They don't have the time to read the fine print in contracts, so they end up with a credit card that has an inflated yearly percentage rate.”
- “Our busy world for these students promotes the “quick-fix”. Unfortunately, there are no quick fixes when they decide to go to college.”

While the causes and consequences of reading effectively may be debated amongst those with differing world views, TVCC has chosen to focus on enhancing reading in order to enhance student learning overall. Therefore, we worked to a common definition of both the developmental and college-level reading. Basic reading is a process of decoding words, experiencing meaning, and visualizing the connection to other words in the sentence to establish a purpose. Sentences are combined in order to support a broader picture. This is much like connecting the dots, eventually forming a mental picture. When added to other sentences purpose is clarified, attitudes change, and understandings may differ based upon the students' life experiences and cultural background.

College-level reading includes an evaluation of the ability to understand text written in a particular discipline at a level higher than would be necessary to master developmental reading. This includes the ability to discern literal and inferential meaning from various textual cues in a field of study, and to be able to demonstrate such comprehension. Since reading in mathematics (e.g. interpretation of charts, graphs and numerical expressions) fits this category, so does reading a complex narrative in literature (such as Shakespeare's Hamlet). As such, specific reading assessments are being developed to further define reading within each discipline. These reading assessments utilize reading samples from the actual texts used in these college-level courses, which are often rated well above the 12th grade reading level. This is an important and often neglected area of assessment, as the gap between basic collegiate reading (past-developmental needs) and the demands of college-level reading are often large.

Reading is viewed as a gateway skill that enhances learning for life. The organizers of the 12th Annual International Conference on Critical Thinking and Education Reform noted,

[e]ffective reading leads to learning when students actively work their way toward drawing conclusions, discussing their ideas with other students and educators while entertaining a variety of viewpoints, analyzing concepts, theories and explanations from their own point of view. When students actively question meaning and implications of what they are learning, compare what they are learning to their life experiences, tackle new problems, and examine assumptions, they achieve a higher order of learning. (*Proceedings*, 1992, p.2)

Pugh, Pawan, and Antommarchi (2000) noted that “[r]eading is the platform from which critical thinking, problem solving, and effective expression are launched” (p.25). The long-term purpose of the Learning Initiative is to enhance student learning in a variety of areas, yet this research justifies our focus.

Kingston (2003) noted that studies of developmental reading has a long history. Soon thereafter, Bray, Pascarella, and Pearson noted that reading improved between the first and third year of college. The study utilized the *CAAP Reading test* as a measure of gains in reading comprehension. The variable with greatest predictive ability was the level of reading ability upon college entry. Positive associations were also observed between reading gains and semester credit hours taken, number of assigned books read, student perception of the effectiveness of instruction, and exposure to science and engineering courses. All of these associations were positive after the first year of college as well, with the exception of exposure to science and engineering courses. Therefore, increasing academic challenge (assigning more books) and providing professional development for faculty (enhancing teaching) appear to be appropriate actions.

Reading Data

After reaching a consensus on reading as a student learning outcome in need of improvement, the LI Council determined that further baseline data were needed. The collection of this data commenced in fall 2005, and has continued to the present. The primary artifacts of this research are an analysis of reading pre- and post- tests

administered in various venues, and the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP).

Reading Results, Pre- and Post-Testing (*Pre-TASP*)

The Assessment Team began to meet with the director of the learning initiative and the dean of planning and institutional effectiveness, as plans to adopt an assessment tool for reading began. Standardized tests used for reading were considered, but the developmental reading coordinator indicated that the *Pre-TASP* (forms 01 and 02) was a good place to begin assessing reading comprehension. This test yields ratings of performance on six skill sets that would be much more revealing than the other standard reading tests that were reviewed. These skill sets included understanding the meanings of words and phrases, main idea and details, purpose and meaning in writing, relationship among ideas, critical reasoning skills, and study skills in reading (see Appendix for further details).

Permission was obtained from National Evaluation Systems to utilize the reading portion of the *Pre-TASP* form 01 and 02 for our testing purposes. The LI Council spent much time in discussion about who to test for fall 05. Because attention was being given to crucial learning experiences and first year experiences, the Council arrived at the conclusion of testing all developmental reading students (except those students enrolled at the Texas Department of Criminal Justice) and as many COSC 1301 Microcomputer Applications students as possible was a suitable approach. The Microcomputer class was chosen as it would yield results of Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Applied Sciences (AAS), and Certificate students. Students in developmental reading were also assessed.

Additionally, the Engagement Team worked on a small engagement assessment to be added to the reading test so that the two key issues could be correlated. Permission was obtained from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (*CCSSE*) to formulate similar questions to those found on *CCSSE*. At the beginning of fall 2005, these reading and engagement instruments were administered to 650 students. Assessments were repeated at the end of the term, with 415 students successfully completing both.

Results from the pre- and post- reading assessment in fall 2005 revealed interesting data, some of which contradicted the expectations of the LI Council. First, non-developmental students have higher scores than developmental students in both the pre- and post- tests. Secondly, developmental reading and writing students appear to gain ground in reading, while non-developmental students lose ground.

Table 6.1. Changes in Reading Ability Among TVCC's Students by Developmental Enrollment Status, Fall 2005

(n=418)	<u>% Correct Overall</u>		<u>Median*</u>	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
<i>Not Enrolled in Developmental AA or AAS</i>				
(n=162)	73%	→ 65%	18.0	→ 17.0
Certificate (n=44)	62%	→ 55%	15.5	→ 13.0
<i># of Developmental Courses Enrolled</i>				
1 Devl. Course (n=159)	56%	→ 56%	13.0	→ 14.0
2 Devl. Course (n=41)	52%	→ 54%	11.0	→ 12.0
3 Devl. Course (n=8)**	53%	→ 63%	12.5	→ 15.0
<i>Type of Developmental Courses Enrolled</i>				
Reading (n=139)	53%	→ 58%	13.0	→ 14.0
Writing (n=19)**	49%	→ 52%	12.0	→ 13.0
Mathematics (n=109)	58%	→ 55%	14.0	→ 14.0

*Median # Correct out of a Possible 24 Items

**Be cautious in interpreting items with small numbers of students

Pre-Post Reading Tests in Pilot Projects

In addition to the administration of the pre- and post-Reading tests in fall 2005, the College administered this reading exam during a *student networking group* pilot project conducted in spring 2006. Preliminary results reveal that students in student networking groups demonstrated increased performance on the reading exam. Early analysis of correlations between reading performance and student engagement assessments that were administered during this pilot project reveal that the engagement items only predicted a small proportion of the variance in performance on reading. Nevertheless, it appears that students in non-networked comparison groups were less likely to be as engaged. This relationship will continue to be explored in future projects of the *student networking groups*, and it may yield more findings as we move to *discipline-specific reading tests* and as the application of *student networking groups* becomes a more comfortable practice among faculty.

TVCC will continue to administer the *Pre-TASP* to developmental reading students. Relationships to administrative and learning outcomes of the Learning Initiative are outlined below.

Learning Outcomes: LO 1.1, LO 1.2, LO 1.3, LO 2.6, LO 2.7

Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)

TVCC's General Education Assessment Cycle calls for the administration of the CAAP reading and writing (essay) tests. The CAAP reading and essay writing tests were administered to AA graduates in spring 2006 using a testing schedule that extended to all three campuses with three testing times each. Forty-one students took the exam.

On average, TVCC graduates perform at least as well as 45% and no worse than 52% of all Reading CAAP tested students. Graduates who had experiences in distance education courses performed at least as well as 52% and no worse than 58% of all Reading CAAP tested students. Performance among other groups was within close range of these rankings.

Evaluation of student performance on the arts/literature reading sub-scale indicates that students perform at least as well as 46% and no worse than 60% of all Reading CAAP tested students. Analysis of student performance on the social studies/sciences reading sub-scale indicate that students perform at least as well as 39% and no worse than 52% of all Reading CAAP tested students.

Table 6.2. CAAP Reading Results, Spring 2006.

<i>READING</i>	All TVCC Students	Full-time	White	Female	Non-Distance Students*	Distance Students
Composite Reading Scores	59.5	58.8	59.6	60.0	58.7	60.7
Reading Subscale: Arts/ Literature	14.7	14.3	14.8	15.1	14.4	15.1
Reading Subscale Social Studies/ Sciences	14.7	14.4	14.7	14.8	14.3	15.6

While TVCC has made preliminary decisions based upon these data, there is an interest in increasing the number of respondents in order to increase the validity and reliability of our findings. In fact, the institution had scheduled a CAAP administration in fall 2005; however, the college was closed due to an ice storm. Therefore, these assessments will be administered again in fall 2006.

The CAAP will be administered to AA Graduates again in 2009 and in 2011. These results will be used as a means to measure progress in the following learning and administrative outcomes:

Learning Outcomes: LO 1.2, LO 1.4
 Administrative Outcome: AO 3.2

Reading Action

TVCC has sprung into action as a result of these data. Actions are described below, and assessments will continue to measure the results of future activity by administering pre- and post-Reading assessments (Pre-*TASP*, *CAAP*, and Discipline-Specific Reading assessments [described below]). While Discipline-Specific Reading assessments are intended for non-developmental courses, it was determined that the Developmental Reading classes would still be assessed by the Pre-*TASP* test. It was clear that students in other classes needed other kinds of reading tests that related more to their individual teacher and subject areas.

Discipline-Specific Reading Tests

Trinity Valley Community College staff and faculty identified reading skills as a crucial area of needed improvement. In order to enhance student engagement and fully develop a student's learning experience, faculty needed an effective, yet uncomplicated way to identify students who were having difficulty with the material offered. Spires (1991-1992) noted that "[o]ne of the most difficult tasks for postsecondary reading instructors is to engage student in the textbook reading process successfully" (p.248). In order to determine the effectiveness of reading enhancement efforts at both the developmental and collegiate level, TVCC needed baseline data on reading comprehension. A pre-test and post-test procedure of the Pre-*TASP* tests (01 and 02) were administered to a cross-section of TVCC students (results are described above). While this provided us with a gauge on student reading ability, faculty began to indicate more than just a general assessment of reading skills was needed. For example, if a student could not comprehend the material set forth in a biology course, then that student could not adequately engage in the learning concepts offered in that course.

The council sought to gain perspective and to seek additional direction by securing the services of a reading assessment consultant who could identify ways in which reading skills could be measured. The use of the Pre-*TASP* as a tool to determine a student's reading comprehension level was quickly identified as inadequate. As a result of the data collected by the administration of the Pre-*TASP* (tests 01 and 02) in fall 2005, the LI Council decided to explore the idea of developing *Discipline-Specific Reading Tests*. The concept came at both the recommendation of the director of the Texas Assessing Student Learning Project as well as out of a need to respond to faculty demands to have information on reading which was practical and useful. In the case of the Pre-*TASP* test, none of the testing material was specific to particular disciplines.

A major pilot for the fall 2006 semester is built around the concept of *Discipline-Specific Reading Tests*. A series of ready-to-use tests were developed around textbook readings taken from U.S. History, Speech, General Psychology, Fundamentals of Nursing and Human Anatomy and Physiology. Students were asked to read a section of each textbook and respond to questions specific to that reading. Tests were created in each of these courses to measure the reading skills of the students enrolled. Student results on those assessments were immediately available so faculty could quickly recommend remediation, if needed.

A post-test will be administered at the end of the semester to determine if progress has been made in students' reading abilities. Each pre- and post-test will be evaluated to

ensure comparability in the types of reading being measured (e.g. inferential vs. literal). Additionally, measures will be taken to ensure the tested reading selections on the pre- and post-tests are at the same level of complexity.

In addition to the original five tests, five disciplines will be added each semester until all disciplines have a usable specific reading test. The goal is to have a series of reading tests which will be beneficial to students and teachers and will give instructors a way to detect potential reading problems which are specific to their discipline at the beginning of the semester. This should increase the success of supplemental instruction or other available intervention methods (See PODS and Great Explanations).

At the beginning of the process, faculty met the idea of developing subject-specific reading tests with resistance. Instructors were reluctant to attempt to develop reading tests specific to each course. However, simplification of the process helped in the development of tests which were both uniquely suited to each subject and an adequate measurement of a student's reading skills. Additionally, the reading team of the Learning Initiative evaluated samples of textbooks from different disciplines and determined that the reading abilities required for some courses were in excess of the level tested by the Pre-TASP exams. Faculty can gain a more detailed idea of the student's reading level as it applies to each course. *Discipline-Specific Reading Tests* are designed to be administered in every section of the courses listed above.

TVCC calculated reading levels for the books utilized in these classes (details included in the Appendix). In many cases, the reading levels were above 14th grade level, which is above the assessment level of the Pre-TASP. The revelation of this data instigated more serious discussions on the true issue of college-level reading as opposed to developmental reading. As the Council began to share this information, it has sparked interest among faculty who are now interested in the reading levels of their textbooks.

Table 6.3. Courses Selected for Discipline-Specific Reading Assessment, Fall 2006

Course	I Enrollment (Fall 05 Spg 06)	Discipline Specific Reading
* HIST 1301 - US History to 1877	1,101	X ¹
SPCH 1311 - Fundamentals of Speech	870	X ¹
* PSYC 2301 - General Psychology	763	X ¹
* BIOL 2401 - Human A&P	586	X ¹
SOCI 1301 - Introduction to Sociology	459	X ²
RNSG 1523 - Intro to Prof. Nurs	127	X ¹
* PHYS 1401 - College Physics 1	115	X ¹
PHYS 1415 - Ast Geo Met	115	X ¹
* DEVL 0306 - Dev.I Reading I	70	X ³
* DEVL 0307 - Dev. Reading II	337	X ³

* On Original Difficult Course Listing

¹ All faculty participating in spring 2006.

² At least one faculty member participating in fall or spring 2006

³ Pre-TASP is the Discipline-Specific Reading Test for Developmental Reading

The goal is to expand the coverage of Discipline-Specific Reading Tests to other courses that are (a) on the difficult course listing with at least 300 students enrolled per long semester or (b) courses where the faculty are interested in learning about reading comprehension as a means to help them to improve their course. This has already begun to happen with several courses listed above, and the following courses are on-deck to develop Discipline-Specific Reading Tests for their courses, including:

Biology 1322- Nutrition
Business and Office Administration 1301 - Business English
Business and Office Administration 1321 - Business Math
Mathematics 1314 - College Algebra
Geography 1301 – Physical Geography
Computer Science 1301 – Microcomputer Applications
Computer Science 1336 – Programming Fundamental I
Government 2301 – American and Texas Constitution

Discipline-Specific Reading Tests will be used to monitor progress on reading as we move forward. Progress on reading will be monitored on a semester basis. Progress towards the administrative outcomes will be evaluated based on a faculty participation in this process, as well as success in developing assessment for each of the courses on the difficult course listing. Specific relationships as outcomes are noted below:

Learning Outcomes: LO 1.1, LO 1.2, LO 1.3, LO 1.4, LO 2.1, LO 2.2, LO 2.6, LO 2.7 Administrative Outcomes: AO 1.2, AO 2.1, AO 2.2, AO 3.1, AO 3.4
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Learning Lab

In an effort to gather material for Best Practices in Learning Lab concepts, four Learning Initiative Council members toured Blinn College's Learning Lab at their Bryan campus in the spring of 2006. Numerous conferences were attended by LI Council members and TVCC faculty and staff, such as the A&M Assessment Conference, the CCSSE workshop in Austin, and the Texas Assessing Student Learning (TASL) Conferences in Killeen at Central Texas College during the 2006-07 school year.

After much discussion and planning, the administration agreed to a pilot open Learning Lab. The first day of operation was September 5, 2006. The Learning Lab is currently temporarily located in room LRC243 on the Athens campus and is open on Tuesdays from 1:00 until 7:00 p.m. and Fridays 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. The developmental reading coordinator also serves as the Reading Team Chairperson and will help coordinate lab activities. The College administration has given permission for all faculty and professional staff to donate one hour of office time a week to the lab.

The TRIO program already provides peer tutoring on campus, but the open Learning Lab will provide professional tutoring and computer assisted learning. There are 30 internet connected computers and 28 desks in the lab area. The academic dean has budgeted for supplies and an hourly lab coordinator. There has also been mention of inviting retired teachers in the area to volunteer in the lab to enhance our professional tutor potential in the future. Because Terrell and Palestine campuses have tutor funding through Carl Perkins grant monies, the campus deans have been asked to consider expanding their tutoring programs in a similar manner.

An hourly coordinator has been hired to run the lab and a part-time Carl Perkins Work-study student assistant. The coordinator (having completed a doctoral degree) is a retired counselor and teacher who has worked part-time for the College in the past. Along with the coordinator, faculty are signing up for one hour a week when the lab is open. A schedule will be provided so students can plan to have face-to-face contact with a faculty member in a specific subject area in a casual setting.

Free computer-based learning experiences are being logged as they are located by faculty/staff and made available to students. Additional staff members, such as guidance counselors, financial aid counselors, and librarians, are scheduling time in the lab. This lab should increase engagement through active and collaborative learning and student-faculty interaction. This venue will also allow for a sharing of tips on study skills, how to handle college textbooks effectively, how to comprehend textbook readings, how to summarize when reading, and how to take notes, which will in turn enhance reading comprehension.

Participation in the Learning Lab will be evaluated to determine levels of use by students and participation by faculty. Additionally, students who seek help in the labs will be asked whether the lab was helpful and whether they will come back for help in the future.

Students who participate in the Learning Lab will be tracked to determine if their grades are improved as a result of attending the Learning Lab. In cases where students are enrolled in courses that have discipline specific reading assessments, the data will be evaluated to determine if reading levels improve and whether there are differences in engagement as documented by the local engagement instrument. The Learning Lab should influence outcomes in the following areas:

Learning Outcomes: LO 1.3, LO 2.1, LO 2.2, LO 2.3, LO 2.4, LO 2.5, LO 2.6, LO 2.7 Administrative Outcomes: AO 1.1, AO 1.2, AO 2.1, AO 2.2, AO 3.4, AO 3.5, AO 3.6, AO 3.7, AO 3.8, AO 3.10

Professionals Offering Departmental Study Sessions (PODS)

Because of the limited space and limited time that the pilot open Learning Lab could be offered during the fall semester of 2006, administrators asked for a viable alternative for faculty and staff to become more engaged in the increased learning activities that would be offered. The answer to their request took the form of learning *PODS* – departmentally driven study sessions conducted in a classroom at a time determined by the faculty of an individual department. This is to be an additional classroom session that provides supplemental instruction and will not include usual classroom material.

Each department will be responsible for deciding where and when this will take place on a consistent basis so that students in general and those visiting the Learning Lab in particular can be aware of the professional supplemental instruction to be offered. *PODS* proposals are submitted to the Learning Initiative office and endorsed by that office before beginning. Each department will be responsible for tracking the student use and faculty/staff involvement in particular *PODS*.

In future semesters, the Learning Initiative Council is hoping to develop a permanent home for the Open Learning Lab. Once the lab is firmly established, individual departments will be able to provide professional tutoring in that central facility. Until that occurs, the temporary location will allow faculty/staff to begin developing supplemental instruction times on a consistent basis.

PODS will be evaluated in the same manner as the Learning lab by tracking students through these courses. In addition, *PODS* should influence the overall outcomes of the QEP as listed below.

Learning Outcomes: LO 1.3, LO 2.5, LO 2.6 Administrative Outcomes: AO 2.1, AO 2.2, AO 3.5, AO 3.6, AO 3.7, AO 3.10

Great Explanations

Also at the prompting of administrators, another related alternative was developed in order to allow for faculty and staff who had extremely heavy schedules and teach off campus classes to become involved in developing new resources. The Learning Initiative office devised a concept called "Great Explanation." This allows faculty/staff members to use one hour a week of their office time to develop new approaches to the challenges of learning in their particular field.

Since each discipline has individual requirements, this allows professionals to discover new on-line resources to be used for supplemental instruction. This time slot is also designed to allow development of ways to bridge reading difficulties for students and advancement of new approaches to particular academic challenges for each area. These innovations are to be shared with the Learning Lab and with the classes or offices affected by each new idea.

Although Great Explanations is an individual project, the goal is still to increase engagement through cultivation of new resources of supplemental instruction. If the faculty/staff member cannot be available in the Learning Academy or Learning Lab, they can provide materials that can be used in either of these other venues and take part in the process.

Great Explanations will be evaluated based on the number of outcomes that are produced by faculty for this project. Additionally, the Learning Lab coordinator will solicit feedback from students as to the effectiveness of each Great Explanation. Overall, Great Explanations should influence the following outcomes that relate to the QEP:

Administrative Outcomes: AO 2.1, AO 2.2, AO 3.5, AO 3.6, AO 3.7

Textbook Websites

Teachers as well as students have encountered multiple problems when trying to use websites developed as supplements to textbooks. Some history teachers have successfully used those sites, as have biology instructors, but many others have reported having difficulty with accessing and using the material available. To improve TVCC's use of online sources, math textbooks became the focus for a spring 2006 effort to get faculty and students to use supplemental material which was supplied online.

Arrangements were made to have book representatives and technical representatives from the primary textbook suppliers in the math department to set up accounts for the faculty and students. The Developmental Math coordinator made a concerted effort to get his algebra class to make use of the additional website material. Those classes were also administered pre- and post-engagement and reading tests to see if that particular practice assisted in learning.

Plans are under way to continue this activity. In the discovery phase of this journey for embracing engagement and student learning, the Engagement Team discussed the need to look at existing best practices at TVCC. Some members of the faculty on the LI Council have used the supplemental material provided as a part of their course textbooks. This material was also presented in a CD format and in an online format. Future plans to fully utilize the supplemental material offered online are in place. These plans include having textbook suppliers provide training for faculty and students. This training will be filmed so that those that are not available to attend the original training may still access this support. Additionally, those supplemental materials will be made available in the open learning lab. Staff in that lab will also be trained in the use and means to access these materials.

Textbook websites provide supplemental support for students enrolled in courses. The evaluation of the use of textbook websites will be challenging, as there are various data systems that are not integrated into an easily accessible format that would allow for student tracking. In the future, such supports may be able to be interfaced through the course management system (*WebCT*) which will allow for tracking. Nevertheless, the institution feels that it is important to offer these opportunities immediately while seeking efficient means to track their use against student performance in the future. TVCC feels that this project will enhance the following administrative outcome:

Administrative Outcomes: AO 3.5

Overall, the goal is to obtain coverage of the courses that were identified as difficult. Excitement about Learning Academy activities has spread beyond courses on that listing. The Learning Initiative encourages these developments but realizes that all engagement and reading actions must be aligned with difficult courses. The need to balance the contagion of this change in the culture with the need to focus on alignment will be managed by the Learning Initiative Council. Table 6.4 (below), outlines the current level of activity as integrated with the courses on the difficult course listing, as well as other courses.

Table 6.4. Current Alignment of Learning Initiative Actions with Difficult Course Listing, Fall 2006

Course	Total Enrollments (Fall 2005 + Spg 06)	Discipline Specific Reading	Student Networking Groups	Academy Scholars Project	PODS	Great Explanations
* ENGL 1302 - English Comp and Lit	1,151		X ²	X ⁴		
* HIST 1301 - US History to 1877	1,101	X ¹		X ⁴		
SPCH 1311 - Fundamentals of Speech	870	X ¹	X ²			
* PSYC 2301 - General Psychology	763	X ¹	X ²	X ⁴		
* GOVT 2302 - US and Tx. Govt	746		X ²			
* BIOL 2401 - Human A&P I	586	X ¹		X ⁴		
PSYC 2314 - Human Growth and Dev	567		X ²			
SOCI 1301 - Introduction to Soc.	459	X ²				
RNSG 1523 - Intro to Prof. Nurs	127	X ¹				
* PHYS 1401 - College Physics 1	115	X ¹				
PHYS 1415 - Ast Geo Met	115	X ¹				
* DEVL 0306 - Dev. Reading I	70	X ³				
* DEVL 0307 - Dev. Reading II	337	X ³				
COSC 1301 - Microcomputer Apps	1,537			X ⁴		
ENGL 1301 - Eng. Comp. & Rhetoric	1,383			X ⁴		
MATH 1314 - College Algebra	1,042			X ⁴		
GOVT 2301 - US and Tx. Const.	963					
BIOL 1406 - General Biology	579			X ⁴		
MDCA 1313 - Medical Terminology	409					
BIOL 2402 - Human A&P II	334			X ⁴		
ECON 2301 - Princ. of Macroecon.	333			X ⁴		
BIOL 2421 - Microbiology	321					
BIOL 1322 - Nutrition & Diet Therapy	306					

Assessment Plan

Section

7

In *Knowing What Students Know* (2001), the National Research Council stated that the foundations of assessment can be traced to the beliefs about the manner in which students should be able to demonstrate knowledge and skills through their behavior. Numerous assessment tools can be utilized to enhance student learning, and faculty time and the college's assessment resources are best utilized when assessment is linked to the cognitive model of learning. In the classroom, formative assessments help to communicate the amount of learning successfully achieved by the learner while identifying areas needing improvement. Biggs (1999) stated, “[w]hat and how students learn depends to a major extent on how they think they will be assessed” (p. 141). This communication raises expectations for active classroom engagement, thereby helping learners commit new learning to long-term memory.

Developing the capacity to specify what changes in learning outcomes may be attributed to student's experiences at a given college is a challenge. Angelo (1995) stated that assessment involves the process of making collegiate expectations of learning “explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards” (p. 7). The assessment of collegiate learning must be carried out using a thoughtful process, as learning occurs within a complex interaction of individual mental development in an increasingly demanding and changing social environment.

Research on learning and development provides a starting point for enhancing student learning in the community college. The National Research Council (2001) summarized the current literature on learning, using the following eight basic principles: (a) learning is a non-linear process that involves reflexive thought and interpretation, (b) learners are much more than recipients of knowledge, because they create their own meaning, (c) learners have different learning styles, (d) deep learning occurs with the passage of time, which supports transference of knowledge from one domain to another, (e) learning is reinforced when learners engage in metacognition, or reflect about their thinking, (f) learning occurs when relationships are sparked between short-term and long-term memory, (g) deepened understanding occurs when new knowledge is transferred into different contexts, and (h) rehearsing or practicing creates expertise.

Continuous learning and unbridled inquiry form the foundations of higher education. Thus initiatives that engage these core values should have more immediate legitimacy with higher education stakeholders—especially those closest to the learning environment. More progress on enhancing learning has been noted in cases where assessment data are used for learning outcomes enhancement rather than quality assurance. When assessment data are used for quality enhancement, faculty, staff, and students are able to engage in a conversation about how to improve learning. When assessment data are used for quality assurance, this places faculty and staff in the position of being the subjects of study. In the quality assurance environment, the focus is on improving the quality of faculty, staff, or students and processes as inputs, rather

than focusing on the outcome of student learning. Trinity Valley Community College (TVCC) embraces the quality enhancement approach to institutional change as TVCC travels on its journey as a learning-centered college.

Data Collection: Past and Future

Descriptions of assessment activities to date have been interwoven throughout this document under the “data” sections. All of the assessment activities discussed therein are targeted for continuation, unless modifications to the plan are mentioned in those areas. Details of the assessment plans, including individual assessment tools, the target audience, and relationships to learning and administrative outcomes are included in the appendix. Specific projects designed to affect these outcomes are tied to each outcome (learning and/or administrative), and these relationships are described after the discussion of each type of engagement action or reading action.

Table 7.1. Reading Assessment Tools

<i>Assessment Tool</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Times Administered</i>	<i>Overall Objective of Assessment</i>	<i>Learning Outcome</i>	<i>Administrative Outcome</i>
<i>Pre-TASP (Administered as a pre-and post-test)</i>	Developmental Reading Students (*Used initially for baseline data on all students.)	Beginning and Ending of each semester (fall-spring)	Reading Diagnostic	LO 1.1 LO 1.2 LO 1.3 LO 2.6 LO 2.7	
<i>Discipline-Specific Reading Tests (Locally Developed)</i>	Students in crucial learning courses and other volunteer faculty	Beginning and Ending of each semester (fall-spring)	Textbook Reading	LO 1.1 LO 1.2 LO 1.3 LO 1.4 LO 2.6 LO 2.7	AO1.2 AO 2.1 AO 2.2 AO 2.3 AO 3.1 AO 3.4
<i>Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)</i>	Graduating AA Students	Before graduation in fall and spring semesters	Core Curriculum (reading, writing, critical thinking)	LO 1.2, LO1.4	AO3.2

Table 7.2. Engagement Assessment Tools

<i>Assessment Tool</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Times Administered</i>	<i>Overall Objective of Assessment</i>	<i>Learning Outcome</i>	<i>Administrative Outcome</i>
<i>Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)</i>	Randomly selected classes	Spring 2007 - 2009	Student Engagement (National Benchmarks)	LO 2.1 LO 2.2 LO 2.3 LO 2.4 LO 2.5 LO 2.6 LO 2.7	AO 1.1
<i>Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE)</i>	Randomly selected faculty	Spring 2007 - 2009	Student & Faculty Engagement (National Benchmarks)	LO 2.1 LO 2.2 LO 2.3 LO 2.4 LO 2.5	AO 1.1 AO 2.1
<i>Local Engagement Instruments</i>	Students taking Pre-TASP, Discipline-Specific	Beginning and Ending of each semester (fall-spring)	Student Engagement (Local Measure)	LO 2.1 LO 2.2 LO 2.3 LO 2.4 LO 2.5 LO 2.6 LO 2.7	AO 1.1 AO 2.1 AO 3.1
<i>Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI)</i>	Diagnostic for students	When deemed useful for students	Study skills, time management, attitude, etc.	LO 2.2	AO 3.4

In addition to the items specifically noted above, comparisons between engagement and reading data will be cross-referenced at a snapshot in time. Where possible, trend analyses will be conducted (e.g. local engagement data, CCSSE, or reading assessments). To monitor overall progress and to garner feedback in an informal manner, focus groups will continue to be conducted.

Learning Outcomes

Learning Goal #1: Enhance student reading comprehension at the developmental as well as college levels.

Learning Outcome 1.1 (LO 1.1)

Reading performance gains will be observed from the beginning of a semester to the end of a semester.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<i>Pre-Tasp</i>		5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains
<i>Discipline-Specific Reading</i>		5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains

Learning Outcome 1.2 (LO 1.2)

Reading performance gains will be greater for students who are enrolled in more courses at TVCC.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<i>Pre-TASP</i>		5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains
<i>Discipline-Specific Reading</i>		5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains

<i>CAAP</i>		2007 59.5 Overall, 14.7 Arts/Literature Reading, 14.7 Social Studies/Science Reading	2009 60 Overall, 15 Arts/Literature Reading, 15 Social Studies/Science Reading	2011 60.5 Overall, 15.5 Arts/Literature Reading, 15.5 Social Studies/Science Reading
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Learning Outcome 1.3 (LO 1.3)

Reading performance gains will be greater for students who are rated as “more engaged” at TVCC.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<i>Pre-Tasp</i>		5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains
<i>Discipline-Specific Reading</i>		5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains

Learning Outcome 1.4 (LO 1.4)

Students with gains in reading performances will have a higher GPA and success of course completions in courses that have been identified as 'difficult courses.'

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<i>Discipline-Specific Reading</i>		5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains	5% Pre-Post Gains
CAAP		2007 59.5 Overall, 14.7 Arts/Literature Reading, 14.7 Social Studies/Science Reading		2009 60 Overall, 15 Arts/Literature Reading, 15 Social Studies/Science Reading		2011 60.5 Overall, 15.5 Arts/Literature Reading, 15.5 Social Studies/Science Reading	

*Correlations between the above and GPA, as well as Course Completions will be conducted.

Learning Goal #2: Enhance student engagement.

Learning Outcome 2.1: (LO 2.1)

Ratings of performance on the CCSSE will increase in the area of Academic Challenge.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
CCSSE	1st Decile (bottom 10%)		2nd Decile		3rd Decile		4th Decile

Learning Outcome 2.2: (LO 2.2)

Ratings of performance on the CCSSE will increase in the area of Student Effort.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
CCSSE	1st Decile (bottom 10%)		2nd Decile		3rd Decile		4th Decile
LASSI	Diagnostic Only	Diagnostic Only	Diagnostic Only	Diagnostic Only	Diagnostic Only	Diagnostic Only	Diagnostic Only

Learning Outcome 2.3: (LO 2.3)

Ratings of performance on the CCSSE will increase in the area of Faculty-Student Interaction.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
CCSSE	1st Decile (bottom 10%)		2nd Decile		3rd Decile		4th Decile

Learning Outcome 2.4: (LO 2.4)

Ratings of performance on the CCSSE will increase in the area of Active & Collaborative Learning.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
CCSSE	1st Decile (bottom 10%)		2nd Decile		3rd Decile		4th Decile

Learning Outcome 2.5: (LO 2.5)

Ratings of performance on the CCSSE will remain stable in the area of Support for Learners.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
CCSSE	6th Decile (top 50%)		Remain in 6th Decile		Increase to 7th Decile		Remain in 7th Decile

Local Measures

Learning Outcome 2.6: (LO 2.6)

There will be marked gains in engagement from year to year on local measures of student engagement.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Local Engagement		Develop Instrument	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Learning Outcome 2.7: (LO 2.7)

Comparisons of engaged and non-engaged students performance gains on reading assessments will be conducted to determine if differences in gains exist.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Local Engagement		Develop Instrument	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Pre-Tasp			*	*	*	*	*
Discipline-Specific Reading			*	*	*	*	*

*Correlations between engagement and Reading Post-Tests will be performed.

**Might utilize CLASSE, once it is available.

Institutional Capacity

As evidenced by the presentation of the development of the Quality Enhancement Plan, the plan will continue to unfold as Trinity Valley Community College learns what is working and uncover new ideas that promise to further the College's vision of a culture of engaged learning.

The Learning Initiative is committed to carrying out the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The budgetary commitment provides the financial support necessary to implement the proposed changes, with direct expenditures in FY05 being \$29,213. The budget was drastically expanded when the positions of director of the Learning Initiative and the secretary of the Learning Initiative were added. The full impact of these expenditures is evident in the FY06 budget total of \$136,092. This budget is anticipated to grow to \$179,078 by FY11, The increases are largely anticipated salary increases for full-time employees.

TVCC's office of planning and institutional effectiveness is responsible for the institutional research activities of the College. This office is staffed with a dean, a senior research analyst, and an institutional research associate. The senior research analyst, while not reflected in the QEP budget, is a new position which began September 1, 2006. A portion of the justification for this position was that this office needed additional staff to support the assessment activities of the QEP.

An additional expenditure to support the activities of the Learning Initiative includes the annual purchase of assessment tools. The amount which will be spent on this purchase will vary each year, ranging from \$3,000 to \$9,800. Also, professional staff will be supported with \$4,000 in annual travel funds. Faculty and staff involvement is supported in the form of Learning Initiative Leadership Stipends, currently budgeted at \$11,500 annually. These funds are used to provide faculty with release time to work on leadership of the significant activities of the Learning Initiative. Additionally, \$2,000 is available annually for faculty and staff to attend training sessions and/or benchmarking excursions during each year of the plan. The institution has made an annual commitment to the Learning Lab Coordinator (\$11,200). Support for student workers (Carl Perkins) and part time employees are budgeted at \$13,330 annually.

Table 8.1. Quality Enhancement Plan Budget, 2006-2011

Operating Expenses	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011
Supplies and Services	\$2,000	\$5,250	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$7,000
Assessment Instruments (CCSSE, CAAP, LASSI, Local Instruments)*	\$6,800	\$3,000	\$9,800	\$3,000	\$9,800	\$3,000	\$9,800
Equipment	\$5,000	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
Travel-Learning Initiative Staff	\$0	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
Travel-Other Faculty/Staff to Attend Benchmarking Excursions/Workshops	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Operating Expenses Subtotal	\$13,800	\$16,750	\$23,300	\$16,500	\$24,300	\$17,500	\$25,300

Personnel Expenses	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011
Director - Quality Enhancement Plan	\$12,600	\$59,910	\$62,190	\$64,056	\$65,977	\$67,957	\$69,995
Secretary - Quality Enhancement Plan	\$0	\$17,407	\$18,285	\$18,834	\$19,399	\$19,981	\$20,580
Learning Lab Coordinator (PT)	\$0	\$0	\$11,200	\$11,200	\$11,200	\$11,200	\$11,200
Learning Initiative Leadership Stipend (faculty/staff support)	\$0	\$5,500	\$11,500	\$11,500	\$11,500	\$11,500	\$11,500
Part-Time Employees	\$2,813	\$2,800	\$2,800	\$2,800	\$2,800	\$2,800	\$2,800
Student Workers (Carl Perkins, Work Study)	\$0	\$10,530	\$10,530	\$10,530	\$10,530	\$10,530	\$10,530
Benefits Package (Insurance, Workers Comp, Retirement, Social Security)	\$0	\$23,195	\$24,143	\$24,867	\$25,613	\$26,381	\$27,173
Personnel Expenses Subtotal	\$15,413	\$119,342	\$140,648	\$143,786	\$147,019	\$150,348	\$153,778

Grand Total	\$29,213	\$136,092	\$163,948	\$160,286	\$171,319	\$167,848	\$179,078
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*CCSSE is fully or partially paid for with a grant from The Houston Endowment (\$6,000 per year, 2005 & 2007, \$3,000 per year, 2009 & 2011).

Communicating Change

Section 9

We now see that our mission is not instruction but rather that of producing learning with every student by whatever means work best.

-- (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p. 13)

Trinity Valley Community College's (TVCC) commitment to this is made real in the Quality Enhancement Plan, which provides promise for enhancing student engagement and reading comprehension. This commitment emerges at a time when TVCC is engaged in becoming a learning-centered institution. TVCC faculty, staff, and administrators function as facilitators and supporters of the learning process.

A culture is a socially constructed set of bonds that tie a particular collective of individuals together for a given purpose. Campus culture is "established around the production of something valued by its members. A culture does not exist for itself; rather, it exists to provide a context ... of the educational purposes of collegiate institutions" (Berquist, 1992, pp. 2-3). Campus culture is shaped by the unconscious assumptions that organizational players take for granted, such as vision, curricula, epistemology, and instruction (Gleave, 1994). These assumptions provide the framework for the meaning assigned to TVCC experiences, which often shapes behavior.

Campus culture provides the parameters for the organization's ability to shape its preferred future. Berquist (1992), attempting to delineate a definition of culture specific to higher education, chose to combine the anthropological (Malinowski, 1948), developmental (Lessem, 1990), and organizational perspectives of culture (Schein, 1985). Berquist (1992) stated that campus culture "provides meaning and context for a specific group of people. . . [and] helps to define the nature of reality for those people who are a part of that culture. . . [and] serves as an overarching purpose" (pp. 2-3). As such, campus culture is defined as a set of norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs held by stakeholders of a given institution that drives their behavior and frames the meaning they assign to their activities.

Learning outcomes enhancement efforts at TVCC have developed from an intense interest in understanding student learning. This dialogue has created excitement on campus and individuals are curious about how they can contribute to the organization's transformation to a learning-centered institution.

Communicating Culture Change

Fullan (2001b) argued that the development of a learning culture involves the development of social relationships within the organization that foster the development of learning. Mintzberg said, for institutions to be successful for the long term, they must "build a strong core of people who really care about the place and who have ideas" that "flow freely and easily through the organization" (in Fullan, 2001a, p. 134). The method of creating this environment is complex, non-linear, and chaotic. Changes to the

complexity of the social networks that shape the culture need to touch the deepest values and beliefs of the organization or modify these values and beliefs to incorporate the innovation. Effective communication is the foundation that supports successful change efforts.

Since communication is the key to any program being successful, the effort to inform all institutional stakeholders has been of utmost importance. The Learning Initiative (LI) Council prepared an update hand-out to be given to the Faculty Association and to the Board of Trustees. The TVCC *News Journal*, the school newspaper, has written numerous front page articles since spring 2005 to inform students (see list below for dates and titles of articles). The LI Council has also conducted the major in-service programs for 2005 and fall 2006, which included Power Point presentations and relevant hand-outs (See presentations on-line and hand-out packets).

The LI Council worked to develop a graphic design of the QEP (Learning Initiative) in fall of 2005. Posters containing the design were placed on all campuses, and the image has been used in the summer 2006 schedule and on the cover of the *TVCC 2006-07 Catalog* (see Appendix). The QEP has also been discussed at this year's faculty retreat, faculty association meetings, committee meetings, and student focus group sessions.

Additionally, the chair of the Update Team worked with the Palestine campus to discuss innovations in instruction to increase learning and encourage experimentation. The dean of planning and institutional effectiveness and the learning initiative director also spent time with the Palestine staff, the Student Support Services staff from all campuses, and the dean and coordinators of Community Services to discuss the QEP and compliance processes.

To communicate with everyone employed by TVCC about the Learning Initiative the Engagement Team co-chair and director produced *Engagement Edge* emails in spring 2006 (see Appendix). These explained what the Learning Initiative was, who was involved, and ways to get involved. A compiled version was completed and given to various groups to help give a clear and concise picture of the intent of the Learning Initiative (QEP) in summer 2006 and how the Learning Initiative included everyone connected to TVCC.

SACS Articles in *The TVCC News Journal*

- February 4, 2005 — “New Dean of Planning looks at TVCC with Updated Strategies” by Susan Tans
- March 4, 2005 — “And Survey Says... ‘Higher education has changed’.” by Seann Walker and “Bridging Higher Education Gap” by Susan Tans
- March 18, 2005 — “Fact on SACS” by Seann Walker
- April 22, 2005 – “QEP Faculty Task Force Finds Success for SACS” by Seann Walker
- May 6, 2005 – “Kay Pulley Named QEP Director” by Seann Walker
- September 30, 2005 – “Learning Academy Under Way” by Tina Perkins
- November 4, 2005 – “Learning Initiative Increases Quality of Education at TVCC” by Tina Perkins
- November 18, 2005 – “Looking for Graduates” by Tina Perkins
- December 2, 2005 – “Strategic Planning for SACS Underway” by Tina Perkins

- January 27, 2006 – “Engage Yourself, Be All the You Can Be” by Tina Perkins
- February 10, 2006 – “Learning Initiative Networking” by Tina Perkins
- February 24, 2006 – “Textbook Websites: New pilot program to make websites user-friendly for students and staff” by Tina Perkins
- March 31, 2006 – “New Reading Areas Available! Magazine rack material free to all” by Tina Perkins
- April 21, 2006 – “Calling all Graduates” by Tina Perkins
- May 5, 2006 – “Students get More Engaged, Be the Best that You Can Be” by Tina Perkins

Future communications will continue to make sure that students, faculty, administrators, and the community are informed of the Learning Initiative.

Leading Culture Change

Hyper-change characterizes the current environment in which organizations are struggling to make meaning and establish relevancy in a dynamic world. Therefore, TVCC is considering a different paradigm of action to maximize their capacity in this new environment. Focusing on change as a continuous process related to the culture of an organization, Fullan (1993), stated that the

. . . development of authentic shared vision builds on the skills of change agency: personal vision building through moral purpose, inquiry, mastery, and collaboration. Collective vision building is a deepening, “reinforcing process of increasing clarity, enthusiasm, communication and commitment” (Senge, 1990, p. 227). As people talk, try things out, inquire, re-try . . . people become more skilled, ideas become clearer, shared commitment gets stronger. *Productive change is very much a process of mobilization and positive contagion.* (p. 31)

Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, and Hall (1987), working with schools at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at the University of Texas at Austin, shared the following observations about change:

- Change is a process, not an event.
- Change is accomplished by individuals.
- Change is a highly personal experience.
- Change involves developmental growth.
- Change is best understood in operational terms.
- The focus of facilitation should be on individuals, innovations, and the context. (pp. 5-6)

Senge observed, “[m]any of the best intentioned efforts to foster new learning founder because those leading the charge forget the first rule of learning: people learn what they need to learn, not what someone else thinks they need to learn” (in Fullan, 1993, p. 71). Marris (1975) stated,

[w]hen those who have the power to manipulate changes act as if they have only to explain, and when their explanations are not at once accepted, shrug off opposition as ignorance or prejudices, they express a profound contempt of the meaning of lives other than their own. (p. 166)

The Learning Initiative seeks to create an open system where action emerges from the needs of the environment rather than the perceived vision of a select few in a command and control environment.

Kotter (1996) emphasized the importance of culture in his eight stage process for change, with the final stage focusing on anchoring change in the culture. Kotter stated, Both attitude and behavior change typically begin early in a transformation process. These alterations then create changes in practices that help [an institution] produce better . . . services . . . [or increased student learning]. But only at the end of the change cycle does most of this become anchored in the culture. (p. 156)

TVCC seeks to anchor the Learning Initiative within the culture. The institution's commitment to the change is evident in the financial support that has been given, the means through which the QEP focus has emerged, and the processes through which it will continue to develop. Leading this change will require the focus of the director of the Learning Initiative and those immediately supporting this project on a daily basis. But leadership will also need to emerge at sites all throughout TVCC. Examples of this already exist; however, an expansion must occur to ensure long-term sustainability.

Fullan (1993) stated that successes come from . . . only those reform efforts that zero-in on changes in teaching and learning, and the surrounding conditions that support such developments in a sustained way . . . are likely to fuel the moral purpose of teaching. Clumsy or superficial attempts at reform actually decrease commitment— they make matters worse. (p. 59)

The Learning Initiative is squarely focused on teaching and learning, and early experiences indicate that resistance may be overcome if it is understood that the effort is focused on enhancing learning. The LI Council will continue to try to make activities meaningful to faculty, staff, and students.

Fundamental Assumptions

TVCCs leadership embraces the following assumptions for the future success of the Learning Initiative:

- Change cannot be something that is done to students or faculty. Rather, change is a process that allows for the emergence of meaning for each individual.
- Change does not always follow a linear process, as individuals are constantly taking in new information and as organizations face increasingly dynamic external forces.
- While TVCC has appointed a director of the Learning Initiative to lead the assessment activities, it is *not enough* for TVCC to begin to focus on student learning in ways that will lead to learning outcomes enhancement. On the one hand, this action demonstrates a commitment to learning outcomes assessment on the part of the administration. However, the message has been sent loud and clear that the “student learning” is an institutional responsibility.
- A fundamental assumption of the Learning Initiative is that assessment of learning outcomes is not enough; rather the focus is on taking action that enhances learning.

- Learning outcomes enhancement processes must have true meaning for those who are to implement changes that will affect student learning—including faculty, staff, administrators, trustees, students, and community members.
- Cultivating a culture of learning outcomes enhancement is a complex process.
- A campus climate is comprised of the interactions of a collective of individuals structured by the norms, values, beliefs, and mores of the environment; therefore, it will be changed as any of these features change. Therefore, the construction of meaning is an ongoing endeavor.

Team Effort

While change at the organizational level often requires structural changes (i.e. resource re-allocation and personnel re-allocation), researchers have noted the importance of focusing on the values, attitudes, and beliefs—or the culture of the organization—when attempting to construct new meaning(s) within the context of the organization. Fullan (2001b) argued, “collegiality, open communication, trust, support and help, learning on the job, getting results, and job satisfaction and morale are the qualities that distinguish ‘learning enriched’ schools from ‘learning impoverished’ schools” (p. 77). Senge (1990) posited that an atmosphere of shared creation usually leads to an emerging culture of shared understanding and meaning.

Marris (1975) stated that leaders in traditional (rational-structural) organizations that attempt to implement changes “have already assimilated these changes to their purposes, and worked out a reformulation which makes sense to them, perhaps through months or years of analysis and debate,” and the failure to allow others to go through the process of internalizing reform efforts treats “them as puppets dangling by the threads of their own conceptions” (p. 166). He concluded that this will likely result in a failure of the reform effort.

The LI Council strives to recall this as it encounter challenging questions from colleagues who may not have traveled on the learning-centered path as long as others. These discussions refresh and energize our efforts, and help to keep the Learning Initiative on course. The Learning Initiative has emerged from the social, cultural, political, and economic context of the Colleges and the process allows faculty and other organizational players to create meaning out of the quality enhancement processes.

Appendices

Section
10

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TRINITY VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN 2007-2010

Approved by the TVCC Board of Trustees April 24, 2006

MISSION STATEMENT

Trinity Valley Community College is a learning-centered college that provides quality academic, workforce, and community service programs to meet the educational needs of our students and the citizens of our service area.

STRATEGIC GOALS

GOAL #1 – LEARNING

Trinity Valley Community College will place student learning as the primary design principle in every College policy, procedure, plan, and action.

Critical Success Factors:

- 1.1—Become a more learning-centered institution.
- 1.2—Increase student engagement in collegiate life.
- 1.3—Provide instruction, academic support, and student services that enhance student learning inside and outside the classroom.
- 1.4—Identify one or more instructional or service program that will be recognized by an accepted authority as excellent within the state of Texas or the nation.
- 1.5—Increasingly engage in data-based decision making at the student, course, department, and institutional level.

GOAL #2 – OUTREACH

Increase the outreach of TVCC through a variety of affordable services and programs, while ensuring that resources are available to meet the needs of students and faculty.

Critical Success Factors:

- 2.1—TVCC will increase enrollment in high-need programs.
- 2.2—College enrollment from the service area will include at least 5.7% of the service area population.
- 2.3—TVCC will increase the amount of institutional financial assistance for students.

GOAL #3 – SUCCESS

Identify and support the success of TVCC students through retention and graduation.

Critical Success Factors:

- 3.1—Increase retention rates of students.
 - 3.1.1—Increase retention rates of students who intend to complete a program of study.
 - 3.1.2—Increase retention rates of students who do not intend to complete a program of study.
- 3.2—Increase completion rates of students.
 - 3.2.1—Increase completion rates of students who intend to complete a program of study.
 - 3.2.2—Increase completion rates of students who do not intend to complete a program of study.
- 3.3—Increase the completion rates in high-need academic transfer and workforce programs.
- 3.4—Increase the proportion of Associate of Arts graduates who transfer to Texas public universities within one year of program completion.
- 3.5—Increase the proportion of Associate of Applied Sciences graduates and Certificate completers who obtain employment in their chosen field of study within one year of program completion.
- 3.6—To be a leader and innovator in economic and community development.

GOAL #4 – DIVERSITY

Trinity Valley Community College will provide a learning environment that supports and encourages diversity.

Critical Success Factors:

- 4.1--The TVCC student body will better represent the racial and ethnic diversity of its service area.
- 4.2--The ethnic and racial diversity of the TVCC faculty will better represent the ethnic and racial diversity of its student body.
- 4.3--TVCC faculty and staff will participate in activities that enhance their cultural awareness.
- 4.4--Students and employees will increasingly report that TVCC has a climate that encourages cultural awareness.

<http://www.tvcc.edu/opie/StrategicPlan>

DIRECTOR OF THE LEARNING INITIATIVE

GENERAL STATEMENT:

The Director of the Learning Initiative provides overall leadership for the institution-wide Learning Initiative, including planning, implementation, and assessment of the initiative.

REPORTS TO:

Vice President of Instruction

EDUCATION:

Master's degree with a minimum of eighteen (18) graduate hours in a teaching field required.

EXPERIENCE:

Minimum of five (5) years community college experience required. College teaching experience preferred.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Responsible for the development, implementation, evaluation, and enhancement of TVCC's Quality Enhancement Plan.
- Coordination of faculty development efforts specific to learning outcomes covered in the QEP.
- Coordination of assessment of student learning outcomes specific to the QEP.
- Coordination of learning enhancement efforts by TVCC faculty and staff.
- Coordination of communications to the campus community and other stakeholders regarding the progress of the QEP.
- Making recommendations regarding curricular revisions/enhancements to be implemented to enhance student learning outcomes specific to the QEP.
- Development of annual Administrative Outcomes and Learning Enhancement Annual Plans that are reported on an annual basis to the Dean of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness.
- Development of the QEP budget, timeline, learning outcomes, administrative outcomes.
- Developing the official QEP Report to be submitted to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.
- Developing any follow-up reports required by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.
- Serve as a member of the Curriculum and Instruction Committee, Instructional Deans' Council, and the Committee on College Planning.
- Serve as the Chair of the Quality Enhancement Advisory Committee.
- Supervise an administrative assistant.
- The QEP project is designed to focus on the enhancement of a specific learning outcome at TVCC; however, the current design calls for the plan to evolve as the institution becomes more knowledgeable about student learning at TVCC. As such, the duties and responsibilities of this position may expand to incorporate the expansion of the project's scope.
- Other duties as assigned by appropriate supervisory personnel.

SECRETARY TO DIRECTOR OF THE LEARNING INITIATIVE

GENERAL STATEMENT:

Provides support for the office of the Director of the Learning Initiative in a secretarial capacity to manage the activity and productivity of the department in an efficient manner

REPORTS TO:

Director of Learning Initiative

EDUCATION:

High School Diploma or GED required, Associate Degree or above preferred.

EXPERIENCE:

Required: Three years of secretarial or equivalent experience. Demonstrated ability to communicate effectively through written communication. Demonstrated experience of computer software programs, including word processing (MS Word), spreadsheets (MS Excel), presentation tools (MS Power Point), database (MS Access), website design (MS Front Page), and project management. Preferred: Experience in an educational environment.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Manages office activity independently and makes decisions in line with departmental processes.
- Manages incoming communications for the office, ascertains nature of the inquiry, and directs students, faculty, and staff to the appropriate departmental resource.
- Uses appropriate technologies for the preparation, compilation and distribution of presentation materials for the department.
- Responsible for creating and updating content for the Learning Initiative website.
- May represent department with outside agencies, contacts, other college, etc. and coordinate activities or handle correspondences, records, files or reports.
- May represent department to internal staff, students or faculty and coordinate activities or handle correspondence, records, files or reports.
- Prepares sensitive reports which may have high visibility/impact, analyzes information and makes suggestions for improvements.
- Assists with the implementation of research projects in support of the Learning Initiative, including administering surveys to students/faculty/staff and scanning survey results.
- Records minutes at Learning Initiative Council meetings, as well as other departmental meetings.
- Creates, maintains, and updates an effective records management system for all office functions (including personnel absences, vacations, official communications, reports, and other important documents).
- Maintains documentation of progress towards departmental goals.
- Maintains schedule of the Director of the Learning Initiative.
- Arranges travel schedule and reservations for out-of-town appointments of departmental personnel.
- Assists in the preparation and maintenance of departmental budgets.
- Coordinates departmental purchasing processes with the Business Office, including securing PO's, documenting Invoices, and ensuring timely payment.
- Supervises a Carl Perkins work-study student for the Learning Initiative.
- Provides support as needed for the Dean of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness and Institutional Research.
- Contributes to the effective team management of all relevant problems, issues and opportunities.
- This job description shall include, but is not necessarily limited to, the above duties. May temporarily perform other duties assigned to maintain operations and services.

Community College Survey of Student Engagement
 2005 Benchmark Summary Table - All Students
Trinity Valley Community College

All Students				
Benchmark	Trinity Valley Community College	Comparison Group Statistics		
			Medium Colleges	2005 Colleges
Active and Collaborative Learning	44.8	Benchmark Score	49.9	50.0
		Score Difference	-5.1	-5.2
Student Effort	43.9	Benchmark Score	49.9	50.0
		Score Difference	-6.0	-6.1
Academic Challenge	42.6	Benchmark Score	50.3	50.0
		Score Difference	-7.8	-7.4
Student-Faculty Interaction	44.4	Benchmark Score	50.1	50.0
		Score Difference	-5.8	-5.6
Support for Learners	50.5	Benchmark Score	49.6	50.0
		Score Difference	0.9	0.5
		Number of Colleges	61	257

Benchmark Score: Each benchmark score was computed by averaging the scores on survey items that comprise that benchmark. To compensate for disproportionately large numbers of full-time students in the sample, all means used in the creation of the benchmarks are weighted by full- and part-time status. Benchmark scores are standardized so that the weighted mean across all students is 50 and the standard deviation across all participating students is 25. Institutions' benchmark scores are computed by taking the weighted average of their students' standardized scores.

Score Difference: The result of subtracting the comparison group score (same size colleges or 2005 colleges) from your college's score on each benchmark.

**2005 CCSSE Benchmark Deciles
All Students
Trinity Valley Community College**

These tables present the range of institutional scores by decile for the five benchmarks of effective educational practice for all participating students. Deciles are percentile scores that divide the frequency of benchmark scores into ten equal groups.

	All Students											
	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%	
All 2005 Colleges												
Active and Collaborative Learning	38.4	45.6	47.2	48.1	49.2	50.2	51.0	51.7	52.7	55.0	67.4	
Student Effort	38.9	46.1	47.4	48.4	49.5	50.6	51.4	52.2	53.5	55.0	60.2	
Academic Challenge	39.9	45.6	47.4	48.9	49.6	50.1	50.8	51.7	52.6	53.9	66.5	
Student - Faculty Interaction	41.2	45.8	47.7	48.8	49.9	50.8	51.7	52.6	54.1	55.9	66.0	
Support for Learners	42.3	45.9	47.2	48.0	49.4	50.3	51.2	52.4	54.4	56.7	62.6	
Small Colleges												
Active and Collaborative Learning	38.4	46.1	47.7	48.7	49.7	50.8	51.4	52.6	53.7	56.7	67.4	
Student Effort	40.7	46.3	47.8	49.4	50.7	51.2	52.0	53.0	53.9	55.3	59.6	
Academic Challenge	41.4	45.5	47.4	48.6	49.5	50.2	50.8	51.8	52.8	54.4	66.5	
Student - Faculty Interaction	41.2	46.5	48.4	49.7	50.9	51.8	52.8	54.1	55.4	57.3	66.0	
Support for Learners	44.9	47.1	48.0	49.2	50.3	51.6	52.9	54.5	56.1	58.0	62.6	
Medium Colleges												
Active and Collaborative Learning	42.7	44.8	47.5	48.1	48.9	50.0	51.0	51.7	52.5	53.8	60.6	
Student Effort	38.9	45.7	47.7	48.4	48.9	49.7	51.0	51.9	52.7	54.4	58.3	
Academic Challenge	39.9	46.4	48.6	49.4	49.7	50.1	50.8	51.9	53.0	54.3	57.5	
Student - Faculty Interaction	44.4	45.4	47.7	48.5	49.3	49.9	50.9	52.3	52.9	54.2	56.2	
Support for Learners	42.3	44.9	46.7	47.6	48.5	49.6	50.5	51.8	52.4	54.5	59.5	
Large Colleges												
Active and Collaborative Learning	43.6	45.6	46.5	47.8	48.2	49.7	50.1	50.7	51.2	52.6	55.0	
Student Effort	45.7	46.0	47.4	48.5	48.6	49.8	50.7	51.1	51.9	54.5	60.2	
Academic Challenge	45.3	45.6	46.9	49.0	50.1	50.5	51.4	52.3	52.7	53.8	56.6	
Student - Faculty Interaction	43.2	45.0	47.2	48.6	49.4	50.2	50.7	51.0	52.1	53.6	55.9	
Support for Learners	42.8	45.3	45.8	47.1	47.8	49.5	49.9	51.2	52.0	53.9	56.6	
Extra Large Colleges												
Active and Collaborative Learning	45.2	45.7	45.8	46.1	46.8	47.2	48.6	50.9	51.0	52.4	55.1	
Student Effort	45.1	45.8	46.2	46.5	47.8	48.0	49.0	50.5	52.0	54.1	55.1	
Academic Challenge	44.6	45.3	47.7	48.5	49.5	49.6	50.0	50.0	51.2	52.6	52.6	
Student - Faculty Interaction	43.3	43.8	45.3	46.5	47.7	49.1	49.7	50.3	51.4	52.2	52.4	
Support for Learners	43.8	45.0	45.9	47.2	47.9	48.0	49.4	49.5	50.7	51.3	58.0	
Urban Colleges												
Active and Collaborative Learning	41.7	45.7	46.8	47.8	49.3	50.2	51.0	51.4	52.5	54.7	60.3	
Student Effort	41.7	47.3	48.2	48.6	49.4	50.9	51.7	52.4	54.4	55.5	60.2	
Academic Challenge	45.3	46.9	48.9	49.6	50.0	50.4	51.5	52.6	53.7	55.1	66.5	
Student - Faculty Interaction	43.2	45.4	46.9	48.3	48.8	50.1	50.7	52.2	53.3	54.3	60.7	
Support for Learners	43.8	45.8	47.2	48.0	48.8	49.7	50.8	51.8	52.4	55.0	59.5	
Suburban Colleges												
Active and Collaborative Learning	42.4	45.5	46.0	47.8	48.3	49.6	50.8	51.2	52.0	53.8	67.4	
Student Effort	43.4	45.8	46.3	47.8	48.5	49.6	50.6	51.6	52.3	54.1	59.6	
Academic Challenge	41.9	45.3	47.3	49.3	49.5	50.1	50.6	51.0	52.4	52.8	59.3	
Student - Faculty Interaction	41.2	44.9	47.5	48.4	49.9	50.5	51.1	51.8	54.2	55.0	59.0	
Support for Learners	42.3	44.9	45.7	47.3	48.5	49.6	50.0	51.1	52.2	56.7	62.6	
Rural Colleges												
Active and Collaborative Learning	38.4	46.1	47.7	48.4	49.3	50.3	51.4	52.7	53.7	56.1	62.0	
Student Effort	38.9	46.1	46.8	48.4	50.2	50.9	51.7	52.5	53.6	54.4	58.4	
Academic Challenge	39.9	45.2	46.9	48.2	49.0	49.8	50.7	51.5	52.4	53.8	56.8	
Student - Faculty Interaction	42.6	46.5	48.6	49.6	50.6	51.4	52.4	52.9	55.1	57.1	66.0	
Support for Learners	42.4	46.7	47.7	48.5	50.3	51.2	52.8	54.4	55.6	57.5	61.8	

Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) Scales

The **Anxiety Scale** – assesses the degree to which students worry about school and their academic performance. Students who score low on this scale may need to develop techniques for coping with anxiety and reducing worry so that attention can be focused on the task at hand.

The **Attitude Scale** – assesses students' attitudes and interest in college and academic success. Students who score low on this scale may not believe college is relevant or important to them and may need to develop a better understanding of how college and their academic performance relates to their future life goals.

The **Concentration Scale** – assesses students' ability to direct and maintain attention on academic tasks. Low scoring students may need to learn to monitor their level of concentration and develop techniques to redirect attention so that they can be more effective and efficient learners.

The **Information Processing Scale** – assesses how well students can use learning strategies to build bridges between what they already know and what they are trying to learn. Students with low scores may have difficulty making information meaningful and storing it in memory in a way that will help them recall it in the future.

The **Motivation Scale** – assesses students' diligence, self-discipline, and willingness to exert the effort necessary to successfully complete academic requirements. Low scoring students need to accept more responsibility for their academic outcomes and learn how to set goals to accomplish specific tasks.

The **Self-Testing Scale** – assesses students' use of self-review and comprehension monitoring techniques to determine their level of understanding. Low scoring students may need to learn effective techniques for reviewing information and monitoring their level of understanding.

The **Selecting Main Ideas Scale** – assesses students' skill at identifying important information from among less important information and supporting details. Students who score low on this scale may need to develop their skill at separating out critical information on which to focus their attention.

The **Study Aids Scale** – assesses students' use of supports or resources to help them learn or retain information. Students with low scores may need to develop a better understanding of how to use the resources available.

The **Time Management Scale** – assesses students' application of time management principles to academic situations. Low scoring students need to develop effective scheduling and monitoring techniques in order to assure completion of academic tasks while realistically integrating non-academic activities.

The **Test Strategies Scale** – assesses students' use of test preparation and test taking strategies. Low scoring students may need to learn more effective techniques for preparing for and taking tests.

Reading Areas Measured by Pre-TASP

Determining the meaning of words and phrases (MEANINGS OF WORDS). Includes using the context of a passage to determine the meaning of words with multiple meanings, unfamiliar and uncommon words and phrases, and figurative expressions.

Understanding the main idea and supporting details in written material (MAIN IDEA). Includes identifying explicit and implicit main ideas and recognizing ideas that support, illustrate, or elaborate the main idea of a passage.

Identifying a writer's purpose, point of view, and intended meaning (PURPOSE). Includes recognizing a writer's expressed or implied purpose for writing; evaluating the appropriateness of written material for various purposes or audiences; recognizing the likely effect on an audience of a writer's choice of words; and using the content, word choice, and phrasing of a passage to determine a writer's opinion or point of view.

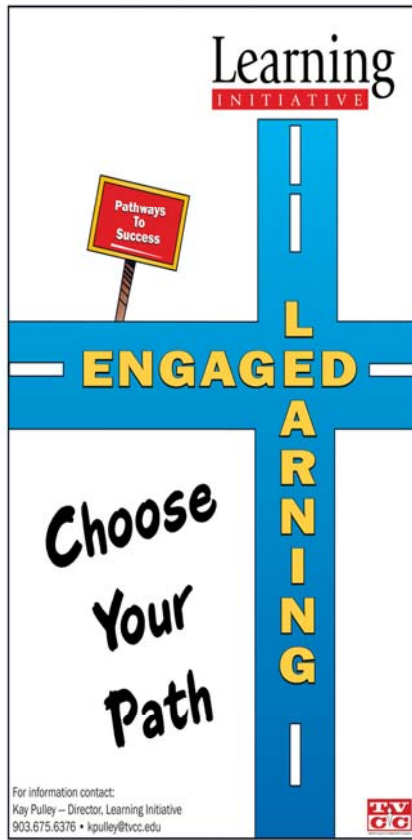
Analyzing the relationship among ideas in written material (RELATIONSHIPS). Includes evaluating the stated or implied assumptions on which the validity of a writer's argument depends; judging the relevance or importance of facts, examples, or graphic data to a writer's argument; evaluating the logic of a writer's argument; evaluating the validity of analogies; distinguishing between fact and opinion; and assessing the credibility or objectivity of the writer or source of written material.

Using critical reasoning skills to evaluate written material (CRITICAL REASONING). Includes evaluating the stated or implied assumptions on which the validity of a writer's argument depends; judging the relevance or importance of facts, examples, or graphic data to a writer's argument; evaluating the validity and logic of a writer's argument; evaluating the validity of analogies; distinguishing between fact and opinion; and assessing the credibility or objectivity of the writer or source of written material.

Applying study skills to reading assignments (STUDY SKILLS). Includes organizing and summarizing information for study purposes; following written instructions or directions; and interpreting information presented in charts, graphs, or tables.

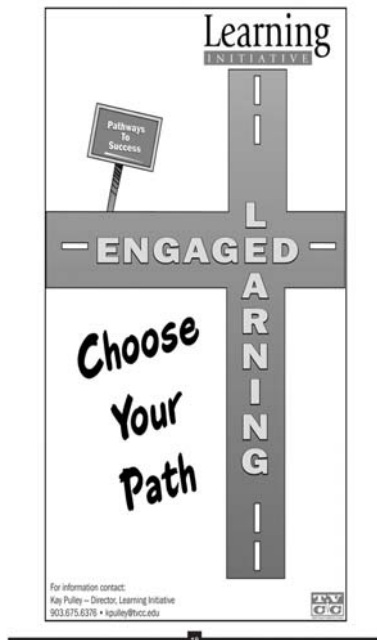
Reading Level of Difficult Course Textbooks for Courses that are Currently Developing Discipline-Specific Reading Tests

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Textbook</u>	<u>Reading Level</u>
Biology 2401 Human Anatomy & Physiology	Marieb, E. (XXXX) <i>Human Anatomy & Physiology</i> (7 th Ed), Pearson/Benjamin-Cummings	FOG 13.4, SMOG 12.4, FORCAST, 11.1, Fry 12.7
Physics 1401 College Physics I	Serway, R. & J. Faughn, (XXXX) <i>College Physics</i> (7 th Ed.), Thomson, Brooks/Cole, 2006	FOG 13.9 SMOG 12.7 FORCAST 10.1 FRY 12.8
Physics 1415 Physical Science I	Shipman, J., Wilson, J., & Todd, A. (2006) <i>An Introduction to Physical Science</i> (11 th Ed), Houghton Mifflin Company	Pending
Nursing 1523 Intro. to Prof. Nursing	Harkreader, H., M.A. Hogan, (2004) <i>Fundamentals of Nursing, Caring and Clinical Judgment</i> (2 nd Ed). Saunders.	FOG 13.6, SMOG 12.8, FORCAST 10.6, FRY 12.1
Psychology 2301 General Psychology	Meyers, D.G., (2005) <i>Exploring Psychology</i> (6 th Ed), Worth Publishing.	FOG 16.3, SMOG 14.7, FORCAST 11.5
Speech 1311 Fundamentals of Speech	Verderber, R.F., & Verderber, K.S. (2005) <i>Communicate!</i> , Thomson.	SMOG 11.8, FORCAST 10.9, FRY 11.9
History 1301 United States History to 1879	Roark, J.L., Johnson, M.P., Cohen, P.C., Stage, S, Lawson, A., & S.M. Hartmann (2005) <i>The American Promise, A History of the United States</i> (3 rd Ed), Bedford/St. Martin's.	Pending
Sociology 1301 Introduction to Sociology	Kendall, D. (2007) <i>Sociology In Our Times</i> (6 th Ed.), Thomson/Wadsworth.	SMOG 14.9 FORCAST 11.3 FRY 16.4



KAUFMAN-HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER		SUMMER II 2006			
COURSE	DESCRIPTION	THE CLASS MEETS	DATE	ROOM	INSTRUCTOR
NURSING					
NURSA 1111/1111	Medical Term	See Instructor	TBA	NAUT	Rud III

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Engagement Edge Informational Emails

This is a series of statements, questions, and answers from the Learning Initiative Council to help prepare everyone for our upcoming SACS visit, Oct. 24-26, 2006.

When SACS comes to visit, they will randomly ask faculty and staff how they were involved in the process. It will be better if we don't answer with a blank stare. The purpose of *The Engagement Edge* is to acquaint everyone with terms and activities of the Learning Initiative Council.

Q: Why does our new Mission Statement insist we are **learning centered**? Isn't this obvious?

A: Actually, when you think about it, most of our efforts have been **teaching centered**. Teachers teach; learners learn, right? But are students actually learning? We won't know until we develop specific learning outcomes, then measure them.

Q: Everyone says SACS is "different" this time. What does this mean?

A: Eight accrediting agencies studied a report from the Pew Trust and developed a new language for learning, then added **student learning outcomes** into the process. This is the new focus for all agencies—regional agencies like SACS as well as professional agencies accrediting programs, like business schools. These groups now want us to identify expected learning outcomes and develop means to measure them.

The emphasis is on **outcomes-based assessment**, the ability to say, "These techniques work because we assessed them." We are increasingly accountable ("responsible", "answerable") at the course level. What we don't want is a single intersect in quantitative measures of student progress. Rather, we need as many measures as possible.

If we don't do this ourselves, the government will...and we won't like it. Accountability is the new creed.

Q: You keep talking about "measurement" of student learning. Isn't the grade I give a student enough measure of whether or not they're learning?

A: Grades measure one aspect of learning, but course grades aren't the only measure. One problem is grade inflation. Now, you know *you* don't inflate grades, but you're not so sure about that other fellow... Another problem is that different instructors have different standards. What's a C for you might be someone else's A. Besides, exams measure short-term retention, not learning.

Specific learning outcomes should reflect an aggregate of everything a student gets from a course (communication skills, group skills, learning how to study, etc.) Grades are only one aspect of this.

Q: Since our two goals are reading and student engagement does this mean I'm going to have to start teaching reading in my class?

A: Not at all. Our first step is to see if students have reading deficits. To accomplish this, Vicki Dossett and her Assessment Team are selecting passages from various textbooks currently in use. She's beginning with five textbooks (General Psychology, History, Speech, Nursing Fundamentals, and Anatomy & Physiology) and will add five more textbooks every semester.

How this would work: Students in a Psychology class, for example, would be asked by the instructor to read a passage from their textbook, and then answer some questions over the material. Can the student read well enough on their own to answer the questions? If not, this is a red flag for both the instructor and the student. Once we know a student's reading strategies, we may know they could use extra help.

The next step would be to refer the student to an **Open Learning Lab** where computers and software are available to help the student improve reading strategies. Obviously, we don't have an Open Learning Lab yet--we need first to see if we need one. Again, this is where measurement comes in. We don't need to fund a program until we know there's a need for it.

Earliest meetings with instructors revealed your concern over students' reading skills. The assumption is we'll find students have reading deficits; therefore, a pilot Open Learning Lab is being discussed for Fall 2006.

Q: SACS surveyors will be on our campuses October 24-26 for more clarification after reading all our written materials. If a surveyor were to come up to you next October 24-26 and ask you what our school's **QEP** is, what would you say? Hmm?

A: Well! Since I read the *Engagement Edge*, I know that "QEP" stands for "Quality Enhancement Plan" in SACS speak, but it was decided this wasn't exactly a user-friendly term. All the work to be done for the "QEP" is being done by the **Learning Initiative Council**, directed by Kay Pulley. This Council is all the people we've been seeing on the stage at the August and January in-services.

SACS encourages each college to create their own plan for **quality enhancement**, or **QEP**. Trinity Valley's plan results from Jeremy McMillen's meetings with all campuses and departments. In those initial meetings, he asked, "If TVCC could do one thing to improve student learning, what would it be?"

Consistently, faculty and staff responded that students would learn more if they were better readers and cared more, i.e., were more engaged. So those are our first two criteria: increased reading and student engagement.

Q: So **QEP** translates as the **Learning Initiative**. What, exactly, is the work of the Learning Initiative Council?

A: Their focus is captured by this statement: The Learning Initiative Council is a TVCC project designed to increase student's ability to read and write in crucial learning experiences by enhancing student engagement. This is phase one. After focusing on reading and student engagement and, hopefully, raising skills in both areas, the second phase will be the next faculty concern: writing. Phase three focuses on critical thinking.

That's why this will not end when SACS leaves next October; the plan is to continue until our students are engaged and can read, write, and think critically. To this end, we must submit a five-year follow-up report to SACS on the continuation of our QEP.

Q: So if the **QEP** is the **Learning Initiative**, and there's a Learning Initiative Council, who are they?

A: They are faculty and staff from all four campuses, working under the leadership of Kay Pulley. Members of the Council include:

- Vicki Dossett (chair of the Assessment Team),
- Linda Gann (chair of the Learning Academy),
- Janet Lumpkin and Russell Self (co-chairs of Student Engagement comprising in class and out-of-class projects),
- Wanda Mayes (chair of the Reading Team),
- Eric Moseley (chair of Update Team),
- Terry Spurlock (chair of Technology),
- Judy Callicoatt (Nursing representative)
- Rob Risko (Strategic Plan Development)

Each of these team leaders have other faculty and staff working with them. Each of these would appreciate a phone call or email if you have questions. If engagement is a goal, wouldn't it be nice if faculty became more engaged and communicative?

An article in Sunday's Dallas Morning News, headlined "*Colleges to get more scrutiny*" (April 9, 2006, page 27A), will strengthen understanding of efforts of the Learning Initiative Council and Strategic Planning Committee.

A federal education commission has until August 1, 2006, to research and report the best way to "push colleges and universities to measure their effectiveness in somewhat the way public schools have done for years."

The head of this commission states, "It is right and righteous for us to ask questions about this system" because "the federal government provides one-third of annual spending on colleges, yet taxpayers do not know enough about how that money is spent or even how to choose schools for their children." The panel is charged with examining rising tuition costs, barriers to going to college, and how well institutions prepare students to compete in the global economy. Accountability! Are we ready for this?

The reason the federal government created the education commission is because the federal government has a right to be concerned. Research quoted in the *Dallas Morning News* article states:

- 20% of recent graduates with four-year degrees and 30% with two-year degrees have only basic quantitative and literacy skills. They can't, for example, estimate whether a car has enough gasoline to reach a destination. They can't calculate the cost of office supplies. To repeat: 30% of community-college graduates can't do basic computations and can't write complete sentences.
- 54% of all beginning students with a degree goal earn that degree or certificate *within six years*. That means, of course, that a little more than half the students achieve their goal. Others simply drop out. The government wants to know why.

Higher education is under increasing criticism. We take their money, but it must appear to them we aren't doing our job. Measurement of **learning outcomes** is the only way to re-gain their trust. Do not think, however, this is something Jeremy McMillen will take care of, and don't think accountability will fade once SACS leaves.

This is a cultural shift. Accountability will be mandated at the course level and you will be involved. Programs are being offered and there will be an ever-greater expectation you will participate, because--here's the gist of it--this is hard ball.

Q: To measure student engagement, the school gave a standardized test to a large sample of students in Spring 2005 and the results were disheartening. How can we improve student engagement as measured on this test?

A: That instrument was the **CCSSE**, or **Community College Survey of Student Engagement**, and it compares TVCC students to other community college students taking the same assessment instrument. It did, indeed, show our students were less engaged when compared to other students.

The test isn't rocket science: If you want to know if someone is engaged, ask them! CCSSE asks basic questions, like "Have you asked questions in class?" or "Have you used email to contact your instructor?" Sounds like common-sense questions that ought to tap into student engagement. We can raise performance in specific ways.

The **CCSSE** has five sections, each one assessing different aspects of engagement. One, for example, is **Student-Faculty Interaction**. The logic of this section is that the more contact students have with their teachers, the more likely they are to learn effectively and to persist in learning endeavors. Some typical questions:

- How often have you used email to communicate with an instructor?
- How often have you discussed grades or assignments with an instructor?
- How often have you discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class?

Obviously, one simple way to raise scores in this area is to encourage students to email you, or to discuss grades with you. Linda Gann has added to her syllabus something like, "You are encouraged to contact the instructor by phone, email, or a visit to her office before the second test. If you are having trouble in this class, she needs to know early enough in the semester to help you."

You can encourage students to interact with you in these specific ways, and the next time they complete the CCSSE, they'll think to themselves, "Sure. I went by Kenneth Stamper's office about fifty times and he always helped me." Direct encouragement of simple activities will raise student engagement regarding student-faculty interactions.

So one aspect of the **CCSSE** involves student-faculty interaction, but there are four other dimensions of the instrument. A second one is **Active and Collaborative Learning**. The research refers often to "collaborative" learning; here at Trinity Valley we're calling it "networking".

CCSSE's thinking here is that students learn more when they're actively involved in their education, as opposed to passively taking notes during a lecture. Active learning means working with others to solve problems or study together to master challenging content—

skills definitely needed in the workplace when they leave the protected environment of college.

Items in this cluster include:

- How often have you asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions?
- How often have you made a class presentation?
- How often have you worked with other students on projects during class?
- How often have you worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments?

Their assumption is that these activities, while social in nature, will actually increase student learning.

To increase **active and collaborative learning**, a networking pilot project began Spring 2006 in four classes with four instructors (three in Terrell and one in Athens) and several **learning outcomes** are built into these classes.

With the questions above as guidelines, the *Teacher Manual* was offered to interested faculty in January, 2006, and it's filled with activities and ideas which will structure assignments and allow students to answer the questions with a resounding "Yes!"

Copies of the *Teacher Manual* are available by contacting either Kay Pulley (kpulley@tvcc.edu) or Janet Lumpkin (lumpkin@tvcc.edu). The *Manual* will be revised and added to over the summer. It's never too late to begin thinking about altering one of your courses to include **networking** and **learning outcomes** measurement. Remember: Our feet are to the fire, governmentally speaking. Sitting back is no longer an option. Request a *Manual* and begin giving serious thought to re-vamping at least one course.

So two CCSSE benchmark areas have been covered:

1. Student-Faculty Interaction and
2. Active and Collaborative Learning.

Our scores were not good in these areas—not at all. But scores were even lower for **Student Effort**. The CCSSE philosophy behind this area is that students' own behaviors will contribute significantly to their learning. Questions in this area ask how often a student has:

3. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper before turning it in.
4. Read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment.
5. Used tutoring, skills labs, or computer labs.
6. Come to class without completing readings or assignments. (This one is reverse scored.)

By their own self-description, TVCC students say they don't put much effort into their own education. Suggestions for improving this will come from two of Trinity Valley's master teachers.

Certainly a master teacher, Kay Pulley is the only TVCC instructor to twice be awarded the Outstanding Teacher award. When asked how to increase **student effort**, Kay has specific suggestions, things that have worked for her:

- Embed short pop tests over reading assignments, a quick, five-minute exercise.
- Encourage use of textbook websites by saying something like, “Bring in the practice test from the website for Chapter 6 and we’ll go over it in class/grade it in class.”
- Have students create a ten-question multiple-choice test on a chapter and then use a combination of all their questions for an actual test.

Vicki Dossett, psychology instructor and winner of numerous teaching awards, believes students will have to be externally motivated to put forth **student effort**, until we are fully immersed in the learning community ideal of networking.

Her suggestions include:

- Give pop quizzes over reading material to equal a test grade. This would externally motivate the student to read the text. Hopefully, they’ll notice how they do better in classes where they read the text.
- Require tutoring or assignments from the text website if the student flunked the first test. (Merl Estep actively uses this technique, to be found on the following website: <http://www.tvcc.edu/OPIE/learninginitiative/engagement/ideas.htm>)

The goal, of course, is for the student to move from external motivation (grades) to internal motivation (noticing how they are in control of their grade, and that extra effort holds benefits).

Three CCSSE benchmarks have been discussed:

1. Student-Faculty Interaction
2. Active and Collaborative Learning
3. Student Effort.

As discussed, feedback from students in these areas has not been stellar. In fact, it’s downright disheartening. Improving student reactions and perceptions is the principal task before all of us.

4. A fourth area is **Support for Learners**, and our rating here is “not bad”. Questions address whether or not we provide the following:
 - support needed to help you succeed
 - help coping with non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
 - support needed to thrive socially
 - financial support
 - frequency of academic advising and planning.

Other colleges our size scored 49.6; Trinity Valley scored 50.5. Hooray for us! This was our highest score.

5. The fifth and final area is **Academic Challenge**. This one is interesting. Questions address the students’ perception of course difficulty:
 - worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor’s standards or expectation
 - analyzed the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory
 - synthesized and organized ideas, information, or experiences in new ways

- made judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods
- number of written papers or reports of any length
- mark the box that best represents the extent to which your examinations during the current school year have challenged you to do your best work at this college
- encouraged you to spend significant amounts of time studying.

Here, we received the lowest score of all five areas.

Our students, by their own admission, do not feel challenged. They do not believe they have to work hard to pass our classes.

Yet! One of my classes was in the CCSSE sample. This class had been complaining all semester how hard my tests were, how much time I was requiring of them—yet!—when I glanced at their responses, they consistently stated they weren't challenged. They weren't asked to work hard; they didn't have to spend a lot of time studying. Their assessment on the CCSSE did not correlate with their verbal statements. Which was the more honest?

Improving **active and collaborative learning** is fun to think about; developing **learning outcomes** will take effort but it's feasible. How to change students' perceptions of **academic challenge** . . . well, that's going to require a paradigm shift—on all our parts.

If all you ask of your students is to memorize . . . If all tests are Scantron multiple choice questions . . . If extra credit is so abundantly available that passing the course is never an issue . . . If rules are inconsistently enforced . . . Well. We have problems, and students haven't hesitated to tell us.

The facts are that CCSSE kind of slapped us around, that students don't feel challenged, that the government may move into our classrooms with regulations if we don't develop them first.

CCSSE and the accreditation process have given us a wake-up call, and we need to seek and make some needed changes. CCSSE will be administered again in Spring 2007. Our goal is to create a culture which will both nurture and challenge our students.

Do you recall *The Wizard of Oz*? The Lion wanted courage; the Tin Man requested a heart. The Scarecrow asked for a brain, but all he got was a diploma. Our students ask for more than just a diploma! And, as in *The Wizard of Oz*, a good teacher needs all three—courage, brains, and heart. Take heart in your teaching so you can do what good teachers always do—give heart to your students. It is a high calling.



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