2014 AHE COMPENDIUM

Nash Community College

The story of **Nash Community College** is part of a compendium that contains case studies of six colleges and universities from across the United States that implemented AVID for Higher Education (AHE). Whether implemented as a First-Year Seminar course or integrated with an existing tutoring or mentoring program, AHE is making a positive difference in student learning. *Read more . . .*

NASH

COMMUNITY

COLLEGE

CONTRIBUTORS

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CAMPUS PROFILE & INFORMATION

Type of Institution: Public, 2-year, comprehensive community college

Total Enrollment: 3,279 students

Student Population:

- Undergraduates, age 24 or below: 60%
- Underrepresented minority: 46%
- Federal aid recipients: 47%
- Pell-eligible first-time student: 68%

AHE System: Student Success Initiative (SSI)

AHE Campus Timeline: 2nd year; started in June 2012

Source of Funding: Institutional

Professional Development—Administrators, Faculty, Staff, Tutors: 897

Summer Institute Attendance: 2 years

Leadership Perspective

EVOLVING EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

by Deana Guido, Dean of Learning Resources

The recession of 2008 prompted a dramatic decrease in state funding for higher education, forcing changes on the Nash Community College (NCC) campus in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. As a further blow, the cuts in state funding were coupled with an economic downturn that saw once-thriving industries outsourcing their work overseas and small businesses shuttering their doors. Droves of students enrolled in community colleges for re-training after being laid off from positions they had held for decades. By 2012, it was apparent that the economy was going to be slow in rebounding and that higher education administrators needed to adapt to the shifting reality of reduced funding. Meanwhile, the profile of the "typical" community college student also changed. Increasing costs at four year colleges and universities pushed many recent high school graduates to community college as a way for them to save on tuition and housing before transferring to another college or university.

The NCC administration acknowledged the changing educational landscape and, moreover, recognized the higher, moral purpose of effectively educating students. Scores of students failed to clear the developmental course hurdles placed before them and dropped out—often within the first semester. Trends in higher education indicate that merely enrolling a high number of students will no longer be the benchmark of a successful college. In the near future, North Carolina will base funding on graduation rates and performance measures. The focus needs to be on student success rather than enrollment.

Connecting With Early College High School

NCC is fortunate to have an early college on its campus that collaborates with the local public school system to advance student success for dual-enrolled students. A distinctive instructional aspect is that the NCC-Rocky Mount Early College is an AVID secondary school, which creates a rare secondary-to-postsecondary pipeline for AVID students. This partnership fosters an environment where it is not surprising to hear terms from a common language at NCC from the Early College. Students find that Early College instructors

using AVID strategies, such as Philosophical Chairs and Cornell notes, experience a common instructional language. [This] shared determination between the two institutions . . . forms a more seamless transition for the students between high school and college classes. As opportunities arise, NCC seeks instructors with AVID experience, often from AVID secondary schools, in an effort to continue to advance the culture of sound pedagogical instructional practices aimed at student success.

The NCC president, along with other senior leaders, and the AVID site team sought to bring professional development to the entire campus. At the initial AVID for Higher Education (AHE) professional development session, the president welcomed the AHE facilitators, and acknowledged the value of pedagogically sound instructional strategies and their corresponding value to student success. College administrators continue to demonstrate support by attending AHE sessions and encouraging staff and faculty participation.

Leadership Perspective
INCREASING STUDENT SUCCESS
by Mike Latham, Dean of Instruction & Chief Program Officer

Students who enroll at community college often require further developmental education. This contributes to the two persistent problems of low retention and graduation rates in community college systems. NCC redesigned its math developmental education in Fall 2011, followed by changes to English and Reading developmental education in Spring 2013. (AHE was implemented in Fall 2012.) Headcount increased 4% from Fall 2012 to Fall 2013 and, subsequently, 5% in Spring 2013 to Spring 2014. The increase in headcount contrasts with a decline of 11% in new enrollments for the same period, yielding an increase of full-time equivalency (FTE) of 2.7% from Fall 2012 to Fall 2013. Campus leadership believes that retention rates have increased due to effective student instruction utilizing AVID strategies.

The progression rate for the developmental math classes was 76% in the third year of the redesign model while the English progression rate was 52% in

its first year. The rise in progression and persistence rates in developmental courses also transfers to the curriculum levels. While many interventions were applied in close succession, the focus on quality instruction at all levels translates to a marked increase in student success. Table 1 illustrates FTE progression through developmental (pre-college) level, introductory level, and advanced level courses.

Table 1

FTE Progression at NCC

% of FTE Students, by Level	Fall 2012	Spring 2013	Fall 2013	Spring 2014
Developmental (000-level)	18%	15%	12%	10%
Introductory (100-level)	67%	66%	72%	71%
Advanced (200-level)	15%	19%	16%	19%

As shown above, the decrease in the percentage of students in developmental classes paired with an increase in the percentage of students in 100-level classes signifies persistence as well as progression. Furthermore, these numbers represent progress toward the vision of offering every student the opportunity to graduate.

Leadership Perspective
SUCCEEDING IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY
by Deana Guido, Dean of Learning Resources

The AVID Seminar course, College and Study Skills (ACA 115), is required for all programs. The flexibility of the content (i.e., note-taking, time management, and career exploration) allows instructors to showcase instructional methodologies. Christopher Kent, an instructor of College and Study Skills, participated in study-abroad programs during his undergraduate and graduate education and incorporates his global experiences with his students. In fact, the "buzz" surrounding Kent and his teaching style spread quickly among students when Kent donned an Australian accent for the first day of class. Kent brings a global perspective to the classroom by comparing educational cultures. For example, he leads students in a discussion of something as seemingly innocuous as

how classroom arrangements can differ from one culture to the next.[1] How students solve problems can also be viewed through a multicultural lens, which provides a deeper preparation for life and work in an increasingly global community. The College and Study Skills class also helps prepare students for career success by including the Career Readiness Certification (CRC) test in the curriculum. The CRC is widely accepted in global industry and serves as a recognizable credential.

The focus of AVID on campus is guided by the school's administrative commitment that all students have an unquestioned opportunity to graduate. AHE helped the administration to shift its focus to the shared responsibilities of faculty development and professional learning (AVID Essential 1). The most effective way to illustrate the paradigm shift comes directly from the faculty and students through testimonials from a faculty member and a student. Renee Martinez, Instructor of English and True Blue Core Coordinator, and Melissa Herbert, a 2014 NCC graduate, tell the AVID story in their own words.

Faculty Perspective
CHANGING FACULTY POINT OF VIEW
by Renee Martinez, Instructor of English

AVID site team member and English Instructor Renee Martinez observes:

"When I first heard that NCC contracted with AHE to come to campus for professional development, I thought, here we go with 'the latest and the greatest' in professional development. I thought, I'll go and listen, but this is just a fad and it won't change my students' learning or the way I teach. I was wrong! First, the strategies learned are well developed, tested, and backed by research. For a couple of years, I sought to lecture less and put the responsibility of learning on the students. AVID provided me with strategies to do this. For example, on my class schedule, I list guided reading questions for each class period. These questions need to be answered by the students before they come to class.

This has two benefits: 1) it lets the students know exactly what I want them to read and understand before class, and 2) I know who has and has not read for that class.

Students learned quickly that preparation was essential to classroom success because the class discussion would focus on those topics. Something as simple as placing focused reading questions on my class schedule helped to change the classroom climate. The students were aware of expectations before entering the classroom. In the past 15 years of teaching, I never had the majority of my students come to class having read the information required to make class more productive. Now they are completing the assigned reading, participating in class, and gaining more knowledge and understanding because of the guided reading questions.

What advice would I give to faculty who are involved in AHE faculty development? Make the strategies your own. To reiterate, each strategy is field-tested, so we know they help with student engagement, learning, and comprehension. The strategies can easily be modified to fit your curriculum and your teaching style. Do not be afraid to tweak the strategies to fit your classroom. I would also recommend not being afraid just to try them. Some will work well and others not so much, but keep trying. Sometimes we are afraid to experiment, especially in front of students, but that is one of the great things about the diversity of AVID strategies. One may not work this week, but with a different topic and a different class, it may bring the results you were expecting the first time you tried it.

I would strongly recommend that any school implementing AHE find time to allow faculty members to share. Every other month, NCC holds hour-long snack-and-share sessions. At these meetings, faculty members from a variety of disciplines share strategies they are using in their classes. Attendees discuss which strategies are being used campus-wide to see if they reflect pedagogically sound instruction. This show-and-tell format helps make the strategies more concrete and attainable from [these] in-house experts.

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[1] *C. Kent, personal communication class, June 30, 2014*

One of the aspects that worked effectively for our faculty was the diversity of strategies. NCC applied AVID holistically across the campus. We did not focus on just one discipline, and I believe that is one of the most effective strategies our campus employed. Implementing a wide range of approaches, each discipline found those that worked and created a list of best practices.

Another great aspect of AHE for our faculty is that we now have a common language. Students who are sitting in my English class and then go to math class will hear the same terminology (language) and know what to expect. This helps students become more involved in their studies increasing their academic comfort level. Students' internal dialogue confirms, 'I know what is expected of Four Corners.' Students get more out of the lessons regardless of what class they are taking. I know that this is one of the best things AHE has done for our faculty, which helps us engage, teach, and retain students across campus.

AHE is not just a fad. The strategies I have learned transformed not only my teaching style and classroom, but our campus."

Student Perspective
ALTERING STUDENT VIEW
by Melissa Herbert, 2014 NCC Graduate

Melissa Herbert is a 2014 graduate of NCC and plans to attend East Carolina University to major in English with a career goal of becoming a community college instructor. Reflecting upon her AVID experience, she says:

"Attending a school that uses AVID methods can sometimes be a little intimidating at first. Classes might be run differently—you may be asked to turn in exit tickets, instructors might answer your question with a question, and group work can be required more often than at a 'traditional' institution.

Embracing these differences can lead to huge success and a deeper learning experience. As a student, I sometimes wanted to just give in to my inner lazy voice and not fill out the optional exit ticket. However, once I learned why instructors wanted them, I was happy to fill out as many as they requested. One may think exit tickets are a waste of time, but in reality, they have many uses. Many of my instructors used exit tickets to provide students with a small amount of extra credit, but the main purpose was to help the instructor understand which aspects of a subject they successfully communicated and what might need some additional explanation. Exit tickets also require you to really think about what you just learned, and question what you did or did not understand. They provide you with a chance to say, "I didn't quite understand that," without actually having to say it aloud in class. If you don't understand something, chances are someone else doesn't either. If you say that on an exit ticket, everyone can reap the benefits.

Sometimes it is frustrating to ask an instructor a question, only to have them ask you one back. However, once I thought about it, I realized that just giving me the answer wasn't actually teaching me anything. True learning isn't about rote memorization; it's about a deeper understanding of the how and why. If an instructor just gives you the answer then that's the only one you'll have, with no way to solve the next one. Learning to really analyze what is being required of you and to come to the solution to a problem on your own gives you the answers to thousands of questions. So when your instructor answers a question with a question, don't get frustrated, accept that they are teaching you much more than that one answer.

Life is change. Adapting is living. Nothing tests your adaptation skills more than group work. Very few people would actually volunteer for group work, but working effectively within a group is a very important skill. No one works completely alone all of the time. So, even though I was not always thrilled to be assigned a group project, I always went into it determined to do

my best and learn all that I could. Often my group projects were some of the most creative and educational projects of the semester. It enhances everyone's creativity to be able to bounce ideas back and forth, and increases quality of the final project to have more brains to analyze the process and determine potential problems.

The best advice I can offer a student who is attending a college or university that is using AVID is to embrace the unique teaching methods wholeheartedly and trust that your instructors are there to help you really learn. AVID helps them do so in the most effective ways possible."

FINAL NOTE

Dean Guido reflects:

"It is impossible to isolate a single factor in accounting for student success at NCC. However, AHE is undoubtedly an inextricable part of the equation. AHE staff provided leadership and guidance during the launch of AVID professional development. Facilitators regularly visit campus sharing expertise with instructional strategies thereby empowering the staff and faculty at NCC to have a positive impact on the lives of our students."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Latham, D. M. (2014). North Carolina Wesleyan College & NCC: A Partnership in Developmental Education [PowerPoint slides].