MOHAWK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE TITLE III EVALUATION

Year Three Annual Evaluation Report

Fall 2018

Mohawk Valley Community College
Title III Project – *Pathways to Graduation*
Year Three Annual Evaluation Report

Mohawk Valley Community College (MVCC) began its current Title III Project –*Pathways to Graduation* – in the fall of 2015. The overall purpose of the project is to improve the quality and effectiveness of the educational experience thus enhancing student success. With a comprehensive approach, the project strengthens two programmatic components: first, the Student Success Portal, which enables dedicated college professionals to identify at-risk students and support them with individualized guidance, mentorship and assistance from their first entry into the college onward through timely interventions during their academic journey; and second, Gateway Course Customization, which re-energizes the learning experiences through course enhancements that address learner-needs in multiple, engaging, effective ways. Concluding in the fall of 2020, *Pathways to Graduation* will increase successful Gateway Course completion rates by 10%, persistence by 5%, and retention by 10%--with a final outcome of a 5% increase in graduation rates

During the inaugural year of the Title III project, the College contracted with Development Institute, a Boston consulting firm, to conduct the external evaluation with Dr. Katherine German, Vice President, and Dr. Philip Sbaratta, Senior Associate comprising the evaluation team. Drs. German and Sbaratta have been involved with the design, implementation and evaluation of similar programs since 1980 and have held a variety of leadership roles within higher education over the past forty years. They are currently working

with numerous institutions on the development and evaluation of Title III and Title V projects as well as other strategic change efforts within higher education.

On November 2nd and 3rd this year Drs. German and Sbaratta visited the campus to conduct an annual assessment. Prior to the campus visit, they reviewed the College's overall five-year implementation plan as well as other related documents, outlining the evaluation criteria specified in the project year as indicated through project objectives, implementation strategies and anticipated results. These criteria have been incorporated into the evaluation report, which follows, for use as benchmarks against which to measure the progress of the project to date.

While on campus for the assessment, the evaluators conducted a series of discussions focusing on the overall goals of the project, its organization and management, as well as progress to date. During these discussions, they met with the Title III Project Director, Lewis Kahler; Activity Director, Ibrahim Rosic; consultant Maryrose Eannace, and President Randall VanWagoner. Though officially retired, former Project Director Maryrose Eannace continues as a consultant.   Additionally, the evaluators were scheduled to meet with the following individuals; however, schedule conflicts prevented several persons from attending:

Jim Lynch, Norma Christman, Colleen Cornmire, Oleg Donchuk, Tamara Donchuk, Jeff Kimball	Starfish Team
Mike Faitell, Jim Roberts	EN101 Toolkit Team
Gary Kulis, Anna Radlowski	MA110 Toolkit Team
Rachel Golden, Salina Billins, Justin Johnson, Rosa Portorreal, DuWayne Engram, Rachel Simonds	Completion Coaches
Erin Severs, David Nackley, Kristin Raab	EN099 Toolkit Team
Gina St.Croix, Brandon Shaw, Norma Chrisman	DS090 Toolkit Team
Breanne Rathbun, Russ Penner, Gabe Melendez	MA091 Toolkit Team.
Stacey McCall, Bill Zogby, Roman Santos	HI101 Toolkit Team
Erica Brindisi, Melissa Barlett, Dick Thomas	BI141 Toolkit Team

Diana Ayers-Darling, Dina Radeljas	SO101 Toolkit Team
Robert Huyck, Christine VanNamee	AC115 Toolkit Team
Anna Radlowski	MA115 Toolkit Team
Rosemary Fuoco, Robert Huyck	IS101 Toolkit Team
Stacey McCall, Melissa Barlett, Dick Thomas	HI101 Toolkit Team
Rachel Golden, Gina St. Croix	DS051 Toolkit Team
Ruyn Cavic	PY101 Toolkit Team
Kelsey Mooney	HS101 Toolkit Team
Jocelyn Ireland	Instructional Designer
Tom Squires	VP Finance & Admin
Jennifer DeWeerth, Julie Dewan, Brandon Shaw, Anna Radlowski, Dawson McDermott, Rosemary Mink, Breanne Rathbun, Kristin Raab, Rachel Golden, James Lynch, Jim Roberts, Jocelyn Ireland, James Myers, Jennifer Fanelli, Ruyn Cavic, Marie Miknavich, Steffani DiPierro, Colleen Cornmire, Timothy Thomas, Christine Miller, Mark Montgomery	PGP Project Team

Additionally, the evaluators met with students who have used the Commons services and appreciate the assistance they have received. Throughout the evaluation process, participants described their involvement and accomplishments, sharing their commitment to and enthusiasm for the project. These discussions ultimately lead to a series of recommendations for consideration as the project continues into the next year.

Needs Assessment

The College completed a thorough analysis of its strengths, weaknesses, and major problems inhibiting self-sufficiency in concert with the design of its Comprehensive Development Plan. The analysis drew from multiple sources, including the Strategic Plan, CCSSE results, Middle States accreditation report, NCCBP, and other seminal documents, underscoring a single critical problem:

Five out of every ten students drop out within a year;
of those remaining, only two will graduate within three years.

This problem and its underlying weaknesses provide compelling evidence for the need to implement significant improvements in academics, student services, and technological support systems – all aiming to increase student engagement and achievement to graduation. As a result, the overall vitality and self-sufficiency of the institution will be significantly strengthened.

Scope of the Project

A single activity is designed to deliver dramatic improvements in success and achievement as students transition into and through the institution. *Pathways to Graduation* consists of two interrelated components supported by sophisticated technology:

Student Success Portal: A physical and virtual haven for active support of learning and navigating college, the Portal includes predictive analytics, early-alert tracking, Completion Coaching with individualized prescription pathways, a vibrant, resource-rich Learning Commons to co-locate wrap-around instructional and life-challenges supports, and an iTeach Learning Lab for faculty to develop and enhance courses as they model learning for the students.

Gateway Course Customization: Digital course toolkits, lodged in Blackboard, enliven learning engagement in 18 Gateway Courses that are highly enrolled and which currently exhibit large gaps in successful completion. Faculty teams and an Instructional Design Consultant will develop, pilot, implement and provide training to all full- and part-time faculty teaching these courses so that all students benefit from deeper, livelier learning experiences.

The Activity addresses MVCC's key problem and the attendant weaknesses in a synergistic, strategic manner, promoting student success through improved retention, persistence, and graduation rates. In so doing, *Pathways to Graduation* is intended to strengthen both the student experience and the overall vitality of the institution.

Year One Interim Assessment

Guided by an annual implementation plan, the Project's objectives identify the expected gains in student success, achievement, and engagement during the grant period. The Year One objectives focus on the start-up elements of the *Pathways to Graduation*:

> 1.1 To increase from 0 to 100% student participation in the student success portal enhanced analytics.

> 1.2 To increase student satisfaction from 4.02 to 4.25 on a 5-point scale on the Student Opinion Survey (SOS).

As a result, it was anticipated that all first-time, full-time matriculated students would participate in enhanced assessment/analytics with 640 student participating in the Learning Commons, 600 of whom would complete the SOS and indicate a 6 percent increase in satisfaction.

At the outset, a significant effort has involved the recruitment and hiring of completion coaches. As of the spring, three highly qualified coaches were hired with an expected start date later in the summer. Similarly, a talented candidate was named to fill the instructional designer/librarian position. Thus the team was being assembled that would carry forward the objectives of the Activity.

Component 1 – Student Success Portal

Importantly several foundational initiatives were taken. First and foremost, an impressive space for the Learning Commons was identified and an architect selected. Architectural renderings of the space were approved with an expectation that renovations would be initiated immediately with construction and the installation of workstations and

technological tools completed and ready for the Fall 2016 semester. The Learning Commons would serve as a multipurpose space to support tutoring, project-based learning, and coaching, as well as space dedicated to faculty for innovation and professional development – a significant addition to the learning environment. With a coffee bar just outside the door, students and faculty would soon be flocking to the Commons. At the same time, the installation of technological support through Starfish was underway including the Connect and Early Alert modules. An implementation committee was charged with the oversight and integration of Starfish within the components of the College and the development of training protocols and schedules, anticipating that the full suite would be up and running in August for use in the Fall of 2016.

Component 2 – Gateway Course Customization

The major academic initiative is to develop electronic toolkits within Blackboard for gateway courses with teams of faculty spending one semester developing the toolkit, a second semester piloting, and a third semester training colleagues. To launch the effort, Dr. Alice Voorhees-Bedard, a consultant in teaching practice and distance learning, provided training to the first cohort of faculty design teams representing English, Mathematics, and Psychology. A two and one-half day session focused on the examination of points during the semester where students run into trouble within the courses identified followed with the development of appropriate interventions underscored by the principles of universal design. This initial training was followed by phone conferences and the development of Blackboard materials using the Creative Commons to vet materials while generating considerable synergy among the faculty engaged in the process. Some of the initial work on toolkits included:

- Psychology—selection of articles and YouTube videos related to textbook chapters for PY101 by Ruyn Cavic, Hilmar VonStrunck, and Maria Ramos, Chair;
- English—creation of supplemental resources for students enrolled in EN101 by Sarah Beck, Mike Faitell, and Jim Roberts, Chair; and
- Mathematics—selection of open source materials augmented with guided notes, vocabulary and supplementary instruction by Gary Kulis, John Swistak, and Anna Radlowski, Chair.

With initial work completed, the expectation was that faculty would pilot the toolkits during Fall of 2016, make necessary adjustments and expand their use with their colleagues teaching the same courses thereafter. Clearly the work of the first semester generated excitement with participants suggesting that their efforts 'turned out better than expected'!

At the midpoint of the first year of the project a significant amount of progress had been made in getting both major components of the Activity off the ground. As a result, the year was expected to conclude with the College well positioned to meet and exceed its objectives.

Year One Annual Assessment

For a successful launch of a Title III project, thoughtful and detailed organization is required, and MVCC did an outstanding job, fulfilling the first year objectives of the *Pathways to Graduation*:

1.1 To increase from 0 to 100% student participation in the student success portal enhanced analytics.

1.2 To increase student satisfaction from 4.02 to 4.25 on a 5-point scale on the Student Opinion Survey (SOS).

Importantly, key personnel were hired to advance the project: Salina Billins, Rachel Golden, and Maimun Khan were hired as Completion Coaches, and Jocelyn Ireland was hired as Instructional Designer. With these individuals aboard, the Activity had a full complement of staff and a clear path to implementation with high expectations for the year ahead.

Component 1—Student Success Portal

The Learning Commons, a major initiative in Year 1, was up and running. In a short span of time, the a centrally located 8,714 square foot space was redesigned and renovated so that the Learning Commons now provides a welcoming, open, and fully-outfitted space for multiple types of learning and support, including an iTeach Lab for enhanced faculty professional development. Early indications suggested a healthy use of the space as students worked independently, in groups, and online. With just a few more details to be completed, a ribbon-cutting ceremony officially marked this new resource for students and faculty.

Housed within the Learning Commons are the Completion Coaches who are the main go-to persons for students. A primary focus for the Coaches is high-risk students enrolled in gateway courses. Initially, students were assigned to Coaches alphabetically, which proved to be inefficient, requiring the invention of a new assignment system. Nevertheless, Coaches emailed and phoned students, making contact and establishing rapport. To further introduce the coaching process, Coaches visited multiple classrooms, introduced themselves, and handed out business cards, stating "I am your coach--come see me." Initial coaching sessions lead to a success plan and introduce students to multiple campus resources.

A significant part of the support structure for students is the addition of Starfish, a retention and early alert software system. Students, Completion Coaches, and eight faculty members started using Starfish to monitor academic progress of students enrolled in seventeen sections of the first three Gateway courses. During the launch, Educational Technology and the IT department worked collaboratively, resolving glitches as they were identified. The Starfish protocol was initiated through surveys at specific intervals wherein

faculty raised flags as well as kudos. During the Fall semester, nine faculty members teaching gateway courses completed two surveys regarding student progress. As a result, 450 students were flagged with Coaches responding. Additionally, over 100 students used Starfish to schedule appointments with tutors and coaches.

In an effort to better assist students in need, Completion Coaches participated in professional development. The three Coaches completed a series of workshops including: *Heroin: The Addicted Person, Family, and Community Concerns, Available Treatment*; *University Partners and Transfer Center Workshop - How to Search for a College or University that Fits You*; and *Center for Family Life and Recovery Presentation*. In addition, Coaches met with the Office of Accessibility Resources and Adult Learner Services to collaboratively support students. Moreover, the Coaches read *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Succe*ss in preparation for a general discussion about their work and experiences.

Component 2 – Gateway Course Customization

The hiring of Jocelyn Ireland as the instructional design librarian was an important step in stabilizing the course redesign process and providing the necessary guidance to faculty design teams. Among her initial tasks was developing a template for the toolkits which standardized the look and feel of the toolkits across courses. During Year 1, two sets of toolkit design teams worked on creating toolkits of promising best practices:

Toolkit Design Teams	
Spring 2016 (Pilot Phase)	
EN101	Jim Roberts, Mike Faitell
MA110	Anna Radlowski, Gary Kulis, John Swistak
PY101	Maria Ramos, Ruyn Cavic, Hilmar VonStrunck
Fall 2016 (Design Phase)	
EN099	Erin Severs, David Nackley, Kristin Raab
DS090	Gina St. Croix, Brandon Shaw, Norma Chrisman

MA091	Breanne Rathbun, Russ Penner, Gabe Melendez
HI101	Stacey McCall, Bill Zogby, Roman Santos
BI141	Erica Brindisi, Melissa Barlett, Dick Thomas

The first group, Spring 2016, was in a pilot phase. Faculty were experimenting with materials from the Creative Commons, select publishers, the Khan Academy, and other open educational resources. One math faculty member was in the process of developing a series of YouTube videos as supplemental material for MA110. As the Toolkit Teams continued to refine their materials during the pilot phase, they were meeting with the instructional designer every other month. During this period, the eight faculty members collected data to compare successful course completion in sections using toolkits versus sections without toolkits.

In the overall, the MVCC team created a strong foundation for success in this first critical year. With personnel hired, renovations near completion, technology installed, teaching practice enhanced, and student support expanded, MVCC was certainly on the path to institutional transformation.
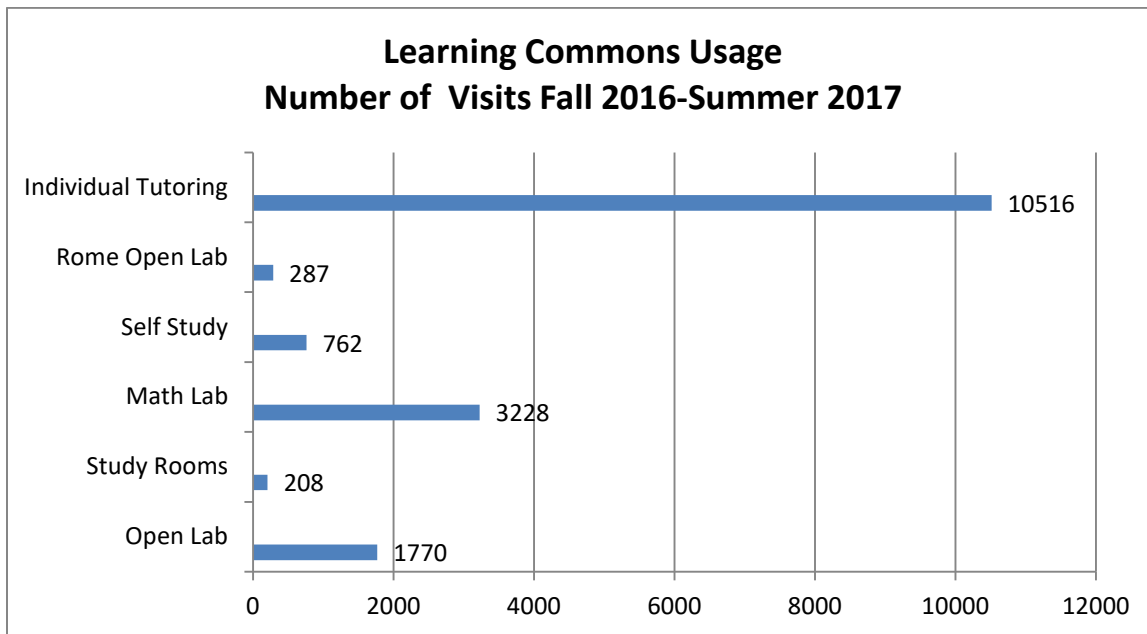
Year Two Annual Assessment

With substantial accomplishments occurring in Year One, MVCC stood on firm footing to advance the project in the second year of the grant. Guiding the initiatives were the following objectives:

- To increase student satisfaction from 4.25 to 4.5 on a 5-point scale on the Student Opinion Survey (SOS).

- To increase student persistence from first-to-second semester from 75% to 76% through the implementation of the Student Success Portal

- To increase student achievement from 63% to 73% through participation in Cohort 1 customized Gateway Courses.

As a result, it was anticipated that students would begin to benefit from the pathways with 300 students improving performance through alerts and interventions, and 423 students increasing achievement through the infusion of active learning strategies in gateways courses.

Component 1 – Student Success Portal

A central feature of the Student Success Portal is the consolidation of numerous support services within the new Learning Commons. Over the last two years, a major renovation was completed, transforming a poorly-used space into a bustling hub of activity that includes tutoring in multiple subjects, collaborative spaces, and numerous computerized workstations. As a consequence, a continuous flow of students occurs (see chart below).

Learning Commons Usage
Number of Visits Fall 2016-Summer 2017

Category	Number of Visits
Individual Tutoring	10516
Rome Open Lab	287
Self Study	762
Math Lab	3228
Study Rooms	208
Open Lab	1770

During Year Two, the Learning Commons logged nearly 17,000 visits, including the Open Lab located at the Rome Campus. From the data, it appeared that individual tutoring and the Math Lab activity predominated; however demand was increasing across the board. Importantly, the work occurring in the Commons had already produced some positive results:

Comparison of Student Performance by Department						
Cumulative GPA			Term GPA		Re-enrollment Rate [%]	
Department	Attended LC	Did not attend LC	Attended LC	Did not attend LC	Attended LC	Did not attend LC
ARTD	2.84	2.64	2.61	2.50	63.83	52.98
APER	2.03	2.22	1.81	2.24	64.71	40.43
BCCS	2.63	2.62	2.46	2.45	51.42	44.04
EDLS	2.80	2.95	2.72	2.79	62.96	50.00
HLTP	3.16	3.15	3.21	3.02	48.91	28.89
HUEN	2.67	2.57	2.52	2.41	54.61	34.8
MNSC	2.71	2.48	2.46	2.17	38.33	38.30
PSAT	2.94	2.86	2.61	2.84	44.00	40.00
SSPT	2.53	2.57	2.39	2.34	52.45	32.91
ADI	2.45	2.49	2.15	2.45	64.29	48.94

According to the data, students who used Learning Commons services at least 10 times during the last academic year had higher cumulative and term GPAs than students who never attended the Learning Commons. In addition, students who utilized the Learning Commons services had significantly higher re-enrollment rates than students who never used those services.

A second critical element of the Student Success Portal is the availability of coaching, with coaches' offices located in the Commons, thus making their services readily available. The coaching model evolved over time. Initially, coaches worked only with students enrolled in redesigned gateway courses. However, that approach was not efficient, in that students could wind up with multiple coaches. Now with five coaches on staff by the end of Year Two, all students were assigned a coach with each coach connected to particular programs of study. As a result, from Fall 2016 through Summer 2017, the coaches logged over 500 coaching hours. However, determining equitable caseloads remained a challenge to be addressed going forward. In any case, a focus group of students, interviewed by the evaluators, was most

appreciative of the coaching they received—helping students negotiate the challenges of the transition to college while also providing advice to help them solve problems as they arose and promote confidence.

Another support element is the use of Starfish as an alert system. Targeted primarily to students in courses using toolkits with the coaches implementing outreach, faculty were both raising flags and providing kudos. However, at this juncture Starfish had only modest success with approximately 35 percent of faculty using the system. As a result, the Title III team was considering the development of a more intensive marketing campaign accompanied by a relaunch in an effort to involve faculty on a larger scale.

Component 2 - Gateway Couse Customization

With the selection of the new instructional design librarian, Jocelyn Ireland, the design process for gateway course customization and toolkit development was significantly improved. Focused specifically on the four primary goals of the project addressing student satisfaction, achievement, retention and graduation measures, a four-month development process was outlined during which participants meet regularly with the designer to learn about toolkit design after which they focus on the subjects to be addressed, build content, and elicit collegial feedback prior to piloting. Through this protocol designers receive guidance and support both from the instructional designer and from their colleagues during the development process which is followed by a pilot and refinement, implementation and assessment. Features of the toolkits include universal design principles, active learning activities, increased student interactions, expanded audiovisuals and technological tools, flexibility and use of multiple approaches all linked to life lessons. Built with an intentional focus on three fundamental

neural networks, the toolkits highlight the focus on those problematic skills and concepts that often impede student achievement and inhibit progress.   And so far, the evidence of usage and impact looks good!

August – November 2017 Toolkit Statistics			
Course	Hits	Non-creator Hits	% Teaching Faculty
Cohort 2			
DS 090	171	142	100
BI 141	42	2	100
EN 099	291	154	60
HI 101	1425	142	67
MA 091	584	147	83
Cohort 1			
EN 101	224	148	44
PY 101	273	182	33
MA 110	806	516	72

In Year Two, Cohort 1 Design Teams completed the pilot phase and implemented course modifications in three targeted courses. Early results looked promising across the board:
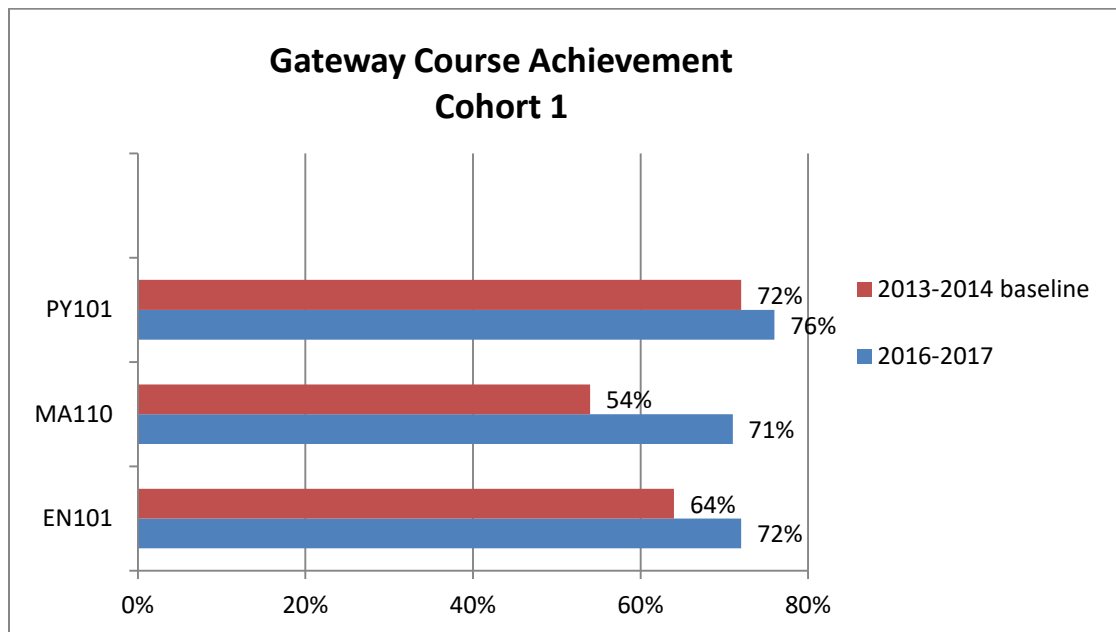
For the three courses that comprised Cohort 1, student achievement (a grade of C or better) increased by an average of 17 percent, with the most striking gain in MA 110 where

achievement increased from 54% to 71%. These data suggest that the course redesign and resulting toolkits have, in fact, contributed to increased student performance, a realization that fueled continued gateway course customization.

Simultaneously, Cohort 2 teams who began their work with the new development process were piloting customized course materials, and Cohort 3 teams were in the design phase. With the clarification of the expectations and deliverables of the design phase and the support of the instructional designer, faculty found the kind of technical and design assistance required to support them in their effort to confidently experiment and innovate.

Taken together, the two components of the project, the portal and course customization, had already begun to show positive results college-wide: student achievement had increased in each of the three Cohort 1 courses piloted, while the fall-to-spring persistence rate had increased from 75 percent to 77 percent, exceeding the target. With these results it was clear that the MVCC *Pathways to Graduation* project was moving forward on multiple fronts, making gains on critical student success measures, and implementing long-lasting change that benefits students. At the end of the year the momentum was strong, commodity that always bodes well for continued progress and overall success.

Year Three Annual Assessment

With the fundamentals established in the first two years, Year Three focused on advancing the major elements of the project. Providing guideposts were the following objectives:

- To increase students satisfaction from 4.5 to 4.8 on a 5-point scale on the Student Opinion Survey.

- To increase student persistence from first-to-second semester from 75% to 78% through the implementation of the Student Success Portal.

- To increase student achievement from 63% to73% through participation in cohort 2's customized Gateway Courses.

As a result, over 750 students were expected to benefit from the pathways with 900 students increasing achievement as a result of the early alert and intervention and over 1, 124 students increasing achievement through the use of active learning strategies in gateway courses.

Component 1 – Student Success Portal

An essential feature of Component 1 is a proactive coaching model, a primary support system for entering students. In Year Three, the complete coaching staff was assembled to ensure that every student has a coach. Essentially, the coaches have assigned programs/majors so that they serve as liaison between student support and academic affairs, establishing connections with departmental faculty and leadership. Providing tailored support, the coaches often have a devoted following of students who have benefited from the coaches' assistance.

Coaching Data

	Fall 2017	Spring 2018
# of appointments	715	1133
# of students	364	520
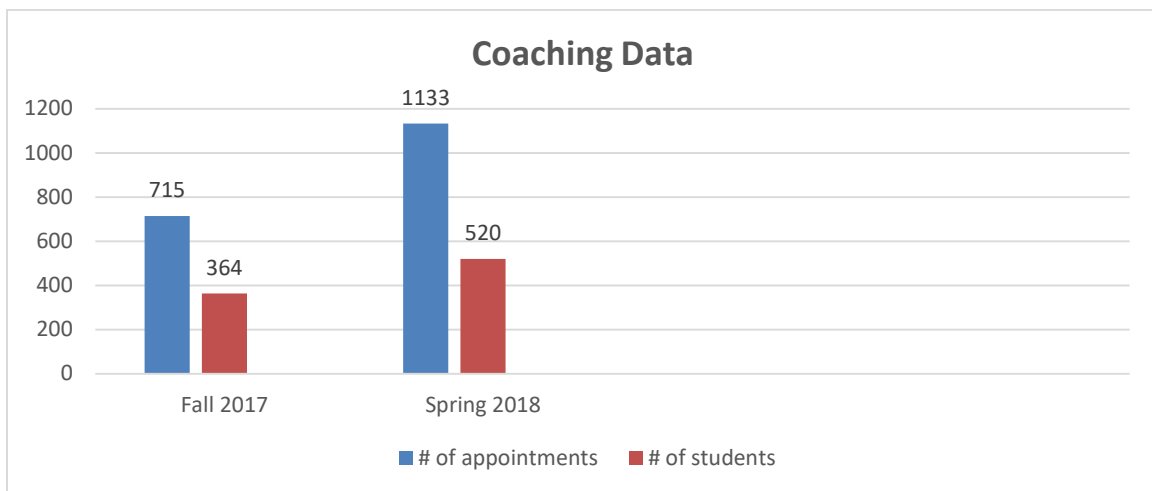
The data suggest increasing impact of coaching availability; with a full complement of coaches, students have greater access to services and the interventions have greater impact.

Another important coaching activity involves working with the Starfish system to reach out to students who have flags. During Year 3, coaches cleared almost 8,000 flags, raised by faculty or generated automatically by Starfish.

Overview of Starfish Activities				
Total Items Raised		**Breakdown of items based on method raised**		
Item Name	**Total Raised**	**Manually Raised**	**Survey Raised**	**System Raised**
FLAGS	**7906**	**1295**	**4321**	**2290**
Attendance Concern	1591	436	1155	0
Class Materials	4	4	0	0
Drop from course	43	43	0	0
Failing Grade at Midterm	429	53	376	0
General Concern	153	153	0	0
In Danger of Failing	1304	354	950	0
I Need Help	6	6	0	0
In Need of Tutoring	23	23	0	0
Low Participation	74	8	66	0
Low Quiz/Test Scores	315	46	269	0
Meet with Completion Coach	228	18	210	0
Missing/Late Assignments	444	23	421	0
No Show	191	15	176	0
Not Meeting Requirements/Completing Assignments	640	81	559	0
Poor Midterm grade	2290	0	0	2290
Preparedness	171	32	139	0
KUDOS	**5857**	**495**	**5362**	**0**
Engaged in Class	2282	14	2268	0
Grades Are Starting to Improve	103	27	76	0
Great Participation	181	181	0	0
Keep Up the Good Work	2550	97	2453	0
Outstanding Academic Performance	4	4	0	0
Your Extra Efforts Show	737	172	565	0
REFERRALS	**117**	**66**	**51**	**0**
C3 Referral	2	2	0	0
Course Content Tutoring Referral	63	63	0	0

Writing or Math Tutoring Referral	52	1	51	0
TO DOS	**28**	**28**	**0**	**0**
Follow Up	28	28	0	0
GRAND TOTAL	**13908**	**1884**	**9734**	**2290**

The data suggest that Starfish flags cover a large set of "concerns," some of which seem vague or open to interpretation. At the same time, the source of the flag can range from a "one-off" manual flag to those generated by surveys. These variations put additional burden on coaches who need to investigate the particulars of the flag before initiating an intervention.

Another important feature of the Student Success Portal is the comprehensive Learning Commons, which now is a hub for student support. In addition to being a home for the coaches, the Learning Commons offers a wide range of tutoring support in a number of academic areas by professional and peer tutors. During Year Three, academic assistance was provided by 2 full-time tutors, 38 part-time professional tutors and 16 peer (student) tutors. Additionally, 9 full-time and 22 part-time faculty members held their office hours in the Learning Commons and offered additional support to students. In all, individualized tutoring was provided for 38 different courses.

Student Support Summary			
Fall 2017			
Academic Support	**Total # of hours**	**#of Individual Visits**	**Total # of Visits**
Open Lab	4,883.5	1,513	4,391
Study Rooms	256.25	83	158
Math Lab	3,338.75	282	2,415
Self-Study	49.5	43	48
Rome-Open Lab	94.5	36	71
One-on-one Tutoring	3,585	2,089	4,779
Total	**12,207.5**	**4,046**	**11,862**

Spring 2018

Academic Support	Total # of hours	#of Individual Visits	Total # of Visits
Open Lab	2,693.5	919	2,569
Study Rooms	122	58	86
Math Lab	2,407.25	196	1,676
Self-Study	48.5	30	43
Rome-Open Lab	21.25	17	21
One-on-one Tutoring	3,626	1,804	4,610
Total	**8,918.5**	**3,024**	**9,005**

Summer 2018

Academic Support	Total # of hours	#of Individual Visits	Total # of Visits
Open Lab	29.25	20	26
Study Rooms	N/A	N/A	N/A
Math Lab	566.75	57	384
Self-Study	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rome-Open Lab	1	1	1
One-on-one Tutoring	260.5	79	255
Total	**857.5**	**157**	**666**

As a precursor, all tutors attend a seven-hour training that focuses on creating positive learning experience, clarifying content on students' level using different learning styles, and helping students attain higher academic achievement.

Clearly, one of the important outcomes is to assess impact of implemented interventions. Below is a preliminary comparative examination of achievement and retention of students who used Learning Commons services and those who did not.

Comparison of GPA and Retention 2017-2018						
Cumulative GPA			Term GPA		Re-enrollment Rate [%]	
Department	Attended LC	Did not attend LC	Attended LC	Did not attend LC	Attended LC	Did not attend LC
ARTD	2.74	2.67	2.69	2.63	73.42	67.75
APER	2.54	2.42	2.63	2.30	84.21	60.67
BCCS	2.63	2.53	2.50	2.41	72.74	61.95
EDLS	2.89	2.84	2.78	2.74	80.75	71.12
HLTP	3.17	3.13	2.97	3.11	76.08	61.34

HUEN	2.62	2.50	2.56	2.39	71.63	59.03
MNSC	2.82	2.64	2.60	2.44	62.96	62.30
PSAT	2.89	2.89	2.82	2.87	81.18	66.11
SSPS	2.62	2.46	2.60	2.33	73.35	56.03
ADI	2.09	2.33	2.07	2.24	62.50	59.49

In almost every academic department, students who used the Learning Commons did better academically and were more likely to be retained.

Component 2 – Gateway Course Customization

A correlative to the Student Success Portal is the ongoing development of toolkits that feature approaches, assignments, and classroom activities that can be a resource for faculty adopting recommendations from colleagues. Working with an instructional design specialist, the following teams have designed and piloted toolkits for a variety of gateway courses:

PGP Toolkit Teams

(Arranged by starting semester)

Spring 2016

EN101
Jim Roberts, chair
Mike Faitell

MA110
Anna Radlowski, chair
Gary Kulis
John Swistak

PY101
Maria Ramos, Chair
Ruyn Cavic
Hilmar VonStrunck

Fall 2016

EN099
Erin Severs, chair
David Nackley
Kristen Raab

DS090
Gina St. Croix, chair
Brandon Shaw
Norma Chrisman

MA091
Breanne Rathbun, chair
Russ Penner
Gabe Melendez

HI101
Stacey McCall, chair
Bill Zogby
Roman Santos

BI141
Erica Brindisi, chair
Melissa Barlett
Dick Thomas

Spring 2017

SO101
Diana Ayers-Darling
Dina Radeljas

AC115
Robert Huyck
Christine Van Namee

Summer 2017

MA115
Anna Radlowski

Fall 2017

DS051
Gina St. Croix
Rachel Golden

IS101
Rosemary Fuoco
Robert Huyck

HS101
Kelsey Freeman
Cheryl Plescia

CJ101
Troy Little
Rich Kelly

Over time, the purpose and scope of the toolkits have been clarified, leading to a more uniform approach and framework. Additionally, with the support of the instructional designer several new components have been added to each toolkit:

- Added study strategies using retrieval practice, interleaving, and spaced practice in each toolkit
- Added an Accessibility section in each toolkit and highlighted accessibility conversion tools and accessibility apps (part of UDL efforts)
- Updated syllabi in toolkits to be more accessible with stylized headings and images with alt text
- Created new library research guides and made them available digitally through the toolkits

And several specific developments were completed within targeted courses under the guidance of the instructional designer:

- Designed three renewable assignments tied to the OER textbook for the Biology 141 toolkit in collaboration with Dr. Melissa Barlett. The assignments included a grading rubric, assignment description, and a sample completed assignment.
- Assisted IS101 instructor in creating and captioning five tutorial videos for the toolkit.
- Led the CJ101, IS101, DS051, HS101, and MA115 faculty in their piloting and implementation phases.

Throughout the year significant initiatives have been taken to expand and improve toolkits even as efforts to improve consistency in terms of how toolkits are used, who uses them, and what overall purpose they serve, a continuing effort as development moves forward.

In the end, the overall purpose of the toolkits initiative is to increase student achievement. An examination of academic performance in the targeted gateway courses indicates an overall improvement in course completion with a grade of 'C' or better:

Course	Base Line 2014	2018	% Increase/Decrease
AC115	49	61.2	25%
BI141	61	62	2%
CJ101	73	60	-18%

DS051	86	78.8	-8%
DS090	80	83.1	4%
EN099	47	58.4	24%
EN101	64	67.9	6%
HI101	61	72.4	19%
HS101	67	61.2	-9%
IS101	64	62.6	-2%
MA091	43	53.5	24%
MA110	54	61.1	13%
MA115	58	59.3	2%
PY101	72	70	-3%
SO101	73	69.9	-4%

Ten of the fifteen gateway courses showed an increase in student achievement, some by double digit improvement, with an average increase of 11.9%. Next the faculty engaged will need to examine their efforts carefully to identify the ways and means of improving on this assessment going forward, whether they have already increased achievement or not, to ensure consistent improvements in achievement across all targeted courses and sections.

These efforts to improve student achievement in gateway courses were bolstered by professional development and support organized and delivered by the instructional designer:

- Automatically created Blackboard accounts for new toolkit instructors and reached out to them in-person (when possible) and by email regarding toolkit content and availability with 69% of the faculty on the LMS college wide;
- Created three screencast tutorials to promote toolkits;
- Trained several faculty members on Blackboard course design, toolkit usage, and educational technologies;
- Presented at Faculty Caucus on digital toolkits;
- Presented at an adjunct workshop on emerging educational technologies and the digital toolkits;
- Presented at MVCC Institutes in January and August on toolkits in the implementation phase;
- Presented at the MVCC Institute on video compliance and captioning; and
- Presented at All Academic Meeting on the accessibility conversion tool as part of UDL efforts.

Complementing these efforts is the i-Teach Lab, a unique facility supported through the PGP project to ensure the availability of continuing professional development. With over 500 hours logged, the Lab was widely used by various staff and students including toolkit team meetings and trainings, Starfish training, JumpStart instruction sessions, Summer classes, study groups, CSTEP, completion coach meetings, Learning Commons staff monthly meetings, tutor training, faculty technology trainings, tutorial creation meetings, Math supplemental instruction, interviews, New Faculty Institute trainings, and webinar viewings.

Now at the end of the third year, the news is good! Through both PGP components, Year Three saw positive persistence results. For Fall 2017 to Spring 2018, the rate of persistence was 78.07 percent; thus, MVCC reached its target set for Year Three. In sum, the accomplishments of Year Three position the College to formalize and build on its successes in the final two years of the project.

Project Management

Mohawk Valley Community College's Title III project is strategically managed and fully integrated into the institutional structure with the President of the College, Randall Van Wagoner, assuming overall leadership responsibility. The Title III Project Director, Lewis Kahler, Vice President for Learning and Academic Affairs, reports directly to the President and supervises the Activity Director, Ibrahim Rosic, as well as the project consultant and former Director, Maryrose Eannace, forming a talented and dedicated leadership team. The Project Director's responsibilities include overall project oversight to ensure the achievement of project objectives and intended impact. In this capacity Vice President Kahler promulgates Title III policies and procedures and, along with the Activity Director, supervises the Title III staff;

establishes and supervises data collection and reports systems; approves all grant expenditures; oversees the evaluation process; and engages the College community's support for the project. Additionally, the Title III Project Director serves as the liaison with the Program Officer, Pearson Owens, providing regular performance reports and organizational updates along with budget amendments developed as necessary.

A *Pathways to Graduation* manual addressing the administration and evaluation of the project has been developed to serve as a guide to ensure effective management. All staff hired for Title III positions are selected and supervised in accordance with established hiring procedures at the college, and position descriptions are on file for all program personnel. Those paid directly by the project or contributing their time as outlined in the application maintain regular time-and-effort tallies to document their efforts in accordance with federal requirements, and all project records are maintained on file by the project leadership.

A Project Team involving all key stakeholders is chaired by the Project Director and meets monthly to ensure the smooth implementation of the project and the achievement of all project objectives. In this capacity, the Team oversees the direction of the Activity, assists with implementation, provides support, makes recommendations, and disseminates information about the project to all constituencies across the institution. A standardized monthly report documents achievement, while a project web page ensures transparency and open communication regarding project implementation. A data warehouse captures baseline measures, monthly reports, activity logs and professional development rosters, as well as quantitative and qualitative information from coaches and support systems to monitor and assess achievement, persistence, and retention to graduation.

All project expenditures are initiated by the appropriate individuals to be processed through the Activity Director, approved by the appropriate College officers, and reviewed by the Project Director prior to submission to the Business office for processing to ensure compliance with the approved budget as well all federal and state regulations. Program records are maintained in the business office under the proper standards of accounting, and the Title III Project Director has direct electronic access to current statements at any time. For the third year the budget was $449,907; with carryover from the second year in the amount of $44,138, a total of $494,045 was available to support the project. During the year, with a single budget amendment approved, an estimated $454,407 was spent, leaving a balance of approximately $40,000 to be carried over into the fourth year of the project. Added to the budget for the fourth year, a total of $479,170 is available to sustain the continued development of the project going forward.

The Mohawk Valley Community College management plan reflects the College's intense investment in the success of the project, with everyone, from the President and the Vice President to the members of the Title III team, the faculty and staff dedicated to the effort.

Conclusions, Commendations, and Recommendations

The first year of any Title III project sets the agenda for the duration of the effort; it establishes the infrastructure to strengthen the institution and creates a framework for sustained progress. MVCC seized the opportunity with much accomplished to support the development of the Student Success Portal and the implementation of the Learning Commons along with the development of Gateway Course Customization and the implementation of course enhancements that re-energize learning experiences from the start for all students.

However, as with any massive new project, getting started presents challenges as unanticipated issues arise which require attention moving forward. Therefore, at the midpoint of the first year the leadership was encouraged to consider the importance of technological improvements such as a single sign-on as well as the selection of a talented instructional designer/librarian to fuel the development and use of course toolkits.

During the balance of the year as work continued on the two components and the remaining staff came aboard, the Title III Leadership, with the members of the design team and the members of the implementation team, explored the vision and identified the elements that linked the two components of the Activity to create the anticipated synergy and ensure improvements in student achievement, persistence and satisfaction. As a result, the full complement of resources available were interwoven, and, by the fall semester students were flocking to the Commons to engage with tutors ready to assist with Gateway course assignments, with faculty invested in their success, and with coaches encouraging them to excel, setting the stage for the second year of implementation. To fuel this effort, four additional recommendations addressed the continued development of the coaching role, the potential of instructional toolkits, the development of assessment mechanisms, and the resolution of technology issues.

By the second year of implementation most projects have initiated each component of their projects and hired their teams, but they are still trying to get their footing as they intensify their efforts to change the trajectory for students. In the case of Mohawk Valley, the team was assembled, the initiatives were underway, and they were already beginning to produce results, a fact that augured well for the continued development of the effort as targets become more

difficult to achieve.   During the course of the year, the *Pathways to Graduation* team began to make adjustments to the effort with the restart of Starfish and the enhancement of the toolkit development process. Therefore, as the year ended the MVCC Title III Team was encouraged t: consider the distribution of the coaches' caseloads; engage faculty in the "relaunch" of Starfish; address the sustainability of course customization and toolkits; and create a single sign-on to access all technological systems with a plan for Starfish rollout and training and simplified attendance reporting.

During the third year, every component of the activity is in motion with some components in a design stage, some in pilot and some fully implemented. At this juncture the effort moves from design and development to refinement and institutionalization, an effort that will be continued to the conclusion of the project in the fifth and final year. And, true to form, the MVCC project was right on pace, with the Learning Commons, the coaches, and the early alert moving along through refinement, and the development and refinement of toolkits continuing apace. The following recommendations should fuel that effort:

- First, the leadership team and the administration need to focus on the streamlining of technology. The current situation suggests that here are multiple systems for different purposes that are not necessarily integrated or have not been fully adopted. The result seems to have generated confusion and resistance, impeding the technology from doing what it is supposed to. The causes seem to be varied depending on the constituency and point of view, but it is necessary to "right the ship" in order to move the project and the institution forward.

- Second, the Title III team needs to consider mechanisms to promote the necessary technological development supporting a single sign-on and creating a masterplan for Starfish rollout and training college wide while simplifying the task of attendance reporting. As a result the improved technological platform will effectively serve as a means of sustaining the Title III initiatives beyond the grant period while simultaneously increasing managerial effectiveness and efficiency.

- Third, the course customization process has stabilized with the instructional designer providing intensive support. However, currently a lot of the redesign work is shouldered by the Instructional designer. Moreover, there are issues of dissemination—how do colleagues know about toolkits; updates and improvements—how do the toolkits become "living" documents? Options such as mini-grants to support innovation and the formation of communities of practice may broaden both participation and involvement, ensuring the effective implementation of toolkits and other instructional resources across the curriculum for which they are designed.

- And fourth, the College has embarked on a Guided Pathways initiative supported by Achieving the Dream (ATD). To ensure the success of both projects, it would be advisable to articulate the synergy between these initiatives and promote fulfillment of the objectives of the PGP project—where are the intersections, how can the initiatives support each other, and how can the purposes of the initiatives help to create an overarching framework? With the focus of the entire institution on student success to graduation and transfer, both initiatives will contribute with the students and the institution as the beneficiaries.

Once again, kudos to the MVCC Title III Team! *Pathways to Graduation* is not only off and running with a strong leadership and tremendous energy, but also producing significant results! Legions of students are using – and thriving – in the Learning Commons even as faculty pilot their toolkits, increase their use of the LMS, and expand their development through increasing use of the i-Teach Lab and a plethora of professional development programs. During the year ahead, in concert with ATD, each component of the PGP will continue to intensify and increase student satisfaction, achievement, and persistence to graduation. Given the talents of the PGP team, the success of the first three years, and the continuing effort to monitor the impact on the overarching goals of the project, the fourth year should again meet - and exceed – expectations! Kudos to the MVCC leadership, the PGP implementation team, and the many faculty and staff contributing to the effort to increase student success!