

CENTER FOR NEW MEDIA:

Summative Evaluation

Submitted to:

United States Department of Labor

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Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund



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INTRODUCTION

In 2012, Middlesex Community College (MxCC) received funding from United States Department of Labor under its Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program to enhance and promote New Media studies at the college by incorporating five evidence-based design features:

- Identify New Media Studies as an academic field;
- Transform the physical space to facilitate academic collaboration and synergy;
- Offer industry accepted certifications, certificates and degrees;
- Develop and integrate technology-enabled learning; and
- Offer supports (academic and others) to increase persistence and accelerate graduation rates.

The four objectives associated with these strategies include: retrofitting Chapman Hall and upgrading equipment, improving curriculum and instruction; promoting success by using technology-enabled learning, providing additional opportunities for experiential learning, mentoring and peer support; and managing, evaluating and sustaining the project.

The summative evaluation report that follows contains information specific to the duration of the CNM funding and provides preliminary information related to the continued implementation and sustainability of the Center.

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide the developers and implementers of the CNM and USDOL with information on the quality of the intervention efforts in order to:

- Identify participants most likely to benefit from participation;
- Describe the interventions essential to their growth;
- Identify opportunities for growth and sustainability of the project; and,
- Document promising and best practices for replication throughout Connecticut's higher education system and in other community college settings.

METHODOLOGY

Evaluation Methodology.

The evaluation included both quantitative and qualitative data collected by evaluation staff at Connecticut Women’s Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) and its partner, the Charter Oak Group. Data and information were collected in the following ways:

Participant Data

Evaluators were given access to data files for students enrolled in Center for New Media for the time period of the grant. These files were made available through the Office of Institutional Research at Middlesex Community College. Data were analyzed for demographic statistics, program enrollment and program completion.

Additionally, evaluators created and implemented a survey for students that had exited the college. The survey contained 16 questions, including questions about student status, demographics and program satisfaction. The survey link was emailed to 1300 students; 57 responses were received. An analysis of the responses is included in participant data.

Document Review

Evaluators reviewed the following documents: quarterly and annual reports submitted by the Center for New Media; wage data files from Connecticut’s Department of Labor; Advisory Board meeting notes; newsletters and blog posts available on the CNM website; and, website analytics information.

Interviews And Focus Groups

Evaluators conducted the following focus groups and interviews:

Focus groups

CNM core committee

- Richard Lenoce, Director, Center for New Media
- John Shafer, Professor, Communications; Coordinator, Communications; Interim Coordinator, Broadcast-Cinema
- Peter Galgano, Media Associate
- Randi Plake, Program Assistant, Center for New Media
- Rick Eriksen, Professor and Coordinator, Multimedia/Digital Arts
- Kimberly Hogan, Director, Finance and Administrative Services
- Dan Nocera, Director, Corporate Media Center

Interviews

CNM faculty and MxCC administrators

- Richard Lenoce, Director, Center for New Media
- Dan Nocera, Director, Corporate Media Center

CNM students

- Angelique Ortiz

- Cindy Gerstl
- Cobi O'Connell
- Karla Isabel Santos Polanco
- Kate Mertens
- Melissa Ruznicki

Employers/Internship providers

- Alex Donovan, (a)squaredstudio
- Deb Rycki, Nutmeg Public Access TV
- Andrew Chatfield, Wesleyan University Center for the Arts
- Dave Festa, CT-N (Connecticut Network)

Connecticut Board of Regents

- Alice Pritchard, Chief of Staff to the President

DATA SKETCH OF MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE¹

Middlesex Community College (MxCC) is a two-year public institution of higher education that is located in the small city of Middletown, Connecticut. It has a rural setting, and can be accessed by public transportation (buses), but the campus is not close to any major resources that exist near larger urban Connecticut schools. MxCC has 45 full-time and 179 part-time faculty, and approximately 4,500 students. Of full-time first-time undergraduates, 69% receive student financial aid and 50% receive Pell grants. Among all undergraduates, 49% receive financial aid and 37% receive Pell grants.

By race/ethnicity, the majority of the student body identified as White (64%); 16% identified as Latino/Hispanic; 9% as Black or African American; 3% as Asian; 0% as American Indian; and, 4% as race/ethnicity unknown.

Sixty-three percent (63%) are 24 years of age and younger; 59% of students identify as female.

Retention year to year (2013-2014) was 60% for full-time students; 43% for part-time students.

Although 69% were enrolled in no distance education, 20% were enrolled in some, and 11% in only distance education.

Of full-time, first-time undergraduates (who matriculated in Fall 2011), 14% graduated within 150% of normal time; for the same population, the transfer rate was 27%.

¹ National Center for Educational Statistics, *College Navigator: Middlesex Community College*. Online. Available: <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>. Accessed June 13, 2016

PARTICIPANTS IN THE CENTER FOR NEW MEDIA

According to the final report submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor by the Center for New Media program, there were **2755 total unique participants** served by the program. This number far exceeded the target number of 295 participants. Of these, 72 (99% of the program target) completed a TAACCCT-funded program of study; **1968 were still retained in their program** (643% of the target). The total number of **participants completing credit hours was 2127**, a number which was over 100% the target number. **Ninety-seven (97) participants received credentials**, exceeding the target of 89. The following data reflect the 2015-2016 academic year.

Demographics

There were 222 students in the program in academic years 2015-2016. The average age was 25.6, a year younger than the average age in the academic years 2013 and 2014. The percentage of females and males is similar to the previous two academic years. The percentage of veterans is slightly higher than 2013 and 2014.

Table 1. Age					
	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
Age in Years	222	17	67	25.6	21.0

Table 2. Gender		
	Frequency	Percent
Female	79	35.6
Male	143	64.4
Total	222	100.0

Table 3. Race and Ethnicity			
		Count	Percent
Race	American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0.5%
	Asian	5	2.3%
	Black or African-American	24	10.8%
	Multiple Races	17	7.7%
	White	155	69.8%
	Other	13	5.9%
	Choose Not to Respond	5	2.3%
	Missing	2	0.9%
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino	32	14.4%
	Not Hispanic or Latino	180	81.1%
	No Response	10	4.5%

Table 4. US Veteran Status		
	Frequency	Percent
No	212	95.5%
Yes	10	4.5%
Total	222	100.0%

Two thirds of the students had some prior college experience. This is the reverse of the situation in the previous two reporting years. Institutional research re-analyzed the data for “all CNM majors enrolled in academic year 2015-16”, and they are correct at 66% having prior experience. Institutional Research indicated that reason for this is that many of the CNM participants in academic year 2015-2016 also participated in one or both of the prior years of the grant and, thus, Banner (the student data management system) indicates they have prior college. Analyzing this same cohort across the entire grant period as a whole, only **25%** of students have prior college experience (i.e., before fall 2013).

Table 5. Prior College Experience		
	Frequency	Percent
No	75	33.8%
Yes	147	66.2%
Total	222	100.0%

Program Data

Table 6 shows the 92.3% of the students enrolled were seeking an Associate’s degree. This is a similar but somewhat higher percentage than that in 2013 and 2014 (89.4%).

Table 6. Degree		
	Frequency	Percent
AA	95	42.8%
AS	110	49.5%
Certificate	17	7.7%
Total	222	100.0%

Table 7 shows that the highest percentage of students is enrolled in Broadcast Cinema with the second highest in Communications followed by Multimedia and Fine Arts: Graphic Design. This was also true in both 2013 and 2014.

	Frequency	Percent
Broadcast Cinema	60	27.0%
Communication	54	24.3%
Multimedia	48	21.6%
Fine Arts: Graphic Design	43	19.4%
Broadcast Communications Certification	6	2.7%
Multimedia Certificate	6	2.7%
Multimedia Web Design & Development	4	1.8%
News & Sports Production	1	.5%
Total	222	100.0%

Program Completion

Of the 222 students reported for 2014/2015, 183 sought an Associate's degree and 13 sought a certificate. As in 2013/2014, a higher percentage of those pursuing certificates completed than did those pursuing Associate's degrees. Those pursuing Associate's degrees may be part-time students, combining work, school and family, and take longer than the 150% of standard time (or 3 years to complete 2 years of classes) to Associate's degree completion.

	No		Yes		Total	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
	AA	87	91.6%	8	8.4%	95
AS	96	87.3%	14	12.7%	110	100.0%
Certificate	13	76.5%	4	23.5%	17	100.0%

Employment Entrance, Retention and Wages

Table 9 illustrates employment entrance, retention and average quarterly earnings for Center for New Media grads in comparison with Communications students at Manchester Community College. Entered employment represents the number and percent of graduates employed in the first quarter after exit. Retained employment reflects the number and percent of those who entered employment that are also employed in the second and third quarter after exit. Average earnings are for those who entered and retained employment, and reflect the average of the wages earned in the second and third quarter after the exit quarter.

Table 9. Employment Results							
	Not Initially Employed Total			Total-Initially Employed and Not			
	Grads	Entered Employment	%	Grads	Retained Employment	%	Avg. Earnings (Quarterly)
Manchester Community College	8	Not Provided		27	10	66.7%	\$11,469
Middlesex Community College	18	6	33%	61	21	53.8%	\$9,933

Center for New Media Exit Survey

Respondents

The survey was sent to approximately 1,300 current and former students who took a degree or took a course within media studies. Fifty-eight individuals involved in the Media Studies program at Middlesex Community College (MxCC) responded to the survey. Although there were 58 respondents, not all respondents completed answers to every question. As is evident in Table 10 below, nearly two-thirds of the respondents are still enrolled in the program. Another 21% graduated from the program with a degree. The low response rate may be due to the large number of people sent surveys that did not fall into one of these two categories.

Table 10. Status of Respondents			
		Count	Percent
What is your current status in regard to MxCC?	I am still at Middlesex	37	63.8%
	I dropped out of Middlesex	3	5.2%
	I left Middlesex after taking the courses I wanted	5	8.6%
	I graduated from Middlesex with a certificate	1	1.7%
	I graduated from Middlesex with an Associate's degree	12	20.7%

Diversity is rather limited among respondents. As seen in Table 11, 86% identified as white. Only 2.3% identified as Black despite the fact that Blacks constitute over 11% of Connecticut’s population and 9% of MxCC’s student body. Similarly, Table 12 shows that Hispanics represent 10% of the respondents while they represent over 17% of Connecticut’s population, and 16% percent of the MxCC student population.

Table 11. Race			
		Frequency	Percent
	Asian	1	2.3%
	Black	1	2.3%
	Pacific islander	1	2.3%
	White	38	86.4%
	Multiracial	3	6.8%
	Total	44	100.0%
	Missing	14	
Total		58	

Table 12. Ethnicity		
	Frequency	Percent
Hispanic	6	10.3%
Not Hispanic	52	89.7%
Total	58	100.0%

Student satisfaction and other qualitative questions

The Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) is a combination of questions 9 (satisfaction), 10 (meeting expectations) and 11 (closeness to an ideal program). The three questions are presented on a 1-10 scale. The three questions are averaged and converted to a 0-100 scale. Similar indices consider a high degree of satisfaction to be indicated by an overall index score of 80 or higher. The score in Table 13 is just below that standard, indicating a high level of overall satisfaction.

Table 13. Customer Satisfaction Index				
	Number	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
CSI	43	79.1	0	100

In Question 12, the respondents were asked to identify the best features of the program. They could choose as many of the course features as they wanted. Table 14 shows the number and percentage of respondents endorsing a particular feature. The highest percentage of respondents (87.8%) endorsed the hands-on opportunities provided in the program. The value of hands-on opportunities is also mentioned frequently in the open-ended comments at the end of the survey. The second most frequently identified positive feature is the course content (85.4%), closely followed by the “ability to work with advanced equipment and technology” (82.9%). The lowest level of endorsement was for connections made to job opportunities (56.1%) reflecting comments about the need for stronger job connections.

		Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Q12. Best Features of the Program	Course content	35	85.4%
	Hands-on opportunities	36	87.8%
	Ability to work with advanced equipment and technology	34	82.9%
	Real world experience of faculty	33	80.5%
	Connections made to job opportunities	23	56.1%

Question 13 asks what reasons contributed to the decision to leave the program. Table 15 shows that the most common reason given for leaving (65.4% of respondents) is that students have taken all the necessary courses. The second most frequent reason is that students transfer to another institution. Combined, these two reasons suggest a high level of success among the students that responded to the survey, they have gotten what they needed and moved on.

Success is not the only reason people leave, however. More than 30% leave because they want to take a break. Given the time and financial pressures facing many students, this is not surprising. About a quarter that leaves the program do so for family reasons other than health. The pressures of financial strains and family responsibilities can combine to convince students to “take a break.” Smaller numbers “lost interest,” had inadequate advising, or found courses “not challenging.” Only one person experienced discrimination, did not feel safe on campus, didn’t have the math skills, or didn’t have the writing skills.

		Count	Percent of All Responses
Q13. Reasons for Leaving	Obtained a job in the field	4	15.4%
	Transferred to another institution	11	42.3%
	I took all of the courses that I needed	17	65.4%
	Wanted a break from my college studies	8	30.8%
	Health-my own	5	19.2%
	Health-family	3	11.5%
	Family responsibilities other than health	6	23.1%

Moving/being transferred to a new location	4	15.4%
Not comfortable in my classes	4	15.4%
Received inadequate student support services	3	11.5%
Experienced discrimination	1	3.8%
Did not feel safe on campus	1	3.8%
Dissatisfied with my grades	2	7.7%
Courses not challenging	3	11.5%
Inadequate academic advising	3	11.5%
Lost interest in the program	4	15.4%
Didn't have the math skills needed	1	3.8%
Didn't have the reading/writing skills needed	1	3.8%
Class schedule didn't work for me	2	7.7%
Did not anticipate the financial cost	2	7.7%
Financial aid inadequate	4	15.4%
My job interfered with my ability to continue	4	15.4%

Questions 14 and 15 are open-ended questions where respondents, in their own words, can talk about what they liked best about the program and what they would improve. Most of the positive comments made about what is best focused on the teachers: their experience and knowledge. The second two related areas for positive comments was the hands-on aspect of the classes and the content was about the content of classes.

Table 16. What was best about the program at MxCC?	
	Code Categories
Ceramics	
Got to go on cool field trips	Content
I appreciated the way that there was a separate course for each Adobe program that I wanted to learn. I've attended multiple schools & MxCC is the only institution that didn't force me to try to learn the ins and outs of multiple intricate design programs in one semester long course. Now that I have a job in the entertainment industry, I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to gain a thorough understanding of each program individually & feel like I am better versed in these areas than most of my colleagues.	Content
Interesting material	Content
Learning new things everyday	Content
The summer professional production workshop	Content
Well structured in the sequence of classes to graduate.	Content
The diversity of the classes and the high quality of the equipment.	Content Studio
Everyone was eager to learn and teach. Team work was first, followed by keeping contacts of those	Environment

who where organized with tainted.	
Working with other students who are passionate about media creation, unlike in other programs	Environment
Hands on courses in small classes. Influence to grow and share ideas.	Hands on
Hands on Teaching of the technology and programes	Hands on
Real life hands on experience.	Hands on
The hands on experience	Hands on
The Hands On Experiences	Hands on
Access to specific computer programs	Studio
The quality of the professors and the media center itself.	Studio
TV studio	Studio
Anything bob dion teaches(not new media a teacher), souly the only teacher at mxcc that has any worth as a teacher...hispanic and non hispanic are also not the only ethnicities, thats inherently racist as fuck...	Teacher
Being able to build a connection with professors who have experience in their fields.	Teacher
Peter Galgano	Teacher
1. Elena Sanchez, student Mac lab worker, provided hands-on assistance to me and other students because of her knowledge of Mac software (Adobe suite). 2. Instructor knowledge and experience in media studies.	Teachers
Great teachers	Teachers
I got to meet and make new friends who are interested in the same field as I am. Select professors were also fantastic, where some were not.	Teachers
I have taken a few media classes and I have noto been disappointed. Teachers are nice and helpful.	Teachers
I love the teachers	Teachers
I really enjoyed working with my professor and the assignments he gave us. The assignments brought us out into the world to do the work as if we were professionals. It was fun and invigorating.	Teachers
Instructors	Teachers
Many of the teachers have real world experience; they offer valuable advice and networking opportunities. Most are available to talk and provide guidance whenever they are needed.	Teachers
Mostly excellent professors, small classes,	Teachers
So far I have not taken enough media specific classes to really make an informed opinion. I will say, however, that the classes I have taken with Professor Ericksen/Plake have both been great so far.	Teachers
The class instructors are very helpful, friendly, and passionate about what they are teaching.	Teachers
The faculty members have all worked in the fields they teach before now which helps me to know they have experience and knowledge that's worth listening too.	Teachers
The faculty was always willing to meet with me and work with me especially when I had both personal and familial health concerns.	Teachers
The professors really want you to succeed and they are there every step of the way even after	Teachers

you've passed their class!	
The professors. Classes all depend on them; whether or not classes are good or bad depends on whether the professors are good or bad	Teachers
The teachers in the Center for New Media are the best around.	Teachers
The teachers—Erikson did a phenomenal job at holding my attention and helping me learn new techniques. I have to thank every teacher that I've had so far because of the things I've learned.	Teachers

Among the comments regarding improvement, the most frequent comments relate to content. There were several constructive comments about how content could be upgraded and improved. As in the positive comments above, there were also a number of comments about teachers. There are a couple of complaints about individual teachers and their commitment, but the other concern actually echoes the positive comments. But, instead of praising the teachers for being experienced and knowledgeable, these comments pointed out lack of real world experience and lack of commitment. The number of positive comments about teachers far outweighs the few negative in this last question.

Table 17. What is the one thing you would change to improve the program?	
	Code Categories
Can't say yet. That's also why I can't answer questions 10 and 11.	
Everything is good	
I was honestly happy about everything within the program.	
N/A	
Nothing	
Nothing that I can think of.	
Nothing.	
There is nothing	
I took online classes and I would choose to take them at school if I could do something differently.	?
The audio courses. More learning focused on the audio.	Content
Adding classes that go deeper into the many Adobe programs.	Content
Better way for students to receive Adobe programs	Content
Change course requirements and content for people who want to make movies as opposed to working in television. I feel the school really pushes tv and that's it.	Content
Have more classes in the Public Relations field.	Content
I would have liked to see a lot more courses in the Public Relations side of Communications.	Content
I would like to see an additional course added about journalism and law. Deeper knowledge about the law behind quoting, copyright and maybe even adding how to submit work to the papers and etc.	Content
It would be beneficial to expand the program by including Public Relations because that is also an aspect of Communications.	Content
More Mac lab hours and student workers like Elena to provide support for students when not in	Content

class.	
More of a focus on lighting techniques for film and video.	Content
More rigorous coursework	Content
Put some music into your program.	Content
Job search & help	Employment
They were no help in helping me find a internship or job. They need to have partnerships with companies.	Employment
fix everything having to do with the internship program.	Internship
Flexible online schedule in film program	Schedule
The classes were very long—which seemed very heavy handed at the time. I know that there is a lot to cover in new media courses, but having a 3-4 hour class is a lot to handle for anyone.	Schedule
Access to the unfinished recording studio	Studio
More variety in equipment that's able to be borrowed.	Studio
Have teachers who are more current with the times	Teachers
Hire teachers that actually give a shit about teaching, classes are cheap but i e had 3 teachers that barely speak English	Teachers
i am very satisfied with all parts of the college, some teachers were very bad, but they i took care of my studies, either way these classes were not my major and for core classes only.	Teachers
More real world speakers	Teachers
My advisor for my first three semesters at MxCC (John Shafer) put me on the wrong degree track in the beginning which wasted a huge amount of my time. I could have taken more valuable classes during my time at MxCC, but he did not seem to understand or care about my academic goals. He always claimed to be ""busy"" and did not show up to three out of four of our originally scheduled advising appointments. My MxCC experience was great, but was soured by my conflicts trying to meet and talk with him. In order to improve the program, I would hire more staff to rid him of the excuse of being ""busy"", or simply consider a staffing change and let him go.	Teachers
Rid the school of Patience Hetrick because she allows plagiarism.	Teachers
The teachers communication with students	Teachers

Student experiences

For the summative evaluation, the evaluators interviewed six (6) students individually; most interviews occurred in person, one was held by phone. They were a diverse group of students, sharing one common variable- they were all female. This was not intentional, but communication with a broad group of students yielded an all-female group. They, however, have many differences in age and experience. The students interviewed included:

- Cobi O’Connell, a communications major, graduated in May 2016 and is transferring to the University of Hartford to complete a Bachelor’s degree in Communications.
- Kate Mertens, received a certificate in Multimedia from MxCC in 2014.
- Angelique Ortiz, graduated in May 2016 as valedictorian of her class, received an Associate’s degree in Multimedia and Graphic Design; now working at (a)squared studio, where she interned. Ortiz is an Air Force veteran (2002-2006) and worked for an army contractor previous to enrolling at MxCC.
- Karla Isabel Santos Polanco, graduated in 2015 with a degree in Communications; currently pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in Journalism at the University of Connecticut.
- Cindy Gerstl, earned a certificate in Broadcast Cinema in 2013; currently engaged in contract work with the Center for Corporate Media Center. Gerstl has Master’s degrees in Communication and Social Work.
- Melissa Ruznicki, earned a Broadcast certificate from MxCC in May 2016. Ruznicki is a veteran (1990-1993), earned a Bachelor’s degree in Communications (Broadcast Media) in 2005. She worked as a professional for the government producing video training for the military.

In the formative evaluation submitted in December 2014, students identified four attributes of the CNM as strengths of the program: faculty commitment, flexible curriculum, relevant course material, and career networking opportunities. The students interviewed over the last 18 months also cited these facets of the Center for New Media; their reflections on the Center’s strengths include:

- *Changes to the facility – professional level equipment and supplies, collaborative workspaces.*

Federal funding and the planning process undertaken by the faculty and administrators at MxCC have paid off in a big way for students. Many spoke of the ease of transition to their internships and jobs because of their exposure to, and use of, equipment at the Center for New Media that mirrored the professional workspace. The new space allows for more student collaboration – both with other students, and with their professors, who can more easily provide them with critique. The number of spaces available for student work, and the appearance of the Center as a separate and unique program has been important to them.

Cindy Gerstl shared her perspective on the equipment changes. “Previous to the changes to the program, the instruction could only mirror the level of equipment. They needed to update and to be at the cutting edge. They needed the same equipment as the professionals, in order to give their students the chance they needed.”

- *Faculty connected to the real world, highly experienced and committed to students.*

Most of the faculty preceded the physical plant and curricular changes at MxCC that resulted in the Center for New Media, and have had long teaching careers at MxCC as well as professional identities outside of their academic lives. They bring their professional experiences to their classes and share

those with their students. Karla Santos added, “I was surprised at the amount of knowledge my professors had. I appreciated the teachers who took time to talk about their experiences in the real world. This was exactly what I was looking for.”

Angelique Ortiz enjoyed all of her classes, even the prerequisites and general education classes she needed to take. “You get individualized attention; the teachers know you, they know your skills, they can help you out when they see you struggling and push you when they think you can do more.” She continued, “I know most people have bad days, but they never showed it if they had a bad day. They knew my skills and would often push me out of my comfort zone to go further. What’s the worst thing that could happen if I tried something a new way?”

Cobi O’Connell spoke about the real world advice she got from her teachers and their ability to bring the material alive. “We had texts, but they often went off the texts to integrate their own real-life experiences, and talked as much about what not to do, as what was important.”

- *Flexibility for working students of instruction and certificate/degree options.*

Many of the students interviewed, like community college students in general, have busy lives with work and family added to their academic responsibilities. As can be seen in the brief sketches of students above, they are both traditional and nontraditional, some came to MxCC with degrees and some had just completed high school. Their needs were varied, and all were important.

Many of the CNM classes were online, which greatly benefitted some students. For example, Cobi O’Connell could take needed courses to get her Associate’s degree while interning and working.

For professionals with degrees in some area of media, it was important to have short certificate programs in which participants could hone existing or learn new skills that were relevant to today’s workplace. Melissa Ruznicki came to MxCC with a degree in media and considerable experience, but needed to touch up her technical skills because she saw “that the equipment and software had changed dramatically in ten years,” and although she does not ultimately want to be the person behind the camera, she needed to understand and master the body of skills that would allow her to excel in production decisions.

- *Hands-on learning.*

Cindy Gerstl spoke directly about the importance of the hands-on technical content of the program. She described her prior academic work as mostly theoretical, and explained that while the theory integral to the CNM curriculum is important; it was usually “useful theory,” taught in the context of skill mastery. “The theory was practical, and there was a strong connection between the theory and practical application. We did have technical assignments, which required us to learn the software and apply the theory we learned in class.”

Angelique Ortiz believes that her hands-on experiences at the CNM have also influenced her as an artist. “As I have become more skilled, I am more confident in putting myself out there as an artist.” She is looking forward to entering more shows and finding a gallery to show her work and to balancing her work at (a)squaredstudio with her own free-lance work doing video promotion.

- *Diversity of student experiences and a safe space for critique.*

As mentioned previously, and as is evident in the student profile of MxCC, students are diverse in age, ethnicity, previous education and work experiences and family structures. The students interviewed suggested that this diversity adds to their experiences in the classroom and the studio. Karla Santos is pursuing her dream of being an onscreen reporter for a Spanish language station; two of the women are veterans; many are nontraditional students; Cobi is a first generation college student. Yet, they all feel a sense of safety and acceptance in the CNM programs.

Cindy Gerstl summarized well why this diversity was of great benefit to the program. “The dynamics of the classes were interesting. There were often one (1) or two (2) or three (3) back-to-schoolers, another group that might have been displaced workers, usually younger with graphic design or communications backgrounds, traditional undergrads, and another group who were a little older and never started or finished a degree and now life presented them with the opportunity to do this. In group projects, it was sometimes a challenge, the younger folks had complicated schedules or didn’t seem to take it as seriously, but they also were energizing. A lot of them had technical skills some of us did not. And the older students had life experiences to tell and perspectives on how to tell the stories.”

And the diversity of experiences made for good critique. Angelique Ortiz offered, “Being around all of these talented people, it was great to get constructive criticism. We got in the habit of asking for feedback to help each other to try and grow even more. Even the classmates that were timid at first and said very little in the beginning, learned to be more comfortable in giving and receiving this kind of criticism which confirmed for everyone how much we were learning.”

Students also offered their perspectives on some of the challenges experienced by the Center for New Media. They include the following:

- *Improve outreach to, and relationships with, employers.*

Kate Mertens spoke about the need for greater outreach to smaller businesses and organizations around the state; she indicated that some might not know about the Center for New Media or its programs and graduates. “They could raise awareness about the program for employers, especially with HR departments or gatekeepers, and with smaller businesses who may need media professionals but not understand exactly what the Center for New Media or its programs consist of. If you say the Center for New Media, they don’t necessarily connect that with graphic design (her field). ESPN might get that connection, and it has tons of people working for it, but in smaller departments in most places, chances are the person hiring won’t have a clue what CNM means.”

- *Consider adding soft skills and business courses for students to succeed in getting a job or becoming small business owners (as independent contractors).*

Angelique Ortiz suggested that because most of the nature of the work graduates may be doing, they may not be employees of a company or organization, but rather, contractors or consultants hired by companies to perform a service. In that case, they will need content related to small business management. She believes that a course that would introduce students to the principles of small

business management, including the tax forms and other paperwork associated with being a contractor would greatly benefit the creative class graduating from MxCC.

- *Keep current in new media by hiring faculty/staff that can teach at the cutting edge*

When asked about any changes she might make to the program, Cobi O’Connell suggested that the Center hire younger people to teach new media, especially social media. “Everyone here is really experienced in Broadcast Cinema and Graphic Design, but only Randi Plake and Peter Galgano are available to teach new media; and there are only two of them.” She believes that having faculty and staff keep current with emergent trends in media will keep the Center for New Media relevant.

PROGRAMMATIC ELEMENTS

Degrees and Certificate Programs

As a deliverable of the USDOL funding, CNM proposed that ten (10) courses would be created. This objective has been met, with four (4) Associate's degree programs and six (6) certificate programs completed. Additionally, non-credit courses continue to be developed.

<p><i>Associate of Science Degree Programs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broadcast Cinema• Multimedia/Digital Arts• Communications• Fine Arts/Graphic Design <p><i>Certificate Programs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broadcast-Cinema<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Broadcast Communication○ Corporate Media Production○ News and Sports Production○ Production Assistant Boot Camp (non-credit)• Multimedia<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Multimedia-New Media Design○ Web Design and Development

There were two programs that were being considered as additions to the complement of course offerings; they included Animation and Interactive Gaming certificates. However, guidance from employer partners and faculty that the amount of technical knowledge that students would have to learn in order to satisfy workplace requirements would exceed the year allotted for most certificate programs. Therefore, the CNM did not continue to pursue its approval with the Board of Regents.

The faculty is pursuing the development of a first year cohort model, offering a core group of classes that teach the basics in production for all students. They believe that the new model will echo the new media workplace and is in line with research that suggests that cohort learning is associated with enhanced student retention, engagement and success.

Online learning

Faculty and staff are committed to continuing to develop and offer many CNM courses online. Professors Lenoce and Shafer have both created and taught numerous courses online since the late 1990s. Faculty intends to work with the college's distance learning department to expand their offerings. Online courses can help students to make decisions to enroll in certain classes much easier. Community college students often have employment and family responsibilities that can affect the number of hours they can spend on campus. Online courses offer an 'anytime/anywhere' alternative that students can fit into a complex daily schedule.

To date, there are eight (8) online courses regularly offered as part of the Center for New Media. They include:

- Communications 101/Mass Communication/Intro to Mass Media;
- Communications 104/Careers in New Media;
- Communications 111/Scriptwriting;
- Communications 120/Social Media;
- Communications 125/New Media Production;
- Communications 201/Introduction to Public Relations;
- Communications 203/Media Literacy; and,
- Communications 226/Journalism.

Some online learning ideas that faculty have mentioned for exploration include web analytics, game theory and design, TV history and technology, pop culture, and digital journalism.

Summer programs

The Production Assistant Boot Camp has been held four times:

- June 2013: four (4) participants completed the program and received certificates;
- June 2014: six (6) participants completed the program and received certificates;
- June 2015: for (4) participants completed the program and received certificates;
- June 2016: five (5) participants completed the program and received certificates.

Participants enrolled in the Production Assistant summer program learned skills which included terminology, production organization, operations and office procedures, functional roles of personnel, set etiquette, radio communications and interpreting various production forms such as call sheets and production reports. Several students in the summer programs were offered production assistant work on films shooting in Connecticut.

Also in summer session of 2016, the following CNM courses were offered:

- Art 250/Digital Photography;
- Communications 173/Public Speaking;
- Communications 295/Internship I;
- Digital Arts 110/Computer Graphics;
- Communications 101/ Intro to Mass Media (online);
- Communications120/Social Media (online);
- Communications 125/ New Media Production (online); and,
- Digital Arts 125 /New Media Production (online).

In January 2016, the college received a grant for “Digital Stew” a non-credit digital journalism course with the goal of improving digital media, career and writing skills. CNM worked during the summer of 2016 to develop the course with the intention of implementing it in Summer 2017.

According to the sustainability plan, faculty would like to offer the Production Assistant Program every other year and also investigate the possibility of offering summer media production camps for both high school and middle school students. They will pursue alternate funding sources (grants, donors) as well as consider an affordable tuition for younger students.

Prior Learning Assessments (PLAs)

No one was assessed or assigned credit using PLAs, despite the outreach efforts on the part of the program. This is not a weakness of the design or offering PLAs in general, but the lack of PLAs may be due to the nature of the CNM program. Media is a very dynamic field and may be less appropriate for credit based upon prior learning. Students in CNM programs chose to be enrolled in classes in which they were working with new technology and developing new skills, even those students with prior experience for which they could be assessed and assigned credit (via a PLA). Hands-on experience with emerging technologies was the reason many came to the program. PLAs, therefore, were not important to returning students who were looking to hone skills or learn new ones.

Articulation with high school and four-year college programs

One objective of the Center for New Media project was able to establish articulation agreements with other higher education institutions. By the end of the spring semester 2016, there were eight (8) formal and 18 total articulations in place. Agreements are in place with the four (4) state universities – Central, Southern, Eastern and Western Connecticut State Universities. The Center faculty updated and added three (3) new articulations with Eastern Connecticut State University. Other formal articulations include those with the University of Hartford and Quinnipiac University.

Informal articulations exist with Champlain College and the University of Connecticut. Additionally, graduation checklists now contain transfer articulation information- categories and courses for the CSU system. Going forward, the faculty, administration and the Coordinator of Corporate Media Program will be responsible for existing and new relationships with media programs at institutions for higher education and secondary schools.

High school articulations occur through the Connecticut Career Pathways (CCP) program. The college articulates courses in communications and digital arts with seven (8) high schools – Maloney and Platt (Meriden), Middletown, East Haven, Haddam-Killingworth, Daniel Hand (Madison), and West Haven High Schools and Vinal Technical High School (in Middletown). At Vinal Technical High School, Communication/Digital Arts 125 was offered to high school students through the College Career Pathways Program for high school students. Twenty-two students were enrolled in the program; upon their successful completion they will earn three (3) college credits that can be applied when they matriculate. Because of the success of this endeavor, CNM and Vinal will add a second three-credit course, Graphic Design, as part of the CCP program.

The model of the College Career Pathways Program will be changing post-grant and moving to a program of study model where students will be able to earn more college credits in technical areas, and teachers of CCP courses will use the college's own curriculum for the courses to teach them. Post-grant, the Middlesex Community College Counseling office will continue to update transfer articulations with high schools through the program of study initiative, and work with state college and university Transfer and Articulation (TAP) committees.

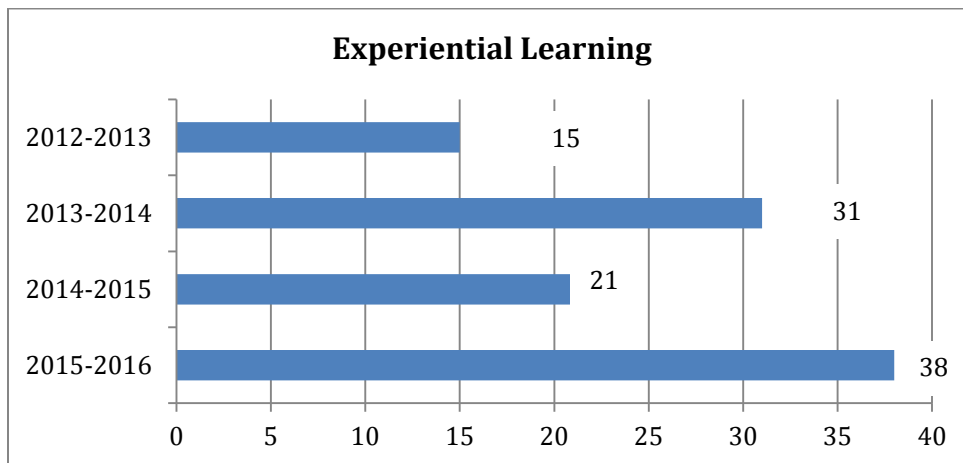
Experiential Learning

MxCC has three internship courses for students studying in the CNM programs: Communications 295 and 296 (Internship 1 & 2) and Communication 293 (Corporate Media Practicum).

This year, 38 students were engaged in experiential learning – seven (7) students in Corporate Media productions and support, seven (7) student workers in the CNM proper, and 24 internships, some of which continued into the summer semester.

During the 2012 to 2016 time period, 96 students have received credit for either the Communications 295/296 course (Internship 1 and 2) or Communications 293 (Corporate Media Internship). The chart below shows the growth of the program by year.

Chart 1. Numbers of students participating in Experiential Learning



Interesting and diverse settings have provided students with opportunities to apply what they have learned in CNM classrooms and build their professional skills. The following employers provide internships to CNM students:

TV Station Internships

- LIN Broadcasting/Channel 8, ABC Affiliate
- Meredith Broadcasting/Channel 3, CBS Affiliate
- NBC30, NBC – owned & operated by NBC/Universal
- Connecticut Public Television
- The Tribune Company
- ESPN/Disney
- Back9 Sports
- MSNBC Sports
- Wallingford Public Access Association
- WFSB-Eyewitness News
- WTNH- TV 8 Action News

Specific Shows, Network & Syndication

- Ron Hazelton Productions House Calls
- David Letterman, Late Show with...
- Internships at all NBC Universal network and cable stations (NBC, MSNBC, USA, Versus, NBC Sports, Universal Pictures, CNBC, Bravo, SyFi, Chiller, Oxygen, etc.)
- Maury
- WWE

Cable Networks

- ESPN/Disney
- MSNBC Sports
- Viacom/MTV family of stations
- WWE
- CT-N

Cable Systems

- Comcast Cable, Clinton Public Access
- Cox Communications-Commercial Production

Film Production

- Captured Time Productions
- CT Film Office
- Universal Pictures
- Synthetic Cinema International

Audio

- Coffee House Recording Studio
- Audio 911 professional Sound Services
- WESU Radio, Wesleyan
- Crossroads Communications
- Columns of Knowledge Recordings

Video Production Facilities

- New Britain Rock Cats
- Connecticut State Department of Children and Families-Media Center
- Moving Pictures
- Lojeri Productions
- Ron Hazelton Productions House Calls
- OutThink
- Shore Publications
- CPTV Sports
- VSI Media

Digital Media and Design

- New Wave Industries, Inc.

- Vivid Images Design
- Web Solutions, Inc
- Business Performance Technology
- CT Department of Children and Family
- Nickelodeon Animation Studio
- Meriden Record Journal
- Back9 Sports
- Microburst Learning
- Our Lady of Mount Carmel School
- Queen's Consignment Shop

External productions through the Corporate Media Center (CMC)

By November 2013, 11 CNM students participated in four (4) external productions produced by the Corporate Media Center and contributed to in-house productions and services. A year later, the number of external productions hit 11, exceeding the projection of ten (10) productions across the entire grant. Clients are diverse and the Corporate Media center enjoys good relationships with many state agencies and non-profits.

Lately, students needed to assume more responsibility for projects because the Corporate Media Center has experienced significant growth in the number of clients. During the past year, five (5) students have interned approximately 10-15 hours per week for the numerous companies and state agencies contracting with the CMC. Students get experience in meeting with clients and articulating ideas and a production plan, as well as doing the technical work of producing and editing content, and presenting a finished product.

The following is a list of external productions that students participated in since summer 2014, followed by the name of the client:

- Paint Recycling Video – Paintcare
- Paintcare Blog – Paintcare
- Connecticut Congestion Forum – Connecticut Department of Transportation
- Juvenile Detention Center Introductory Video – Connecticut Judicial Branch
- Introduction to Jury Duty – Connecticut Judicial Branch
- Jury Summons Videos – Connecticut Judicial Branch
- Family Engagement Video – Connecticut Judicial Branch - Court Support Services
- Gender Responsive Video - Connecticut Judicial Branch
- Sustainability Conference – Eastern Connecticut State University
- Live Shooter Drill – City of Middletown, South District Fire/ Middletown Police Department
- Product Videos – GCI Outdoor Brands
- Sizzle Reel – Hired!
- CT Parks Centennial –Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- EV Cars Presentation – Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Goodwin State Park Orientation – Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Wastebusters Green Cleaning Products in Schools – Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

- CT State Parks Marketing Videos – Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Composting Video – Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- No Child Left inside Event – Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection EV
- Aquifer Protection Graphics – Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Connecticut – “Honey, We should get an Electric Car” 4 Spots – Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Hammonasset Welcome Video – Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Natural Resources 150th Anniversary Video – Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Aquifer Protection Video – Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Career Connect Videos (6) – Connecticut Department of Labor
- Client Stories Web Videos – Gilead House
- Making Better Sen\$e – Roberta Hoskie – TV Pilot
- Bravo Delta Training Videos – Dawn McDaniel
- Shelter Logic Marketing Videos – Shelter Logic
- CCAP Video and CI Video - Capital Community College
- “Make it Here” Television and Radio Ads (6 Versions) – Connecticut Board of Regents
- CT Humanities Marketing Videos (6) – Connecticut Humanities Council
- Guru and the Schwab - Media Edge Consultants

Profile: The Center for Corporate Media

Middlesex Community College’s Corporate Media Center (CMC) produces videos for many business, community and educational groups, and its productions have won over 17 awards and 10 national awards such as the Telly, Ava, and Communicator awards for clients such as Connecticut’s Department of Environmental Protection, Connecticut Department of Labor, Unilever, Stanley Tools, United Technologies, Hamilton Sundstrand and Sikorsky Aircraft. The CMC is led by Dan Nocera, who has both worked and taught in media production for the past twenty years. He has also produced, directed, and edited more than 350 corporate, documentary, and marketing videos, many of which have won awards from the industry. Dan teaches the Corporate Media Practicum year round, a television production class each fall, and an advanced editing workshop each spring.

Growth in Corporate Media Center with the changes in facility

Driving the growth of the corporate media project was the move to the new studios and meeting spaces. Where Dan once had a tiny office, he now has a “real” office and use of a conference room where he can meet with potential clients about their ideas and projects. This is especially important because many of his clients are state agencies, who often include a large number of people in meetings. Additionally, the new studio space allows for more the production to take place on campus – before the construction of the new work spaces, Dan would need to rent space in which to film videos. “This,” he says, “makes it faster and more efficient to turn out quality training videos.” Some of the more recent projects have required bigger crews which can be accommodated in the studio spaces, and students can now do ‘live to tape’ videos, where they can read a script (on the teleprompter) live while standing in front of a green screen.

In the last two years, Dan believes that the number of videos produced by corporate media has tripled.

Curriculum changes lead to better skills

Dan believes the curricula in the Center for New Media has had an effect on both the number of students interested in his program and their talent level. “Many more students are interested in my classes and program, and the talent level may have also risen. Where I previously had one or two students who had talents that were almost at the professional level, now we are attracting and seeing many more talented students into our programs.” In his 200 level classes, he sees students in their final year of the program, and indicates that “there are students with higher skill levels coming into my classes; they are better at the newer software and there is a less steep learning curve.” Dan believes that the new facility has made it possible for students to have hands-on experiences earlier (in classes like lighting, writing and cinematography) which help them to master skills in his class at a quicker rate. These skills allow students to produce better video and fuel the growth of the corporate video program and the Center.

Important training for interns

In 1999, the Corporate Media Center began to offer a class in corporate media; currently, this course, COM 293- Corporate Media Production Practicum is a 3-credit course limited to a small handful of students (approximately 5). The description from the course catalogue follows.

Once or twice a year, Dan will have students who cannot find outside internships and will take them on to do an independent project. And in the last few years, students have volunteered to help. Because students enjoy his classes, Dan has “pretty good lists of former students I can call on to hire. This feels like the perfect way- students take the class, graduate and come back to oversee a few projects. That way, they have a nice reel of projects that they’ve worked on.”

Interns often work on community-based projects – usually done at no cost to the organization – when Dan is approached to do a simple project that he feels that students can handle. Students will take the project on as an independent study, while Dan acts as Executive Producer, overseeing their work; this is a way for the college to use its resources to give back to the community, as well as a way to give students professional-level experience. Last year, students worked with a community-based mental health nonprofit on a project related to their resources, and this year a student worked with the Portland Public Schools. “The students are getting real world training they don’t get in a class, and do all of the things they will be doing professionally while at the same time having the safety net of Dan and the rest of the college,” Dan indicates.

Additionally, there have been student collaborations across media disciplines – Dan indicated that they students sometimes partner with the advanced media class on their capstone project.

Alumni and the program mutually benefit from the work done through the CMC

Dan also hires alumni to assist with producing and overseeing logistics on projects. This, too, has been a benefit of the move- having the space to make use of students and alumni. The first corporate media graduate, Cindy Gerstl, has been hired by the Corporate Media Center to work on projects for the Connecticut Fund for the Humanities and Capital Community College as well as projects for the college internally.

Dan would like to see the Corporate Media Center do more in the way of training/educational videos, both to make available to instructors on campus and to market to other educators at a cost, to bring in more revenue. He would like to build a library of training materials and become a resource for educators and others, and would help build their name as a provider of quality educational video tools.

Dan gets approximately one to two calls a year from people looking to hire, and he has helped a number of students to get their first jobs in the industry. By his account, Dan has helped about 30 to 40 media professionals get their start after they finished their college training. And, he added, other faculty members are doing the same thing, in their own ways.

The CMC as a revenue center

The corporate media program is an important alternate revenue stream; Dan suggests that it is “one of the few alternative revenue streams at the college.” This is important in a time of shrinking resources. The college needs the program to make money, but there is a limit to the capacity of the program with current staffing, and Dan is very sensitive to balancing students’ educational needs with financial demands. He has one staff member – this allows the corporate media center to take on more projects, and students (current students and graduates) also extend their capacity to shoot and edit. Once in the past year, they had three projects that were running concurrently, one led by Dan, one by staff and one by students.

Dan indicated that most of their projects are for \$25,000 or less and that they usually have two (2) projects per month around the calendar year. This year, they have a large contract (for more than \$100,000) but Dan suggests that these large projects come along once every five (5) years or so. Most clients are recruited to the CMC by word of mouth, through other projects or connections. Dan suggests “new clients are often blown away when they get a tour of the Center for New Media, and are impressed with our facility, workspaces and equipment.”

Corporate Media, Dan suggests, is “where they figured out the partnerships with outside businesses and agencies to create professional content. From there, it has spread out to other pathways (such a Multimedia). Currently, the Corporate Media Center is working with its governing body, the Connecticut Board of Regents on the Make It Here campaign, promoting the manufacturing programs at Connecticut’s Community Colleges and State Colleges. They were slated to film the campaign’s press conference the next day. Examples of the Corporate Media Program’s work can be found on their You Tube channel at:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/MXCorpMedia>.

Instructional improvements and professional development

CNM instructors are seasoned professionals and educators; many have designed and taught courses that address emerging media as well as traditional production and writing courses. Yet, media continues to evolve almost daily and the CNM plans to continue to follow new trends in educational content and pedagogy. The equipment acquired by the Center for New Media is much more complex than the technology it replaced; this required faculty and staff to engage in many hours of training and practice before it could be used in the classroom and for productions. Faculty and staff have received, and continue to receive training on all installed equipment and technologies through their vendor and manufacturer relationships, and by attending industry conferences and taking advantage of online training modules, some through the www.lynda.com which offers online software instruction in media production and computer coding and operations.

In addition, the CNM recruited film professionals and visiting scholars, and made use of externships to increase both their knowledge and skills. Larry McConkey, a film professional gave a class for students and faculty; Jim DeCesare, Tim Hunter (University of Connecticut) and Ann DeMarle (Champlain College) presented to faculty. Faculty and staff attended conferences on interface design and other topics. As stated in

the sustainability plan, the faculty must be “on the cutting edge of industry knowledge.”² To continue to do so, there are currently professional development funds available through the faculty union, and sabbatical and course release arrangements provided by the Connecticut Board of Regents and MxCC.

Faculty experiences

The Core Committee participants cited three major areas when queried about the strengths of the program created under this funding: the capital improvements that allowed them to have an identity as a distinct, state-of-the-art Center; the courses created under the funding and the increases in enrollment in media courses; the ability to connect with and meet the needs of the corporate, government and non-profit communities.

- *Capital improvements that allowed them to have an identity as a distinct, state-of-the-art center.*

John Shafer spoke about the physical plant being the program’s biggest strength. The funding allowed the existing media programs to collaboratively plan and implement changes that would not have occurred otherwise. “Being in this building (Chapman) is the biggest strength. All of our programs are located here; the space itself is an advertisement for a very professionally minded program. This is what allowed the programs to become the Center for New Media.” Dan Nocera, the Coordinator of the Corporate Media Center, added, “The move was great; now almost every prospective student is sold. In the old studio that never happened. The equipment and space were showing their age. Now there’s the WOW factor.” Peter Galgano, involved in facility tours taken by students, teachers and others, concurred, “During every tour, I hear how impressed they are with the facility. It wasn’t always that way. It used to be a hard sell.”

Rich Lenoce indicated that the space allows them to have access to and interact with students with greater facility. “For instance,” he added, “at 8:30, a student, Angela, was already in editing. We are in direct proximity to the studios, where we can be of assistance to students and watch their progress. The design of the rooms is integral to the success of the program.”

Course enrollments have increased greatly, Lenoce indicated, citing enrollment numbers submitted for grant purposes. “We can now offer three (3) TV production courses at the same time, we can now add courses, move students. We have plenty of time spots open for students to take courses. John (Shafer) can now teach acting with the film class and have both acting and film classes work together. Half of the students enrolled are non-majors – students in science or business, for example – so they can now get some exposure to the areas of media that will someday be useful to their work.”

- *Courses created under the funding and the resultant increases in enrollment.*

The meeting structure (weekly meetings during planning and construction) adopted by the Core Committee allowed the group to be iterative and thoughtful, and changes, big and small occurred. Dan Nocera addressed those changes and their genesis. “Students over the years have had required courses that they have taken and done well, but now with the new facility and enhanced resources

² MxCC Center for New Media, Sustainability Plan, page 7

and the time for faculty to spend together as a unit, we got to plan for the program's growth." Added Rick Eriksen, "And the original consultant's report confirmed and revealed some new ideas for the development of new courses."

John Shafer again began the conversation, addressing the changes in content and pedagogy. "The grant also allowed us to add several new courses using the newest technologies – Social Media, Motion Graphics, New Media. Students here are taught with and about the newest technologies, both conceptually and technically. We have also updated current courses."

Rich Lenoco got more specific about the courses affected, and discussed the importance of giving students the experiences that would match workplace needs. "It has also allowed us to address what's going on in the industry for students' benefit. While some of our rooms had appropriate technology, we didn't have Room 629 where we now teach new Media Production. 3-D Animation did not exist- now we have the technology to support students' education."

- *Connections to the College and the community.*

The federal funding allowed for capital improvements that were essential to the CNM's success to date, and the existence of federal funding allowed the college administrators to be true to their vision for Middlesex Community College and step up with additional funding. The college has made use of the Center's facilities and there are plans to consider enlarging the role of the CNM in distance learning and in other areas of the college (marketing, web design).

The successful Corporate Media Center has expanded greatly with the infusion of federal money and the changes in skills and equipment, and this has increased the exposure of the Center for New Media and its faculty and students. There are more calls from the business and non-profit community for the services of the Corporate Media Center than there is capacity; and many more calls for internships. The three years of the project have seen an increase in general interest in the CNM, and Rich Lenoco believes that the Center's profile and a graduate led to the sizeable donation of equipment and supplies from a media company closing its doors in Glastonbury.

The faculty identified the following challenges presented by the Center for New Media program:

- *Different student profiles.*

As stated in the formative evaluation, the CNM serves multiple student profiles. The faculty and staff concur, suggesting that there are three major groups of students enrolled in the program: (a) technical/occupational minded first-time students; (b) transfer-minded students who will go on to study elsewhere for a Bachelor's degree or higher; and, (c) returning students, some of whom have already earned a Bachelor's or Master's degree, but need to tune up or learn new skills or have not finished a certificate of Associate's degree previously.

All are well served by the program, but the faculty has been considering a cohort model in order to enhance student learning and retention. However, community college students are often more greatly affected by life circumstances – family, transportation, employment – and many 'stop out' on their path to a degree. The faculty is well aware of this, and wondered aloud about whether a

structure change, like moving to a cohort model, or greater rigor, would be accompanied by a loss of good students.

“If we could solidify the cohort concept, we could enhance students’ development of an esthetic sense,” John Shafer indicated. Currently, some courses need to be taken out of sequence because of students’ start dates and schedules that affect when they can take specific courses. Informal cohort groups have naturally formed because of the emphasis on collaboration, rather than competition, in the program.

There has been further discussion (by faculty and the Advisory Board) of a structure in which first year students would take common, core courses and in the second year, branch out into specialized, more advanced technical courses. Yet, the wide range of skills with which the students come into the program calls for more study by faculty and administrators.

- *Calendar/Scheduling of Courses.*

There are still structural issues that are impeding enrollment of students in summer courses. The CNM offers a summer intensive program open to high school students as well as the college population and the community at large. However, the first session of the summer academic calendar begins before the last day of school for many high school students.

Additionally, some faculty maintain that the college’s “global scheduling decisions take power away from the program level. When we make proposals to vary from the traditional scheduling, they are not approved.” They believe that budgetary constraints may have some effect on those decisions, and also that the rigidity of the college schedule may hinder potential students referred by workforce boards or students with significant time constraints.

FACILITY/PHYSICAL SPACE and EQUIPMENT

The physical plant changes to Chapman Hall have all been completed. Students benefit from well-designed workspaces that were designed to be multi-functional, allow for collaborative work and integrate instruction with professional-level technology. Staff and faculty were relocated to one building before the fall 2014 semester began. Students benefit from using space and equipment that were carefully planned and executed; the Advisory Board (including major media representatives such as ESPN) and the Mason report (consultancy report about the need for the Center) cited in the formative evaluation were well used in the design of a space that allows for flexibility and gives the Center an impressive presence on campus. Since the formative evaluation, CNM has enhanced their relationship with the MxCC library and integrated instructional resources for the use of all students and faculty. In early 2016, 900 square feet of storage was added for necessary equipment and supplies.

The Center for New Media facilities include:

- More than 80 new computers and up-to-date file and server technology;
- Advanced workstations;
- Modern display, projections and sound systems;
- Video conferencing technology (where students can access professionals remotely)
- Professional-grade collaborative design which enhances collaboration and instruction;
- High-definition screening room (that can be used for classroom instruction or performance);
- New media production lab;³
- Three new media production classrooms outfitted with workstations and latest production technology and software;
- Production studio for live and recorded programming;
- Music production (with 24 track recording capabilities);
- Audio/radio production (which will house a newly approved radio station);
- Master control;
- Two video editing labs;
- Green room/conference room;
- Corporate Media Center office and editing room;
- Faculty/staff offices; and,
- Equipment loan room.

The Center for New Media assessed and procured state-of-the art equipment and supplies to replace the timeworn cameras and equipment that preceded the grant. The planning was thoughtful, and included input from professionals in the fields as well as faculty. The equipment is on par with professional media corporations (although on a smaller scale). The Center for New Media has instituted equipment certification training program (2015) which students are required to complete before they use the equipment. Increases in enrollment led to the purchase of four (4) additional video cameras for classes that have been added, and a 15-foot extendable “jib” was also purchased to enhance production by allowing for camera shots above head level.

³The new media production lab is a space where students can work on projects, individually or collaboratively. It is open daily (with late hours Monday through Thursday) and on Saturday.

Sustaining the program post-grant, CNM will maintain and replace equipment in order to meet current and emerging needs. The CNM Coordinators will continue to work with the Information Technology department on a schedule for software replacement and ensuring budgets reflect CNM software needs. The sustainability plan calls for the CNM to adhere to the industry standard for equipment replacement – 3 years for computers, 5 years for Digital Media hardware, and 10 years for TV studio equipment. The college receives both Capital Bond Funds and Strategic Technology Initiative Funds; program coordinators, college administrators, development staff and the liaison to the MxCC Foundation will research and pursue new and existing funding opportunities.

EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT

Advisory Board

CNM has an active Advisory Board, of whom many are alumni; the majority of members have sat on the Board for more than five (5) years. They cover a variety of professions within media, and provide an essential touchstone for the project. Their collective expertise has been important to curriculum, design of the new space, experiential learning including internships and job referrals, and fundraising. Quarterly reporting chronicling the work of the Advisory Board indicates that partners wrote letters of support for funding and also discussed internship and employment opportunities, criteria and pathways in various types of media companies and occupations.

Advisory Board members include:

- Videographer/cinematographer (business owner);
- Senior Coordinating Director of Production Operations at a major cable sports company (ESPN);
- HR professional (and recruiter) at a major sports cable company (ESPN);
- Video and multimedia production company (business owner) (joined in 2012);
- Director whose experience includes top TV shows;
- Producer and scriptwriter for network TV;
- Co-owners of a video production company;
- High school media director and educator;
- Communications department professor at Eastern Connecticut State University;
- Assistant news director at a Hartford TV station;
- Radio station owner;
- COO of the American Radio Relay League and media executive; and,
- Production and advertising agency owner.

The Advisory Board formally meets twice a year, but have made important contributions on an ad hoc basis as consultants on the design of the new physical space and the CNM curriculum. As stated previously, members have provided executive and technician level input on a regular basis, and have contributed their time by presenting to students enrolled in the Careers in Media course, hosting interns, and hiring graduates.

The October 2015 meeting discussion centered on a proposed curriculum model to be further developed with a start date of Fall 2017. The Board took into consideration the lessons learned from the grant activities, employers and internship site to assess a proposed new model of new media education. The proposed model would consist of a first year program that would center on the essential skills of media production, and a second year centered on an area of specializations (such as video production, interactive media, graphic design, news and sports production and music production). All graduating students would receive an Associate's degree in New Media and credentialed (through a certificate) in an area of specialization. The program would use a cohort model because of enhanced student experiences, collaborations and success fostered when students are members of a cohort group. Industry partnerships and experiential learning would be maximized under the model as proposed.

During the fall semester (2015), employer partners (including members of the Advisory Board) came to the Center for New Media to discuss career opportunities with students. Personnel from WFSB, ESPN, three

digital media companies, the Hartford Courant, Blue Sky Animations, Outthink and WMRD radio all spoke with classes about the media landscape and how students could maximize their learning experiences by taking the courses that would help them meet their professional goals. Employers also met individually with students about college course choices and employment options. Rich Lenoce followed up with students about internships for the spring 2016.

Additionally, members from the recruiting office and the associate's training office at ESPN (a long-time supporter of the Center) came to the campus for the fall and spring semesters and interviewed students, and intend to continue the practice. Although ESPN will only be hiring limited numbers of students, they spoke with students individually about how to improve their resumes and portfolios materials, as well as critiquing their interviews. These experiences will be important as students go out into the workplace and begin searching for media employment opportunities.

Alumni Networking

On Saturday, November 7, 2015, the Center for New Media hosted its first Alumni Networking event. Approximately 100 people attended the event. Out of that meeting, a Facebook group and LinkedIn groups were formed; the group intends to meet annually in person. Going forward, this group could be very useful in helping students and graduates in the program to receive notification of any open positions and for use as a networking resource.

Experiences and insights: Internship providers/employers

Evaluators spoke with four internship providers over the last year of the grant, to gain a sense of their experiences with the process of hosting an intern, and how they would describe the students that were interning with their businesses. Those interviewed included Alex Donovan, founder of (a)squaredstudio; Deb Rycki, Finance and Human Resource Manager, Nutmeg Public Access TV; Andrew Chatfield, Press and Marketing Director, Wesleyan University Center for the Arts; and, Dave Festa, Director of Engineering Production, CT-N (Connecticut Network).

- (a)squaredstudio develops websites, engaging in graphic design and photography and provides search engine optimization for its clients and is located in Middletown, Connecticut.
- CT-N (Connecticut Network) is a non-profit organization that provides the state's citizens with television and webcast coverage of Connecticut state government and public policy and covers government hearings, press conferences, and important events that can affect the lives of Connecticut's citizens.
- Wesleyan University Center for the Arts serves the college and the greater Middletown community by providing performances and exhibitions in a variety of spaces that include concert halls, other performance spaces, galleries and an art center.
- Nutmeg Public Access TV is an independent, nonprofit corporation serving eight towns north of Hartford by providing facilities, equipment and three channels specifically for the public, local education and government use. It provides training and ongoing support for the public on productions.

The diverse nature of their businesses led to very different skill sets required from their interns.

(a)squaredstudio develops websites (especially for ecommerce) and logos and provides graphic design and photography services for its clients. Their owners were trained as artists; therefore, their approach to each project reflects their aesthetics married to quality functionality. Alex Donovan shared his experiences with Angelique Ortiz, who he hired as an intern and is now an employee. Angelique worked on her portfolio with the help of MxCC staff, and emailed a number of businesses in the area in order to find an internship related to her interests and skills. Donovan was impressed by her initiative. “It is awesome for someone to go through the process of pursuing their own internship; they are motivated and want to be there. What happened with Angel was that there was instant communication. You can’t teach someone to be interested. And she was interested to learn more.” Angelique, he shared, came with good skills – she had digital experience, something Donovan knew she would need to prosper at (a)squared. Donovan saw her skill set as befitting their content and style of work, because she is not afraid to take on new challenges, to be iterative, and to respond to good feedback.

Donovan had praise for CNM’s program, stating that the curriculum is practical, teaching students both theory and practice, exposing them to real-world work situations and teaching them transferable skills. (a)squared decided to pay Angelique as an intern because the work she did was professional. And while Angelique was their first intern, they are open to another experience.

As a non-profit public access organization, **Nutmeg Public Access TV** is different than a conventional newsroom. The staff is charged with education as much as production, and their interns and staff need good production skills and also good communication and teaching skills. The ability to interact and instruct the public on how to produce good television content is essential. And while they have “a corporate feel,” a major part of their mission is to serve the public. Rycki employed a student, Michael, as a part-time production assistant from October 2013 until July 2015 when he left for a full-time job. Nutmeg has a very small staff (seven people); therefore Rycki got to know the student and his skill set very well. He did very good work in his time at Nutmeg, Rycki indicated that his skills in production and communication made him a successful member of the team.

Dave Festa at **CT-N (Connecticut Network)** uses www.internhere.com as a source for interns, but often goes out to college programs to get a feel for its instruction, faculty and student work. He indicated that the requests for internships wax and wane, depending upon the year. CT-N is by his words, “a small operation with a lot of different equipment; equipment that interns need to learn as they would at a major media player.” CT-N has ten (10) full-time technicians in his department, and seven (7) started out as interns. This gives CT-N to develop both the skills and the everyday broadcast experiences of students who understand the organization’s work style and master the skills they will need to be successful as technicians. Cobi was an intern at CT-N over the last year. She was, in Festa’s words, a great intern, a fast learner and well advanced for her years. She picked up things quickly, has very good technical skills, communicates well, and listens, all of the attributes someone needs to succeed here.”

Andrew Chatfield at the **Wesleyan University Center for the Arts** has had interns in the past and was originally connected to Rich Lenoce and John Shafer through a previous intern who had come through Middlesex’s program. Brendan interned with Chatfield during this year, and received credit for his experience. Chatfield’s first intern was Stephanie Nelson, in whose honor a benefit concert has been held each of the last two years to establish a memorial scholarship for Middlesex Community College students. Brendan is the third Middlesex intern Chatfield has supervised; he is responsible for video filming and production, analyzing survey data, and press outreach. The relationship between Chatfield and MxCC has been

productive; Wesleyan is a baccalaureate and graduate liberal arts institution, and without a Communications/Marketing academic department, and its ties to MxCC allows them to host interns with considerable technical skills. He praises Middlesex for the flexibility he has found in working with interns – “they are flexible about the content in which our interns are engaged, as well as the time frame. As long as they complete the requisite number of hours, it works.” He intends to continue taking on interns from the CNM to assist with the press and production associated with a significant number of performing spaces and galleries.

PROGRAM SUPPORTS

Project management

Administrative structure at time of the formative evaluation

Dr. Anna Wasescha, President
Steven Minkler, Dean of Academic Affairs
Richard Lenoce, Director
Roynn (Lisa) Simmons, Recruitment Placement Coordinator
Randi Plake, Program Assistant
Peter Galgano, Media Associate
Kimberly Hogan, Director of Finance & Administrative Services

Faculty include:

Richard Eriksen, Professor; Coordinator, Multimedia-Digital Arts
John Shafer, Professor; Coordinator, Communications; Interim Coordinator, Broadcast-Cinema
Dan Nocera, Coordinator, Corporate Media Training Center
Judith DeGraffenried, Professor; Coordinator, Fine Arts-Graphic Design
Matthew Weber, Assistant Professor; Fine Arts-Graphic Design and Curator
Kelly Carrington, Full-time Lecturer

Administrative structure post-grant

Dr. Anna Wasescha, President
Steven Minkler, Dean of Academic Affairs
Jamie Flores, Division Director
Kim Hogan, Interim Dean of Administrative Services

Faculty include:

Richard Lenoce, Coordinator, Broadcast Cinema; Coordinator, Communications
John Shafer, Faculty, Communication
Rick Eriksen, Coordinator Multimedia/Digital Arts
Judith DeGraffenreid, Coordinator, Fine Arts-Graphic Design
Matthew Weber, Fine Arts
Dan Nocera, Coordinator, Corporate Media Training Center
Peter Galgano, Media Associate

Lloyd Langevin, Educational Assistant
Monique Simon, Educational Assistant
Simon O'Reilly, Educational Assistant

Leadership

Throughout the grant period, Richard Lenoce directed the Center for New Media program; he holds a Bachelor of Science in Radio-Television Communications from Ithaca College and a Master of Science in

Instruction Media and Technology from Southern Connecticut State University, and has a rich background in corporate media. He has been on the faculty at MxCC for the last 21 years, most recently as Coordinator of Broadcast-Cinema. Post-grant funding, this is the post to which he will return; Lenoce will also assume the position of Coordinator of Communication and Chair of the Center for New Media Committee. Lenoce remains the pivot point of activity; his experience as a faculty member with a deep understanding of MxCC's strengths and challenges, traditional- and nontraditional-aged community college students, as well as his professional expertise and connections in media have allowed him to move seamlessly into directing the project.

The core committee met weekly since the grant project was envisioned. They were drivers in program change, meeting week to discuss facility needs, equipment, curriculum, experiential learning and other topics germane to the implementation of CNM. A diverse group contributed their insight and knowledge in project meetings – college finance, information technology, marketing, and recruiting staff all had seats at the table – and members worked outside of the meetings in subgroups by task to advance the objectives and groundwork laid in the regular meetings. Staff and faculty who participated feel that the group valued their input. Additionally, faculty who teach in the program, were already in place, which allowed for a program to build from a strong academic foundation.

Going forward, the administrative structure will undergo some significant change. Lenoce will again become Coordinator of Broadcast Cinema, as well as taking on the role of Chair of the Center for New Media Committee. Jaime Flores has been appointed Academic Division Director of the School of Arts and Media, Humanities, and Social Sciences, an intermediary between Steven Minkler, Academic Dean, and the CNM program. The core committee will continue to meet to assume leadership and guidance for the CNM program.

Traditional Recruiting

Royann (Lisa) Simmons was hired in October 2013 as the Recruitment and Placement Coordinator. Shortly after her hiring, Simmons met with all high schools in the region, and attended many college fair activities in the state. By the end of April 2014, Simmons had made 12 high school visits, attended a career fair and College Experience Day, and met with three local Chambers of Commerce. Going forward, the Admissions staff will be responsible for student recruitment.

Campus tours were also being employed to highlight CNM assets. Tours were initiated as part of the admissions process and are also scheduled for specific groups of possible CNM students. During regularly scheduled admissions tours, Barrett engages CNM faculty and staff to describe CNM programs. There have been a number of group tours, including one with Middletown Adult Education students and instructors. This relationship with Adult Education programs, may be a new source of students for the CNM programs.

During the period of the grant (upon the completion of the new CNM), the following audiences toured or made use of the facilities:

- High Schools: 58 visits
- Libraries and adult education providers: 9 visits
- Connecticut Department of Labor: 7 visits
- Chambers of Commerce: 5 visits
- Community events: 5
- WIA staff: 4 visits
- Veterans events: 4 visits

- College students: 2 visits
- Experience College Day: 2 visits
- TAACCCT participant meetings: 2 visits
- Career/Job Fairs: 2
- Businesses: 2 visits
- State Workforce Conference: 1
- Imagination Collaboration: 1
- Connecticut High School Film Festival: 1

Additionally, 36 OneStop counselors were trained on the specifics of the Center and TAACCCT.

As of September 30, 2015, the Recruitment and Placement Coordinator's contract ended, and all recruiting activities were moved to the Marketing and Admissions programs. Post grant, the marketing department; Admissions, Dean of Students, Dean of Academic Affairs and CNM Coordinators will share responsibility for recruiting students for the Center. Perkins funding received by secondary and their college partners can help CNM (and MxCC) resource recruiting for high school students for dual enrollment, as well as other activities designed to nurture college partnerships with business and industry and workforce development institutions.

Responsibility for the placement of students has reverted to the faculty program coordinators. Narrative progress reports submitted to USDOL stress the importance of recruitment and placement in the continued success of the program.

Web Presence and Social Media

Website analytics for the Center for New Media site (mxcc.edu/cnm and subpages) show 21,451 sessions (60% are new visitors), and over 13,205 page views since November 1, 2014. Forty-three percent (43%) of the visits are direct, meaning that users are typing in CNM specifically. Users visit 3.2 pages per session, and spend, on average, 3:06 minutes on the site. The bounce rate is 50.14%, which is average. There have been spikes in site activity during times that align with registration for classes – July, November, January and April.

Earlier in 2016, the CNM site was integrated into the main MxCC website. Unfortunately, the data was wiped and reset because mxcc.edu/cnm is no longer separate site. This makes it impossible to measure the number of visitors who first accessed the Center for New Media via the landing page. However, available data indicates that users visited these specific internal pages (in order of number of page views): Broadcast Cinema (639); Communication Degree (503); Multimedia Degree (461), Production Assistant Program (272), Courses (260), Broadcast Communication Certificate (251), Web Design and Development Certificate (241), Faculty Spotlights (238), and Facilities (229).

With respect to traffic from social networks,

- 58% of referrals to the site were from Facebook, 32% from Twitter, and 5% from LinkedIn;
- 2% from Vimeo; and,
- 3% from the blog.

As of February 2016, the Center for New Media blog was integrated back into the College's main blog with a separate link: <http://mxcc.edu/blogs/category/center-for-new-media>, as there is no one currently assigned to keep the blog updated after the grant ends. Since the start of the grant in September 2012, there have been

447 blog posts for the Center for New Media. The newsletter, also available online, has 15 issues, beginning in November 2013.

In October 2014, the promotional video was updated and replaced on Vimeo to include the new facility. According to analytics (July 16, 2016), the video has also referred traffic to the Center for New Media site and has had 476 views. The CNM video (available via web and DVD, and included in recruitment folders) has been used at various recruitment events.

Randi Plake and Lisa Simmons created and developed strategies for recruiting CNM students via the web and in person; they meet weekly with the Program Director to discuss implementation. Plake was also part of the college marketing staff; this role allowed her to leverage CNM funding and make CNM a *college* marketing priority, using general marketing dollars to promote CNM.

Additional activities hosted by and/or co-sponsored by CNM include:

- MxCC Arts and Media Festival, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016
- Alumni Networking, November 2015

At events, tours were given and information about CNM shared. The Alumni networking event will continue to provide important connections and career support for students and graduates as they look for jobs post-graduation and beyond.

Orientation, Assessment and Support Services

In the last two years, the Center for New Media has instituted an orientation for students enrolling in the program. The orientation will be held in late August (before classes start) and inform students about options within the program.

Accuplacer is the most commonly used method of assessment for Connecticut Community Colleges (CCC), but the CCC system has moved to a model of using multiple assessments of student readiness and placement. Some students have taken the SAT or ACT; other methods of assessment include high school grades, student essays, campus-specific testing and work teacher recommendations.

Students are assigned a faculty advisor (in their department) who assists them with a course of study and course selection. Within the CNM, students are advised by faculty teaching within their specific certificate or degree program. Some students have participated in MxCC's Transitional Year Program as well as CNM courses. In the Transitional Year program, students are grouped into a learning cohort, provided embedded instructional support, study skills instruction (freshman seminar) and a flexible math option.

MxCC provides academic support, including tutoring, to its students through the College Learning Center. There are three physical locations – Middletown, Meriden and Westbrook – and an online option. The college has a contract with Lynda, a LinkedIn owned site that provides instruction support services (<https://www.lynda.com>); there are two (2) Lynda stations located on campus and the school owns several portable licenses which are available for faculty, staff and students use. Blackboard is also available as an assistive technology.

There are also two CNM networking sharing sites – through instructor and student files – allowing instructors to download files for student use and students to access their own projects from any campus computer. This allows students and faculty to more easily collaborate on projects. Additionally, it is possible to view and download equipment manuals and a training video.

Learning Center staff provides tutoring in Math, English, some of the sciences, and accounting, depending upon the location and schedule. The online option, offered through the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium, offers a more robust list of subject areas and scheduling options. There are three (3) educational assistants now assigned to the CNM; these staff members act as enhanced tutors, helping students to navigate the community college and program landscape as well as offer support academically. Two are assigned to staff and faculty of the CNM; one is assigned to the Corporate Media Center.

Additionally, this year (as in other years) there were seven (7) students who were employed by the Center for New Media. They have many and various duties, including responsibility for CNM equipment. However, their peer support may have the most impact; they offer their fellow students tutoring and technical support in all aspects of the CNM programs.

Veterans

MxCC has a robust veterans' program. The school includes veteran-specific information on its website, including on-campus resources such as the Veterans' Club and the OASIS Center (Operation Academic Support for Incoming Service Members). OASIS is open daily, Monday through Saturday for academic support activities. MxCC has identified a Veteran's Outreach Coordinator, Peter Galgano, who coordinates work with the population. Galgano is also CNM's Media Associate and participates in planning and implementation of the CNM. His talents and resources are important to the recruitment of veterans to CNM and their continued success. Among CNM students in the 2015-2016 academic years, there were ten (10) veterans; they were 4.5% of the CNM student population. Program faculty and evaluators posit that the numbers of veterans in the CNM programs are underreported, because many veterans either served earlier in their lives or do not access tuition or support services, and do not find identifying as a veteran germane to their present experiences.

Students with disabilities

Hilary Phelps is the Disabilities Support Specialist at MxCC, and responsible for providing services and support to students. She has been at MxCC in this position since 2013, and understands well how to provide support to post-secondary students. Phelps has known Richard Lenoce in various capacities over the last ten years, and has taken an interest in what CNM might offer to students with different learning styles. She suggested that some students with disabilities might find CNM's programs attractive because of the hands-on nature of the work, and the emphasis on demonstrating mastery. As with veterans' programs, there may be significant underreporting of students with disabilities, perhaps because of the stigma attached to identification or their lack of knowledge about the kinds of services available. However, there are information documents and resources available online through which students can explore their support options, including a support services manual.

Phelps often helps students to prepare for the transition between high school and college. Others come to her after they are enrolled. Phelps indicates that there may be fewer academic adjustments for CNM students, as compared (for example) to an English 101 class, because assessment is less likely to be sitting for an exam or essay, as it is in English 101, and more likely to be hands-on.

She provides CNM faculty and staff with guidance on classroom dynamics and helps them to meet all students' needs.

Connections to the Community

During the spring of 2015, the CNM realized that there were periods of time during which the classroom and studio spaces were not being used. They have allowed adult education, non-profits and production companies to 'borrow' space in the studios. Students participate by assisting with or serving as production staff when needed on these productions..

The Corporate Media Center partnered with the Connecticut Department of Labor to create a Career Connect video series, posted to the LinkedIn site. LinkedIn, used by more than 300 million users, LinkedIn has become a go-to site for students and professionals looking to network, find employment and share employment-related tips and information.

Additionally, the Center for New Media hosted the Imagination Collaboration, a day of workshops taught by MxCC faculty and media professionals for high school students interested in new media programs. Blue Sky Studios, a computer animation film studio (*Ice Age, Rio*) based in Greenwich Connecticut made the talents of Bruce Anderson, an animator and film producer available to students; he spoke on the importance of story and animation. Patience Hettrick, News Director at WFSB, and a faculty member co-presented to students about news stories. Also integral to the day were Dan Nocera, Coordinator of the Corporate Media Center and Kelly Carrington and Rick Eriksen, faculty at CNM.

Leveraged resources

Partners (*including* Advisory Board members and their companies) and the college have leveraged considerable resources since the beginning days of the project.

Middlesex Community College has provided the Center for New Media with many college resources, including administrative time for planning, implementing and supporting the many grant activities, computer hardware and software purchases, marketing and recruiting resources, budgetary resources and additional space for the storage of its equipment and the sets required for instruction and production.

These leveraged resources include:

- MxCC purchased a character generator for the program.
- The Board of Regents provided architectural resources.
- ESPN consulted on the design of the revamped CNM space by working with architects and engineers.
- WFSB reviewed the facility and provides student support.
- American Radio Relay League (ARRL) reviewed engineering plans for the studio space.
- OutThink, VSI Media, Moving Pictures, ESPN, WFSB, WMRD/WLAS radio all participated in the Careers in Media course that exposes students to various media careers and helps them to refine their focus on specific interests and skills.
- Hired Education provided five (5) career coaches to speak with 100 students about job seeking strategies in media industries.
- Whelan Engineering, Young's Printing, Frontline Production, Branford Public Access TV and Wallingford TV provided internships to students.

- Media Connection, Inc. (Dennis Ducharme) made a significant donation of video equipment and supplies including cameras, lighting kits, tripods, cables and assorted accessories (value of approximately \$30,000) when he dissolved his business.
- The State Of Connecticut Department of Education Perkins Technology Grant awarded CNM over \$9,000 for four (4) new high definition video cameras to be used by the Center for New Media and to provide student tutoring support.
- The Workforce Alliance (the Workforce Investment Board for south central Connecticut) contributed \$2,500 to provide scholarships for TAACCCT and WIOA students to be used in Spring 2016.

Leveraging Job Center Relationships

In October 2013, CNM executed a contract with the Workforce Alliance (south central Connecticut's Workforce Investment Board) to recruit CNM participants through their activities at America's Job Centers. In her first year, Lisa Simmons met with all of the region's Job Centers, and trained 24 TAA, WIA, and Veteran's counselors at those locations; she also attended two veteran's events. The Center for New Media also hosted the Connecticut Department of Labor's (CTDOL) TAA Coordinator, Joseph Criscuolo.

According to the CNM Project Director Lenoce, the time-limited nature of TAA services (participants are expected to complete a certificate/program of study in 52 weeks after starting) is also a challenge. With few – four (4) identified TAA participants – Lenoce checked in with the state TAA coordinator who told him that the TAA legislation has reverted to cover workers displaced from the manufacturing sector *only*. This has caused a significant drop in TAA participants at community colleges in CT from 2013 to 2014 (from 151 down to 95).

Significant relationships were formed during the time period of the contractual relationship between the Center for New Media and the Workforce Alliance. Now that the contract has expired, Student Services, Admissions and Program Coordinators will continue to maintain those relationships for referrals of possible participants in various workforce programs and enroll TAACCCT grant (and other) populations.

SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability plan for the Center for New Media has been completed and submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor and will serve as a blueprint for maintaining and growing the Center for New Media and its programs. According to the report, the technology, facility and faculty are recognized for their excellence well beyond the state's confines. It is, as described in the report, "technologically progressive, creating an environment that mimics the real world media production workflow and doing so with a beautiful design that fosters collaboration, creativity and innovation."⁴

The college, the college's foundation or alternative funding will fund many of the changes initiated by the project; the following are some highlights from the report:

- Construction is complete on a new facility with collaborative workspaces and room for growth and partnerships.
- There is a plan for replacing equipment that meets industry standards.
- Faculty and staff continue to study job market trends and emerging technologies to develop curricula that meet the changing needs of students and employers.
- Summer programs have had some limited success; new funding and outreach efforts continue.
- Online courses will continue to be developed, and some existing courses will also be offered to students online.
- Faculty has pursued professional development and training and needs to have current professional development plans.
- Enrollment goals remain important to the program's success; college admissions personnel will need to be ambassadors for the program as well as the college.
- The Corporate Media Center has seen a steep increase in demand and is often at capacity, and is self-sustaining. The practicum is important to students; productions are important to state agencies and many local organizations and businesses.
- Collaborative relationships with secondary and post-secondary partners (through transfer articulation and dual enrollment programs) must be maintained and new relationships pursued.
- Relationships with Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and TAACCCT programs should be nurtured and grown.
- Ongoing evaluation is important in monitoring progress and demonstrating outcomes.

Added to this list are some suggestions offered by Dr. Alice Pritchard, Chief of Staff to Mark Ojakian, President of the Connecticut Board of Regents, in an interview with the evaluator and Rich Lenoce.

- Maintain a strong relationship with the Workforce Alliance (WIB covering south central Connecticut) to pursue possible training and education collaborations using WIOA funding.
- Promote the Center for New Media as an asset for the entire Connecticut public college system. The community college system needs the capacity to educate students and faculty in emerging media. The CNM, with its expertise, equipment and facility could also provide programming and technical assistance to other grant programs.

⁴ R. Lenoce, *New Media Studies Center Initiative Center for New Media: Sustainability Plan*, Middlesex Community College, Middletown, Connecticut, p. 2

- Maintain strong relationships with other state agencies to provide services through the Corporate Media Center; ensure that when media services are called for, state agencies come to CNM/CMC.
- Consider funding equipment through the system’s bond package, especially if MxCC is willing to give access to other institutions in the system.
- Consider providing CNM curriculum across campuses (and even nationally) through the use of a hybrid or fully online model.
- Nurture relationships with the high schools in the Connecticut Career Pathways system; as the model moves to programs of study, meet the needs for dual enrollment while promoting CNM’s many strengths as a post-secondary choice.

DISCUSSION

The Center for New Media project was an ambitious one, with a complete overhaul of physical space allowing for more collaborative learning spaces, new hardware which echoes the equipment and software found in many of the most sophisticated media organizations, revisions to existing curricula and creation of new curricula, and the recruitment, retention and achievement of students. The program met the important outcome numbers of total participants served, retention, curricula created and space redesigned.

As evaluators for the three years of the project, we have attended core committee meetings, surveyed students, reviewed program data and project reporting and spent countless hours in focus groups and interviewing those involved with the project – the Advisory Board, faculty, employers/internship advisors, and perhaps, most importantly students. We, therefore, would like to cite the following considerable strengths of the program.

Strengths

- ***Professional quality equipment and new identity as a Center***

The Center for New Media was designed in collaboration with media professionals and is outfitted with professional grade equipment and technology. The Center is now physically located in one space in Chapman Hall, and is, as cited previously in this report and in project reporting, a major asset to the program and the college. It has flexible workspaces that allow for student and faculty collaboration, meeting spaces for classes, and faculty offices in a distinctly designed area that promotes its identity as a unique program. The iterative planning allowed for thoughtful consideration of acquisitions and student needs, and for a growing program. Its identity as the Center for New Media is recognized both inside and outside the college.

- ***Dedicated faculty with professional experience***

Students in interviews, focus groups and surveys all cited the faculty as a major strength of the program. The Advisory Board and college support staff and leadership also attributed much of the Center for New Media's success to its faculty – its persistence and thoughtfulness in planning, its care in implementation. Most importantly, the faculty is a seasoned group of professionals who brought their experiences outside of the classroom into the academic setting. Adjunct faculty, working media professionals, were able to fill any gaps in instruction with their many years of experience in broadcast journalism, scriptwriting, audio and music production, social media and on-air/on-screen performance. Faculty members shared their successes and challenges along with the academic content they were entrusted to teach. Students also spoke in a meaningful way about their willingness to assist with learning challenges and their accessibility.

- ***Strong leadership and administrative support, collaboration and dedication to process***

The importance of the team approach to planning and the leadership of Rich Lenoce cannot be overstated. The Core Committee met regularly during all stages of the grant, to discuss changes to the physical plant, to the curriculum and to all aspects of bringing the components together into a true Center. Their consistent collaboration and the iterative process allowed them to quickly address any challenges that emerged and thoughtfully discuss any new ideas brought to the table. They used the talents of their Advisory Group well, in discussing curriculum and design decisions and acquisitions of hardware and software. They hired a

consultant, and used his findings to support their vision to its conclusion. They continue to meet so as to keep the Center committed to their objectives and the Center's students in the future.

In addition, support from the administration of Middlesex Community College was robust and persistent. The administration, including President Anna Wasescha, Dean Steven Minkler (Academic Affairs), Dean David Sykes (Administration and Finance), Kim Hogan (Director of Finance), and Annie Scott (Director of Information Technology), was essential to the project's success. Their abilities to navigate bureaucratic challenges that threatened to stall the project and provide financial support were critical; they embraced the project and saw it as their responsibility to make it happen.

- ***Flexible and rigorous curriculum options to meet workforce and the variety of student needs***

There are many types of students who enroll in the Center for New Media. Some are traditional-aged, and have gone to MxCC upon their graduation from high school; some have been enrolled previously in college but have not completed a degree or certificate program, and some have completed courses of study or degrees, often as media professionals, but have found that their skills did not meet the modern media workplace or have sought to hone their skills in their chosen field or in a new area of media. These three groups were often articulated in interviews and focus groups with students and faculty. Therefore, the courses and programs at the Center needed to be accessible, practical and rigorous. The faculty created online course options that met the needs of community college students who often juggle work, family and school responsibilities. They made learning supports available in-person and online. They offered multiple sections of their most popular courses so that students were able to enroll in the gatekeeper courses they needed. The physical changes to the Center (all classes, studios, labs in one location) also made it easier for faculty to make themselves available in their offices and in the studios where students congregated.

- ***Experiential learning***

Over the course of the grant, nearly 100 students have completed internships; some have enrolled in an internship at the Corporate Media Center; others have interned at a diverse group of companies. Students are guided in their choices, but it has been their responsibility to identify and secure an internship. This model has worked for many; many students have flourished at their internships, many have found employment at the sites at which they interned. Their experiences are broad, from small media companies creating websites to major network shows. This experience is invaluable to students and faculty. Students learn the professional and technical skills they need to get and stay employed, and make contacts that might lead them to employment in their chosen field. They also bring their experience back to the classroom to share with their peers and the faculty. The Center for New Media held its first Alumni Networking event this academic year; hopefully, this group will be of use to both students and alumni alike in offering important advice and connections to internships and jobs.

Recommendations

Structural

Sustainability is often difficult for programs as complex and technology-driven as the Center for New Media. The plans for equipment replacement and software updates have been well addressed and Middlesex Community College has been a true partner in the growth of the Center, and there is every expectation they will continue to do so. However, there have been growth and challenges in the Connecticut Community College system and resources to these schools are often constrained by a tightening state budget. Two of the challenges mentioned below – leadership challenges going forward and promotion of CNM as a unique program – are somewhat contingent on resources and creative ideas are to ensure the identity and leadership of the Center.

- ***Leadership challenges going forward***

The administrative structure has significantly changed since the conclusion of the grant. To reiterate, Rich Lenoce will again become Coordinator of Broadcast Cinema, stepping down as the Director of the CNM program, but retaining the position of Chair of the Center for New Media Committee. Jaime Flores has been appointed Academic Division Director of the School of Arts and Media, Humanities, and Social Sciences, an intermediary between the Dean of Students, Steven Minkler and the CNM program. The core committee will continue to meet to assume leadership and guidance for the CNM program. This is a Center that requires dedication and attention to both short and long-term change, whether it is to emerging media trends or changes to student demography or workforce data. We recommend that the chair of the core committee receives either a reduced teaching schedule or an additional stipend or pay to ensure the program stays on the track of excellence it has established.

- ***Continued promotion of the CNM as a unique program and an ongoing emphasis on partnerships with businesses and the educational system in Connecticut***

The Center for New Media is recognized as such for its programs, facility and the dedication, experience and knowledge of its faculty. It is a rare gem in the Connecticut College system and unique in its ability to reach and teach both traditional and nontraditional students with a combination of theory and hands-on learning. Also true is that the promotion of the Center as an academic program is now the responsibility of the college – more specifically, its marketing and admissions departments. Going forward, the college should follow data on the trends in student enrollment in the Center’s programs to ensure that the changes to the high school articulation strategy through the program of study model is being well-used to channel interested students into the program.

In a meeting with the Chief of Staff to the President of the Board of Regents, there was discussion of enhancing the profile of the Center as an asset of the community college system. This has already begun with a visit from the President and discussion about using the Center to extend academic options for students. These discussions should continue so that the CNM can continue to attract students and support for its programs. The Board of Regents should also review the policy of constraining student recruitment to a college’s specific geographic area. For example, the Journalism and Media Academy in Hartford might be an interesting articulation for the CNM; however, the school does not fall in the school’s service area. These geographic boundaries may constrain student choice and be inefficient in a state as small in Connecticut.

Additionally, many state departments (Connecticut State Departments of Transportation, Energy and Environmental Protection, and Labor), local and regional schools and governmental bodies and private companies are contracting with the Corporate Media Center (CMC). This can be enhanced, but the CMC is at capacity. Serious consideration should be given to staffing at the CMC, so that it can continue to do quality work for the state, but also continue to serve as a training opportunity for students and a profit center for the CNM.

Curricular/student

- ***Expanding experiential learning opportunities***

Nearly 100 students participated in the formal internship courses over the course of the grant. However, the responses to the exit survey and some student focus groups suggest that there is room for improvement to the internship process. While some students found it empowering to secure their own placements, others found the process difficult. The flexibility of the experiential learning component is a strength of its structure, yet there is room to augment the process by adding more student support for those who need it, especially in finding the right fit.

Additionally, the CNM should pursue some new and different partners – perhaps in the nonprofit sector, where many organizations are now employing interns and paid staff dedicated to communications and new media, or in the large financial companies in the state who have media departments. The interns and internship providers interviewed were extremely happy with their placements and students; many of these experiences led directly to jobs. The Advisory Board and the nascent Alumni Networking group are important resources that can be mobilized to expand learning opportunities.

- ***Enhancing business and soft skills for students***

In focus groups and interviews, students who were near to graduation or had graduated made mention of the lack of training around interviewing and other soft skills and courses related to their future employment in the “gig economy.” The modern workforce continues to evolve; an Intuit study posits that more than 40% of the American workforce will be considered free-lancers, independent contractors or temporary workers.⁵ This is perhaps nowhere more evident than workers in creative and technology fields; these professions have been ahead of the curve in responding to trends of job flexibility and retraining needs. Students graduating from the Center for New Media may start their own small businesses, work on multiple projects with different organizations or businesses, or combine a full-time position with free-lancing. They need some basic training in business principles as a complement to the content they receive in the media of their choosing.

- ***Stay with or ahead of the curve with technology and course offerings***

The Center for New Media is a well-designed facility with state of the art hardware and software not often found in academic settings and a giant step up from Middlesex Community College’s former programs. The expertise and knowledge behind the construction of the space and the acquisition of equipment and software resulted in a Center that the planning team, the college and the state can be proud of. The changes in curricula and added online learning options make learning more accessible than ever. But as the faculty and staff well know, technology changes quickly and timelines creep up quickly. The grant team has created a

⁵ Intuit, *Intuit 2020 Report: Twenty Trends That Will Shape The Next Decade*. Available online: http://http-download.intuit.com/http.intuit/CMO/intuit/futureofsmallbusiness/intuit_2020_report.pdf

cogent and economically feasible sustainability plan for equipment and materials, and the college and departments have an established timeline for the regular review of curricula. However, the core committee should stay vigilant about changes in the processes and content of new media forms. These changes will affect how students are taught and what they are taught, and should reflect not only good pedagogy, but also the needs of the workplace. Just as professionals are returning to the Center for New Media to hone skills gained ten years past, there will be workplace needs emerging that cannot be anticipated. In times of a constrained state education budget, the leadership of the Center for New Media must be both nimble and discerning.

CONCLUSION

Middlesex Community College (MxCC) has made good use of the funding it received from United States Department of Labor under its Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program. Its enhancement and promotion of New Media studies at the college was accomplished by incorporating five evidence-based design features. To reiterate, the college identified New Media Studies as an academic field; transformed the physical space to facilitate academic collaboration and synergy; offered new industry accepted certifications, certificates and degrees; developed and integrated technology-enabled learning; and, offered supports (academic and others) to increase persistence and accelerate graduation rates.

The four objectives associated with these strategies were also satisfied: retrofitting Chapman Hall and upgrading equipment, improving curriculum and instruction; promoting success by using technology-enabled learning, providing additional opportunities for experiential learning, mentoring and peer support; and managing, evaluating and sustaining the project.

The Center for New Media served 2755 total unique participants, far exceeding the target number of 295 participants. Of these, 72 (99% of the program target) completed a TAACCCT-funded program of study; 1968 were still retained in their program (643% of the target). The total number of participants completing credit hours was 2127, a number which was over 100% the target number. Ninety-seven (97) participants received credentials, exceeding the target of 89.

Faculty, the Advisory Board and college staff and administrators accomplished a great deal in the three short years of funding. They have attracted and graduated accomplished students; created a unique facility for the college, community and state; and prepared a sustainability plan for its continuance and improvement. While there remain some challenges to be addressed, the Center is an example of intelligent and collaborative planning and successful implementation. Its continued excellence should be of importance to all parties.