

Missouri Community College Association Portal Program Evaluation North Central Missouri College	
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## Overview of North Central Missouri Portal Program

North Central Missouri's UP Program is designed to accelerate students identified with low skills in Math (i.e. placed into Developmental courses) into their program of study and completion. The program is comprised of four parts: *Brush-Up*, *Team-Up*, *Skill-Up* and *tutoring*. The overall goal is to make a smoother transition for students from Developmental Education courses to degree-required courses, improve retention, and to increase their overall college success.

The Brush-Up component is a one-week intensive and accelerated workshop designed for students who have placed into the college's lower level math courses but with scores that are close to the next higher course. At the completion of an intensive workshop, the goal is to have students score into a higher level math course on a post test. Team-Up is a *co-requisite* (dual enrollment) model of delivery where students are enrolled simultaneously in the course they placed into as well as the next level math course.

All students participating in a Team-Up course are required to enroll in a comprehensive college success course called Skill-Up. This course includes training for students to learn appropriate academic strategies, including evaluating information, effective study skills, navigating Blackboard, SAIL, and business/soft skills such as time management, critical thinking, team work, leadership skills, self-motivation, and career assessment. Online tutoring is available for all grant students in developmental and college-level math courses that have participated in the UP Program. This allows students to have access to a tutor whenever they need it, not just during campus working hours.

Students are currently recruited for the UP Program through the efforts of the MoSTEMWINS recruiter and retention specialist. The program recruiter shares information about the program with attendees at the college's orientation/registration days, shares information and accepts referrals from faculty and advisors, and provides outreach to high school counselors. Once enrolled, students receive intensive support through registration, advisement, mentoring, encouragement, and frequent contact.

### Evaluation Methods

Multiple data sources were used for the portal evaluation. This included telephone Interviews with key staff, review of program documents accessed from the *SkillsCommons* website as well as review of an interim evaluation conducted by Cosgrove and Associates.

### Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

#### STRENGTHS

- Strong relationship developed between students and recruiter-retention specialist.
- Helps students overcome barriers and help them become successful and retain them at college
- Have been able to transform structures/systems at campus (complete restructuring of the developmental education department at NCMC).
- In touch with what employers are asking for.

#### WEAKNESSES

- Lack of follow-up and support for students once they move up to other higher level math courses beyond their program of study.
- Technology/IT challenges.

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- Opportunity to pursue developmental reform initiatives campus-wide.
- English Department just picked up the co-requisite model, and other departments are requiring students to take the college prep, career, and soft skills class.
- College has just hired a VP, who will provide a new set of eyes, give them an objective review, and free up the time of the Dean of Instruction.
- Potential to work with current academic advisors to broaden their work with students to include more than just academic advisement.
- Exploring on-line courses

#### THREATS

- Low enrollment (college-wide)
- Lack of recruiter-retention specialists,
- Mathematics pathways have changed, and there is a need to increase math staff or increase staff workloads.

### Discussion/Recommendations

This portal is a seasoned, and effective approach to working with students, and can clearly help students, particularly low-skills students, stay in college. The combination of a pre-academic intensive session combined with a college-ready “soft skills” course is on the front line of quality practices in supporting low-skills students. In addition, the fact that the college used the grant as an opportunity to re-vamp their developmental education shows a vision for more effective approaches to working with low-skills students. Of note is that the college & career ready course has been adapted and scaled to become a requirement in one AA degree and possibly in other degrees. Expanding the co-requisition model as well as the UP program to other departments is also an indication of forward thinking.

The following is a list of recommendations:

- Provide intensive advising throughout students' entire college career. This relationship can prove critical for college retention.
- Once the grant ends, have academic faculty teaching co-requisite classes (grant funded developmental staff do so now). However, it would involve training the faculty in the co-requisite model, or perhaps designing courses so that they are contextualized (e.g., combine developmental education with academic curriculum).
- Find ways to hire more recruiter-retention specialists, who can recruit from a range of high schools and adult programs. This may help with the low enrollment rates.
- Find ways to maintain contact with students once they leave the UP program. This might mean hiring more recruiter-retention specialists, or training academic counselors and expanding their roles beyond academics.

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