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**Due March 7, 2008**

*(All completed templates should be uploaded to the SharePoint site.)*

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**Project Title: Engaging Classroom Practices**

**Theme project is related to:**

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Career Advising        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adjunct Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Distance Learning      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advising         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Instruction |

**Project Description:**

At least two major sources of data indicating the need to improve classroom practices at JSRCC are the qualitative data collected from the QEP Open Forums and quantitative data collected from two administrations of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) in 2004 and 2005.

Based on this qualitative and quantitative data, we plan to use a cadre system to train facilitators who would become leaders within their disciplines for sharing methods to increase student engagement. We do not assume that there is only one way to engage students, since faculty in all of our disciplines are doing so to some degree. Specifically, we plan to do the following:

- Build a core of facilitators selected from faculty who take the Angelo and Cross teaching styles inventory (1993) or selected from faculty who score high on engagement on the CLASSE (2007), a classroom-based instrument for faculty and students related to CCSSE. The first 10 pioneers would help define procedures with the project director to determine how much can be done online, how much needs to be face-to-face, how to approach colleagues in one's discipline/course level/school, whether to visit each others' classrooms, and trying out specific methods of interactions. (Semester 1 would possibly be Spring Semester, 2010—See the appended project timeline.)
- Ten new faculty selected each semester through a competitive process would conduct surveys and focus groups of students who are receiving or have received A's in their courses. The results of these surveys and focus groups would help to create a local picture of students' best practices. Faculty, regardless of teaching styles or methods all have some A students; how do students get A's in a course? We know that most of our students work, but how do A students balance work and study, for instance? We are not trying to preach one way to teach but to find how teachers with various approaches engage students. (Active learning is not the only road to engagement.) These data, along with national data on what A students do, would be disseminated to students by each semester's participating faculty so that students in their courses could be trained to use similar methods. Some differences by school/discipline/course should be expected.
- The ten faculty trained by the facilitator each semester would work informally via PDOs and group sessions with faculty in the same discipline, or at least the same school (that is, a facilitator teaching respiratory therapy, for instance, would invite

other health science faculty to participate in PDOs and group discussions, whereas a facilitator who teaches history would invite adjunct and other social science faculty to PDOs and group sessions for social sciences; in a few cases, such as ENG 111 or 112 and high-enrollment MTH and ITE courses, a facilitator might serve just the faculty of one course). This is partly an economic measure and partly builds on the precedent of *The TEACHING Network* that operated here at JSRCC during the early to mid-1990s. In addition, informal sessions might inspire some faculty to apply to become facilitators.

- Focus group and survey data would be used to provide and prioritize a schedule of best practices for the project director to discuss with the discipline leaders during each semester of this five-year initiative and for these leaders (facilitators) to discuss with faculty participating informally within their disciplines. Pioneers would help determine what content might be turned into PDOs, set as online modules, or simply shared, such as by a newsletter online.
- The project director would do the following
  - train the cadre leaders and sustain contact and training for them over the semesters of the 5-year time line of this initiative to help them lead their cadres
  - train new cadre leaders, mostly from different disciplines, in each semester of the initiative until most disciplines are represented
  - compile good ideas to broadcast to all faculty, such as in periodic newsletters and an interactive website
  - engage discipline leaders in designing PDOs based on ideas for classroom teaching that emerge in their disciplines
  - design online courses for our faculty (and offer one or two per 8-week term)
  - conduct discussion boards within such online modules and outside of online modules
  - assist discipline leaders with designing and hosting on-going informal discussion with faculty in their school/discipline/course
  - spearhead development of the annual symposia on teaching methods mandated by item 2.1.2 of the 2008-2009 strategic plan
- There will be a standard agenda for the project director to train the discipline-based facilitators each semester; it will be systematic and not a “one-shot deal”; accountability will be built in; and, incentives will be recommended. If the college selects this project for the SACS QEP project, the planning group will need to determine the scope of the project (broad versus narrow and deep versus shallow), the curriculum, and incentives for faculty to participate, and other logistics. The numbers of faculty mentors should build by 10 each semester, preferably within disciplines, perhaps by course, but within units no larger than “Schools.”
  - Topics might include learning techniques, e.g. the Holistic Learning Wheel, Classroom Assessment Techniques (Angelo and Cross), and use of technology to enhance student learning.

## **How does this project support the mission and vision of the institution?**

Our primary mission is to provide an education which will help every student realize their academic, career and personal goals. Student success depends on a number of variables outside of our control. We can, however, create a community culture focused on providing the best instruction possible, hence creating an environment where students are much more likely to succeed. Some pedagogies are more engaging than others, creating discipline and course specific classroom environments where student success is likely. Identifying and disseminating such engaging pedagogies requires an ongoing conversation about effective practice. This project greatly expands the places and the media in the faculty's daily life where discussion of engaging pedagogies can occur.

## **How is this project tied to the strategic plan of the institution?**

The JSRCC Strategic Plan has identified key areas where we could improve. These include: increases in retention, course completion, and graduate rates. We also embraced the goal of developing effective approaches to improve performance in selected high risk/gatekeeper courses. A key aspect of meeting these ambitious goals was to train faculty to "develop and disseminate . . . new pedagogical techniques." This project creates an additional mechanism through which both existing and new pedagogical techniques can be developed and disseminated. Specifically applicable segments of the 2008-2009 Strategic Plan include these:

- 2.1 *Increase awareness and use of instructional techniques focused on active and collaborative learning, distance learning, diverse learning styles, and interdisciplinary approaches.*
  - 2.1.1 *Deliver training on new instructional techniques.*
  - 2.1.2 *Develop a peer-to-peer, cross-disciplinary, annual faculty symposium on effective application of collaborative learning and diverse learning style teaching techniques.*
- 2.2 *Design and implement cross-disciplinary projects which use results of comparative and normative data collected from peer institution instruments such as CCSSE and VCCS Core Competency Assessments to continuously improve the academic quality of instruction.*

## **What data (internal and/or external) supports the importance of implementing this project?**

The following findings give rise to this project.

1. A predominant theme of the fall 2007 QEP Open Forums was the need to improve instructional practices.
2. JSRCC's results on the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) reveal that we score lower than all participating community colleges and our comparison group (large colleges) **in the** following benchmarks compared to other community colleges: Active and Collaborative Learning; Student Effort, Academic Challenge, and Support for Learners. The college exceeded the benchmark in only one area: Faculty-Student Interaction. See the link below for CCSSE benchmark comparisons: JSRCC with the Large Colleges group

[http://inside.jsr.vccs.edu/inside\\_asr/Surveys/CCSSE/CCSSE%20CCFSSE%202005%20Results/Benchmark%20Comparison%20All%20graph%20nol.pdf](http://inside.jsr.vccs.edu/inside_asr/Surveys/CCSSE/CCSSE%20CCFSSE%202005%20Results/Benchmark%20Comparison%20All%20graph%20nol.pdf)

3. A total of 17 courses comprise High-Risk/High-Impact course list resulting from a study conducted annually by the Office of Institutional Research. Courses on this list meet the following criteria: 1) The success rate is less than 70% (ABC's) and 2) at least 205 students enrolled in the course during the academic year. (See [http://inside.jsr.vccs.edu/inside\\_asr/College\\_Data/HIGHIMP\\_RISK\\_CRSE\\_LIST.pdf](http://inside.jsr.vccs.edu/inside_asr/College_Data/HIGHIMP_RISK_CRSE_LIST.pdf))
4. The retention rates of various cohorts of JSRCC's students fall consistently below the VCCS average and the rates of the two largest colleges in the system. For example, JSRCC's fall 2005 to fall 2006 retention rate of first-time, full-time curricular students was 44.3% as compared to the VCCS average rate of 49.7%, NVCC's rate of 55.9%, and TCC's rate of 51.4%. The fall 2005 to fall 2006 retention rate for all JSRCC students (n=11,671) was 38.3% as compared to the VCCS average of 40.0%.
5. The graduation rates of JSRCC's students also fall consistently below the VCCS average. For example, the graduation rate for the fall 2003 cohort of JSRCC students was 12.3% as compared to the VCCS average of 16.0%. Only 3 community colleges had graduation rates lower than JSRCC's: NVCC, TNCC, and TCC.

Theoretical underpinnings of our proposal derive from Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, which the cadre system is designed to expand. In addition, Perry's model of how faculty change through their careers may also be relevant. The "Holistic Learning Wheel" from David Kolb (Harvard University) in his definitive text on Learning Styles titled *Experiential Learning* also provides a method and nomenclature for sorting out varied methods of student learning. Some relevant references include these:

- Vygotsky and the Zone of Proximal Development at [http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/articles/vygotsky\\_zpd/index.htm](http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/articles/vygotsky_zpd/index.htm)
- Piaget and developmental stages [http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/articles/vygotsky\\_zpd/index.htm](http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/articles/vygotsky_zpd/index.htm)
- William Perry's model of intellectual/ethical development at <http://www.cse.buffalo.edu/~rapaport/perry.positions.html>
- Others: Jerome Bruner, David Ausubel, and Robert Gagne at [http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pro\\_dev/teaching\\_online/how\\_we\\_learn/cognitive.html](http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pro_dev/teaching_online/how_we_learn/cognitive.html)

**SACS broadly defines student learning as changes in knowledge, skills, behaviors or values. What is the definition of student learning in the context of this project?**

What does "learning" mean in college? Certainly, the mature college learner shows:

- more sophisticated processing skills, such as the cognitive skills of evaluation and synthesis for thorough learning of a large volume of information or for thorough development of procedural skills
- more mature procedural skills,
  - such as knowing *how to memorize* large amounts of information, as well as *how to paraphrase* any idea; in addition, the mature learner decides *when* to memorize (such as all procedures, some definitions, all spelling, etc.) vs. *when* to paraphrase

- such as networking concepts (such as using mind maps to group and relate ideas, seeing comparisons and contrasts between similar words and similar ideas) rather than “the vocabulary fallacy” of treating all concepts as isolated data bits to be memorized one by one
- *valuing* of divergent sources of information and perspectives in order to assemble “truth” beyond one bit of information or even one viewpoint.
- methods of altering behavior to match the grading criteria and test formats used in the course, as well as adapting to individual professor’s teaching methods.

### **What are the specific learning outcomes?**

**Project** outcomes will include

1. Increased scores on CLASSE for faculty participants and their teachers.
2. Increased time on pedagogical tasks by faculty seeking to determine and then take advantage of best practices by best students related to their courses and disciplines.
3. Increased success by students in subsequent courses (treating each semester’s students of participating faculty as separate cohorts).
4. Increased transfer success and persistence by students of faculty participating in the “Engaging Classroom Practices” initiative.
5. Increased persistence, and hopefully graduation, rates by students of participating faculty.
6. The annual high-impact, high risk list will become reduced by at least half within 5 years from 17 to no more than 8.

Student **learning** outcomes will be based on the description of student learning issues in this proposal and in those targeted by the survey and focus group questions, some of which will derive from CCSSE questions ranging from time on task to revision practices and others. For example, the CLASSE has been used recently at the University of Nevada, Reno, as a pre- and post- measure combined with demographic data, final exam scores, and course grades. Gains at Reno can be attributed to engagement activities done in the participating classes. So a similar use of CLASSE with other course factors can show improvements here.

According to our definition of learning in college, *higher order thinking skills* should mature if students are engaged.

Students will also become more *engaged* when they are taking courses from participating faculty.

### **How will you know that the identified learning outcomes have been achieved (assessment)?**

Benchmark data will be collected prior to the beginning of the project from instructors looking at previous teaching techniques and student outcomes (according to instructors’ records) and People Soft records. In gathering the necessary benchmark data, the same measurement techniques for the same student-learning outcomes must be used when gathering data for the existing model of teaching and the redesigned model of instruction.

For example, follow-up surveys and perhaps focus groups will be used to determine which students used the methods found to be most effective for previous A students, CLASSE scores, how knowledge of their preferred learning style either helped or hindered students from learning, how students plan to use in future semesters information about studying and practices that they tried out during the current semester—and follow-up surveys and focus groups during each year of the project to determine if the participating students did what they planned or modified their study plans for good effect.

To measure sophistication in *higher order thinking skills*, specifically the VCCS/JSRCC general education critical thinking core competencies, we would like to administer the *California Test of Critical Thinking* as a pre- and post-measure to a sampling of students of participating faculty in early semesters and later semesters of the project.

To assess *engagement* by students of participating faculty, we wish to administer the CLASSE as a pre- and post- measure of engagement.

### **What best practices are going to be used as a part of this project and why?**

This project identifies a number of approaches to faculty development that have been successful in the past at this institution, placing them into a coherent whole, and adding elements that have been missing, in an effort to capture the variety of our faculty's teaching and learning styles. It is fundamentally interdisciplinary, making no assumptions that one academic area has the market cornered on student learning and engagement. It is interactive, using a "grass roots," bottom-up approach with a heavy emphasis on application to specific teaching challenges (following in the tradition of the summer institutes for hybrid teaching and learning communities). It is multi-modal, giving faculty a variety of ways to access and contribute to a shared collection of teaching and learning materials and strategies. For instance, periodic newsletters and a regularly maintained interactive website will build on modes of dissemination proven successful in earlier professional development at the college (for instance, in *The TEACHING Network* and the Reynolds Faculty Learning Community).

Building on reflective surveys, inventories, and ethnographies, as well as theories (from Vygotsky, Perry, Bruner, Ausubel, Gagne, and others) of how learners develop, instructors will become more conscious of the ways in which their teaching styles and behaviors are parallel or discordant with students' learning styles and behaviors. Instructors can understand how they relate to students and step back to see if what they are doing is promoting engaging and effective instruction. Both students and instructors will talk about what and how they are learning, write reflectively about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives.

Rather than a top-down, one-size-fits-all, "one-shot-deal" approach to faculty development, this proposal uses the cadre model, by identifying, training, and compensating mentors from within the academic community. Cadre leaders (facilitators) will be spread throughout the institution through specific academic schools, and mentoring will take place within each school. By leveraging the "scholarship of teaching" (cf. Ernest Boyer, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1992), this localized approach, perhaps beginning with high-risk, high-impact courses and disciplines, will sharpen faculty understanding of how 2-year college students develop as learners (and what happens when they don't). Participating faculty in the

Summer Institute would work with the project director for a year and other facilitators and faculty within their own discipline in order to report their findings at the annual symposium.

Every stage of the proposal, from the outset to completion, is built on a culture of assessment, as the faculty development curriculum and pedagogy adapt to findings about how students and faculty members *actually* learn. We begin with as few assumptions as possible, gathering and using baseline data to find out *what works* (starting with a question as simple but rich as, “How do students make A’s in your course?”).

**What resources (human, fiscal, academic, and technology) will be needed to complete this project?**

1. Project Director (reassigned time)
2. Faculty Mentors (reassigned time)
3. Summer Institute support a la the Learning Community and the Hybrid Course models
4. An annual symposium mandated by 2008-2009 item 2.1.2
5. Technology support for Black Board classes
6. 200 online test fees per student of the *California Test of Critical Thinking*
7. CLASSE (free to CCSSE member institutions)
8. Additional funds for participating adjunct faculty facilitators, and, if possible, informal participants within disciplines
9. Reserving Friday afternoons, as much as possible, for informal sessions on increasing student engagement within participating schools/disciplines/courses

**What could be the impact on student learning if this project is not implemented?**

1. Retention rate would remain stable or decrease
2. Students would be less well-prepared for the work force
3. Students would be less competitive in a global society

**Name(s) of faculty/staff involved in the preparation of this project template.**

- Writers
  - Eric Hibbison
  - Miles McCrimmon
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  - Jackie Bourque
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  - Harriet Morrison
- Other subcommittee members who provided input
  - Marti Leighty
  - Wayne Knight
  - Erica Holmes
  - Barbara Glenn
  - Barbara Comfort
  - Charlie Peterson

## **Appendix: Time Line for the Instructional Development Initiative titled *Engaging Classroom Practices***

Semester 0 = (organizational semester prior to implementation) Fall, 2009

1. Select project director.
2. Confirm budget for one year.
3. Project budget for years 2 through 5.
4. Recruit and select the first 10 facilitators from different disciplines, preferably faculty who teach high-impact, high-risk courses.

Semester 1 = possibly Spring Semester, 2010: The project director and first 10 facilitators would--

5. Design student survey (or use CLASSE).
6. Design focus group questions and procedures, conduct focus groups, and compile data.
7. Select learning style instrument (VARK?).
8. Select Fall, 2010, facilitators (preferably from disciplines that differ from each other and from the Spring, 2010, group).
9. Design summer institute.
10. Conduct follow-up survey and perhaps focus groups to determine to what extent students used or modified practices of A students in their course-taking methodologies.

Semester 2 = Summer, 2010:

11. Conduct summer institute of the Spring 2010 facilitators (10) with the selected Fall 2010 facilitators.
12. Spring 2010 facilitators design PDOs and informal sessions for faculty in their same disciplines (or target courses) to spread best teaching practices and those of A students within their discipline.

Semester 3 = Fall, 2010:

13. Administer student survey (or CLASSE) (20 faculty to at least 20 classes, as well as participating faculty within the facilitators' disciplines).
14. Administer learning style instrument.
15. Near the end of the semester, conduct follow-up survey and perhaps focus groups to determine to what extent students used or modified practices of A students in their course-taking methodologies.

Semester 4 = Spring, 2011:

16. Administer student survey (or CLASSE) (20 faculty to at least 20 classes).
17. Administer learning style instrument.
18. Near the end of the semester, conduct follow-up survey and perhaps focus groups to determine to what extent students used or modified practices of A students in their course-taking methodologies.

Semesters 2, 3, and 4 would repeat through academic 2013-2014 by which time final data on the project's impact could be gathered for the SACS report due after 5 years. That is, 10 new facilitators per semester (20 per year) work with the project director to be trained in a summer

institute and to follow-up with findings, PDO designs for faculty in their courses/disciplines/schools (depending on the number of faculty available). Discipline Facilitators should receive at least one credit of released time; faculty within disciplines participating in informal sessions and PDOs would be voluntary but hopefully rewarded in their annual evaluations. Compensation for adjunct, even in these informal sessions, should be given in a variety of incentive forms, including monetary.

After 5 years, at least one facilitator should be active in every curriculum offered at the college. There are courses under 76 different prefixes in the Fall, 2007, schedule, but some disciplines, such as ENG, MTH, NUR, and ITE might use more than one facilitator in order to work with faculty on one course or course cluster (such as developmental or such as sophomore courses).

Each summer, the facilitators from the previous academic year would work with those for the following academic year (or at least the next semester). Each discipline could be represented by the mid-point of the project, preferably starting with faculty who teach courses on the high-impact, high-risk list (though it varies annually). Then outreach should proceed in disciplines laden with adjunct faculty. Wouldn't it be marvelous if we could significantly shrink the high-impact, high-risk course list in 5 years?