

AtD students strive for success!

Dennise Espinosa could feel the tears welling up as she stared at the floor of her first-year adviser's office. She couldn't believe that only one more point would have meant a passing score on the state math exit exam for MAT 0024. A term's worth of classes, late-night homework and regular visits to the math lab all seemed like a waste of time at that point. **Miriam LaFortune-Cato**, a success adviser in the Achieving the Dream (AtD) program, shared in her student's disappointment. She took a deep breath and assured Dennise, "You can't give up now – look how well you've done in your other classes." The following week, Dennise registered to take the class again during the summer.



Miriam LaFortune-Cato (left) with AtD student Dennise Espinosa.

This level of persistence is what Achieving the Dream is instilling in students. Like other AtD students on a path to complete what they start, Dennise Espinosa's journey through Broward College has been nothing short of remarkable. A native of Ecuador, she, like many AtD students, placed in three developmental courses. At Miriam's urging, she joined a learning community that integrated English and developmental reading with art appreciation and an SLS course. Since then, Dennise has had great success in moving through her developmental and general education English and reading requirements and is now taking composition along with the prep math.

Despite her setback in math, she is confident about her future and credits her Learning Community experiences and constant help from her first-year adviser, in continuing her education. "I was in a Learning Community for two terms. I really liked the schedule and the LC made it easier for me to communicate with my friends on the work we needed to do. When I found out I failed the math exam, I felt like crying. My adviser told me not to give up, and here I am."

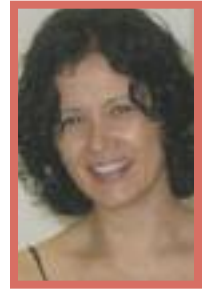
"It's not easy, so you have to work hard and not give up."

~ AtD student Dennise Espinosa

To some, AtD may sound like another installment in a litany of catch-phrase educational initiatives. But for the Broward College students working through these programs, AtD is providing real-life learning opportunities that have a genuine impact on their lives. Students from all three major campuses testify to the benefits they have experienced in AtD programs like Learning Communities and holistic advising. In fact, the most recent data collected by Broward's business intelligence team points to dramatic overall results for those students being supported by the

Achieving the Dream programs. (See back page.)

Vital to many of the AtD students is the role of the first-year adviser in their academic success. "I met with my adviser every time I had a question about my education," said **Luis Reyes**. His friend **Jaime Rey** seconded this review. "My adviser, **Giovana Guevara**, showed me how to use the college database to help me pick my classes and create my plan of study for upcoming terms."



Giovana Guevara



LC students Jaime Rey (left) and Luis Reyes.

Students Luis and Jaime both cited the collective energy often inherent in Learning Communities. "I made a lot of close friends and we really helped each other in all of our classes. When you're in a Learning Community you get more attention and you learn more than when you are in a regular class." His friend, Jaime Rey, agrees: "My experiences in being part of a Learning Community were amazing. I got to meet new friends and learned how to improve my reading and writing skills. I completed my work and now I feel I am more independent."

Another of the common threads of praise by students for the Broward Learning Communities has been the benefit of pairing of a general education class with developmental work. **Soledad Molina de Bonilla**, an adult student from Judson A. Samuels South Campus, added, "The fact that I have taken regular courses at the same time I have been taking EAP classes makes me feel confident with continuing to study for my career goal; now I know what to expect in the regular classes." Her persistence led her to a work-study position in the South Campus Behavioral Science Department. She also mentioned her adviser, **Andrea Apa**. "When I felt I had troubles in my speech class with my pronunciation, I asked my adviser for help," Soledad said..



Soledad Molina de Bonilla (left) with adviser Andrea Apa.

While the enthusiasm for collaboration generated by the Learning Community experience and the success of holistic advising are positive AtD outcomes, perhaps the greatest result has been the deepened commitment to the learning process.

Indeed the AtD programs at Broward College are helping students persist through the curriculum, articulate their goals and finish what they have begun – to **"Dream It, Achieve It!"**

Student Life Skills (SLS) highlights

Building core competencies



Monica Ramirez (left) and Pam Shaw work on SLS curriculum revisions

At the heart of the campaign for student success in 2008 was the work done by the Student Life Skills Task Force, led by Dr. **Monica Ramirez**. Important revisions to the SLS curriculum, campus-wide textbook adoptions and expanded faculty training for SLS courses were key accomplishments of the SLS team this past year.

SLS faculty training

One of the most exciting events supported by Achieving the Dream and the SLS Task Force was the SLS Instructor Training workshop.

In April a mix of administrators, advisers, faculty and staff gathered for a two-day event that provided in-depth training for SLS teachers. The crash course in SLS pedagogy was designed to equip SLS instructors with a variety of innovative teaching techniques for these important skill-building courses. Participants learned to assess and adapt successfully to different learning styles, engage students through a variety of active learning exercises and collaborate on a number of SLS learning assignments.



The SLS instructor training workshop provided in-depth student engagement tools.

Also featured in the training were workshops on Blackboard support and a session on designing integrated assignments for the SLS classroom.



Instructors check out student display at SLS training workshop.

SLS curriculum evolutions

Because the SLS course is mandatory for the growing number of new students who test into two or more college preparatory classes, the SLS task force revised and added valuable content to the SLS 1501 and SLS 1001 course outlines. A proven stepping stone for student success and retention, the SLS curriculum teaches underprepared students vital skills such as test-

taking, note-taking and listening, memory techniques, academic regulations, ideas for wellness, understanding for diversity, and career issues that face college students. Added to the course outline was a technology unit designed to improve student capabilities in using technology in their learning processes. "Computer literacy is an absolute essential for success in college," said senior academic adviser and SLS instructor for South Campus **Pam Shaw**. "This was a natural addition to the course."

SLS textbook adoptions

The task force also was successful in adopting new SLS textbooks for each campus. This process included a professional development workshop hosted by South Campus to promote Carol Carter's study skills textbook *The Keys to Success*, as well as a Central Campus-sponsored Houghton Mifflin event that showcased a variety of SLS textbooks. At the end of this process each campus selected a campus-wide SLS textbook.



North
Campus
SLS

Central
Campus
SLS



South
Campus
SLS

SLS future

A recent administrative decision to expand the college's SLS requirement means more Broward College students will be taking these valuable courses in the near future. Dr. Ramirez is enthusiastic about upcoming SLS initiatives, including more faculty training and implementing a one-on-one coaching/mentoring program for SLS students. "SLS is all about empowering our students to become successful learners. This means teaching them



Central Campus AtD staff with student Herschel Diaz at "Welcome Back" event.



LC Cohort-style E-learning

More than 150 College Prep and EAP students in the Achieving the Dream (AtD) program are discovering e-learning “cohort style.” Launched as a pilot program in fall 2007, AtD learning community cohorts continue to expand learning beyond the classroom through web-enhanced learning activities.

Introducing their students to integrated learning, College Prep and EAP faculty are linking with GenEd faculty to strengthen student engagement and to promote student success. **Charlene Koonin**, a Learning Community coordinator, has recruited faculty to link such classes as Wellness, Strategies for Success, Psychology, Introduction to Business, and Computer/Internet Literacy with Prep English, Reading, Math and EAP classes in the various AtD learning communities.



Charlene Koonin

Whether viewing class content in an electronic classroom or posting reflective responses, LC students click “login” to their course on Blackboard to find that ideas from one class are reinforced in another. With the help of instructional technology designers in uploading syllabi and integrated assignments unique to each LC, faculty and students forge virtual learning connections and discover more sustained student support in the process.

AtD success specialists, embedded in the Learning Communities, add their online presence and interaction with cohort faculty and students. **Elvira Perez, Giovana Guevara, Sondra Weiss Goldman, Juwel Watson, Veronn Benjamin, Andrea Apa** and **Miriam LaFortune-Cato** are dedicated support members of an AtD learning community.

As advocates for student success, the specialists post their comments, such as a reminder to encourage students to ask questions virtually to clarify assignments.



North Campus Learning Community students at the “Bodies” exhibit in Fort Lauderdale.



Central Campus LC students work together to construct a house out of chocolate.

Thus, the web-enhanced LC helps to promote student responsibility for learning.

By posting integrated assignments at the course site, LC faculty reinforces critical thinking beyond the parameters of a single course. EAP cohort students of **Maria Hincapie, Mary Ann Hillerbrand** and **Pat Leslie** integrated a field trip to a local chocolate factory after reading the award-winning novel **Like Water for Chocolate**. Students posted reflections on the novel and the film adaptation, as well as pictures of their “hands on” chocolate experience. Posting their pictures on Blackboard, students were able to enjoy each other’s digital moments and read one another’s discussion board comments.



Collaborative learning takes a literal hands-on turn.

Faculty, students and success specialists agree that learning community e-learning expands student success, engagement, and connections beyond the traditional classroom.



“The college’s Learning Community program provides our entering students with needed support. With LC mentoring from Kingsborough Community College, we hope to expand Learning Communities, including courses that relate to students’ chosen careers.”

*~ Dr. Judith Scherer
Academic Affairs
Vice President*

In our next issue, look for an interview with Dr. Scherer on upcoming learning-centered conversations.

President Armstrong welcomes conference attendees

Broward College played an integral role in the 2008 Connections Conference in Fort Lauderdale in May. The conference, sponsored by the national Achieving the Dream initiative, was an energetic three-day learning event that provided participants with student success practices at AtD community colleges across the state of Florida.

A conference thread was how these colleges are using data to drive institutional changes promoting student success. Policy-makers, administrators and faculty from Florida's four AtD community colleges – Broward, Hillsborough, Tallahassee and Valencia – presented what they are doing to benefit developmental education students within their institutions.



The conference kicked off at the Gallery One hotel with a dinner featuring speeches from community college leaders, including welcome remarks from **President David Armstrong** and former president and current Chancellor of the State of Florida Division of Community Colleges **Willis Holcombe**. Both President Armstrong and Chancellor Holcombe emphasized how critical remediation is to the community college mission.

David Armstrong

Participants attending the opening plenary session heard nationally recognized author and consultant Mark David Milliron. In *Raising our Sights: The Challenge of Catalyzing Change*, Milliron describes “four pillar” priorities that institutions must embrace to effect change successfully:

- Catalyze conversation
- Foster leadership
- Inspire innovation
- Champion insight

Dr. Milliron highlighted emerging trends in higher education relevant to institutional effectiveness today, such as the concept of “learning swirls,” where students swirl in and out of educational models, online learning and blended infrastructures. Colleges are beginning to use “deep analytics” to serve millennial student populations.

Lt. Gov. Jeff Kottcamp provided a state policy-level perspective on the work of community colleges, addressing issues including funding and future state priorities for higher education.



South Campus success specialists Veronn Benjamin (left), Andrea Apa and faculty with LC student and a future Broward College standout.

In the session *From Data to Meaningful Information: A Strategy to Improve the Use of Assessment Data in Institutional Decision Making*, Kurt Ewen and Roberta Brown explained Valencia's AtD process and shared assessment data that drives institutional decision-making.

“Best practices such as Learning Communities and holistic advising are just two strategies we are promoting to encourage student success. We are now tracking and analyzing positive outcomes that encourage our expanding student success initiatives.”

~ David Armstrong

At the Presidents' Panel, presidents and vice presidents from the four Florida AtD colleges offered insights on how their institutions had changed since the AtD initiative began and what they had learned from these experiences.

Broward College hosted *Data Models for a Culture of Evidence*. At this session the college's **Carole Camarcho**, **Matt Seeman** and **Patricia Anderson** presented various assessment measures Broward College uses to support student success initiatives. They featured comparative data between students in baseline cohorts and in AtD success initiatives, demonstrating the effectiveness of these efforts.

Jose Macia collaborated with representatives from other AtD institutions for *Incorporating Success Strategies into the Institutional Culture*. Use of dashboards by advisers and faculty is now an effective tool to track student success. Data show that our learning community model successfully pairs a general education class along with a developmental and SLS class.



South Campus student **Soledad Bonilla** participated in a student panel. About her LC experience she said: “I had the opportunity to take two linked courses – General Psychology and Writing in fall 2007 and Computer Literacy and Communication Speech in winter 2008. Through the EAP program, I've improved my English skills and feel confident about preparing for a career. My success adviser, **Andrea Apa**, suggested I get involved in the activities of the Multicultural Café. Because of all these experiences, I am a work-study student in the Social and Behavioral Science Department; this opportunity complements my use of English.”



Soledad Bonilla

“Many of us left the conference more informed and energized to do what is necessary to help our students finish what they have started.”

~ Donna Samet



Living the dream collegewide



Broward College is Achieving the Dream

Fall 2007 Learning Community Assessment Report Highlights

In fall 2007, Broward College implemented 17 Learning Communities to increase student success. These learning communities involved 398 students and 47 faculty members. Learning Community coordinators recruited LC faculty and provided support, and the eight collegewide student success specialists provided holistic advisement for the AtD and EAP LC models. The following table highlights some the remarkable accomplishments of the learning communities across the college.



Full-time Achieving the Dream integrated Learning Communities (seven cohorts)

Characteristics

- ✓ Students in these LCs were holistically advised.
- ✓ Five College Prep, two English for Academic Purposes
- ✓ All of the College Prep LCs and one of the EAP included either a three-credit or one-credit SLS class.
- ✓ All of the College Prep LCs and the EAP included at least one Gen Ed class.

Results

- ✓ Fall '07 to spring '08 retention rates ranged between 75 and 100 percent with a mean of **91 percent**, while baseline rates of non-learning community classes ranged from 79-91 percent with a mean of **82 percent**.
- ✓ Five of the seven had retention rates over 95 percent (baseline 79 percent).
- ✓ Majority of classes had successful completion rates at or above baseline rates.
- ✓ College Prep average term GPA 2.3, compared to 1.9 baseline for non-LC classes.
- ✓ EAP average term GPA 3.0 as compared to 2.7 baseline for non-LCs.
- ✓ Two LCs had **100 percent** retention: First Year Experience and EAP Communication Garden. The Communication Garden LC also had **100 percent** successful completion in **all** four classes.

Part-time co-registered linked-class Learning Communities (seven cohorts)

Characteristics

- ✓ Students in these LCs were holistically advised.
- ✓ Four College Prep, two English for Academic Purposes, one college level

Results

- ✓ Fall '07 to spring '08 retention rates ranged between 71-100 percent with a mean of 88 percent while baseline rates from non-linked classes were 63-74 percent with a mean of 70 percent.
- ✓ The majority of classes had successful completion rates at or above baseline rates.
- ✓ Two linked classes included EAP0420C EAP Reading class. Results when this class was linked with a Gen Ed PSY2012 General Psychology class were unfavorable (83 percent retention, 75 percent completion of EAP0420C, 33 percent completion of PSY2012) but results when this class was linked with SLS1501 were excellent (100 percent retention, 100 percent completion of EAP0420C, 90 percent completion of SLS1501).

Part-time co-registered FTIC Honors Learning Community (HELIX)

Characteristics

- ✓ Students in these LCs were not holistically advised.
- ✓ Two Gen Ed classes were linked: SOC1600 Public Speaking and SLS1261 Leadership.

Results

- ✓ Fall '07 to spring '08 retention rate was over 95 percent, compared to 72 percent baseline.
- ✓ Both SPC1600 and SLS1261 had successful completion rates of 100 percent as compared to 74 percent and 95 percent respectively.

Overall, the initial performance of Broward College Learning Communities in fall 2008 was highly successful. Faculty and administrators are hopeful that these trends will continue and be demonstrated in a similar assessment report for the spring 2008 term.

For more information regarding the report please contact **Matthew Seeman** at gseeman@broward.edu or **Pat Anderson** of the Broward College/IT/EBI/Research and Analytics at panders1@broward.edu.