Strategies for Transformative Change

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Transformative Change Initiative Overview
The Transformative Change Initiative (TCI) is dedicated to assisting community colleges to scale-up innovations that improve student outcomes and program, organization, and system performance.

Transformative Change Definition
TCI defines transformative change as follows: Raising the individual, organizational, and system performance of community colleges to unprecedented levels without sacrificing their historic commitment to access and equity.

Major Themes
H2P is advancing the notion that a core curriculum forms the basis for standardizing entry-level expectations and foundational knowledge and skills for health occupations. All H2P colleges have agreed to develop and implement a core curriculum (or enhance an existing model) and have leeway in selecting components based on local employer needs and institutional capacity. El Centro College (ECC) has a robust core curriculum model instituted in 1998 to better prepare health care students for the workplace. ECC serves as the technical assistance provider to the H2P Consortium. Informational background and selected advice based on the ECC experience follows.

Employer and industry input is critical to ensure the rigor and relevance of the most current expectations in the workplace. H2P colleges crosswalk their draft competencies with the Department of Labor’s Allied Health Competency Model.2

Health Care Core Curriculum Definition
A core curriculum is “a set of interdisciplinary courses, clinical training, and other educational exposures designed to provide [health career students] . . . with the common knowledge, skills, and values necessary to perform effectively in the evolving health care workplace.”1


Selected Outcomes. ECC has identified several processes and outcomes of its core curriculum model.

1. The curriculum contains well-thought-out concepts that are reviewed and realigned regularly. Concepts include the five major competencies published by the Institute of Medicine: provide patient-centered care, work in interdisciplinary teams, employ evidence-based practices, apply quality improvement, and utilize informatics.

2. Various accrediting agencies, including the Board of Nursing, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and other agencies, have grown to see the value of this interdisciplinary approach in the 15 years the core has been implemented at ECC.

3. Students applying to programs of study meet and interact in carefully designed, interactive instructional scenarios within core courses. They typically enroll in core courses before acceptance into a program of study, and in doing so, they broaden their knowledge of occupations in healthcare and are able to make a more informed career decision while learning to better communicate across disciplines.

4. Enrollment remains high in core courses; Fall 2013 enrollment was 886. All six courses are not required of all programs of study; the range is from one to six. Program faculty and administrators determine which courses best fit their program needs.

5. The core has provided ECC with educational efficiencies in utilizing faculty, especially important when facing faculty shortages in some programs.

6. Faculty enjoy teaching in interdisciplinary groups and sharing courses. They recognize many health care educators are well prepared to teach skills common to several occupations that were previously taught independently within discrete programs of study.

For more information about ECC’s core curriculum, please contact Sondra Flemming, Vice President of Academic Affairs, sflemming@dccc.edu.

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Ashland Community & Technical College Model

Two colleges in Kentucky are part of the H2P Consortium: Ashland Community & Technical College (ACTC) and Jefferson Community & Technical College. These two colleges held summits within the 16 colleges that are a part of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System to promote the concept of a core curriculum. System-wide adoption occurred in March 2013; any core course can be offered at any college. ACTC organized essential health care competencies into seven courses. The health care industry is the number one employer in the ACTC region, and successful completion of core courses helps prepare students for entry-level employment by offering two recognized credentials that indicate the attainment of locally and industry-recognized skills. Students completing four specific core courses earn a basic certificate that totals 9-11 credits, and students completing three additional core courses earn an intermediate certificate comprised of 16-18 credits. Though core courses have only been offered for two semesters at ACTC, faculty in various health occupations programs report that students completing a core course are better prepared for the rigor and expectations once they enter specific programs of study. Moreover, faculty report that because of participating in core courses, students have a broader view of the health care field and thus, a clearer picture of their potential fit in various occupations compared to students who have not taken core courses. Similarly, students who took core courses report an increased understanding of the health care field and feel more prepared in subsequent coursework.

ACTC Recommendations for Implementing a Core Curriculum

- Any college interested in implementing a core curriculum should consistently communicate with community and employer partners through multiple avenues to develop, maintain, and improve the core curriculum.
- The competencies included in a health care core curriculum should reflect locally valued skills and credentials in addition to nationally recognized competencies.
- There should be visionary and supportive leadership at the college and program levels to accomplish the adoption of a competency-based core curriculum.
- Faculty buy-in is critical. In a short amount of time, faculty at ACTC have seen the educational benefits of the core to students in the classroom. Additionally, they have recognized benefits to themselves including the efficiencies of non-duplication and having students who are better prepared in advanced coursework.