

**Calhoun Community College
PO Box 2216
Decatur, AL 35609**

End of Year Evaluation Report

**A Strengthening Institutions Program Grant
(Title III of The Higher Education Act 84.031A)**

Award Number: PO31AO40086

Education Program Contact: Deborah Newkirk

2004-2005

External Evaluator:

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I. Introduction

A. External Evaluation

This report is the External Evaluation report for Year 1 of the Title III Part A Strengthening Institutions grant awarded to Calhoun Community College with a start date of October 1, 2004. The external evaluation was conducted by Dr. Lora P. Conrad, Conrad Consulting, of Keosauqua, IA. The first year evaluation was conducted through two on-campus visits. The first evaluation visit was conducted early in the grant year and was designed to provide guidance for evaluation planning and to assist in establishing management processes. The second visit was conducted on November 16 and 17, 2005. Additional evaluations are planned at the end of the third and fifth years of the grant.

The Evaluator has open access to all project data and files and is tasked with preparing a report for delivery to the Title III Coordinator after each visit. This report is to offer both formative and summative evaluative data, to enable the Coordinator to correct any problem areas, and to obtain an external, objective perspective on the project's accomplishments. This position is a contract for services and will not be added to the College structure. The contract is for \$7,000 for year 1 which required two on-site visits and for \$5,000 for years three and five which will each require one on site visit to Calhoun Community College. The contract amount includes both consulting fees and travel allowance. No separate travel reimbursement will be filed. The contract covers the visit(s), a follow-up report, and accessibility for consulting via email or phone as needed during the year, particularly for formative evaluation issues.

The College contracted with Lora P. Conrad of Conrad Consulting as the External Evaluator using standard college practices for contracting for services. The basis for the selection of Conrad Consulting by the Title III Coordinator was previous experience as a Title III External Evaluator, a background in information systems and knowledge of Alabama Community Colleges, including Calhoun Community College. She is not a college employee.

As specified in the proposal, during each on-site visit the External Evaluator will review all aspects of the project, interview all key personnel, and meet with the internal monitoring team. Each end-of-year report will be primarily summative with formative advice for the following year. The final project report will be primarily summative and will reflect careful, objective assessment of the success of the project and its impact on the College. Each report will be submitted by the External Evaluator to the Title III Coordinator. The Coordinator will forward this unedited report, with a written response, directly to the President for her review. Another copy will be forwarded to the US Department of Education Program Officer. A final copy will be kept in the Project Working File for review by any interested party. Additional copies may be distributed internally or via the web.

B. External Evaluation Data Gathering Techniques

At the end of year visit, the External Evaluator interviewed the Title III Coordinator, key project personnel, college administrators, and staff involved in the various program activities. She also examined reports and related materials provided before and during the site visit, examined facilities and related resources strategic to Title III and reviewed the project management procedures and processes employed by the College. The Title III Coordinator provided the External Evaluator with a comprehensive end of year report, including accomplishments, budgetary data, and sample publications and project recommendations. Personnel interviewed at the end of year one on-site visit included the following personnel, individually and/or in small group sessions:

Title III Project Personnel

- Dena Stephenson Title III Coordinator and Dean for Planning and Research

- Randy Cox Academic Component Director
- Wayne Tosh Services Component Director, Director of Admissions and College Registrar
- Bill Stephens Instructional Technology Specialist
- Tammy Kerby Title III Administrative Assistant

Information Technology Personnel

- Laquita Nelson Director of Information Technologies
- Eddie Gooch Virtual Services Specialist

Redesign Team Faculty

- Michael Kinney HIS 121 – Team Leader, HIS 122
- Gene Barrett, HIS 121, HIS 122 – Team Leader
- Raymond Nabors HIS 121, HIS 122 - Adjunct
- Jimmy Duke BIO 103 - Team Leader
- Steve Calatrello ENG 101 - Team Leader
- Ernest Williams MTH 100 - Team Leader
- Kathryn Vaughn ART 100 - Team Leader
- Steven Threlkeld BIO 104 – Team Leader
- John Willis BIO 104 - Adjunct
- Mary Ellen Garrett ENG 102 - Team Leader
- Suzanne Joiner MTH 110 - Team Leader

- Kenny Anderson PSY 200 - Team Leader

Internal Evaluation Team

- Penelope Blankenship
- Kermit Carter
- Richard Ferrara (unable to attend)
- Theresa Hamilton
- Gerald Jackson
- Dena Stephenson

Administrators and Staff (Individual or small group meetings)

- Marilyn Beck President
- Theresa Hamilton Vice President of Instruction/Student Services
- Jack Burrow Dean for Business and Finance
- Kermit Carter Dean for Student Affairs
- Debi Garrison Grants Administration
- Belinda Lane Administrative Assistant for Grants Administration
- Belinda Bowen Accounts Clerk II

II. Scope of the Project

A. Overview

This report covers progress through the first year of a five-year Institutional Aid grant,

through September 30, 2005. Calhoun's Title III Grant is comprised of one activity with two components--an Academic Component focusing on course redesign, and a Student Services Component focusing on virtual student services. Implementation of the Title III project is expected to produce increased student satisfaction reported on Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey results, increased student success reported in grade distributions, and increased retention to graduation.

B. Program Changes

No changes in program design were made in Year 1

III. Evaluation of Activity 1: (Redesigned Academic Courses and Virtual College Services)

A. Major Problem Addressed/Background

Achieving the major objectives of the Title III activity will help the College to overcome two of the most significant problems Calhoun Community College faces. Both problems occur in College Academic Programs:

Problem 1: Inconsistent, inflexible academic courses result in low student success rates.

Problem 2: Inaccessible, inadequate student services result in student dissatisfaction and low retention to graduation

B. Changes to be Accomplished

The project has one activity with an Academic Component and a Services Component. In the Academic Component, the College will embark upon a complete redesign of the largest enrollment courses and majors at Calhoun. Course redesign, combined with faculty development, will enable the College to deliver learner oriented courses, with consistent assessments, improved instructional techniques that meet diverse learning needs, and both campus-based and distance learning options so students can choose their time and place to learn.

The Services component will develop a full range of student and academic support services for delivery through the web. The result will be a Virtual College environment individualized for each student's courses and service needs. The results of accomplishing both components of the activity will be increased student satisfaction, increased student success, and increased student retention to graduation.

C. Baseline Data and Evaluator's Observations

The Title III Team decided, after careful research, to use the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) as a major database in defining baselines in all areas concerning student satisfaction, assessing areas needing improvement, and assessing impact of changes made. Implementation of the inventory in 2003, prior to preparing the Title III application, defined baseline data against which to assess future changes. In addition, college data base records of course grades and retention data became the baseline for course improvement and for retention. In the application, initial baseline data or its source were defined for each objective.

The Noel-Levitz SSI is an excellent resource, when fully utilized, for identifying areas of the College needing improvement and for assessing the impact of change on the attitude and satisfaction of students. If taken seriously, it can guide the College to strengthen programs and services. College personnel are to be commended for their use of the inventory in assessing and guiding their work.

The most difficult area to assess currently is student satisfaction with the new information services directly. This will require tools in the on-line software to obtain feedback regarding unsuccessful actions on-line and to provide an immediate method of feedback after each student-system interaction such as registration.

D. Objectives and Accomplishments To-Date

Year 1 Outcomes:

During Year 1, the following three objectives were addressed:

Component 1:

Objective 1.1. Increase the knowledge of faculty regarding course redesign, student assessment, and use of technology by September 30, 2005.

Results.

Internal course redesign materials were provided for eight full-time and four adjunct faculty.

Dr. Carolyn Jarmon from the Center for Academic Transformation conducted an overview of the benefits of course redesign for 81 full-time (64%) and 117 adjunct (39%) faculty on August 15, 2005. On August 16, 2005, Dr. Jarmon conducted an intensive workshop on applying the principles of course redesign for a group of 38 full-time and adjunct faculty. Dr. Rose Mince, from the Community College of Baltimore, also provided a focused workshop on student assessment for 11 faculty and administrators on September 23. Both workshops are available through streaming video on the College's personnel website.

This objective has been exceeded.

Objective 1.2. Increase student success rate by redesigning four large enrollment general education core courses (Group I Courses) in campus-based and distance learning modes by September 30, 2005.

Results.

Start up of the academic component was slower than originally planned. This was due to several factors. One was that the beginning of the grant in mid-term meant that fall released time

could not be implemented, shifting all outcomes about one term behind. Another problem was that summer faculty assignments had not been carefully planned to see that faculty needing to pilot courses would be allowed to work during the summer under faculty summer employment policies. Pilot teaching is to occur in the spring in future years.

After careful consideration, the courses to be redesigned first were changed to ENG 101, MTH 100, HIS 121, and BIO 103. All of these are high enrollment courses in which success is critical for associate degree-seeking students. The Evaluator concurs in the selection of courses for redesign.

Component 2:

Objective 2.1. Increase student services available on the web and increase student satisfaction with financial aid and registration by 10% by September 30, 2005.

Results.

The Financial Aid feature was added to the system in April 2005, three months ahead of schedule.

WebAdvisor went "live" on-line on June 15, 2005, on schedule. Two groups of students in redesigned courses were used to test SPACE (student e-mail and portal system); eight faculty tested online grade submission, and ten students tested the First Class system. As of the end of September, the College's WebAdvisor system provides online student services in registration, academic and financial profiles, and financial aid. 1,924 full-time students also had e-mail accounts in First Class.

These features have helped to increase student satisfaction on Noel-Levitz by 27% in registration and 13% in financial aid from the 2003 baseline year. Successful pilots for these systems occurred in July 2005. The WebAdvisor system can accommodate 300 simultaneous users (more than a 50% increase over the baseline of 64) with zero system halts.

This objective has been exceeded.

E. Observations/Recommendations

Component 1.

The Evaluator was very impressed with the quality of the new HIS 121 course produced by the Redesign Team and the new Faculty Study Guide. The Evaluator also commends the team for their enthusiasm for the new course. To use this new course effectively, history faculty at both Decatur and Huntsville will require more access to technology for instruction. This need must be addressed either through rescheduling of existing technology resources or through purchase of additional technology to support the new course. The Team Chair, the Academic Component Coordinator, and the IT Director should address this issue. Assistance from the Title III Coordinator and/or the Vice President may be needed.

The Evaluator commends the faculty who are redesigning courses in all areas. The faculty exhibited a great deal of enthusiasm and interest in their projects. They had obviously been researching ways to improve course design and improve the quality of instruction in their courses. The Evaluator commends the development of standardized syllabi and a test data bank for courses such as MTH 100 and BIO 103.

The Evaluator noted that faculty in several areas, including history, math, and biology will need testing center support both in Decatur and Huntsville so that students may take proctored exams on-line. The Evaluator commends this effort on the part of faculty to see that students have flexibility in time and place for taking examinations. It is a different approach to testing and will require College support long term.

The Evaluator notes that all departments must take care to see that adjunct faculty members are properly prepared for using redesigned courses. Adjunct faculty must also have the resources for support that are provided to day faculty at Decatur. The College should pay appropriate stipends to adjunct faculty to attend workshops on the use of technology and the new

redesigned courses. Title III funds could be used to support this initially, if the dollars available permits.

In the broader sense, the College must have a commitment to having the same services available to its day and night students and faculty at either campus. This is, of course, an on-going challenge but should be the goal. This must be addressed in both components and by not only Title III personnel but college administrators as well.

One issue the College is analyzing is the advantages and disadvantages of customized texts. Several courses have developed such texts which mean that students only purchase material they will use. This can reduce initial costs for the book. It can also assure that the book and the syllabus are consistent and thus serve as a reinforcement to new course designs. On the other hand, when the book is no longer needed, it can not usually be sold on the open market but only at Calhoun. The cost effectiveness of this approach for the student and the bookstore must be considered. Among the issues affecting cost will be whether all sections of a course use the same book, how long a customized text must be used after adoption before it is changed, and what the cost to the student is, comparing initial purchase price and resale value.

Assessing outcomes for the redesigned courses is a challenge. The most direct comparison will be to compare the outcomes from all sections of a course taught in a comparable term before the course was redesigned. However, in reality, some courses are being dropped and new ones added at state direction. In some cases, no current faculty members have previously taught a course. These and other factors can make comparison difficult. The Evaluator suggests, that in some cases, there will be no valid comparison. For example, in comparing outcomes from World History with American History outcomes earlier, the students' prior knowledge of American History from high school courses might be better than their prior knowledge of World History. This could significantly affect student performance. Faculty may need to look for some external standards of assessing effective outcomes in their discipline. In others, where courses

have been previously taught, the comparison should best be made comparing the outcomes of the same faculty members teaching the course before and after redesign, preferably during the same term (different years). Some subjective assessment should also be conducted as to how both faculty and students feel about the courses. These assessments will take considerable care to research and design so that the results can help improve the courses.

The College President and Vice President may need to assure that faculty released time can be provided and that summers can be used for course redesign and/or piloting as is needed to keep the project on schedule. In the high technology area of Huntsville with several universities that offer graduate degrees in many areas, there should not be a shortage of adjunct faculty. If there is, then the College should readdress both recruitment and those factors that affect the interest of adjunct faculty including compensation, appropriate support, opportunity for preparation, respect for their expertise, and expectations/rewards for quality work.

Component 2.

The new IT hardware purchased with the help of Title III is much faster than the old hardware and has supported the new software implementation effectively. While the software selection was carefully made and is working well, there is very little monitoring or feedback software in the system. A Log Analyzer is available for First Class which can provide some improved monitoring. The Evaluator strongly recommends that this be purchased and implemented as soon as possible.

The Evaluator commends both Student Services and IT on the on-line registration of all students for fall 2005. This has dramatically reduced the depressing, long registration lines of prior years.

However, for new students, student user names and passwords are not available until a batch run is made at the end of each week. This is not satisfactory for a web-based system. The

IT department is requested to address this issue. No batch process should limit student access and use of the system once the student's registration has been accepted. This will become even more significant as the new on-line application for college is implemented during spring of 2006 and as all students begin to use the college assigned e-mail.

IV. Project Management

A. Staffing

The College followed its standard procedures for filling new positions by advertising the positions widely and following EEO procedures. Internal assignment of Dena Stephenson as the Title III Coordinator took place effective October 1, 2004. Dr. Stephenson answers directly to the President and is responsible for management of the project, supervision of the Title III Component Directors and direction of the Title III Leadership Team. She is a member of both the President's Staff, which includes senior administrators, and the Strategic Planning Council. She also serves as the Dean for Planning and Research which is an excellent combination with the role of Title III Coordinator.

Filling other positions took several months, resulting in some unused personnel dollars which were shifted to support other needs. However, all positions have been filled with qualified personnel.

B. Management Processes

The Title III Coordinator meets regularly with the component directors and meets monthly with the Title III Internal Evaluation Team who represents the interests of each area of Calhoun directly and immediately impacted by the grant. This team serves as internal monitors, gauging and measuring the progress of the project. In turn, each member of this team is responsible up the administrative hierarchy to the President. The Title III Coordinator meets

with the President's Staff every other week to update the Staff on the project status and any problem areas.

The Title III Coordinator, assisted by the Administrative Assistant, maintains a working file in the Title III office on all aspects of the activity, including interim data reports, budget reports, job descriptions, memos, etc. She also prepares a monthly performance update overview which addresses operations, implementation strategy and timetable items, performance indicators, and budget expenditures, including a special item on travel.

C. Internal Evaluation

The major purposes of the project's evaluation plan are as follows:

- To establish and document baseline measures for all CDP goals and objectives,
- To collect reliable, verifiable, and timely data that will lead to a valid assessment of the strategies used and the tangible results achieved as presented in the *Implementation Strategy and Timetable* forms,
- To collect reliable, verifiable, and timely data of the status of all baseline measures and other project outcome indicators as documented in the *Activity Objectives and Performance Indicator* forms, conducting all required qualitative and quantitative analyses and preparing reports documenting knowledge gained,
- To use data gathered for formative evaluation in order to guide the ongoing project,
- To use data gathered as formative input to identify problems and to suggest other alternative processes and solutions, exploring these issues with the larger college community when necessary,
- To use data gathered for summative evaluation and reports, providing evidence for completion reports required at the end of each year and at the end of the grant,

- To document and disseminate outcomes, successful strategies, and lessons learned regarding grant goals for other colleges and universities,
- To assess the impact of the project on the College's complete CDP, and
- To assure institutionalization of the outcomes achieved into the operations and culture of Calhoun Community College.

The annual plan for evaluation is developed by the Title III Coordinator working with the component directors and the internal evaluation team, with the guidance of the external evaluator. The Coordinator shares the evaluation plan with the President for review and approval. Each year, the plan will include a detailed timeline for gathering, analyzing, and reporting the required data for each activity objective and CDP goal. The initial data collection chart was included in detail in a chart in the Title III application, detailing all data to be collected and the timeline to use. This has been adapted as the project has progressed to assure the timely development of baseline and comparative data.

The Evaluator found the data available to be informative and valuable in assessing project outcomes.

D. Fiscal Management

The College Business Office maintains the auditable records of expenditures. Accounts Clerk II, Belinda Bowen, supports the project and provides timely, accurate reports to the Title III office.

No budget amendment was submitted for year 1, as all changes needed could be authorized by the Title III Coordinator under the expanded authorities.

E. Management Issues and Recommendations

The Evaluator commends the Title III Coordinator on her detailed, clear and complete documentation of all meetings, actions, and outcomes to date of the project. The end of year

report was complete, well documented and supported by the observations made by the Evaluator while on site.

The Title III Coordinator and Component Directors need to think carefully through the plans for the coming years prior to submittal of the annual report and next year's budget each year. Every effort should be made to keep change requests, whether to objectives or to the budget, to one time per year. The Title III Coordinator should then use the expanded authority to adjust expenditures at other times. Approval for changes should not be requested from the program officer unless it is required under the guidelines of Edgar and the Expanded Authority.

V. Conclusions

A. Institutionalization Issues/Recommendations

Although the project is just entering year 2, institutionalization should already be a factor in the decision making processes. That this is the case is evident in the assignments of new personnel to appropriate college areas rather than the Title III office, in the assignment of college leadership to direct the activity components, in the utilization of current, full-time faculty rather than primarily adjunct faculty for course redesign. But institutionalization requires ongoing attention by the Title III Coordinator, the Academic Component Director and the Vice-President to assure that all dollars spent support the long range plan of the College and improve the instructional processes of the College.

Assuring that the College can sustain the hardware and software systems being developed will be an ongoing challenge. As the demand for services expands, the need for 24/7 staffing by IT will grow. The work load in IT will grow as more and more faculty use computer technology for everything from teaching to grading to communicating with students. This will require not only personnel, but frequent updating of hardware and software by the College.

The expanded cost of test center proctoring and expanded use of technology for

assessment will have to be considered in college budgeting. To some extent this cost may be offset by the increased use by students of their own systems for course work and homework. All course design processes should support this use and not establish processes that require use of systems on campus except where essential such as in assessment.

B. Dissemination Issues/Recommendations

The College developed a Title III web site as a means of dissemination of outcomes information. See <http://www.calhoun.edu/grants/TitleIII/index.html>. The web pages are current and are easy to use. In the Evaluator's opinions, the web site is an excellent resource for both college personnel and personnel from other colleges to learn about the project and its outcomes.

C. Summary

The Evaluator found the project making excellent progress by the end of year 1. All personnel involved were learning, working to improve the educational delivery systems of the College, excited about the changes and making a difference in the future of the College. The Evaluator commends the personnel who are part of this project and who are transforming the instructional delivery and support services of the College.

D. Certification of External Evaluator

submitted electronically by _____ January 22, 2006 _____

Lora P Conrad, Evaluator

Date