

Reynolds Learning Communities Team (LCT) Prepares for Summer Institute

The JSRCC LCT is preparing to participate in the 8th Annual National Summer Institute on Learning Communities. The Institute will be held at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington from June 20-25, 2006 and is sponsored by the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education,. The Institute's primary aim is to help campuses start or strengthen learning community programs. Colleges and universities selected for this institute are matched with resource faculty drawn from across the country. J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College was chosen through a competitive selection process and will be one of 22 teams.

Why are we doing this?

In FY 2005, the College developed a comprehensive strategic plan which is rooted in a systematic examination of the institution, its vision, goals, and performance and relates directly to the institution's effort to increase student success and achievement, serve the community and achieve institutional self-sufficiency. This same strategic planning process led to the creation of a Model for Retention for which the Student Success & Retention Plan emerged as the focus. Currently the overarching goal of JSRCC is to improve student success.

In late summer 2005, a Title III steering committee was convened, comprised of the chief student affairs officer, chief academic officer, chief development officer, dean of math and science, director of academic support services, chief institutional effectiveness officer, several faculty, and student services staff. Using the Model for Retention and the College's Strategic Plan, the committee began work to outline a Title III project that would assist in the attainment of college goals to strengthen student engagement, increase retention and graduation rates and ultimately increase student success. Following a prolific amount of research and working meetings, learning communities emerged as a leading methodology to incorporate best practices for success and retention.

Concurrent with the Title III project planning, the College was accepted to take a team to the Learning Communities National Summer Institute at Evergreen State University in the summer of 2006. The eight member team will participate in this national recognized training program for college and universities and will receive a mentor to help the college through the implementation process. Implementation of learning communities directly supports the Student Success & Retention Plan as both a service to the students who will join a learning community as well as serving as an incubator for the development and adoption of best practices for success and retention. With the guidance and support of the LCT, in the Fall of 2007, JSRCC will launch learning communities and support activities to increase student success. The Title III funding being applied for will assist in launching these learning communities on a larger scale and will help to bring related services and benefits to

a larger portion of the student population more quickly.

The LCT's goal for the Summer Institute is to participate in the team process and to refine the Title III action plan for starting and evaluating our new learning communities program. The team hopes to learn more about successful practices for implementing learning communities in community colleges. For additional information, see http://www.evergreen.edu/washcenter/team_profile.asp?teamid=90