



Foundations of Excellence® Summary Report

BACKGROUND:

In 2005, following the inaugural use of the Foundational Dimensions® as part of the Foundations of Excellence® (FoE) process, Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC) made significant changes and improvements to the first-year experience, including establishment of a one-stop enrollment services center, hosting a community day celebration for first year students, development of a new student orientation and registration (SOAR), distribution of a new student folder and the formation of a First Year Committee.

CURRENT PROCESS:

In 2015, KVCC decided to complete the Foundational Dimensions® self-study process again with an additional focus on transfer. The college created a Task Force with co-chairs assigned to each of the nine Dimensions. During the self-study process, Dimension committees employed different strategies to engage the college community including interviews, focus groups and short surveys. The Task Force met regularly to provide updates and to reinforce the rigorous timeline for the process. Several joint meetings were held with the members of KVCC's First Year Committee to share findings and to solicit suggestions.

ACTION ITEMS:

Many of the recommended action items proposed by each Dimension committee overlapped, so the team decided to divide the items into categories for implementation.

1. Improved Communication/Organizational goals:

- a. **Philosophy Statement:** The First-Year Committee will disseminate the newly revised KVCC Philosophy of the First Year statement. Additionally, the statement will be incorporated into appropriate publications and communications.
- b. **Retention Mission:** The KVCC community needs to define retention, create a retention mission statement, and describe the roles of faculty and staff in the retention initiative.
- c. **New Student Profile:** To assist faculty and staff with new student programming and support services, the institutional research office should create and share a New Student Profile at the beginning of the academic year.
- d. **Upgrade Website:** To increase ease-of-use for students in relation to advising, locating services, etc. the college should upgrade the website and KV Portal

2. Improved Assessment:

- a. **Essential Learning Outcomes (ELO):** The college should develop and implement an institution-wide ELO assessment plan to include standards rubrics and procedures for evaluation, reporting and improvement. Once this plan is implemented, the deficits observed in departmental and institutional level assessment should be resolved.
- b. **Assessment of first-year activities:** The college should design and implement a comprehensive survey instrument to measure the value and effectiveness of the various activities and services that impact the first year student
- c. **Systematic Review and Revision:** The first year data should be systematically reviewed by the First Year Committee with recommendations for improvement reported annually to the Leadership Team.

3. Improved Academic Advising:

- a. **Resource Guide:** The college should develop a resource guide for faculty and staff that includes information on the roles and functions within each of the KVCC departments
- b. **Training/Professional Development:** The college should establish a standardized onboarding process with an academic advising module. Professional development activities focused on advising and the first-year experience should be ongoing.
- c. **Create Mentor Systems:** For those programs with a large advisor to advisee ratio, the college should create mentoring systems by pairing successful second year students to first year students

4. Improve Curriculum and Co-Curricular Activities:

- a. **Revise First-Year Seminar Course:** This course should be revised to improve student success both in the class and in the first year of college. The value of the course should be communicated to the students. Revision of this course can include embedding an opportunity for the first year student to reflect on how becoming an educated person will benefit the student, the community, and society.
- b. **Extended Orientation:** To capitalize on the momentum of initiatives such as SOAR, Community Day, and Welcome Week, the college should continue to plan and implement an extended orientation program to serve new students throughout their first year.
- c. **Diversity :** To expose all new students to diverse ideas, worldviews, and cultures, the college should develop an intentional plan to incorporate diversity into the first year of college. The plan should include inclusion of a diversity learning objective and activities into designated courses, with the intent of exposing all first year students to diversity.
- d. **Leadership and Service:** The college should identify relevant strategies to communicate information about leadership, service, and employment opportunities to students.



Executive Summary of the Foundational

Kennebec Valley Community College

May 2016

Introduction

The Foundational Dimensions[®] were developed by John N. Gardner, Betsy O. Barefoot, and Randy L. Swing of the Policy Center on the First Year of College (now the John N. Gardner Institute For Excellence in Undergraduate Education) in collaboration with 87 two-year colleges. In 2005, Kennebec Valley Community College was selected as one of ten two-year colleges that provided national leadership in the inaugural use of the Foundational Dimensions[®]. According to the John N. Gardner Institute:

These Foundational Dimensions[®] statements constitute a model that provides two-year colleges with a means to evaluate and improve the new student experience. This model recognizes the multiple roles and functions of two-year institutions as well as their service to diverse student populations that have widely varying educational backgrounds and goals. As an evaluation tool, the model enables two-year institutions both to confirm their strengths and to recognize the need for improvement. As an aspirational model, the Dimensions provide general guidelines for an intentional design of the new student experience.

The Dimensions rest on four assumptions:

1. The academic mission of an institution is preeminent.
2. The experience of new students is central to the achievement of an institution's mission because it lays the foundation that enables students to achieve their educational goals.
3. Systematic evidence provides validation of the Dimensions.
4. Collectively, the Dimensions constitute an ideal for improving not only the new student experience, but also the entire college experience.

Following the inaugural use of the Foundational Dimensions[®] as part of the Foundations of Excellence[®] process and the task force findings, the college made significant changes and improvements to the first year experience, including establishment of a one-stop enrollment services center, hosting a community day celebration for first year students, development of a new student orientation and registration (SOAR), distribution of a new student folder and the formation of a First Year Committee.

A decade later, in 2015, KVCC made the decision to complete the Foundations of Excellence[®] (FoE) self-study process again with an additional focus on transfer. This endeavor was made possible by with funding from a U.S. Department of Education Title 3 grant designed to promote persistence and student success in the General Science and Liberal Studies programs. The college created a Task Force with co-chairs assigned to each of the nine Dimensions. During the self-study process, Dimension committees employed different strategies to engage

the college community including interviews, focus groups and short surveys. The Task Force met regularly to provide updates and to reinforce the rigorous timeline for the process. Several joint meetings were held with the members of KVCC's First Year Committee to share findings and to solicit suggestions.

The FoE task force will share the summary of the findings and the recommendations for improvement with the campus community during a professional development day in the Fall 2016. Many members of the task force also serve on the First Year Committee and will assist with the planning and implementation of the FoE self-study recommendations in the coming years.

Philosophy Dimension

Foundation institutions intentionally cultivate learning environments for new students that emerge from a philosophy of two-year colleges as gateways to higher education. The philosophy is explicit and easily understood. It is consistent with the institutional mission, reflects a consensus of internal and external constituencies, and is widely disseminated. The philosophy is also the basis for organizational policies, practices, structures, leadership, and resource allocation to support the new student experience.

A review of the evidence indicates that Kennebec Valley Community College does currently have a written philosophy statement for first year students, and this statement is consistent with the institutional mission. Members reviewed the current philosophy statement and found that the goals are lacking in clarity and do not reflect the current campus culture. Additionally, the philosophy statement does not emphasize academic progress toward the second year of college or toward lifelong learning. Dissemination of the currently philosophy statement is not evident since many individuals were unaware of a first year philosophy statement. Although the statement itself is not disseminated in written form, the concepts are embedded in other materials that first year students receive at the welcome table, during SOAR and in the First Year Experience course syllabus. The task force also found that there seems to be an unwritten philosophy for first year students among programs and departments.

The Philosophy Dimension committee's high priority recommendations included updating the College's Philosophy of the First Year statement, incorporating the philosophy in appropriate publications and communications, and reinforcing the philosophy in professional development activities. The committee addressed the first recommendation by drafting an updated philosophy statement. The co-chairs committee presented the updated philosophy statement to the FoE task force and the college's First Year Experience Committee for approval in the spring semester. It was unanimously approved. In the fall of 2016, the First Year Committee

will develop a plan for dissemination of the updated philosophy and for potential professional development activities.

Organization Dimension

Foundations Institutions provide a comprehensive, coordinated, and flexible approach to the new student experience through effective organizational structures and policies. These structures and policies guide and align all aspects of the new student experience. Through effective partnerships, critical stakeholders such as instructional, administrative, and student services units provide a coherent experience for new students that is enhanced by ongoing faculty and staff development activities and appropriate budgetary arrangements.

The Organization Dimension committee reviewed the evidence and met with faculty and staff to assess whether KVCC has a comprehensive, coordinated, and flexible approach to new students. At the conclusion of the process, the committee determined that the College lacks a consistent approach to providing services and support for first-year students. Although a consistent approach was not evident, the committee identified several initiatives that promote first year student success.

In 2008, the College established a First Year (FY) Committee with a mission to promote a campus culture that provides first year students with the foundation to achieve personal, academic and professional goals. Although the FY committee has not been active for several years, many of the activities and procedures established by the FY committee are still in existence. These include the new student information folder, the new student orientation and registration (SOAR) activity, Community Day, and a welcome table during the first week of classes. The current FoE process was the catalyst needed to bring new life to this committee. The FY committee will review the findings of the FoE self-study and develop a new plan to support first year students. A task force has also convened this year to discuss an extended first-year orientation. The extended orientation model would expand on the current first-year activities, establishing a first year experience that extends beyond the first week of classes.

A recurrent theme in the faculty and staff conversations was inconsistent or inadequate academic advising. There are several underlying reasons for some of the issues with academic advising. First, depending on the department or program, some faculty advisors may be assigned 40 or more advisees. The second major reason is the college's lack of a thorough and consistent onboarding process for new faculty and advising staff, resulting in little or no training for a new academic advisor.

Because academic advising is critical to first-year success, the Organization Dimension committee put forth several high priority recommendations for the college to focus on this issue: establishment of a standardized onboarding process to include an academic advising module, development of a resource guide for faculty and staff that includes information on the roles and functions within each of the KVCC departments, and establishment of professional development activities focused on academic advising and the first-year experience.

Learning Dimension

Foundations Institutions deliver curricular and co-curricular learning experiences that engage new students in order to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with the institutional mission, students' academic and career goals, and workplace expectations. Both in and out of the classroom, these learning experiences promote critical thinking, ethical decision making, and the lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

The college established five essential learning outcomes (ELO's) for all students. These ELO's are consistent with the mission and the college's definition of an educated person. KVCC is developing rubrics and will begin evaluate these ELO's in the 2016-2017 academic year. The institution will set benchmarks for our first year and second year students. These ELO's include some of the soft skills that all KVCC graduates should attain such as written and oral communication, critical thinking, and problem solving. Individual programs also have established learning goals (outcomes) that are career specific and responsive to the workplace. Each program has an advisory council that provides input concerning the workplace needs and suggestions for program improvement. These program outcomes can be accessed in the catalog and program-specific student handbooks. And finally, the Maine Community College System administrators and general education faculty have worked established a 35-credit block transfer articulation agreement with 4 year institutions. This initiative required identification and evaluation of common learning domains. Each domain will be assessed with a rubric derived from the AACU's VALUE rubrics. The Liberal Studies program and/or departments will establish performance expectations for students in the first year or second year of their academic program.

The FoE self-study liaison selected the five courses for consideration in the Learning dimension. Several factors were considered when selecting the five DFWI courses to focus on in the Learning Dimension including total enrollment and success rate.

Course	Annual Enrollment	DFWI Rate
Anatomy and Physiology I (BIO213)	248	21.4 %
English Composition (ENG 101)	318	30.5 %
Introduction to Psychology (PSY 101)	335	28.1 %
Software Applications I (CPT 117)	178	25.3 %

First Year Seminar (FYE 125)	191	29.8 %
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The Learning Dimension committee consisted of faculty who teach these five courses. The departmental faculty summarized the current situation for the course with reference to placement, student learning outcome assessment, common assessments and process for improvement. Anatomy and Physiology, College Composition, and Introduction to Psychology utilize common assessments and standardized curriculum across sections. The results of the common assessment are discussed at the departmental level and indirectly at the institutional level with grant reporting (in the case of Anatomy and Physiology. Results will be further discussed at the institutional level once the college's ELO assessment plan is implemented. Adjustments to methodology are made periodically to improve student learning.

With reference to the Anatomy and Physiology I course, the Math and Science Department found a correlation between Accuplacer® placement reading scores and student success in the course. In response to this finding, the pre-requisite reading score was increased, contributing to a 10% increase in student success observed over the past four years. All sections of the course have an additional hour of instruction in the form of recitation to allow students an opportunity to work in smaller groups or with the instructor. The College has established a minimum score of 74 on the Accuplacer® Writing Skills placement test as a pre-requisite to enrolling in English Composition.

Placement for the Software Applications I course has been an ongoing topic of concern. The Business Department is currently working with admissions to select or develop an appropriate computer skills placement test. An effective placement test could improve student success in the course, by ensuring student computer readiness prior to enrollment. The department has access to student work across the sections of the course; however, the data is not examined at the departmental or institutional level.

And finally, the course that was introduced to foster student success in the first year, FYE 125, now appears in the top DFWI inventory. Investigation revealed that other than the student course evaluation, the department did not have mechanism in place to document instructional methods and the effectiveness in engaging students across all sections of the course. In response to these findings, a small group of committed faculty and staff have organized a steering committee to revise the course for Fall 2016. Provisions for assessing student learning outcomes will be included in the revised curriculum.

In terms of learning communities, the college's trade, nursing and health occupation programs establish a cohort with each class that enters in the Fall semester. These students have the opportunity to collaborate and move through program courses as a unit. The Liberal Studies,

General Science and Business programs struggle with the cohort model due to the fact that students may enter these programs in any semester, making it difficult to establish a cohort. All new students begin their semester attending Community Day, a special event designed for the incoming students. Students meet with program faculty, fellow students and academic advisors, engage in some team-building activities and enjoy a barbecue. The day also provides an opportunity for students to take care of last minute paperwork, purchase texts, or schedule and additional meeting with their advisor.

To respond to some of the areas of concern, the committee makes the following high priority recommendations. First, the college must develop and implement an institution-wide Essential Learning Outcome (ELO) assessment plan to include standards rubrics and procedures for evaluation, reporting and improvement. Once this plan is implemented, the deficits observed in departmental and institutional level assessment should be resolved. The committee recommends the revision of the First Year Seminar course (FYE 125) to improve student success both in the course and in the first year of college.

Campus Culture Dimension

Foundations Institutions make new students a high priority for faculty and staff. A culture of responsibility for the experiences of new students characterizes these institutions. This culture is realized through high-quality instruction, services, and support as well as substantial interaction with students both inside and outside the classroom. Campus leaders nurture this culture and support it by appropriate institutional recognition and rewards.

Evidence indicates that KVCC employees agree that new student experiences are important and consider the first-year student in their everyday actions both in and out of the classroom. Faculty members, who were interviewed, indicated that they engage first-year students based on their own intrinsic values and past experiences in the classroom rather than based on an institutional directive or mission. The committee determined that any gaps in the campus culture stem mostly from a lack of a clear overarching institutional message and lack of coordination of the efforts.

The college currently holds events designed specifically for new students such as SOAR, Community Day, and Welcome Week. Student surveys indicate that the students value these activities. These initiatives impact a new student from the time they are accepted through the first week of class. The College lacks of specific first-year programming that extends into first semester and first year of college. Currently, faculty and staff are designing an extended orientation program to create a meaningful experience for all first-year students, providing an ongoing and consistent message to first-year students.

Although the college has established essential learning outcomes for all students, there are no explicit learning outcomes established for all first-year students. Several programs have established first year seminar courses to promote student success. The learning outcomes for these courses are specific to a new student. Faculty and staff involved with the First Year Experience course (FYE 125) are currently updating the curriculum to meet the needs of new students, while being engaging and relevant.

College administrators have identified retention as an urgent priority. While everyone understands the importance of enrollment numbers, the committee identified the need for a unified institutional vision and definition of retention. There is a desire for the conversation to reflect an understanding of evidence-based / educationally relevant strategies and philosophies, including benchmarks. Faculty recognize academic advising and its important role in retention, however discussions uncovered a desire for the process to be refined resulting in increased advisor/advisee contact.

To improve the campus culture for new students, the committee put forth several high priority recommendations. First, KVCC should continue to plan and implement an extended orientation program to serve new students. To assist faculty and staff with new student programming and support services, the institutional research office should create and share a New Student Profile at the beginning of the academic year. This profile should be based on empirical data that includes both cognitive and non-cognitive factors. And finally, the KVCC community needs to define retention, create a retention mission statement, and describe the roles of faculty and staff in the retention initiative.

Transitions Dimension

Foundations Institutions facilitate appropriate student transitions beginning with outreach and recruitment and continuing throughout the period of enrollment. They communicate clear curricular/co-curricular expectations and possibilities, and they provide appropriate preparation and support for educational success. They are forthright about their responsibilities to students as well as students' responsibilities to themselves and the institution. These institutions create and maintain communication with secondary and other postsecondary institutions, families, employers, community agencies, and other sources of support for students.

The Transitions Dimension committee discovered that KVCC does a very good job of communicating entry requirements, college costs and financial aid information to prospective and new students, based on the 2013 CCSSE and the FoE student survey. Evidence also indicates that the College clearly communicates academic expectations as well as the student code of conduct to all students. In recent years, the college has improved and streamlined the admissions process, creating a more user-friendly experience for an applicant. Admissions personnel have a well-developed recruitment plan to engage area high schools and adult education in the region. The college regularly hosts transfer events, bringing four-year institution admissions representatives to the campus to speak with students.

Several areas of concern came to light in this dimension. Because many of our students are the first generation to attend college, their families are not familiar with how colleges operate, and may be intimidated by the process. The college could do a better job of making the families of students feel more included in the college experience. Over half of KVCC's students have dependent children, so attendance at the mandatory new student orientation and other new student activities may prove to be a challenge for students who struggle with childcare. The committee also found that the college does not engage to a significant extent with community organizations to provide access to community networks that could support student success.

Recent survey results indicate that the college's academic advising model requires attention. In the area of academic advising, the recent CCSSE indicates that 54% of students have not met with their advisor and only 1/3 of students saw their advisors one or more times during the semester. Only 45% had a plan for completing their degree, but 66% felt confident they knew what was expected. And finally, the CCSSE results report a lack of student engagement in co-curricular and extracurricular activities. This finding is not surprising given that KVCC is a commuter campus.

To address some of the areas of concern, the committee makes the following recommendations: offering effective multi-dimensional academic advising with particular attention to the programs that have high advisee to advisor ratios, creating a mentoring systems by pairing successful second year students to first year students, and upgrading the website for easier navigation and accessibility of information.

All Students Dimension

Foundations Institutions serve all new students according to their varied needs. These institutions anticipate, identify, and address the needs of traditional and non-traditional students in response to their individual abilities, backgrounds, interests, and experiences. These efforts are subject to assessment and adjustment as needed. Institutions also ensure campus environments that are inclusive and safe for all students.

The All Students Dimension required a thorough look at many facets of student experiences on campus, ranging from academic to social and personal. Generally speaking, the committee determined that much of the knowledge about student experiences on campus is impressionistic and anecdotal, not necessarily systematic or empirical.

There are many services and procedures in place to determine and address the unique academic needs of first-year students, assuring smooth onboarding for new students. To place students in appropriate courses, the college utilizes Accuplacer® placement tests for writing, math and reading. The college also offers a variety of developmental courses on campus to serve students who require additional preparation.

The college is doing a sufficient job identifying and addressing the unique social and personal needs of first-year students. However, some collected data contradicts this perception. Data indicates that the Portal's "Refer a Student" functionality is underutilized by faculty; however, this data is limited because it does not measure alternative methods for student referral to services. Social and personal support services like SALT (for financial literacy) are not assessed based on performance and meeting student needs.

When it comes to the various types of experiences available to students, such as individualized support from faculty, academic support outside the classroom, opportunities for student involvement, and access to an inclusive campus environment, it is clear that students have access to all of the above experiences with the exception of an inclusive campus environment.

With regard to academic support outside the classroom, there is a general consensus among faculty and staff that there is a solid menu of options for students who need additional help including the Learning Commons, the Math Port@l, a Writing Center, TRiO, and library services. Faculty and staff did express concern as to whether or not students are adequately aware of these resources and utilizing them.

The college lacks observable, systematic, or verifiable ways to assure students experience an inclusive campus environment. The FoE survey and other data sources suggest that various subpopulations of students may need additional support to succeed at KVCC. These subpopulations included: veterans, transgendered students, working students, and students with mental health needs.

The college has made significant strides in systematizing and addressing safety on campus, both physical and psychological safety. Recently implemented changes by the Emergency Response Team (ERT) included improved communication strategies and actions regarding physical safety on campus. In addition to the ERT procedures, all new students receive an overview of campus safety policies as well as campus safety information in accordance with the Clery Act at SOAR. The college recently unveiled a partnership with Kennebec Behavioral Health, providing counseling services on campus for 8 hours per week, to address student mental health issues.

The All Students Dimension committee recommends that the college creates a systematic approach to monitoring the demographics and unique needs and behaviors of first-year students and makes this information readily accessible to faculty and staff. This would include a focus on support services to determine the best methods for communication and delivery of the services. And to promote an inclusive and comfortable campus for students across all axes of difference: age, race, sexual orientation, and (dis)ability, the committee recommends developing a civil rights team or organization.

Diversity Dimension

Foundations Institutions ensure that new students experience ongoing exploration of diverse ideas, worldviews, and cultures as a means of enhancing their learning and participation in pluralistic communities. Institutions cultivate an open and civil community in which students interact with people from varied backgrounds and cultures. These institutions guide students to reflect on ideas and values different from those they currently hold, and explore their own cultures and the cultures of others.

The Diversity Dimension committee determined that the college lacks an intentional plan and a clearly stated diversity learning objective to ensure that all new students are exposed to diverse ideas and perspectives. Although some courses may include activities to promote interaction between individuals with different backgrounds and beliefs, there is inconsistency with the curricular and co-curricular initiatives.

There are currently classes that require a Service Learning experience as a part of the coursework, providing students the opportunity to engage with others in the surrounding community. The college also offers at least twenty courses which advance curriculum to exposes students to diverse ideas and world views. All students enroll in one of two communication courses, with content that includes culture, co-culture, diversity, intercultural communication (verbal and nonverbal), cultural dimensions, and barriers.

The college attempts to convey to new students the standards of behavior expected. This is conveyed in a number of publications, providing the guidelines to understand the concepts of respect and civility in the campus community. Although the opportunities for interaction are varied, there is no way to ensure that the message of civility is being conveyed to all new students.

To expose all new students to diverse ideas, worldviews, and cultures, the committee recommends that the college develop an intentional plan to incorporate diversity into the first year of college. The plan should include inclusion of a diversity learning objective and activities into designated courses, with the intent of exposing all first year students to diversity.

Roles and Purposes Dimension

Foundations Institutions promote student understanding of the various roles and purposes of higher education and those unique to two-year institutions, both for the individual and society. These roles and purposes include learning for personal growth, career enhancement, workplace preparation and retraining, transfer for additional education, engaged citizenship, and serving the public good. Institutions encourage new students to examine their motivation and goals with regard to higher education in general and to their own college. Students are exposed to the value of both a general education and focused study in an academic or career field.

The Roles and Purposes Dimension committee investigated if the institution effectively communicates its vision of the purposes of higher education to new students. The college's mission statement and the *Definition of an Educated Person* does communicate the vision of higher education with regards to personal growth, future employment, engaged citizenship and service. Both speak to the reasons for pursuing education but neither contains any sort of message specifically for first year students.

The application process provides a limited opportunity for students to reflect on their career choices and personal motivation for pursuing a degree in higher education. Although the KVCC mission statement speaks to the value of education to an individual, it does not encompass

how education serves the public good on a larger scale. The committee discovered that there is no consistent opportunity for students to reflect on how their education contributes to the larger system and how being an educated person benefits society.

Currently there are three first year seminars, offering a core of student success skills and additional major-specific topics. Evidence suggests that the content may vary with the interests of the instructor. There also seems to be a lack of a consistent message as to why the College values the seminar courses.

Many of the courses in health-related and social science courses incorporate service learning component into the coursework. The College's Center for Civic Engagement provides a rationale for engaged citizenship; however, there is no comprehensive institutional commitment to engaged citizenship outside a brief mention of it in the definition of the educated person as found in the College's mission statement.

Recommendations for improvement in this Dimension include identifying relevant strategies to communicate information about leadership, service, and employment opportunities to students. The committee also recommends embedding an opportunity for the first year student to reflect on how becoming an educated person will benefit the student, the community and society. And finally, the college needs to revisit the first year seminar curriculum and to communicate the value of this course to first year success.

Improvement Dimension

Foundations Institutions conduct assessment and maintain associations with other institutions and relevant professional organizations in order to effect improvement. Assessment provides feedback to new students to guide their learning, to faculty to guide their teaching, and to the institution to guide planning, resource allocation, decision making, and improvement of programs and policies. As a way to facilitate improvement, these institutions are knowledgeable about current practices at other institutions as well as relevant research and scholarship.

The Improvement Dimension Committee identified these five initiatives to have significant impact on first-year students:

- SOAR - Student Orientation and Registration
- Community Day
- Welcome Week
- First Year Seminars (FYE 125 and BIO 125)
- Portal Access (MyKV Portal)

The College has assessed, to varying degrees, some of the initiatives that impact new students but the evaluation processes do not meet the definition of systematic assessment. The committee noted that some of the identified initiatives failed to delineate specific purposes and to include measurable objectives.

For several years, data was collected from SOAR attendees and then reviewed, evaluated, and used for improvement. Since its inception following the initial FoE project ten years ago, Community Day and one other first-year initiative, the new student folder, have been regularly assessed with a survey. The results of the survey are used to guide planning, allocate resources, make decisions, and improve the new student experience. Other first year initiatives such as the Welcome Week have never been formally assessed by the College.

The First Year Seminar (FYE 125) was also developed as part of the 2005 FoE action plan. The recent DWF1 rating of 30% has been identified as an area of concern. FYE 125 course evaluations indicate that students found the course valuable; however, this end of the semester evaluation will not capture the students who have withdrawn or stopped attending. Further research is required to determine why this course has a lower student success rate and to determine steps to effectively engage students in the course curriculum.

The student portal access (MyKV Portal) has a significant impact on how new students initially experience higher education. The portal is designed to provide information which focus on admissions content, advising, academics, campus life, and finances. The effectiveness of MyKV Portal has not been assessed at the College.

KVCC does not routinely disseminate a new student profile that includes demographics, the academic profile of new students, intended majors, and retention rates to faculty and staff. The College also collects some data relevant to student/student connections, student/faculty connections, student use of campus services, student allocation of their time, and patterns of student involvement. The institution does not systematically analyze the data to improve the College's understanding of how these factors impact new student success.

In summary, the College continues to utilize a variety of strategies to improve the experiences of new students. An effective strategy has been attendance of college staff members at higher education conferences and workshops designed to address the needs of first year students. The Foundations of Excellence[®] self-study has been most helpful with the broad exposure to campus-based knowledge/expertise regarding the new student experience.

The Improvement Dimension committee recommends that the action plans for each Dimension be incorporated into the KVCC's Strategic Plan. Another high priority recommendation would be for the college to design and implement a comprehensive survey instrument to measure the value and effectiveness of the various activities and services that impact the first year student. Additionally, a new student profile should be presented to faculty and staff at the beginning of

the academic year to promote awareness and understanding of the first year student. And finally, the first year data should be systematically reviewed by the First Year Committee with recommendations for improvement reported annually to the Leadership Team.

FoE Task Force Membership

Lisa Black, TRiO Project Director

Katy Butts-Dehm, Science Faculty

Carrie Dionne, Student Navigator

Kathy Englehart, Math/Science Department Chairperson

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Teresa Smith, Director of Advising and Enrollment

WendySt. Pierre, Mental Health Faculty

KVCC Faculty and Staff Dimension and First Year Committee Participants

Michelle Bardsley	TRiO First Year Coordinator
Barbara Bartley	Librarian
Kevin Casey	Dean of Technology & Chief Security Officer
Jim Chapman	Adjunct Faculty, Business
Anne Connors	Director of Financial Aid
Kim Dubay	Administrative Specialist III
Stephen Duren	English & Humanities Department Chair
Lila Finlay	Nursing Faculty
Greg Fletcher	Trades & Technology Department Chair
Marcy Gage	Financial Aid Specialist & Counselor
Juliette Guilmette	English & Humanities Faculty
Linda Hepfner	Physical Therapist Assistant Faculty
Jeremy Kaherl	Information Systems Specialist II
Elaine Katz	Adjunct Faculty, Science
Mark Kavanaugh	Social Sciences Department Chair
Steve Knight	Adjunct Faculty, Humanities; Concurrent Enrollment Liaison
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Julie Larouche	Occupational Therapy Faculty
Mark McCafferty	Communications Faculty
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Jamie Sylvain	Adjunct Faculty, Psychology
Sarah Sirois	Math Learning Specialist-Title III
David Smith	Librarian I
Pauline Stevens	Early College for ME Regional Director
Don Trask	Information System Specialist III
Lorie Tyson	Human Resources / Payroll Technician
Marjorie York	Business Administration Department Chair

Summary of High Priority Recommendations

1. Philosophy Dimension
 - Update the existing first year philosophy statement
 - Create a plan to disseminate the first Year philosophy to the college community
 - Reinforce the statement by including it in professional development activities
2. Organization Dimension
 - New faculty and advising staff members should participate in professional development that includes advisor topics
 - Develop a resource guide for faculty and staff that includes information on the roles and functions within each of the KVCC departments
 - Offering an evening orientation/ training for all adjuncts annually in the fall
 - Implement a standardized onboarding process for any new KVCC faculty or staff member
3. Learning Dimension
 - Establish an institutional Essential Learning Outcome (ELO) assessment plan
 - Document instructional methods and learning outcomes in courses, with particular attentions to the high enrolled and high DFWE courses
 - Establish common vision, goals and curriculum for first year seminar-style classes
4. Campus Culture Dimension
 - Offer professional development focused specifically on teaching and engagement methods as they relate to first-year and underprepared student
 - Create a new student profile annually to inform faculty and staff
 - Continue to develop the vision and implementation of and extended orientation
 - Create a KVCC retention mission statement and define the roles of faculty and staff
 - Create and implement a system of communication that routinely informs and unifies faculty and staff in carrying out the retention mission
5. Transitions Dimension
 - Upgrade the college website for easier navigation, accessibility of necessary information and include a virtual campus tour of both campuses
 - Examine the current academic advisor system and incorporate best practices to improve the system
6. All Students Dimension
 - Foster better partnerships/sharing between faculty and support staff to assure the most efficient administration of student-centered services
 - Create a systematic approach to monitoring the demographics and unique needs and behaviors of first-year students and makes this information readily accessible
 - Civil rights/inclusivity team or organizations to promote an inclusive and comfortable campus for students

7. Diversity Dimension

- Develop explicit diversity-related learning objective(s)
- Develop and include a diversity statement on course syllabi
- Provide professional development opportunities to educate about faculty and staff about institutional priorities related to diversity
- Revitalize the standing Diversity Committee to generate ideas, make policy recommendations, research best practices, and focus on the institutional goals related to diversity
- Encourage faculty and staff participation in cultural and diversity-related programs and events
- Identify (and create if necessary) Safe Spaces for students to obtain information, support, and engage in open and undeterred dialogue related to diversity issues
- Develop an awareness campaign to communicate diversity as institutional priority

8. Roles and Purposes Dimension

- Include a standardized component of the first-year seminar curriculum to provide an opportunity for students to consider why they are at KVCC and how they contribute to a bigger picture
- Adopt a campus-wide (student/faculty/staff) community service project
- Improve enrollment counseling for Accuplacer®
- Expand advisor training for SOAR personnel

9. Improvement Dimension

- develop one (1) survey to systematically assess SOAR, Community Day, Welcome Week, and MyKV Portal
- All initiatives created and run at KVCC for first year students should have built in outcomes and assessment strategies to insure we are measuring the effectiveness of the initiatives

KVCC Philosophy of the First Year

Kennebec Valley Community College believes that the first year of college is the foundation for the academic, professional, and personal growth of engaged student learners as they pursue a career and continued involvement in their communities. We recognize that a strong start to the college experience is critical for student success.

Goals for Students in the First Year

- Success
Strive for Academic Excellence
Refine your skills and effective learning strategies to achieve degree completion and pursue the path to your chosen profession/career. Develop an academic plan which considers personal learning styles and supports responsibility for your own education.
- Opportunity
Take Advantage of Resources
Get the most from your education by becoming familiar with the available human and physical resources on campus that contribute to your college success. Establish ongoing relationships and seek and accept support from faculty, staff and peers. Take the opportunity to advance your research and technology competencies.
- Commitment
Make the Effort
Build a foundation that supports your life-long learning by developing critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem solving, communication, and leadership skills. Your success will be determined by your own hard work.
- Balance
Support Personal Wellness
Enhance your healthy coping strategies to maintain balance and nurture physical and emotional well-being. Strive to achieve balance among work, rest and play.
- Connection
Cultivate Relationships
Participate in campus activities as you become a part of the college community. Appreciate your own values and beliefs, and those of others, as you broaden your respect for diverse and multicultural perspectives. Embrace inclusion and civility as cornerstones for shared learning.
- Vision
Explore Academic and Career Options
Understand the connection between your academic interests and career aspirations. Develop job seeking strategies and investigate college transfer opportunities. Network with working professionals.

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