

Section I: College Information

Name of College: Mountain Empire Community College Submission Date: 5/1/05
Web site: www.mecc.edu

Name of Organization Receiving the Grant (if different from the college): Mountain Empire Community College Foundation

Mailing Address of Grant Recipient: 3441 Mountain Empire Road, Big Stone Gap, Virginia 24219

Street Address (if different from above): Same as above

Purpose Statement (one sentence describing the purpose of this proposal): To support Mountain Empire Community College's implementation of its Achieving the Dream plan.

Proposed project start date 7/1/05 and end date 6/30/09

Total amount requested \$400,000 over four years

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Section II. Proposal Narrative

Planning and Results

Describe how you collected and analyzed qualitative and quantitative data. What student outcome data were examined?

Qualitative Data - Five surveys and two focus groups were used to obtain qualitative data for Mountain Empire Community College (MECC). The new Data Team (Institutional Research Office staff assisted by faculty and administrative staff) constructed, administered, and tabulated the data. The data results were provided to the Core Team for analysis.

An online service, SurveyMonkey.com, was used to electronically survey the faculty/staff, students in Orientation classes (235 respondents), and "upperclass" students (148 respondents). Two focus groups (one for faculty, one for students) were conducted by Coach Kent Farnsworth. (Three MECC employees have subsequently received focus group training.) To hear community "voices," face-to-face interviews were conducted in 209 lower-income community households, and a survey was mailed to 119 members of the academic program advisory committees who represent professionals in the community.

Quantitative Data - While the 2002 - 2003 cohort databases were being compiled, the Data Team conducted a study of student data from 1998 - 2002, with an analysis of first-semester *retention* and *success* outcomes. ("Success" at MECC refers to an enhanced retention measure created by MECC's Student Success Committee in 1997, which includes completion of two-thirds of attempted credits with a GPA of 2.0 or greater.) These data, the faculty/staff survey results, and an initial review of the literature allowed the Core Team to begin identifying potential high-risk student characteristics and possible barriers to their success, resulting in the establishment of five Strategy Teams to study these issues. From this point on in the proposal, data refers to the combined 2002-2003 cohort databases, unless otherwise stated. The 2004 database was not available to begin analysis until February.

Retention and success outcomes were disaggregated to measure the relationship of these variables to *income, race, age, gender,* and full-time/part-time *enrollment status*. Although MECC has long

maintained retention/success data, this was the first extensive look at disaggregating these measures in relation to socio-economic factors. Analysis showed a definite relationship between student retention/success and student income, age, and enrollment status. With only a two percent minority population, the numbers for this student group were too small for adequate analysis. Their success rates appear to be similar to low-income student rates. Gender was not a factor; a simple disaggregation of males and females showed both had 50% fall-to-spring success rates.

The value of data disaggregation is illustrated by the “previous dual enrollment” (PDEs) and enrollment status variables for fall-to-spring retention and success rates. The higher retention and success rates for the PDEs and full-time students can mask the lower rates of non-PDEs and part-time students if not disaggregated, as shown in the table below.

Enrollment Status	Retention Rate	Success Rate
Previous Dual Enrollment		
Full-time	89%	73%
Part-time	54%	26%
Non-Dual Enrollment		
Full-time	74%	50%
Part-time	51%	39%

In what ways did you engage faculty, staff, students, and the community?

Twenty-two faculty/staff and the Student Government President served on the Core Team, Data Team, and/or one of five Strategy Teams. The Strategy Teams used MECC’s 7-Step problem-solving process to assess current conditions, review the literature, identify institutional policies/practices that are barriers to student success, identify best practices, and make recommendations for institutional improvement. Each Strategy Team prepared a written report and presented their findings to 60 faculty and staff in December at the Achieving the Dream retreat. At a follow-up inservice in January, roundtables on each report provided additional discussion with 60 faculty and staff. Almost all of the College’s full-time employees have attended at least one Achieving the Dream meeting. In January, priorities for the

implementation phase were identified; further refinement followed reports from the five faculty/staff who attended the Strategy Institute in Tampa. In February, three faculty members from Daytona Community College conducted a full-day of training on learning communities with all full-time MECC faculty members. Fifteen percent of MECC's full-time faculty and staff were involved as Core, Data, or Strategy Team members in creating the draft plan that was submitted to the Coach in March.

Information about Achieving the Dream activities are presented to the College Council. News items about the Achieving the Dream initiative are published in the College's employee/local board newsletter, *The Link*, and in the student newspaper, the *Red Fox Flier*.

As stated above, community voices were obtained through person-to-person surveys of households in MECC's service region and a survey mailed to program advisory committee members. A College Community Task Force has been convened to discuss the Achieving the Dream initiative, as well as the challenges of providing students with child care, emergency student assistance, and quality service learning experiences.

What priority issues arose from your data analyses and discussions? Why did you choose these priorities? What were key contributing factors? What evidence led to this understanding?

Priority Issue #1: Improve overall student success "pass rates" in development math and English while reducing the disparity found for lower-income students.

Why Selected – Seventy-two percent of the cohort were assessed into at least one of seven developmental classes. Only 57% of all student registrations in developmental courses in the first semester were successfully completed. Increasing the course pass rates for this large number of students in developmental courses will have a correspondingly positive effect on overall student success rates for the College. Further, the developmental courses serve as gatekeepers for college-level courses, since almost three out of four entering students must successfully complete developmental courses to either transfer or graduate from MECC.

Key Contributing Factors –Success is related to *income*. Levels of student income are indicated by the expected family contribution, or EFC, which is determined by the federal government using the Federal Assistance for Financial Student Assistance form (FAFSA). Only 7% of the 2002 and 2003 cohorts did not apply for financial aid and were not assigned an EFC. Students eligible for Pell grants (who have an EFC of 0 – 3, with 0 being the lowest income category) were assessed into developmental courses at a higher rate than the non-Pell groups (EFC 4 - 6). Pell-eligible students were also less likely to pass their developmental courses and students with the lowest income group (EFC of 0) had the lowest pass rate.

Age was a factor in the proportion of students enrolled in developmental courses. Only 16% of the developmental students were age 25 and older; half were ages 17 – 18. Older students (> 24 years) were generally less successful than the younger students in their developmental courses. Targeting the younger students for specific interventions will impact the greater number of students. Counselors and faculty report that many developmental students have poor time management skills, poor study habits, and make limited use of supplemental learning assistance outside of the classroom.

Evidence – Pass rates by *income* and *age* for developmental courses are presented below:

	EFC Group			Age Group			
	Attempted	# Passed	% Passed	Attempted	# Passed	% Passed	
-1*	60	25	42%	17-18	436	264	61%
0	413	202	49%	19-20	241	129	54%
1	72	42	58%	21-24	94	53	56%
2	76	47	62%	25-29	47	21	45%
3	84	50	60%	30-34	33	15	45%
4	67	54	81%	35-44	32	21	66%
5	59	45	76%	45+	13	6	46%
6	65	44	68%				

*A small number of students (7% of cohort) with no EFC (-1) were the lowest performing group. This group needs further study to determine their characteristics.

The impact of income on success has a social basis. Median income for the region is \$24,436, which is 53% of the state average of \$46,447; additionally, 38% of individuals in the service region who are 25 and older do not have a high school diploma. Community survey respondents stated that the lack of adequate income and family support were barriers to student success.

Priority Issue #2: Create an intrusive, integrated first-year experience.

Why selected - The fall-to-spring retention rate was 70%; fall-to-fall retention was 48% for the total cohort. These rates will vary when disaggregating by age, income, and enrollment status. However, when disaggregation combines several variables, analysis becomes more complex. For example, looking at retention rates by age/EFC/gender creates 70 separate groupings of students. This segmentation produces many groups with numbers too low to provide meaningful data. MECC's strategies for improvement of retention and success rates will target all students, with emphasis on those groups with the largest number of students, i.e., those with an EFC of zero, ages 17 – 20, who are enrolled full-time. The literature suggests the first-year experience is critical for student success, particularly for those needing a strong orientation course and significant personal "outside-of-class" contact with college personnel.

Key Contributing Factors - Analysis of MECC's policies and procedures revealed the lack of an integrated system for critical first-year services such as advising, orientation, and early warning strategies to identify and intervene with high-risk students providing that personal "out-of-class" contact. Inadequate staffing, combined with the newly available online registration for classes, decreases face-to-face contact with many MECC students.

Evidence - The Orientation class was expanded from a one-day to a semester-length course in 1998, based on a recommendation from the Student Success Committee. In the 1998-2002 study, it was shown that the retention rate for students taking Orientation was 12 percentage points higher than for students who did not take Orientation in their first semester. However, it is not mandatory that students take this class in their first semester.

Personnel who have responsibility for counseling and advising have heavy workloads. The ratio of counselors to students at MECC is approximately 1:400; the average ratio of full-time faculty to advisees is 1:52. In addition to these heavy workloads, members of the Advising Strategy Team identified a number of additional issues related to advising: inconsistency in providing training/information, limited summer

staffing, lack of specific expectations/ accountability for implementing early warning strategies, and a lack of recognition and rewards for good advising. In the survey of faculty/staff, lack of advising was most often cited as a barrier to student success. In a faculty focus group, there was unanimous agreement that personal contact with advisees had been reduced over time.

An extensive early warning system to identify and intervene with high-risk students was developed by the Student Success Committee in 1998; however, this system lacked consistent coordination and was never fully implemented. MECC plans to use this experience to create more effective strategies and a supportive administrative structure.

Priority Issue #3: Increase student engagement and enhance active learning, targeting gatekeeper courses or other courses with lower levels of student success.

Why Selected - Based on the results of student surveys, less than one-third of MECC students effectively utilize support services, thereby failing to become academically and socially integrated into the College. The literature on student engagement and learning communities suggests instruction can be structured to encourage the building of social and academic support. Retention experts such as Tinto and Noel/Levitz recommend that classrooms be organized to deeply engage students with the subject matter, the faculty member, and other students.

Key Contributing Factors – Forty-five percent of all 2002 and 2003 fall semester, program-placed students attend part-time. During the 2003-2004 academic year, 44% of all students took one or more distance education courses. Many are balancing college with work and family obligations. These students have less time to participate in academic support services and social activities. Full-time students on campus are also failing to access many of MECC's support services, leading the College to recognize that assistance with key support needs must be integrated into gatekeeper courses.

Evidence - In a survey to identify the impact of support services on student success, fewer than one in three of 148 "upperclassmen" responded that key support functions helped them to continue in

college. The percentage of second-year students citing support services as being effective were: orientation (29%), personal counseling (29%), tutoring (27%), Career Center (26%), work study program (26%), math lab (23%), and clubs and organizations (14%). MECC lacks data on the numbers and types of students utilizing support services that help build engagement with faculty/staff and other students.

Four-Year Implementation Plan

What measurable changes do you intend to achieve over the four-year period? How will you bring about these changes? What evidence or rationale suggests that your strategies will be effective in increasing student success?

Priority Issue #1: Improve overall student success “pass rate” in development math and English, while reducing the disparity found for lower-income students.

MECC has set a goal of increasing the pass rate in developmental courses by 5%, while increasing the lowest income group’s pass rate to within 10% of the other income groups, as shown in the chart below.

Faculty teaching developmental courses will be addressing the pass rates for each of the seven developmental courses with the goal of cumulatively reaching the overall pass rate of 62%.

	2002-03 Baseline	2008 Goal
Developmental Course Pass Rate	57%	62%
Lowest-income students’ pass rate	49%	57%
All other developmental students’	64%	67%

The ‘success gap’ between the lowest income students and others are large in some developmental courses. MECC realizes it will be a challenge to close these gaps over the next four years, but is committed to addressing the disparities across all developmental courses. MECC’s new Scholarship America Emergency Assistance Program will help focus on some of the critical financial needs of low-income students.

Faculty who teach developmental courses will participate in a Developmental Committee. Led by a faculty coordinator, this group will analyze data on student outcomes, share best practices from

experience and the literature, benchmark with other colleges; pilot new research-based instructional strategies (e.g., active learning, contextualized learning, learning communities, supplemental instruction and bridge programs); and evaluate the results. At least one learning community will be developed for developmental English and math.

A bridge program will be piloted and targeted to younger, low-income developmental students, particularly those 17-18 years of age, who comprise half of the students enrolling in developmental courses. The bridge program will either operate as a cooperative partnership within the public schools to increase student college-readiness before graduation (using a model similar to the Bridge Partnership funded by the Lumina Foundation), or it will be conducted as a summer program on the MECC campus for recently graduated students who need developmental instruction, as well as opportunities for career exploration, college orientation, parental involvement, and part-time employment prior to the first semester of college. If the summer program is selected, students will be employed part-time as work-study students and will complete service learning projects to build peer-to-peer learning and encourage community involvement.

MECC anticipates that these strategies will be successful because 1) they are based on best practices in developmental education, 2) they are targeted to the highest at-risk (low-income) developmental students attending MECC, and 3) other colleges have achieved success with the instructional strategies which MECC plans to implement.

Priority Issue #2: Create an intrusive, integrated first-year experience.

MECC has set a goal of increasing overall fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention rates for first-time students by 10 percent. Over the four-year period, the College will 1) establish standards and recognition for excellent advising, 2) revise the current Orientation course, and 3) create an operational early warning system which focuses on intrusive contact for those students at higher risk of failure. If integration of these strategies is effective, the goal is for 80% of first-time students to utilize two or more support services.

A First-Year Experience Committee will be established with three subcommittees: Orientation, Early Warning, and Advising. This Committee will be led by a faculty coordinator, who will facilitate the activities of the three subcommittees in accordance with the workplan. The Advising Subcommittee will propose standards and strategies for good advising. This group will also pursue the feasibility of “blocking” self-directed on-line registration for at-risk students. A Student Risk Analysis System, which measures the probability of an individual student’s success as compared to an average student, has been created by MECC’s Institutional Research statistician using ten variables from the cohorts databases and student questionnaire data entered in the COMPASS database. This system will be piloted by a select group of advisors to determine its effectiveness and efficiency for identifying at-risk students for referral to appropriate support services.

The President’s staff will address resource allocation/role clarification issues that are contributing to inconsistencies in advising (e.g., assigning on-going responsibility for updating advising manuals, ensuring adequate personnel for summer advising, assigning responsibility for advisor training, and rescheduling in-service to focus on student advising at the beginning of the semesters.)

The Orientation Subcommittee will study the existing orientation course curriculum in relation to the data findings and recommend changes which will help facilitate the use of support services by high-risk students. This group will also study the feasibility of making Orientation a mandatory first-semester course.

The Early Warning Subcommittee will obtain input from campus personnel and benchmark other colleges regarding effective early warning strategies. The Subcommittee will develop a system that incorporates the roles of teaching faculty, advisors, orientation teachers, tutors, counselors, and peer mentors. The subcommittee will also lead the creation of a database to document the utilization of support services by high-risk students.

The full committee will bring together the work of the three subcommittees to ensure strategies are intrusive and integrated. The goal is to provide all students academic and support services before they

need help - not after they are already experiencing academic difficulty. Data will be centrally gathered and analyzed on the student use of academic and support services. This measure will help determine the effectiveness of the new integrated intervention system.

Priority Issue #3: Create Learning Communities, targeting gatekeeper courses or other courses with lower levels of student success.

To improve outcomes in courses with lower rates of success, the College will develop a minimum of three learning communities and incorporate more active learning strategies in at least six other courses over the four-year period. Special efforts will be made to make learning communities available to part-time and distance education students who have the greatest barriers in becoming connected to the college.

A Learning Communities/Active Learning Committee, chaired by a faculty coordinator, will organize faculty professional development opportunities, receive proposals for courses that will be revised (with either learning communities or other active learning strategies), and coordinate the scheduling and marketing of learning communities.

Research has shown that learning communities improve the quality of learning for many instructional situations and are effective in improving learning for high-risk students, particularly those in developmental and general education classes. The successful implementation of learning communities will be a transforming pedagogical shift for the College.

How will you assess progress?

1) Surveys and focus groups will be used on a formative basis to listen to college and community voices as intervention strategies are developed and implemented. 2) Changes in developmental student outcomes will be measured annually by comparing course completion rates to the 2002 – 2003 baseline data. 3) Annual changes in retention/completion rates for all cohort students will help determine the success of intrusive and integrated strategies of advising, orientation, and early warning interventions.

4) The effectiveness of learning communities and active learning will be assessed by comparing student outcomes in these courses with corresponding courses being taught with traditional methods.

Who will be responsible for collecting and analyzing evaluative data?

MECC's Office of Institutional Research director and research assistant will be responsible for collecting and analyzing the evaluative data, with assistance from the Data Team, and providing data results to the various AtD committees. The Virginia Community College System is also creating a position to collect and analyze data related to the AtD initiative and VCCS student outcome goals.

Would your college like to be considered for more intensive evaluation by MDRC?

Not at this time.

Institutionalizing Your Plan

How will you use the Achieving the Dream work to drive lasting change in core policies and practices at your college?

MECC has established retention and completion rates as measures of institutional effectiveness. This is a transformational change for the College. For the first time, the College will hold itself accountable and make student success numbers as relevant as FTES. These same accountability measures are also being implemented at the academic program level. The Achieving the Dream initiative is driving lasting change by setting high expectations. The emphasis on data-driven, decision making is resulting in a more thorough analysis to identify students who are having difficulties and the underlying causes, and responding with strategies for improving student success.

To show its commitment to change, one long-standing college policy and one practice have already been revised. Based on literature indicating its negative effect on persistence, the policy of allowing students to register into the second week of the semester has been changed, effective summer term of 2005. The practice of daily back-out of students who have not paid tuition after the deadline was revised effective spring semester 2005.

Who will lead this work and how will they engage others inside and outside the institution?

As previously discussed, three teams including members of the Core Team will carry out the work plan to accomplish the three priorities. The Co-Directors will conduct bi-monthly meetings of the Core/Data Team to monitor progress and coordinate the work of the three committees. The Co-Directors will communicate about progress/activities to faculty, staff, students and board members, as during the planning phase. The President will head the Community and College Task Force.

What will be the role of the president and governing board?

MECC's President has communicated the priority of Achieving the Dream to the entire campus and been an active member of the Core and Strategy Teams. He initiated the two changes cited earlier, will receive recommendations for change when supported with data, and will continue to ask the tough questions, such as "Is this a transformational change?" MECC's Local Advisory Board was involved in the submission of the Achieving the Dream planning grant, has received periodic updates on project progress, and will be represented on the Community and College Task Force.

How will your plans influence the allocation and/or reallocation of college resources for 2005-2006 and beyond?

The establishment of student outcomes as institutional effectiveness performance measures will ensure the plans are integrated into the College's strategic and annual planning and budgeting process. A commitment has been made by the administration to earmark necessary federal work-study funding to the summer bridge program (if this option is selected) to aid in attracting students to the program. This is a substantial commitment for the program's first year and beyond. The grant budget applies few resources to new personnel, but instead focuses on building capacity and expertise among existing staff to ensure the sustainability of the initiatives over time. College employees have committed to helping the MECC Foundation raise the \$80,000 needed to match the \$100,000 Scholarship America Emergency Assistance Program to ensure its perpetuity.

SECTION III. Proposal Timeline and Action Plan

(complete this form for each priority area; add rows to the work plan as needed)

Priority Area: Improve overall student success “pass rates” in developmental math and English, while reducing the disparity found for lower-income and younger students.

Evidence/Rationale: The 2002 and 2003 cohorts contained 1,143 students and 862 of these students took all three placement tests (math, reading, composition). Seventy-two percent of these students (620) assessed into at least one developmental course. A total of 528 students finally enrolled in developmental courses. Only a small percentage of the students who did not pass these courses (0-10%, depending on the course) were successful (with success being defined as retained with a GPA of at least 2.0 and successful completion of 2/3 of credits attempted.)

The 2002 and 2003 cohorts had low pass rates (51-57%) for all developmental math courses. Rates of success in developmental math, as in other courses across the curriculum, show a great disparity of success for the College's lowest income students (with EFCs of 0.) Students with an EFC of 0 passed Math 02 at a rate of 55%, as compared to a 64% for those with higher incomes. Students with an EFC of 0 passed Math 03 (Algebra I) at a rate of 36%, as compared to a 60% for those with higher incomes. Students with an EFC of 0 passed Math 04 at a rate of 40%, as compared to a 67% for those with higher incomes.

The pass rates in all developmental English courses were low, with 31% - 66% successfully completing the courses. The lowest income students have the lowest success rates. Students with an EFC of 0 passed English 1 (Preparation for Writing I) at a rate of 42%, as compared to a 60% for those with higher incomes. Students with an EFC of 0 passed English 3 (Preparation for Writing II) at a rate of 53%, as compared to a 65% for those with higher incomes. Students with an EFC of 0 passed English 5 (Reading Improvement II) at a rate of 54%, as compared to a 76% for those with higher incomes. The relationship of income to success did not hold true for the developmental English course with the smallest enrollment and least prepared students, English 4 (Reading Improvement I.) In this course, students with a 0 EFC passed at a 38% rate, as compared to 20% for those with higher incomes.

Faculty loads are heavy and there is little time for curricular reform and planning. The English faculty teaching developmental courses plan to establish at least one pilot learning community, which will require considerable time for planning. Math faculty will need time to plan for curricular changes in each developmental Math course, based on best practices (using findings from such projects as Pathways to Algebra, and the recommendations of researchers who have documented learning improvements through learning communities, active learning strategies, contextualized learning, and supplemental instruction). A bridge program will be planned during the 2005-2006 academic year and offered for the first time in the summer or fall of 2006.

The bridge program will be targeted to young developmental students, particularly the 17-18 year olds attending right out of high school who comprise half of the students completing developmental courses. Student Services reports that a high proportion of these students register just before classes are to begin and they are often unclear about career goals. The college will either conduct this program as a cooperative partnership within the public schools to increase student college-readiness before graduation (using a model similar to the Bridge Partnership funded by the Lumina Foundation), or it will be conducted as a summer program on the MECC campus for recently graduated students who need developmental instruction, as well as opportunities for career exploration, college orientation, parental involvement, and part-time employment prior to the first semester of college. If the summer program is selected, students will be employed part-time through the work study program and will complete service learning projects in teams to build community and encourage the development of friendships for peer-to-peer learning. The proposed summer program will be piloted in 2006 with 20-30 students. A particular emphasis will be made to target students with the lowest incomes (i.e. EFC of 0 if students have already graduated from high school.) If the in-school bridge program is piloted, the first program will be conducted during the 2006-2007 academic year in a high school with high levels of poverty.

Measurable Changes after Two Years: Students who participate in a summer bridge program will achieve the course completion goals described on page 7 of the narrative, as specified by income levels. Based on success of the program in year 1, it will be revised, expanded and continued in subsequent years.

Measurable Changes after Four Years: The overall success rate in developmental courses will increase by 5 percent and the disparity in success for students with an EFC of 0, compared to those with higher incomes, will be reduced by 10 percentage points, as compared to 2002-2003 cohort data. The specific goal for increasing success in each developmental course is described on page 7 of the narrative.

Work Plan	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Lead Staff
A Coordinator will be appointed to work with the Developmental math and English Committee. The Coordinator will call meetings of the faculty teaching developmental courses at least six times during the academic year, outside of Division meetings, to review developmental course data and implement the multi-year workplan.	X				Rhoda Bliese, Coordinator; Jason Ingles (student)
Two faculty members will be provided release time and technical assistance during the 2005-2006 academic year to plan the bridge program with counseling and Enrollment Services staff. If the summer option is selected, the program will begin to be marketed in February 2006.	X				Faculty to be identified
The bridge program will be piloted in summer 2006 or during the 2006-2007 academic year.		X			Faculty to be identified

Faculty members teaching developmental courses will meet six times during the academic year, outside of Division meetings, to review developmental course data and implement the second year workplan.		X			Rhoda Bliese and all developmental faculty
Three developmental faculty members who were not responsible for the implementation of the bridge program will receive three credit hours of release time to review best practices for developmental instruction, using findings from such projects as Pathways to Algebra and research regarding the efficacy of such techniques as learning communities, using active learning strategies and providing opportunities for study groups, use of contextualized learning, teaching study skills as a component of developmental courses, supplemental instruction, and using diagnostic and tutorial software (such as ALEKS) to identify and remediate topics in which they are weak. Two faculty members will receive a semester of release time to participate in professional development (which may include visiting other colleges using best practices) and plan course revisions. At the end of the semester, a written plan for revising two developmental courses to include new curricular improvements will be submitted to the Division Chair and Co-Directors of Achieving the Dream. The plan will include strategies for improving outcomes for all students, but especially low income students.		X			Faculty to be identified
The bridge program (either summer or academic year) will be evaluated. If the summer program is conducted, data will be gathered on retention from summer to fall, student success in completing developmental courses during the summer, and reductions in the disparity in success based on income. An additional measure will be success in enrolling students in the next developmental course in the sequence, or in college-level courses in fall semester. If the in-school bridge program is offered in 2006-2007, data will be gathered on the number of students who complete placement tests early, who begin addressing academic weaknesses early, and who take advantage of dual credit courses in high school.			X		Faculty to be identified
Faculty members teaching developmental courses will meet six times during the academic year outside of Division meetings to review developmental course data and implement the fourth year workplan.			X		Rhoda Bliese and all developmental faculty
Three faculty members will pilot revisions from second year planning. The Office of Institutional Research will assist faculty members in establishing an "experimental group" and a "control group" (if possible) to compare outcomes for new practices			X		Faculty to be identified

versus current practices. Data on student outcomes will be collected and analyzed.					
Three developmental faculty members will receive three credit hours of release time to review best practices for developmental instruction and plan course revisions as previously described. The course improvement plans will to be submitted to the Division Chair and the Co-Directors of Achieving the Dream will include strategies for improving outcomes for all students, but especially low income students.			X		Faculty to be identified
Three faculty members will pilot the second year course improvement plans. The Office of Institutional Research will assist faculty members in establishing an "experimental group" and a "control group" (if possible) to compare outcomes for new practices versus current practices. Data on student outcomes will be collected and analyzed.			X		Faculty to be identified
Three developmental faculty members will receive three credit hours of release time to review best practices for developmental instruction and plan course revisions as previously described. The course improvement plans will be submitted to the Division Chair and the Co-Directors of Achieving the Dream will include strategies for improving outcomes for all students, but especially low income students.			X		Faculty to be identified
Bridge program will be improved and expanded based on pilot year results.			X		Faculty to be identified
Faculty members teaching developmental courses will meet six times during the academic year outside of Division meetings to review developmental course data and implement the fourth year workplan.				X	Rhoda Bliese and all developmental faculty
One developmental faculty members will receive three credit hours of release time to develop a course improvement plan and pilot the improvements. The Office of Institutional Research will assist the faculty member establish an "experimental group" and a "control group" (if possible) to compare outcomes for new practices versus current practices. Data on student outcomes will be collected and analyzed.				X	Faculty to be identified
Bridge program will be improved and expanded based on results from first two years.				X	Faculty to be identified

Priority Area: Create an intrusive, integrated first-year experience.

Evidence/Rationale: The literature suggests that an integrated first-year experience, with intrusive services, have a positive effect on persistence through the first year. Good advising and orientation, and effective early warning systems help this academic and social integration to occur and to identify students who are having problems that could result in dropping out of college.

Large numbers of employees cited advising deficiencies as a “barrier to student success” and all of the faculty members in a focus group agreed that personal contact with advisees had been reduced over time. These faculty opinions were supported by student responses to two surveys. Ninety-six percent of orientation students surveyed indicated they had used MECC Online (a service for on-line registration implemented this year); only 76% had used advisors. In a separate survey of second year students, 93% cited MECC Online as helping them to continue at MECC; only 68% cited advisors as helping them to continue.

The college’s data reveal a higher level of success for students who complete orientation (52%) than those who do not (44%). The Core Team determined that a good orientation program could be further improved to bring College services to students. The Early Warning System developed in 1998 lacked coordination and was never fully implemented. All of these indicators, plus those included in the narrative, suggest a need to improve the consistency of advising, enhance orientation and enroll more students in orientation during first semester, and improve the early warning system.

Unlike in the college’s first early warning system initiative, in this initiative, at-risk students will be identified and appropriate interventions will be implemented to increase chances for student success.

Measurable Changes after Two Years: The following benchmarks will be achieved through advising/orientation/early warning system:

1. Standards for excellent advising will be developed and adopted for an advising recognition program.
2. 60% of all first year students will utilize at least two support services other than financial aid. Support services to be tracked include: advising, GAIN/tutoring, orientation, summer bridge program, learning community, work study, math lab, emergency assistance, or organized study groups associated with a class.
3. Creation of an operational early warning system which focuses on intrusive contact for students at higher risk of failure.

Measurable Changes after Four Years: MECC will increase overall fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention rates for first-time students by 10%. Over the four year period, 80% of all students of all first year students will utilize two or more support services other than financial aid.

Work Plan	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Lead Staff
A Coordinator will work with the Advising, Orientation and Early Warning System	X				Mike Cook, First Year

<p>Subcommittee Chairs for planning and monitoring of activities. A representative from the Core Team will work on each of the Subcommittees, along with volunteers from throughout the campus.</p> <p>The First Year Experience Committee will work with GAIN Program, Student Services Program, Financial Aid, and Office of Institutional Research to develop a central database to capture information on a variety of support services provided to students through various offices on campus (e.g. work study, tutoring, mentoring, emergency financial assistance program). This database will be used to track success in reaching benchmarks for use of support services.</p>					<p>Experience Committee Coordinator; Gary Bumgarner, Advising Subcommittee Chair; Mary Phillips, Orientation Subcommittee Chair; Perry Carroll, Early Warning Subcommittee Chair</p>
<p>The Advising Subcommittee will work with the Office of Institutional Research to establish instructions/guidelines for advisors who will be piloting the Student Risk System.</p> <p>The Subcommittee will also: 1) develop a checklist of issues to help advisors be intrusive in asking questions and soliciting information from students, 2) evaluate and make recommendations on how technology could be used to enhance advising, including establishing "blocks" to enrollment in inappropriate courses by at-risk students and notifying advisors of students dropping courses on-line, 3) gather data from other colleges on how to enhance contact with students who are registering for the first time on-line so that goals for face-to-face contact with advisors are achieved, and 4) determine if there is any information which advisors are not obtaining that is necessary to good advising (advisee lists, information on student progress on the SIS, etc.)</p>	X				<p>Gary Bumgarner, Sharon Fisher</p> <p>Core Team Members: Regina Massey Jerry Ramey</p>
<p>The Orientation Subcommittee will make recommendations regarding whether the college should require orientation in the first semester. The subcommittee will revise orientation so that students interact with each other academically and socially; students complete group work to solve problems and share ideas; access is provided to a counselor, faculty, GAIN staff member, student mentor; a strong career development component is included; students are exposed to a repertoire of active coping strategies.</p> <p>The Orientation Subcommittee will work with the Office of Institutional Research to assess student opinions about how to effectively involve families in</p>	X				<p>Mary Phillips, Sharon Fisher</p> <p>Core Team Member: Kim Dorton</p>

orientation/College activities. This information will be used for summer orientation planning in year 2.					
The Early Warning System Subcommittee will: 1) benchmark other colleges with effective early warning systems, 2) establish guidelines for implementing the early warning system with integrated roles of teaching faculty, advisors, orientation teachers, tutors, counselors and peer members, and 3) develop a plan/technical capacities for using the SIS to support an early warning system that is both "high tech and high touch." The early warning system will be implemented at three critical points: a) prior to registration (if the student registers before the start of classes), b) by the add/drop date, and c) after grades are released.	X				Perry Carroll
The President's Staff will: 1) assign on-going responsibility and timetable for updating advising manuals; 2) develop policy for summer advising; 3) assign responsibility for providing consistent advisor training; 4) schedule in-service at times that will minimize student difficulties in meeting with advisors; 5) develop rewards and recognition system for advising.	X				Dr. Terrance Suarez
The Advising Subcommittee will develop recommendations for standards for excellent advising to be used in faculty recognitions. The advising recommendations will extend beyond course scheduling to helping students be successful in achieving their educational goals (completing their program and either transferring to another college, or seeking employment). The standards will include responsibilities for advisor roles in implementing the early warning system.		X			Gary Bumgarner
The Orientation Subcommittee will 1) develop a summer orientation program for parents and students, 2) monitor implementation of new orientation being piloted, and 3) join with the Developmental Committee to evaluate the Summer Bridge Program.		X			Mary Phillips
The Early Warning System Subcommittee will lead implementation of an early warning system with defined roles and responsibilities. The Subcommittee will work with the Advising Subcommittee to train personnel who have roles in implementing the early warning system.		X			Perry Carroll
The First Year Experience Committee will document success in achieving goals for measurable changes after two years.			X		Mike Cook
The Early Warning System Subcommittee will monitor implementation of the early warning system by 1) surveying faculty/other employees to determine success in			X		Perry Carroll

implementing early warning duties; and 2) working with Computing Resources personnel to determine whether Student Information System (SIS) needs further development/refinement to provide information for early warning system.					
The Advising will utilize information gathered on support service utilization after year 2 to determine how support service utilization can be improved by year 4. Evaluation of year 2 results and recommendations will be provided to the Core Team.			X		Gary Bumgarner, Advising Subcommittee Chair
The Orientation Subcommittee will conduct a summer orientation for students and families and evaluate the results.			X		Mary Phillips, Orientation Subcommittee Chair
The Advising, Early Warning System and Orientation Subcommittee will be merged into one Subcommittee to monitor advising, orientation, and the early warning system. Data will be collected to determine success in meeting goals for measurable change after four years.				X	Mike Cook, First Year Experience Committee Coordinator

Priority Area: Create Learning Communities, targeting gatekeeper courses or other courses with lower levels of student success.

Evidence/Rationale: Twenty-nine percent of the 2002 and 2003 cohort attend MECC part-time. Part-time students, and many full-time students who have many outside responsibilities, are unable to participate in campus activities that foster academic and social integration. When 148 “upperclass” students (including 75% attending full-time and 25% attending part-time) were asked what helped them continue at MECC, 73% percent cited “faculty involvement with students” as being a significant factor. Fewer than three in ten students cited services designed to support social and academic integration, including orientation (29%), personal counseling (cited by 29%), GAIN/tutoring (cited by 27%), Career Center (cited by 26%), work study program (cited by 26%), math lab (cited by 23%), and clubs and organizations (cited by 14%).

These data suggest the need to maximize the use of classroom “capture time” to build student engagement with the subject matter, faculty members and other students, and increase academic and social support, particularly in classes that have low success rates. Learning communities will be proposed by faculty to achieve this goal. No learning communities currently exist and faculty/administrator knowledge of how to create and manage learning communities is limited; substantial professional development will be needed to develop learning community capacity. MECC will collaborate with PHCC and DCC in a learning community consortium to share professional development resources/knowledge and experience on learning communities.

Measurable Changes after Two Years: MECC will have at least two learning communities planned, advertised, and students will be enrolling. Active learning strategies or other strategies for learning enhancement will be piloted in two gatekeeper courses with low levels of success.

Measurable Changes after Four Years: MECC will have conducted at least three learning communities. Learning communities or active learning strategies will have been piloted in six gatekeeper courses with low levels of success. (The six are in addition to the three learning communities.) Quantitative data (student grades, retention rates) and qualitative data (student assessment of the learning environment) will be collected to determine comparative outcomes of learning communities versus instructional methods previously used in courses. Success rates for the same courses completed by the 2002 and 2003 Cohorts will be used as a basis for comparison.

Work Plan	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Lead Staff
A Coordinator will be appointed to work with the Learning Community and Active Learning Committee and to provide administrative support to learning communities for a period of four years. A member of the Core Team will serve on the committee, along with faculty members who volunteer to be involved in the development of the first learning communities.	X				Jim Burns, Learning Community and Active Learning Coordinator Core Team members: Karen Carter, Donna

					Stanley (others to be recruited)
The first phase faculty team/administrators to be involved in development of learning communities will participate in professional development. Faculty will select partners for planning, submit proposals around a theme, and gain approval for tentative plan for learning community. Faculty will plan in-class and out-of-class activities to achieve learning community goals, with joint selection of course materials, as needed. Baseline data for grades and retention will be obtained for evaluation purposes. A meeting of the three-college learning community consortium will be held during first and second semesters.	X				Jim Burns, Learning Community and Active Learning Coordinator Core Team members: Karen Carter, Donna Stanley (others to be recruited)
Gatekeeper courses with low rates of success will be identified and two faculty members will explore best practices to enhance success in two courses with three hours of release time. Plans for course improvement will be submitted to the Vice-President of Academic and Student Services for approval.	X				Jim Burns, Learning Community and Active Learning Coordinator Core Team members: Karen Carter, Donna Stanley (others to be recruited)
First Semester: A plan for two first phase learning communities (first semester) will be approved by the Vice President of Academic and Student Services; policies for registering students will be developed and approved; all personnel involved in registering students will be trained about the planned learning communities and the students most appropriate to enroll; advisement materials will be updated to include information about learning communities. The second phase group of faculty to develop learning community(ies) will begin professional development and planning (including selecting courses to link, levels of integration, and theme.) A meeting of the three-college learning community consortium will be held during first and second semesters.		X			Jim Burns, Learning Community and Active Learning Coordinator (Others to be recruited)
Second Semester: Information about the first learning communities will be published in the Fall Schedule; students will register for all learning communities.		X			Jim Burns, Learning Community and Active Learning Coordinator

The second phase group of faculty to develop learning community(ies) will plan in-class and out-of-class activities to achieve learning community goals, with joint selection of course materials, as needed. Baseline data for grades and retention will be obtained for evaluation purposes.					(Others to be recruited)
Two faculty members who planned improvement to gatekeeper courses in year 1 will pilot improvements		X			Faculty to be determined
Gatekeeper courses with low rates of success will be identified and two faculty will explore best practices to enhance success in two courses with three hours of release time. Plans for course improvement will be submitted to the Vice-President of Academic and Student Services for approval.		X			Jim Burns, Learning Community and Active Learning Coordinator (Others to be recruited)
First Semester: First learning communities will be piloted, data will be gathered on the results. The second phase faculty will observe first cohort of faculty teaching in learning communities. The final plan for the second phase learning community(ies) will be approved by VP of Academic and Student Services, as well as Curriculum and Instruction Committee for inclusion in the schedule for the following fall. A meeting of the three-college learning community consortium will be held during first and second semesters.			X		Faculty to be recruited
Second Semester: Policies governing learning community registrations and success of marketing of learning communities will be evaluated. Faculty who led learning communities will evaluate what was learned in the first year. Information about new and previously offered learning communities will be published in the Fall Schedule; students will register for fall learning communities.			X		Jim Burns, Learning Community and Active Learning Coordinator
Two faculty members who planned improvement to gatekeeper courses in year 2 will implement pilot improvements.			X		Faculty to be recruited
Gatekeeper courses with low rates of success will be identified and two faculty members will explore best practices to enhance success in two courses with three hours of release time. Plans for course improvement will be submitted to the Vice-President of Academic and Student Services for approval.			X		Faculty to be recruited
First Semester: Conduct the second phase learning community(ies) will be piloted. The first phase				X	Faculty to be recruited

learning communities will be repeated, after revisions. Data will be gathered to evaluate results. A meeting of the three-college learning community consortium will be held during first and second semesters.					
Second Semester: Second phase faculty who led learning community(ies) will evaluate what was learned during previous semester.				X	Faculty to be recruited
Two faculty members who planned improvement to gatekeeper courses in year 3 will pilot improvements.				X	Faculty to be recruited

Attachment A – Itemized Anticipated Expenses

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total Lumina Fdn Support Requested
1 Direct Costs					
Personnel Expenses					
Release of Full-Time Personnel by Adjunct Faculty:					
Developmental Committee					
Coordinator - To facilitate committee activities for four years. Overload pay at 6 credit hours per year X \$829.33 per credit hour (plus 4% increase COLA after first year) Rhoda Bliese will serve in this role.	\$4,976	\$5,175	\$5,374	\$5,573	\$21,098
2 Faculty members - Providing instruction/planning for the bridge program in public school or during summer 2 faculty members X 3 credit hours X \$550 per credit hour adjunct rate	\$3,300	\$3,432	\$3,569	\$3,712	\$14,013
Faculty members - planning for course revision 3 credit hours X \$550 per credit hour adjunct rate (plus 4% increase COLA after first year) 3 Faculty members year 2, 3 Faculty members year 3, 1 Faculty member year 4		\$5,148	\$5,354	\$1,848	\$12,350
First Year Experience Committee					
Coordinator - To facilitate committee activities for four years. Overload pay at 6 credit hours per year X \$762.33 per credit hour (plus 4% increase COLA after first year) Mike Cook will serve in this role.	\$4,574	\$4,757	\$4,940	\$5,123	\$19,394
Faculty member - Leading Advising Subcommittee for 3 years 3 credit hours X \$931.50 overload pay per year (plus 4% increase COLA after first year) Gary Bumgarner will serve in this role.	\$2,795	\$2,907	\$3,023		\$8,725

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total Lumina Fdn Support Requested
Administrator - Leading Orientation Subcommittee 2 credit hours X \$550 per credit hour adjunct rate to teach orientation (plus 4% increase COLA after first year) Year 1, 2, 3	\$1,100	\$1,144	\$1,190		\$3,434
Learning Communities and Active Learning Committee					
Coordinator - To facilitate committee activities for 4 years. Overload pay at 6 credit hours X \$655.70 per credit hour (plus 4% increase COLA after first year) Jim Burns will serve in this role	\$3,934	\$4,091	\$4,249	\$4,406	\$16,680
Faculty members - Planning for learning communities/active learning 3 credit hours X \$550 per credit hour adjunct rate (plus 4% increase COLA after first year) 6 Faculty members Year 1 (4 learning community-2 other) 6 Faculty members Year 2 (4 learning community-2 other) 6 Faculty members Year 3 (4 piloting learning communities-2 other) 4 Faculty members Year 4 (4 piloting learning communities)	\$9,900	\$10,296	\$10,708	\$7,392	\$38,296
Administrative Support II for data entry to establish a central student support database					
\$8.67 per hour X 20 hours X 50 weeks in Year 1	\$8,670				\$8,670
Tutor wages for supplemental instruction/study groups					
\$6.50 per hour X 60 hours X 40 weeks in Year 1, 2, 3, 4 (plus 4% increase COLA after first year)	\$15,600	\$16,224	\$16,873	\$17,548	\$66,245

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total Lumina Fdn Support Requested
Bridge Program Coordinator (If a summer program established, will use AmeriCorps members to plan/coordinate service learning; will need on-site supervisor. If an in-school program is conducted, will need someone in the schools to work with students outside class.) \$15 hr. X 20 hr. week X 8 weeks = \$2,400 (plus 4% after first year)	\$2,400	\$2,496	\$2,596	\$2,700	\$10,192
TOTAL PERSONNEL	\$54,849	\$53,174	\$55,280	\$45,602	\$208,905
TOTAL FRINGE BENEFITS (7.65% for full-time, adjuncts and wage personnel)	\$4,196	\$4,068	\$4,229	\$3,489	\$15,981
Subtotal - Personnel Costs	\$59,045	\$57,242	\$59,508	\$49,091	\$224,886
OTHER DIRECT EXPENSES					
Materials and Supplies					
Consumable supplies	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$4,000
Marketing materials for bridge program	\$1,000				
TOTAL MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$5,000
STIPENDS FOR FACULTY/STAFF	\$4,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$10,000
Marketing research for summer orientation program for families (Funds to complete personal interviews to assess how families would like to be more involved)					
Stipends to support faculty who are asked to attend meetings during the summer to evaluate new practices or attend AtD meetings during off-contract periods					

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total Lumina Fdn Support Requested
Travel					
Annual Reconvening of AtD Colleges (Years 1, 2, 3, 4)	\$5,013	\$5,053	\$5,053	\$5,053	\$20,172
5 representatives X \$400 airline ticket = \$2000					
5 representatives X \$125 hotel X 3 days = \$1,875					
5 representatives X \$43 per diem X 4 days = \$860					
5 representatives X \$40 ground transportation = \$200					
2 representatives X 120 miles X .325 mi. = \$78					
Benchmarking Other College practices (Years 1, 2, 3) or to attend topical workshops sponsored by AtD or other conferences related to AtD goals	\$9,696	\$9,696	\$9,696	\$9,696	\$38,784
12 representatives X \$400 airline ticket = \$4,800					
12 representatives X \$100 hotel X 2 days = \$2,400					
12 representatives X \$43 per diem X 3 days = \$1,548					
12 representatives X \$40 ground transportation = \$480					
12 representatives X 120 miles X .325 mi. = \$468					
Participation in Learning Community Collaborative with Patrick Henry CC and Danville CC (Years 1-4)	\$1,115	\$1,115	\$1,115	\$1,115	\$4,460
525 miles @ .325 mileage = \$171					
8 representatives X 1 nights lodging X \$70 night					
8 representatives X 2 X \$24 per diem = \$384					
Consultant Travel (Years 1- 4)	\$2,424	\$2,424	\$2,424	\$2,424	\$9,696
3 consultants X \$400 airline ticket = \$1,200					
3 consultants X \$100 hotel X 2 days = \$600					
3 consultants X \$43 per diem X 3 days = \$387					
3 consultants X \$40 ground transportation = \$120					
3 consultants X 120 miles X .325 mi. = \$117					

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total Lumina Fdn Support Requested
Student transportation for bridge program (Years 1-4) Van rental to supplement college motor pool during the summer when vans are heavily utilized for Governor's School and other summer camps 3 vans X \$100 weekly rental X 6 weeks = \$1,800 Fuel allowance for rental vehicles = \$500	\$2,300	\$2,300	\$2,300	\$2,300	\$9,200
Bridge program out-of-town travel for service (If the summer program is offered, will include some opportunities for instructional travel to enrich summer experience for students) (Will collaborate with Talent Search on some scholarships to assist additional students) 20 students X 3 nights hotel X \$75 per night = \$4,500 20 students X \$43 per diem X 4 days = \$3,440 20 students X \$50 admissions for events = \$1,000	\$8,940	\$8,940	\$8,940	\$8,940	\$35,760
TOTAL TRAVEL	\$29,488	\$29,528	\$29,528	\$29,528	\$118,072
Meetings/Conferences (Years 1 - 4)					
Annual AtD Retreat for all MECC personnel (Breakfast or lunch) \$8 X 150 = \$1200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$4,800
Meetings with College and Community Task Force (Breakfast or lunch) \$8 X 15 X 3 meetings = \$360	\$360	\$360	\$360		\$1,080
Summer Orientation for families of new students (Year 3-4)			\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
Registration fees for conferences (including Supplemental Instruction training in first year)	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$3,722	\$15,722
TOTAL MEETINGS/CONFERENCES	\$9,600	\$5,560	\$6,560	\$5,922	\$27,642

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total Lumina Fdn Support Requested
CONSULTANTS (Years 1-4) Consulting fees \$600/day X 2 days X 3 consultants for training on learning communities, advising, develop- mental education, and evaluation (as needed)	\$3,600	\$3,600	\$3,600	\$3,600	\$14,400
EVALUATION The college is absorbing the cost of evaluation.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Subtotal - Other Expenses	\$48,688	\$41,688	\$42,688	\$42,050	\$175,114
2 GRAND TOTAL	<u>\$107,733</u>	<u>\$98,930</u>	<u>\$102,196</u>	<u>\$91,141</u>	<u>\$400,000</u>

Attachment B

Terrance E. Suarez has been **President of Mountain Empire Community College** since 2002. He holds a B.S. and Ph.D. in Chemistry. Prior to coming to MECC, he was the Dean of Instruction and Student Services at Wytheville Community College in Wytheville, VA where he created an “Academic Alert” system to target at risk students early in the semester. Dr. Suarez provides overall leadership for MECC and has been actively involved with the Achieving the Dream strategy team studying learning communities.

Sharon K. Fisher is the Director of Planning and Community Relations at MECC and is serving as the **Chair of the Data Team for the Achieving the Dream initiative**. Dr. Fisher holds an Ed.D. in Educational Administration and Supervision, a M.S. in Nutrition and Food Science, and a B.S. in Social Sciences. An employee of MECC since 1987, Dr. Fisher oversees the Office of Institutional Research, which collects and analyzes data for planning and decision making. She develops instruments for assessing student learning, and she has expertise in strategic planning, facilitation, and team processes for continuous improvement.

Conley F. Winebarger is the Vice President for Academic and Student Services at MECC and is the **Co-Director of the Achieving the Dream initiative**. He holds an Ed.D. and Ed. S. in Curriculum and Instruction and a B.S. and M.A. in Industrial Education and Technology. He joined the administration Mountain Empire Community College in 2001. Under his leadership, MECC has implemented the Bridges Learning Program that identifies learning difficulties and provides a prescriptive improvement plan, and established an online math and English tutoring service.

Donna G. Stanley is the Vice President of Institutional Advancement at MECC, and she is the **Co-Director of the Achieving the Dream initiative**. She holds a B.S. in Home Economics Education and Extension and a M.S. in Consumer Studies. She has additional professional studies at the Center for Public Administrative Policy. As an employee of the college since 1993, Ms. Stanley serves as Executive Director of the MECC Foundation, provides key leadership for the College’s grant writing efforts, and has extensive experience as a grants administrator.

Rhoda Gamble Bliese is the **Coordinator for the Developmental Committee** for the Achieving the Dream initiative and is a Professor of Developmental Reading and Writing at MECC. She has been an employee of the college since 1982. She holds a M.A. in English and a M.A. in Reading, plus she has completed advanced study with the Kellogg Institute for the Training and Certification of Developmental Educators. She has been actively involved in the Student Success Committee since its inception and works as an advocate for the implementation of success and retention strategies on the campus.

Gary Joseph Bumgarner is a Professor of Business Management and Administration at MECC and is the **Advising Subcommittee Chair for the Achieving the Dream initiative**. Mr. Bumgarner holds a B.S. in Accounting and M.S. in Vocational Education with an emphasis in Distributive Education. He also has completed the coursework for a Ph.D. in Vocation-Technical Education with a business cognate. Mr. Bumgarner is an active faculty member and is involved in with the National Small Business Training Network and the local Chamber of Commerce. He has been employed by MECC since 1972.

Mary Phillips is the **Orientation Subcommittee Chair for the Achieving the Dream initiative**, and she has been a counselor and Associate Professor of Psychology at MECC since 1993. She holds an A.A.&S in Liberal Arts, a B.S in Sociology, a M.S. in Educational Psychology, and has hours beyond the Masters in Psychology and Counseling. Ms. Phillips regularly provides academic, personal, and career counseling to students, and she coordinate and teaches new student orientation.

Perry Carroll is a charter member of the MECC administrative faculty in the registrar's office and has been the Director of Enrollment Services since 1978. He holds a B.A. in Business and Public Administration and a M.Ed. in Guidance and Counseling. He is the **Early Warning Subcommittee Chair for the Achieving the Dream initiative**. Mr. Carroll has been a part of all major changes and improvements in financial aid and registration process, and MECC has become the major financial aid information resource for all graduating high school seniors and their parents, regardless of where the student plans to attend college.

