

# STUDENT SUCCESS BEST PRACTICE: WYTHEVILLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



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## STUDENT SUCCESS CATEGORY --

- ACADEMIC PROGRAM
- STUDENT SERVICES
- WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
- COLLEGE BUSINESS PRACTICE
- TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION
- OTHER: GUIDED PATHWAYS

**TITLE: "ACCESS SUCCESS: CREATING GUIDED PATHWAYS TO STUDENT SUCCESS"**

## PROCESS

"Access Success" was funded in part by a Chancellor's Innovation Fund (CIF) Grant, awarded in November of 2015, with the following objectives accomplished: 1) a nationally recognized pathways speaker, Dr. Rob Johnstone, delivered a 3-hour professional development session to education all college personnel about the need for guided pathways, 2) the WCC Foundation purchased every employee a copy of the Redesigning America's Community Colleges book, 3) college-wide book reading sessions were held for all employees to discuss the book and how WCC should implement pathways at the college, 4) design of a tool that enables students to understand and follow a path to completion, with a change in emphasis from education to careers. Data used to validate the need for the pathways project included college completion rates, retention rates (fall to fall and fall to spring), college enrollment for the past 5 years, unemployment rates in the region, and high school graduation rates in the college's service region. The effort was developed by a steering committee that consisted of the following: Tracy McAfee, Associate Professor of Communication Studies & Theatre, Dr. Rhonda Catron-Wood, Vice President of College Development, Shawn McReynolds, Director of Technology, Jill Ross, Development Services Coordinator, and Dr. Lorri Huffard, Vice President of Instruction and Student Development. However, the initiative was true a college-wide initiative, with participation and teamwork by all college personnel.

## STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

The strategy was to develop a pathways "decision tree tool," that would enable prospective and current students to make program choices based on career interests. To begin the process, all faculty leads and program heads, along with their respective program faculty, mapped their programs on skeins of paper, approaching the mapping as if they were advising a student on the best course of action to complete his or her program of study. Once the mapping was complete, WCC began working with Access, a design and marketing firm, to develop a career-based mapping tool for the WCC website. When the tool was complete, WCC contracted with EMSI to incorporate real-time career and salary information, along with job openings, career forecast data, and online applications for positions, into the pathways model.

## ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

Google analytics are embedded in the pathways pages so WCC can collect data on usage. Since the pathways tool did not go live until September 2, 2016, data collection began when the tool was launched. Data will be assessed on a regular basis to determine usage patterns, along with reevaluation of college data on completion and retention. While causality cannot be determined, completion and retention data should improve with the launch of the tool.

## PLAN FOR SCALE & SUSTAINABILITY

The pathways tool, as currently developed, is self-sustaining. WCC has submitted a second proposal for a CIF grant this year to expand the capability of the tool to include Workforce programs and industry credentials, transfer and articulation agreements, videos of graduates in each field, brand the pathways tool and develop complementary pathways print materials, load the pathways model onto Virginia Employment Commission computers, and continue the professional development needed to ensure sustainability of the project and a culture shift to make student success the WCC focus.

## COLLEGE DESCRIPTION

Wytheville Community College welcomed its first students in September of 1963, as a two-year branch of Virginia Polytechnic Institute (Virginia Tech). During its first year of operation, the college enrolled 107 students and employed five full-time faculty members. The Virginia Community College System was established during the 1966 session of the Virginia General Assembly. Wytheville Community College became a member of the system on July 1, 1967. In the first year of its operation, the college's enrollment rose to 837 and the number of full-time faculty members increased to 21. In the 2014-2015 academic year, 1,963 full-time equivalent students were enrolled at the College, served by a total of 45 full-time faculty. The mission of Wytheville Community College is to provide a quality, comprehensive education for the citizens of the counties of Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth (Marion and eastward), and Wythe and the city of Galax. The composition of the student body is 36% full-time and 64% part-time, and 62% female and 38% male, 75% attend classes during the day, and 65% receive financial aid.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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