

Integration of Academic ESL Faculty Into Programs Developed for Faculty Who Work With Native-English-Speaking Students



Clint McElroy, Edith Valladares McElroy, and Chuang Wang

■ ■ FRAMING THE ISSUE

Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) is a large, urban 2-year college located in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, which includes the city of Charlotte and a greater metropolitan population of approximately 1.5 million people. CPCC operates six campuses throughout the county and serves more than 56,000 students annually, making it the largest community college in North Carolina. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the Charlotte metro area experienced the greatest increase in percentage of immigrant population in the nation (679% since the 1990 census), which has had a profound impact on CPCC.

A primary function of community colleges in general is to serve the educational needs of multiple and varied communities. Services provided include language instruction for nonnative speakers of English. There was a 38% increase in English as a second language (ESL) offerings between 1991 and 1998 (Kuo, 1999; Schuyler, 1999), and the increase in enrollment of nonnative English speakers in higher education made ESL instruction one of the fastest-growing programs in community colleges (Kuo, 2000). The increase in ESL course offerings within community colleges was found at institutions of diverse sizes, with greater numbers and varieties of ESL courses being offered at larger, more urban colleges (Striplin, 2000). The general goals of these ESL programs are similar, but ESL instruction within community colleges is far from standardized (Shoemaker, 1996).

Authors like Cummins (1989) and Freire (1970) contend that educational underachievement is the result of the failure of schools to change the traditional relations between the dominant and the dominated minority groups. Minority students experience academic difficulties because schools have reinforced, or failed to prevent, the discrimination that minority groups experience in society. Minority students feel ambivalent and insecure about their own culture. They have been disempowered educationally and through interactions with society. Because minorities have already been disempowered by the social system, educational institutions should create a culture in which students feel empowered to develop both their academic abilities and their confidence in their personal identity. In this way, nonnative speakers of English have much in common with many other students in the community college, particularly those who come from backgrounds that have not prepared them well for being successful in a community college environment that, despite decades of efforts to democratize higher education through U.S. community colleges, remains foreign to their life experiences.

Faced with a variety of possible ways to define who at-risk students are and how to best address their needs, community colleges are limited in their options for action because of the narrow scope of their missions. Forces outside the institution cannot be controlled. But at the same time, the number of students in the United States who are attending college is greater than ever. And ever-greater percentages of these students, particularly those from ethnic minority groups, are attending community colleges. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2003a), by 1997 community colleges were enrolling 38% of the total enrollment in U.S. higher education but were enrolling 46% of ethnic minority students, students who are less likely to be prepared to do college-level work and, perhaps more important, less likely to enter college knowing how to navigate the rather complicated maze of higher education on their own.

The increasing number of students attending community colleges reflects a broader reach into the general population, which has resulted in high percentages of underprepared students coming through the doors of U.S. community colleges. According to the CPCC Department of Planning and Research (2006), 54% of the college's new incoming students were placed into at least one remedial course on the college's academic placement tests. This is not an isolated occurrence. Cohen and Brawer (2003) note that scores on the New Jersey Basic Skills Placement Test showed that 46.8% of students entering the state's community colleges in 1993 lacked the level of proficiency in verbal skills required to do college-level work, as compared to 19.6% at the state's baccalaureate institutions. In the same year, figures for computation skills were 54% versus 20.7% and, for college-level algebra, 72.9% versus 30.9%.

These figures for CPCC and New Jersey are different from, but not dissimilar to, those for the United States in general. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2003b), 42% of freshmen enrolling at public 2-year colleges in this country between 1995 and 2000 enrolled in at least one remedial reading, writing, or mathematics course, as compared to 20% at public 4-year institutions and 12% at private 4-year institutions. Further, students attending public 2-year colleges tend to spend more time in remediation than their peers at 4-year institutions, with the average amount of time students spend in remedial courses (at all types of institutions) showing a significant increase between 1995 and 2000. This is particularly true of community college students. For example, of the group of community college students placing into at least one remedial course in 1995, 45% needed to attend less than one year of remedial courses, 44% needed one year, and 11% needed more than one year. In 2000, 37% needed less than one year of remediation, 53% needed one year, and 10% needed more than one year. It is clear that more community college students are spending more time in remedial courses than their community college predecessors in prior years. Again, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, the more time a student needs to spend in remediation, the more likely that he or she will drop out of college.

The challenge, then, is for community colleges to give at-risk students the knowledge that change is possible and that they can be agents of change in their own lives. This is particularly true for urban community colleges,

those located in or close to major cities—[which] play a key role in higher education by serving economically, educationally, and ethnically disadvantaged, and nationally diverse student populations. These urban institutions face numerous challenges, the most notable of which is a student population largely comprised of individuals with one or more of the following characteristics: income below the poverty line, immigrant status, first-generation college student, a member of an ethnic minority group, in need of remediation, or whose first language is not English. (Hirose-Wong, 1999, p. 2)

In 2002, CPCC's president, Tony Zeiss, and his College Cabinet charged a three-member team with researching best practices relating to the retention of at-risk students, developing a plan to improve retention of these students at the college, and writing a U.S. Department of Education Title III Improving Institutions grant proposal to garner funds for implementation of the plan. This team, known as the Title III Writing Team, comprised Emma Brown, dean of retention services (in CPCC's Enrollment and Student Services Unit); Michael Horn, director of resource development (the chief grants officer at the college); and Clint McElroy, the first author of this chapter and the associate dean for enrollment and student services: programs for at-risk students. Based on

research of best practices and extensive consultation with subject area experts within CPCC, the Title III Writing Team designed an activity plan featuring three linked components:

1. improving student services for at-risk students
2. improving faculty training
3. improving technology for student tracking

In August 2003, CPCC received a 5-year Title III grant from the U.S. Department of Education to improve student services to high-risk students, improve training for faculty teaching traditional developmental reading and English courses (designed to improve the skills of native-English-speaking students who were not reading or writing at the college level), and improve the tracking and technology infrastructure in ways that would provide instructors working with high-risk students with detailed information (e.g., learning/cognitive style, personality type) about the students in their classes.

It is important to note that during the early stages of the Title III grant-proposal writing process, the writing team's intention was to include all developmental students, including academic ESL and developmental mathematics students. The decision to focus on developmental reading and English students and faculty was based primarily on which subpopulation of students would be most impacted by the Title III-funded interventions. Study of CPCC data showed that students taking academic ESL courses were much more likely to stay enrolled and be successful in subsequent college-level courses than students taking developmental reading and English (writing) courses for native speakers. Related data showed that students who placed into developmental math, but not developmental reading or English, via the college's placement test performed successfully in their courses other than mathematics. Although the writing team felt that the academic ESL and developmental mathematics students and faculty would benefit from the Title III-funded interventions, the limited federal funding available necessitated a focus on developmental reading and English students and faculty members. However, subsequent grant-writing efforts were successful in securing funding for academic ESL and developmental mathematics.

The remaining sections of this chapter document the process followed in seeking funding to include the academic ESL faculty, feedback from participating faculty and administrators, and detailed analysis of the challenges and benefits of offering these types of professional development and support tools to all faculty members, particularly full- and part-time ESL faculty members.

■ NARRATIVE

During the 2004–2005 academic year, Edith Valladares McElroy, the second author of this chapter and CPCC’s division director for foreign languages and academic ESL, worked with the CPCC Resource Development Department to identify potential funding sources to support academic ESL faculty members’ participation in the Title III–funded Student Success Faculty Training Series. Once the College Board’s Greenhouse Grant Program was identified as a potential funding source, Clint and Edith collaborated in writing a funding proposal.

College Board Greenhouse Grant Proposal

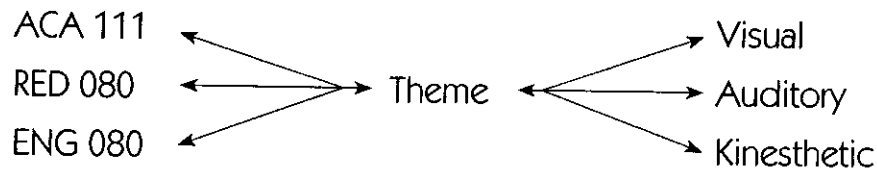
With the Title III funds obtained starting in August 2003, extensive development of the aforementioned programs has occurred. Among the first-year cohort of students participating in the expanded high-risk student programs (all enrolled in traditional developmental courses designed for native English speakers), retention rates increased by 9% and successful completion of developmental reading and English courses increased by 15%.

However, due to the specific focus of the Title III project, its funds could not be used to pay for faculty teaching academic ESL courses to undergo the faculty training process associated with the Title III activity. Because the results of the Title III activity had been so positive in terms of both in-term retention and student grade performance, we sought funds from the Greenhouse Grant Program to allow the 10 faculty members in CPCC’s “other” college-level developmental program (the academic ESL program) to attend the full Student Success Faculty Training Series.

CPCC’s academic ESL faculty (who teach a combined 1,176 students annually) and their students were thus able to fully take advantage of all training and related services being provided by the Title III grant. This training series involved a great deal of time and effort in the development of lesson plans and other instructional strategies designed to help high-risk students be more successful. All funds from the Greenhouse Grant Program (with the exception of administrative costs) were used to pay the instructors to attend the training and complete these instructional development activities. The integrated teaching/learning process highlighted in the training series is illustrated in Figure 1 (note that themes are tied to teaching methodologies addressing the three learning/cognitive styles).

Figure 1 represents the courses taught by instructors of native-English-speaking students, but it also applied to academic ESL courses. For example, if the theme is using CPCC’s Career Services office for job-hunting assistance, then a teacher of the ESL class would use activities that incorporate all three learning styles.

**Figure 1. Central Piedmont Community College
Thematic Teaching/Learning Model**



Grant Funding Allows Project to Begin

Table 1 illustrates the elements of the Student Success Faculty Training Series. The schedules have varied from year to year but have always included 48 total hours of training.

Voices of the Academic ESL Faculty Participants

A total of 10 instructors from the academic ESL area participated in the Student Success Faculty Training Series. The part-time instructors were paid \$17.98 per hour to attend the training. Faculty members' responses to the training were very positive. Although there were elements of the training that some felt could be improved (which is always the case), the full- and part-time participants were enthusiastic about the content of the training and the collaborative nature of the work—with other academic ESL instructors and with their colleagues from the developmental reading and English areas. In 2007, we asked the academic ESL participants to share their thoughts and feelings about their experience via brief written narratives. Of the 10 participating instructors, 6 responded: 5 part-time and 1 full-time. We present their responses grouped by topic.

Access to and Pay for Faculty Development Activities by Part-Time Instructors

- As part-timers, we are often not “in the loop.” Also, departmental meetings, continuing ed. seminars, etc., would often require a part-timer to drive back to campus and attend on their own time. While I (and all the part-timers I know) are fully committed to our students and teaching at CPCC, most of us must have additional employment to make it possible for us to teach. Consequently, attending meetings, training, etc., without stipends is often not possible. We were able to attend the Title III training because we were paid a fair developmental rate.

Table 1. Student Success Faculty Training Series

May 2005	
Day One	
9–10 a.m. Overview of CPCC Title III Project	Content is designed to give faculty participants a broad view of the purpose and goals of the project, with emphasis on goals for improving grade performance and retention of at-risk students.
10 a.m.–noon Overview of instructional components of the project	Faculty members from the ACA College Success Skills area and developmental reading and English present information on how learning style information and thematic content focused on student success issues are presented in their courses. Faculty trainers emphasize the importance of lesson planning and the need to vary instructional activities to meet the needs of students who have preferences for learning in auditory, visual, and/or kinesthetic ways.
1–2 p.m. Who are the developmental students?	Senior faculty from the developmental reading and English areas share demographic information and practical observations about developmental students enrolled at CPCC. The purpose is to emphasize the need for faculty to be creative in reaching out to students and teaching in ways that meet the needs of a diverse student population.
2–4 p.m. Learning style and personality inventories	Faculty from ACA and counselors from Enrollment and Student Services present an overview of the learning style and personality instruments taken by all students enrolled in the ACA 111 orientation course. Participants in the training take the inventories and review their results. Discussion focuses on how to help students interpret their results.
Day Two	
9–10 a.m. Online Student Profile (OSP) system	Participants learn to use the OSP system to access information about students enrolled in their classes, to contact student services areas using the e-mail alert features built into the OSP, and to guide students through the learning style and personality inventories and the resources for interpreting inventory results.
10–11 a.m. The critical first 3 weeks of class	Participants learn why at-risk students are particularly vulnerable to attrition during the first 3 weeks of class and are presented with strategies that senior faculty have used successfully in keeping students enrolled during this period.
11 a.m.–noon The role of counseling and advising	CPCC counseling staff members assigned to the Title III project describe services available to students and ways in which the professional counselors and advisors can directly assist faculty members in working with students.

(Continued on p. 104)

Table 1 (cont.). Student Success Faculty Training Series

1-4 p.m. Blackboard system training	Participants are trained on how to use the Blackboard online course management system (see Blackboard, 1997-2007). Training is provided by representatives of the CPCC Instructional Development office and by faculty members from the ACA and developmental reading and English areas.
Day Three	
9-10 a.m. OSP system (continued)	Participants continue to learn to use the OSP system.
10 a.m.-noon Lesson planning and collaboration with other instructors	Participants are guided through the basics of a lesson-planning process designed specifically for the CPCC Title III grant by faculty participants. This process involves designing lessons that meet the needs of learners with auditory, kinesthetic, or visual learning preferences and that explicitly state how the needs of learners with various learning preferences are developed and shared with other instructors.
1-4 p.m. Blackboard system training (continued)	Participants continue their training on how to use the Blackboard online course management system.
Day Four	
9 a.m.-noon Active learning strategies	Participants from the current faculty training group and from previous years' training groups work with an experienced facilitator to develop active learning strategies that fit the content of courses the participants teach.
1-4 p.m. Active learning strategies (continued)	Participants continue to develop active learning strategies.
August 2005	
Day One	
9-10 a.m. Overview of CPCC Title III Project	Participants revisit the purpose and goals of the CPCC Title III project.
10 a.m.-noon Blackboard system training	Participants are trained on how to use the Blackboard online course management system.
1-2 p.m. The role of counseling and advising	Members of the CPCC counseling staff who are assigned to the Title III project describe services available to students and ways in which the professional counselors and advisors can directly assist faculty members in working with students.

Table 1 (cont.). Student Success Faculty Training Series

2-3 p.m. Student information and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act	A representative of the CPCC Admissions Office gives an overview of federal regulations governing student information and the need for faculty members to keep certain student information confidential.
Day Two	
9 a.m.-noon Active learning strategies	As in the May training session, participants from the current faculty training group and from previous years' training groups work with an experienced facilitator on developing active learning strategies. Emphasis is placed on lesson plan development and incorporation of activities for auditory, kinesthetic, and visual learners.
1-4 p.m. Active learning strategies (continued)	Participants continue to develop active learning strategies.
Day Three	
9 a.m.-noon Active learning strategies (continued)	Participants continue to develop active learning strategies.
1-4 p.m. Lesson planning and collaboration with other instructors	Participants work together in the lesson-planning process designed specifically for the CPCC Title III grant by faculty participants, which was introduced in the May training session.
Day Four	
8 a.m.-noon Participation in CPCC Fall Conference opening activities	This section of the training was reserved for part-time instructors (who are paid to attend the training series) to be able to attend beginning-of-the-year activities that are normally attended by full-time personnel only. The intent is to encourage greater connections among part-time faculty members and the college.
1-4 p.m. Blackboard system training (continued)	Participants continue their training on how to use the Blackboard online course management system.

- I think part-timers do receive support re: development and training. In fact, many departments REQUIRE 12 hours of training a year. The college, in general, and my department, in particular, keep me posted on classes I can take free of charge. Furthermore, full-time staff members are available if I want to talk about ideas I have or if I have questions about new materials, etc. The fact the training was paid was a great help!! For

a part-timer, it's difficult to commit to hours of training if there's no financial compensation.

- I feel that in our department, and generally among others I know in the profession, ESL teachers receive verbal encouragement and enthusiastic support for participation in staff development. However, it is rare for part-time instructors to receive any monetary support for participating. I believe that we all feel a frustrating tension between our desires to maintain a professional attitude, including continual professional growth and development, and the difficulty of taking unpaid time to be a part of staff development programs and activities. [Being paid to attend the training] had a huge impact. No matter how committed the part-time instructor, attending a weeklong faculty-development series without being compensated is more than most of us are willing and able to undertake. The money was great, but equally important for me was a sense that this was important enough for the department to fund payment. I felt that my time was valued, and I appreciated that.
- [The training] was very helpful, productive, well organized, and held in a friendly setting. Part-timers have little opportunity to meet, as they have no central work space where they might stop in regularly, discuss and exchange ideas. The foreign language lab does not lend itself to such meetings, as it is a student workspace and loud discussions are inappropriate. Scattered across the campus are workstations where the mostly invisible part-timers may do some of their work without much if any interaction with anyone else in the room. Part-timers and full-timers, in addition, are scattered over all the CPCC campuses, which further complicates interactions. Thus, organizing staff development activities must be a logistical nightmare. Given the fact that part-timers are paid little more than a mere pittance for a course, any extra pay [for attending training activities] helps.
- Like many (most?) ESL “part-time” instructors, I teach in two ESL programs. Thanks to the forward-thinking attitude in Charlotte academic circles, I have always been welcomed into professional development opportunities. Receiving a stipend and materials for later use is an incentive for participation by those who receive these benefits beyond personal development. In the personal accounts of adjuncts around the world, however, the situation here is an exception. It is my perception that the lack of administrative support across the academic and for-profit world reflects a “cannon fodder” mentality. Any foot soldier (English-speaking person) can do this job. When one falls (quits in disgust and despair over conditions), another will step forward. There's no need to develop and

deepen technique, thinking skills, or knowledge. I have been teaching a long time. I felt that my attendance [at the training] was two-sided, teaching and learning, and work should be compensated for.

- As a general rule, part-time instructors do not receive support for professional development. This is mainly because it is very difficult to expect teachers, who already dedicate a lot of extra time to their students, to spend time on PD [professional development] when they are not compensated for it. The lack of participation does not reflect a lack of interest. Part-timers usually supplement their income in other ways or have many other commitments making it hard for them to commit to unpaid PD. I think that lack of knowledge about programs that are offered and the perception that PD activities are for full-time employees is also a deterrent.

Elements of the Training That Were Most Helpful

- The most helpful topic for me was the learning/cognitive styles. While I have studied this many times before, I was reminded of the need to vary teaching styles to cover all the learning styles. Since the training, I have been more intentional in keeping the class moving and multi-sensory when possible. Learning of the student services and resources has also been helpful. I have referred students to the counseling center with a positive experience.
- I enjoyed the intensive training I received last year. I learned a great deal about how the college places students, placement tests, and special programs. It was very good to know about these things in case my students ask. However, because my students aren't fluent in English, they probably would not take a learning style or personality test, etc. Therefore, this info isn't on file for them; I don't have anything to refer to. Still, it was good to know about these tools. The TRIO program [federally funded support services for at-risk students] is something I have referred students to. Also, I learned a great deal from watching instructors doing presentations on select teaching activities.
- I have always tried to incorporate learning style/cognitive style information in all my classes. The information about CPCC's online assessments for students and instructor ability to access those assessments really complemented and simplified what I was already doing in the classroom. The technology training spurred me on to begin using Blackboard as an integral part of my classes. I had feared that ESL students might find it intimidating, but instead I found that they loved using it after some basic instruction and seemed to feel empowered by their ability to use

technology in the classroom. The other particularly useful aspect for me was the overview of services and resources available to students outside the classroom. I've used the online referral system for students in need of counseling/advising assistance and found it a great tool. I've also begun using information about campus services in classroom activities. For example, in a recent lesson on the use [of] modal auxiliaries I created a "what should you do if . . ." question list for group discussion. The answers were all related to services and procedures here on CPCC's campus.

- Part-timers and full-timers were able to meet in a relaxed environment and exchange ideas concerning teaching strategies, lesson planning, problem solving, strategies of accommodating students with a range of different needs. Overall, the presentations were well done and thought provoking, in my case reassuring me in the ways in which I prepare for class, manage a classroom, and respond to a range of problem situations (e.g., counseling students personally and academically, taking care of snags with paper work, referring students to appropriate support services). Ultimately what impressed me much was the fact that everyone was able to meet and exchange ideas productively. During the regular semester, we all seem to scurry from one responsibility to the next and there seems little opportunity to meet as efficiently and productively as it was possible during the summer workshop.
- I'm not sure when the concepts of learning styles and multiple intelligences became commonplace, but the attention to these elements and their application in the classroom began long after I left my formal educational upbringing! Because I've done a lot of reading/learning on my own, I suppose the collaborative aspect was the most immediately useful, along with knowing what services and resources are available to students. The synthesis and application of all these elements, however, makes it difficult to pick out just one.
- I found the learning styles (auditory, visual, and kinesthetic) useful in developing new lessons and in tweaking old lessons. I was able to integrate activities that reach all three learning styles rather than having different lessons that focus on implementing a particular style. In particular, I developed a "partner dictation" and "jigsaw" discussion activity that requires students to listen, speak, and act in order to put the pieces of a story together to answer questions. I also was motivated to create some lessons that integrate target skills for my students with knowledge of student services and resources on campus. For example, listening and taking notes on academic lectures is a target skill in my Listening-

Speaking II course. After attending the training, I developed a lecture that includes information about services for students at CPCC. My students must listen to the lecture, take notes on it, discuss with classmates, and take a quiz on the information. This lesson allows them to practice an important learning objective while learning valuable information about the college. I also developed a webquest (online scavenger hunt) that gets students to find important information about the college online. This activity utilizes technology to expose students to important college information online while teaching them to navigate CPCC's Web site.

Overall Assessment of the Student Success Faculty Training Series

- The staff development was definitely useful. In addition to the individual learning, it helped me to feel like a part of a professional community. For that week, I felt that I had peers, which was energizing and encouraging.
- I think that my comments reflect the strengths of this program. It provided lots of practical information that I can use on a day-to-day basis. Perhaps the greatest weakness of this particular activity was the fact that it was largely led by people outside the field of second language instruction. At the same time, it seemed that the inclusion of ESL instructors gave a great dimension to the sessions. Because I teach across programs, I find that there is often a lack of understanding among faculty at large about the special needs of our ESL student population. When we meet across programs, I always feel that I have a terrific opportunity to advocate for their needs and emphasize the strengths they bring to our college community.
- Overall, the ideas have been very helpful for my own work. A couple of the presenters who used [Microsoft PowerPoint presentations] might have spoken more freely rather than reading the slide show to their audience (a pet peeve of mine). So as not to end on a sour note, as that would do the overall project a disservice, it was a very good, well organized, productive workshop.
- I think it's wonderful of CPCC to schedule training, and to make the effort to support participation with a stipend, materials, and a professional attitude toward the participants. At the end of the series, it might have been a good idea to ask participants to prepare at that time a contact sheet with a brief description of what they're doing at CPCC so that people could have a written reminder of who was who. I met people whose paths have not since crossed mine. We could have done it in a computer lab, added a photograph, and put together a quick publication that could rest (after editing) somewhere on the CPCC Web pages.

Because I'm not at CPCC during the day, I missed any follow-up, and I didn't receive anything in an e-mail or whatever. I was invited to follow-up activities, but unlike the original series, they were not during non-teaching times (i.e., between semesters). A suggestion: consider a liaison person with released teaching time, or teaching level paid time to continue the collaboration between ESOL and non-ESOL participants.

- Collaboration is extremely important. Teaching can be a very isolated profession. I got so many ideas from the presenters and participants while in the training and while developing the lessons. We all have different strengths and bring unique ideas to the table. It would be nice to have a presentation that addresses some of the specific needs of our nonnative-speaking student population. The strengths of the program were the interaction with other faculty and staff members, the camaraderie that comes from spending time together, basic information about CPCC services, and new ideas for making learner-centered lessons.

■ PROFESSIONAL RESONANCE

During the training, faculty participants learned how to teach students to be more self-directed and proactive in planning their educational activities. Faculty received in-depth instruction in how various student support services work, how students can and should use CPCC's information technology services, and what students should do when they encounter difficulties in their studies or other parts of their lives (which includes the faculty strategizing about how to convey this information to students via activities integrated with their normal course content). As a result of academic ESL faculty participation in the training series, course delivery methods are being altered in ways that will enhance student success, with improved learning outcomes linked directly to student persistence and goal completion.

The content of the training series and the participants' reactions to it reflect a concrete example of the *learning college* concept presented by O'Banion (1997): a community college that places the students' learning needs first. He states that the learning college is based on six principles:

1. The learning college creates substantive change in individual learners.
2. The learning college engages learners as full partners in the learning process, with learners assuming primary responsibility for their own choices.
3. The learning college creates and offers as many options for learning as possible.
4. The learning college assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities.

5. The learning college defines the roles of learning facilitators by the needs of the learners.
6. The learning college and its learning facilitators succeed only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for its learners.
(p. 47)

O'Banion (1997) posits that many of the realities regarding the education of diverse students require that colleges forgo certain traditional ways of operating—particularly a one-size-fits-all delivery of instruction and student services—in favor of delivering instruction and services in a manner that is tailored to the needs of individual students and designed to provide specialized assistance to help students persist to completion, whatever that completion may be.

The Student Success Faculty Training Series in which the academic ESL instructors participated alongside faculty members from the developmental reading and English and “college success skills” areas of CPCC was designed to emphasize the importance of the principles of the learning college in working toward student success. Without opportunities for part-time instructors to participate in faculty training activities—which includes paying them to attend—there is virtually no way for a community college or other higher education institution to actively participate in the professional development of the people who provide the “product” that student customers are “buying.” Although many teaching professionals shy away from using the language of commerce to describe the teaching/learning process, effective arguments must be made in order to secure funding to pay part-time instructors to attend training. Because adopting more learner-centered teaching practices and educating part-time faculty about the services that are available to students (as well as how those services can be accessed) has been shown to improve student success and retention, effective financial arguments can be made via a cost-benefit analysis that ties student retention to increased revenues.

■ ■ INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES

The existence of the CPCC Title III project made the funding for development and implementation of the Student Success Faculty Training Series a nonissue for the institution. Because the training series had already been developed and was being offered to the developmental reading and English faculty and the ACA college success skills faculty, including the part-time academic ESL faculty was only a matter of coming up with the funds to pay them to attend. Because the faculty training series had already been shown to have a positive effect on the quality of instruction, the proposal for the College Board Greenhouse

Grant that funded the academic ESL faculty's participation was fairly easy to write.

That said, the entire project was made possible by grant funding, both from the U.S. Department of Education's Title III Improving Institutions Program and from the College Board's Greenhouse Grant Program. The importance of seeking grant funding for start-up activities such as this one cannot be stressed enough. Most community colleges are strapped for funds, and administrators often have trouble finding enough money to keep everything running "as is," much less add a program that may appear to be nonessential at first glance. Using grant funds to start programs that are ultimately beneficial to student customers can illustrate to administrators that continuing these programs is a good investment of the college's limited funds.

As a case in point, because of the effectiveness of the Student Success Faculty Training Series in promoting the learning college approach among part-time faculty, the CPCC president's cabinet recently (Spring 2007) announced its intention to expand part-time faculty access to the training series via college funding of stipends. Nothing succeeds like success.

The collaborative nature of this project—with the academic ESL program utilizing the existing faculty training component developed through Title III funding in order to successfully apply for its own grant funding—underscores the need for ESL professionals in community colleges and other higher education institutions to keep in close contact with their colleagues in other academic departments (this often gets overlooked) and in student affairs/student services departments. To modify a well-known proverb, no department is an island.

■ EXTENDING THE DIALOGUE

Gaff and Pruitt-Logan (1998) report that colleges with institutionalized formal staff development programs that require faculty participation experience gains in student retention and that faculty who teach at such institutions feel a sense of professional renewal as a result of their participation. However, most faculty development programs in community colleges, colleges, and universities lack specific focus on institutional change or student success outcomes (Brookes & German, 1983; Richardson & Moore, 1987). This lack of focus is problematic because faculty training programs in community colleges that exhibit greater degrees of student success are clearly linked in systematic ways to institutional priorities (Richardson & Wolverson, 1994). Murray (2002) argues that many faculty members teaching in community colleges are not well prepared by their discipline-based educational backgrounds to understand the philosophies that underlie the community college mission. Because of this, Murray emphasizes, it is imperative for community colleges to provide faculty development activi-

ties that tie the teaching and learning process to goals such as helping at-risk students succeed.

As illustrated in the case of academic ESL faculty participation in the CPCC Student Success Faculty Training Series, it is not enough for a college to develop a focused faculty development program that is tied to institutional goals for promoting student success. The institution needs to find ways to involve its part-time instructors in its focused faculty development program once that program is developed and in place. From our experience, it is clear that the way to engage part-time faculty members is to pay them to participate in training and curriculum development activities.

■ ■ CONTRIBUTORS

Clint McElroy is the associate dean for enrollment and student services in the Programs for At-Risk Students at Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) in Charlotte, North Carolina, in the United States. He earned his doctorate in curriculum and instruction with a concentration in urban education from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He chairs CPCC's Retention Committee, which focuses on improving student retention.

Edith Valladares McElroy is the division director for foreign languages and academic ESL at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, North Carolina, in the United States. She earned her doctorate in curriculum and instruction with a concentration in urban education from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. In addition to teaching, she frequently develops Internet-based language courses.

Chuang Wang earned his doctorate with two cognate areas (educational research and teaching ESL) from The Ohio State University and is currently an assistant professor of educational research (both quantitative and qualitative) at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, in the United States.