Lumina Foundation for Education

Baton Rouge Community College

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2010

Narrative Report 2009-10

BRCC

9/30/2010

**Lumina Foundation for Education**

**Grantee Interim Narrative Report Outline**

**Legal Name of Organization:**  Baton Rouge Community College

**Common Name of Organization:** BRCC

**Lumina Foundation Issued Grant Number:** 5164

**Grant start date:** 07/01/2007 Grant end date: 06/30/2010

**Period covered by report:** 08/01/2009 – 07/31/2010

**Progress on Goals, Activities, and Timeline**

1. **List the major objective of the project as outlined in your proposal**

* Expand availability of first-year student experiences {Objective 1}
* Track course completion rates in the College Success Skills (CSSK) linked with College Algebra and Developmental Math {Objective 2}
* Increase percentage of first-time, full-time entering freshman progressing to the second year {Objective 3}
* Increase three-year graduation rate {Objective 4}

1. **Describe major grant milestones and the progress you have made towards achieving these objectives within your proposed timeline.**

The Lumina Journey

As we reflect back on the beginning of this journey, our first ever cohort data presentation shocked everyone in attendance. Our faculty and staff thought that our students were graduating and going on to employment or a four-year institution. Since that initial campus-wide meeting, much has progressed at BRCC. Due to executive leadership embracing Lumina principles, the college has used the Lumina grant to spur institutional change regarding data-driven decisions. The Chancellor, Dr. Myrtle Dorsey, has included Lumina reports as an agenda item for most major college community gatherings such as Convocations. The Lumina project has made a significant impact on college.

Each bullet contributes to objectives indicated:

* Being able to identify high-risk behaviors that affect academic performance is one of the many steps toward student success (persistence and retention). The college has reviewed several systems that would enhance its ability to identify high-risk behaviors earlier and more efficiently, so students are connected with services before they contemplate leaving college. Over the course of several years, the college has become particularly interested in using technology to remedy this concern. Beginning fall 2010, the college will launch its five-year commitment with Starfish Retention Solution to enhance communication between faculty, staff, and students; track academic performance; and connect suppport services with students who need it most.

Starfish supports implementation and assessment of success strategies, while leveraging communication and access barriers. The college will use data from Starfish to make more informed decisions, develop more influenital interventions, and support lessons learned through Lumina project. A more compelling reason for Starfish is that we know students are not bound by time or space. Therefore, access to information at any time is critical to their success. As our student population increases, so does attrition. This tells us that our students need a variety of ways to support their success both in class and throughout their college experience. < *Objectives 1, 2, 3, & 4 >*

* The college is an advocate of more students becoming self-directed learners. Online orientation addresses this concern by creating a user-friendly multimedia method to deliver and access information at any time and any place. This option allows the incorporation of videos, audio, and flash to ehnhace students’ experience. All first-year students must attend orientation, which is a requirement of their admissions process. Because we have an Internet-based student population, it just make sense to offer an alternate method to access and distribute information. Online orientation mimimizes assessibility concerns, while using a more student-centered approach to deliver information. During spring 2010, the college signed a five-year agreement with Comevo (Communication Evolved) to maintain and house the orientation site. This collaboration enables the college to expand the first-year student experiences, in an effort to reach more of its diverse student population. The opportunity enhances how the college delivers its support services using a method similar to course delivery. Through a webmedium, students where-by both an academic and social network is created to ensure more students learn where to go to get resources. Online orientation challenges each student to consider their role in their own success, this is done before the semester begins. To more accurately capture knowledge gained, assessments and customizable reports are incorporated to make certain learning outocmes have been attained.

< *Objectives 1, 2, 3, & 4 >*

* The Student Ambassadorship inititative is by large one of the most visibile milestones attained. Each semester approximately five (5) currently enrolled students are selected as Student Ambassadors to the college. Primarily, these students must maintain a 3.0 grade point average at mid-term and receive at minimum, a grade of (B) in all courses. Students are paid hourly and bi-weekly, according to the normal Human Resource pay schedule. Ambassadors assist with New Student Orientation; assist during on-campus student events; provide directions to various campus locations; give basic information about the various offices and resources on campus; and many are selected to serve on Quality Teams (i.e. New Student Orientation Quality Team) to represent and voice concerns on behalf of the student population. The Ambassadorship program allows students to demonstrate and polish their leadership and soft skills, while working a maximum of twenty (20) hours per week. Margolis and McCabe (2006) encourage use of peer models by allowing students to watch their peers succeed at a task. Leonard (2008) promotes the idea that on-campus student employment positively affects retention rates. Beginning fall 2010, the College through SGA (Student Government Association) will provide funding to continue this effort. SGA will fund the Student Ambassadorships thus providing sustainability for this intervention. This commitment further enhances first-year student experiences, socialization, and persistence rates.

< *Objectives 1, 3, & 4 >*

**Activities that differ from initial plan:**

1. *BRCC Summer Excellence Program, instead the development of a Mathematics Boot Camp*

The Mathematics Boot Camp (MBC) replaced the Summer Excellence Program that was outlined in the grant. MBC focused on those who needed help the most; those students enrolled in the lowest developmental mathematics sequence (M092). National data trends suggest most students usually do not complete all courses in developmental sequence. At the college many students test out of developmental course(s) by retaking the Math Compass before completing sequence, enroll in other courses where completion of the developmental math sequence is not required. All are done in an effort to simply delay taking developmental math courses until all options have been exhausted. To help students understand the significance of completing developmental math sequence and to offer various options for students to complete sequence, the project offered its first summer mathematics boot camp. MBC reinforced pre-algebra and algebraic concepts during a three week, 50-hours of high-tech and touch, summer period. The Center for Academic Success Math Specialist and two peer tutors faciliated learning among twenty (20) students as they attempted to refresh their skill set in order to decrease the number of developmental math courses they would have otherwise taken. At the end of week three, each student retook the Math Compass to assess the level of knowledge gained.

1. Banner Tracking System {Starfish Retention Solution}

The proposal stated Banner as the primary tool to track academic performance. But it was later realized that a more aggressive mechanism was needed to capture academic performance. Banner as a standalone data system could not provide the versatility needed to accurately and consistently monitor academic progress over time. In order to create a culture of evidence, a more comprehensive data warehouse was imperative to establish. Research indicated that Starfish was the only readily available system that could serve as a bridge between *Banner* (Student Information System )and *Blackboard* (Course Management System). Collectively, they both allow Starfish to operate as the centeral nervous system to create reports, allow storing and sharing of notes, calendar sharing, role designation, progress monitoring, and data collection and analyses. The system alleviates delay in early-alert, minimizes use of papers through a quick and convenient access to information, instead of after-the-fact. Starfish is a proactive tool which mimimizes occurrences when services were delivered after students had already withdrawn courses, or the amount of time away from their classes made it impossible for them to successfully complete the course (successful completion means a grade C or better).

1. One-Stop-Shop Redesign {New Student Orientation, NSO}

Although eager to receive new students, many times the college would offer services that leave many students frustrated and confused. As drastic increases in student population continued, the project revisited the One-Stop-Shop Redesign processes to ensure it was working according to plan. The redesign focused on elements of testing, advising, and class scheduling. It was never meant to encompass all areas of admissions and registration. However, several semesters of data suggested that the redesign would be more effective if it included orientation. The New Student Orientation Quality Team approved the collapse of orientation into the redesign efforts. The reconciliation of orientation, testing, advising, and course scheduling enables new students to access more information and resources prior to the start of the semester.

**Major Changes:**

**Describe any major changes or experiences that have had, or will have, an impact on the work supported by the grant.**

1. Consideration to develop an Integrated Developmental Mathematics pilot similar to the Integrated English/Reading pilot.

The mathematics department continues to explore strategies that would decrease the number of students recommended to enroll in developmental mathematics, and the amount of time required to complete sequence (M092, 093, 094). Because of the success of the Integrated English/Reading pilot, serious deliberations are underway to incorporate a developmental math model. The challenge is purely the development of such a model. Many math faculty believe an integrated mathematics [M092, M093, M094] pilot would limit the amount of concepts that are covered in one semester. The belief is that the model would ultimately decrease possible knowledge gained, which could cause students to fail their first college-level algebra course. However, others believe many students need only a review of concepts, not necessarily a course that would teach concepts in a compressed format. The integrated pilot is a viable model for the college to explore, if we could simply agree on what we expect from such a model.

1. Consideration to make incorporate the Integrated English/Reading pilot as regular course offerings.

The college promotes course integration as one that demonstrates how time, course completion, and student success are interrelated as critical components of developmental education. Since spring 2009, four (4) Integrated English/Reading courses have been offered to lessen the number of developmental English and reading courses students would have otherwise taken. As of reporting time, this model is the primary blueprint for how the college would approach integrating other developmental courses. If incorporated as a college-wide effort, the format could debunk the myth that obtaining a college degree simply takes too long, so apparently its not meant to p0p\be attained by developmental students. Although developmental courses do not count towards degree completion, neither is the grade calculated into grade point average of the student; however, it does allow entry into the college while the student attain fundamental skills needed for college-level work. The college promotes course integration as one that demonstrates how time, course completion, and student success are interrelated as critical components of developmental education.

1. Creation of the Center for Academic Success (CAS).

Spring 2009 ushered in a new campus-wide concept that brought a more comprehensive approach to support services. The Lumina Grant provided an opportunity for campus leaders to understand the significance service consolidation, and importance of accurate and consistent information. The creation of CAS will positively impacted retention numbers for the 14th census day and ultimately the fall to spring retention numbers. CAS houses Advising/Counseling, Title III, Academic Learning Center, Testing Center, Computerized Mathematics Lab, Quality Enhancement (QEP)/First-Class, and Disability Services. Prior to CAS, most of these units were working in silos and providing overlapping services and/or information. Housing all of these units together gurantees the delivery of correct information, eliminates countless visits to each department, and ensures completion of enrollment process. Also, the environment promotes and encourages teamwork and cross-training.

The concept of CAS was initated because of Lumina’s interventions which identified a need to create an atmosphere that was more student-centered and student-friendly. During summer 2010, a campus-wide training occurred to retool all CAS staff and other support areas about the importance of providing customer service in a consistent and friendly-manner. Each unit was trained to operate as comprehensive department using all of its resources. Today, CAS continues to modify areas of challenges and maximize every opportunity to ensure the vision is met and all persons involves understand that “greater is the whole than the sum of its parts.” This idea is seemingly the backdrop to the reality, the student population will continue to grow, as the college is expected to do more with a shrinking budget.

1. The campus community has overwhelmingly adapted to the data-driven decision making concept. The Chancellor has led the effort for all departments to include data in every aspect of their decision process. The unit annual evaluations include the goals worked towards during the year and the data that shows the results toward goal completion. Unit leaders and academic department leaders collect data annually. There is an electronic data request form widely used to request data from Institutional Research and Effectiveness. The types of data the college collects and the quality of data needed to complete reports and other benchmarks were recently discussed at the first Annual Data Summit hosted by Institutional Advancement. Over sixty-one (61) professional staff and faculty were in attendance.

**Describe changes occurring within your organization and/or outside your organization that have an impact on the work supported by the grant (e.g. in the community, in your local government, etc.) since your last report.**

* *State budget cuts*, similar to last year, continues to be the driving force behind assessing the duplication of processes, and consolidating services and programs on campuses. The state of Louisiana continues to cut funding for higher education, in an effort to balance the state’s budget. However, enrollment continues to increase steadily. Beginning 2011, only community colleges in the state will be able to offer developmental education in the state of Louisiana. As a result, BRCC will have to educate more under-prepared students with less financial support from the state.
* The college recently submitted a Student Support Services and FIPSE proposal to continue, as needed, successful Lumina strategies aligned with the five goals of Achieving the Dream. During fall 2009, the Chancellor met with every support area to pose this question: Should we look for a place to house staff every time we receive a new grant or have a new project that requires expansion of services and/or offices? Could we possibly expand now, so it would not disrupt the campus? The vision presented was to relocate as many of the support units as possible to one building.

**Describe how you have responded or plan to respond to these changes.**

* *State budget cuts.* For the past two years everyone on campus has been implementing costs saving measures throughout the office. The majority of services provided to faculty, staff, and students are web-based or services can be provided accessed electronically. The college continues to promote 100% use of Blackboard among all faculty and support staff. With increases in enrollment, we can no longer allow duplication of services exist. Simply put, it’s just too costly of an endeavor.

Developmental education is the primary focus of the Title III grant. The grant was written to fund strategies that increase success and retention rates developmental education students, increase professional development opportunities for faculty, and enhance support services to developmental students, such as mentors and tutors; all are done in an effort to leverage resources. The Grant Resource Center continues to research other funding sources to provide additional support to these efforts. Although the college considers projected cuts, its main focus and concern is to improve the access and quality of services to its student body.

* One cause for the surge in enrollment is that more students can now afford to attend college. As of fall 2009, the college began its first-ever federal loan program. The college will remain aggressive with our approach of filtering information to students, specifically new students, to ensure more of them understand all available financial aid opportunities.
* Projections for developmental courses are expected to increase because of the recent changes to the Mathematics Compass. The scores for entry into college-level algebra have been raised, this will increase the number of students recommended to enroll in developmental mathematics. Although the increase will allow Title III to serve a larger percentage of the student population, it will ultimately require more support personnel to provide or extend their services. Title III continues to collaborate with every support program (i.e. New Student Orientation, Non-traditional Orientation, QEP, etc.) to ensure that the project is woven into their agendas. Each support areas use a variety of print and visual media to educate new students about STARS Gate (i.e. informational desktops in lobby areas of enrollment services; informational televisions throughout campus; brochures in ACCS and testing offices, etc.).
* The One Stop Shop extension addressed the needs of the campus to consolidate services that impact new and current students. A reflective analysis of activities allowed college leaders to review strategies and interventions that have duplicate services, select best practices, and make recommendations to improve activities. The in-depth look provided the opportunity to redirect certain program efforts towards another program that may be more equipped to carry-out the identified activities. One response was the creation of CAS. This effort provides a central location for similar services to decrease the steps students must complete to become enrolled, or number of different visits incurred to receive support services. Additionally, the design of CAS will decrease the level of frustration among students who seek services but do not know where to go to receive services based on their needs. However, the model does challenge all departments to become more creative with resources and more knowledge about all services within CAS in order to serve students.

The One-Stop-Shop Redesign efforts are now headed by the newly formed One-Stop-Shop Council. The council consists of directors from the following units: Financial Aid and Scholarships, Title III, Student Programs And Resources, Public Safety, Office of Accounting and Finance, Center for Academic Success, Enrollment Services, Disability Services, QEP/First Class, Honors Program, and Advising/Counseling. The council is charged with ensuring workflows of all units are efficient and information is transparent. All staff are currently participating in cross- training to improve information flow and ensure correct information is disseminated. The council will be more equipped to provide a comprehensive approach to assessing and altering the enrollment process based on data results.

**EVALUATION**

1. Provide an update on the project evaluation plan outlined in your proposal. The evaluation plan is consistent with the initial focus on collecting and comparing data to baseline trends and previously collected data. The project looked for a variety of sources to better understand how the project progressed towards its objectives; both quantitative and qualitative measures were developed. The “yardstick” used to measure progress is similar to *Achieve the Dream* goals: grades, retention rates, student satisfaction, COMPASS scores, graduation rates, etc. After reviewing the comprehensive data matrix and analysis *(see Lumina Assessment Matrix)* the Lumina students out-performed the regular BRCC students in every data element.
2. Evaluation plan also consisted of collecting qualitative data by using focus groups to gauge student satisfaction with the One-Stop-Shop Redesign and the STARS helpfulness. The collected data is housed in main database.
3. For a comprehensive collection of data trends and analyses *see LUM Data Measures, LUM Assessment Matrix.*

**COMMUNICATION**

1. The Chancellor recently highlighted efforts of the project during a NISOD (National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development) panel discussion. The opportunity allowed her to give a description of Lumina’s national efforts and linked those efforts to what the project has accomplished.
2. Noel Levitz recently published an article about the Lumina project that uses the College Student Inventory to help provide services to students who need it most *(See attachment)*.
3. Participation on the Enrollment and Retention Quality Team serves as the primary platform to disseminate information about the project and support facilitation of student success and retention initiatives.
4. At each site visit by data coach and coach different support unit leaders, faculty members, and administrators were invited to attend and dialogue about progress and efforts of the Lumina project.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

1.Describe lessons learned that will help you in your continued efforts to achieve your intended goals.

* The college recognizes how crucial data is for not only developing strategies, but to ultimately determine if strategies are successful to institutionalize or should strategies be modify appropriately.
* Campus buy-in, specifically among faculty is an imperative element of student success. Without faculty buy-in no strategy will be successful, it will take a group effort. Any new strategy should be discussed with all stakeholders to gauge support and enthusiasm. It is pertinent to secure who are willing and able to support strategies, instead of garnering support during implementation. This simple lesson demonstrates to the campus the understanding of reporting protocol and alleviates confusion.
* Student success must consist of a variety of approaches and measures. A longitudinal but yet incremental assessment is needed to better understand challenges and create influential strategies.
* Create assessment plans before implementing strategies. In order to effectively measure strategies, a method of assessment must be established before implementation. This method ensures a
* To sustain support momentum, it is imperative not to overextend support by having too many strategies happening at once. Too much attention spread to thin only diminishes support and relevance, and skew results. Having a list of possible strategies for reference is better than trying to over-saturate the campus with new measures and having little to no support.
* It is more beneficial for the college and the student when high-risk behaviors can be identified early before academic difficulty persist.
* The college has recently hired an Assistant Director of QEP and Service Learning. This hiring will allow additional focus on more in-depth analysis of student success and assessment, marrying STARS Quality Team with E&RQT and STARS Gate used as blueprint for a comprehensive new student success initiative. All of these efforts were systemtic improvements to enhance efforts to meet the objectives of STARS Gate aligned with Achieve the Dream goals.
* In the context of learning communities, the Math and CSSK linked courses created many challenges initially but as the semesters progressed the enrollment services issues were resolved. Linked courses were patterned after learning communities. With the lessons learned, learning communities will be easier to offer. Thus impacting student success in other degree programs.
* Faculty must understand the project and its objectives before their participation is enlisted. Faculty must have professional development in order to execute the interventions properly. Faculty data and results must be part of the assessment process.

2. Describe any changes you have made or plan to make in light of what you have learned.

* Continue to collect data and openly dialogue through various forums (i.e. New Student Orientation, Enrollment and Retention Quality Team, One-Stop-Shop Council, etc.) about how best to identify and serve students who are ill-prepared for college;
* Continue to intrusively advise first-semester students who show early signs of academic difficulty;
* We will use course syllabi to drive student accountability as an added layer to college success;
* We will offer more on campus teaching and learning opportunities for faculty to continue stay abreast of successful instructional practices and targeted interventions; and
* We will create a successful practice portal via the college main webpage so instructors can share and better understand what colleagues are doing on campus that have proven successful, a best practices web page.

3. If applicable, describe any links you have made or would like to make between this project and other Lumina grants.

* Find out more about successful interventions used by other Lumina projects;
* Keep lines of communications open between STARS and other Lumina projects;
* Use the “Are we there yet” publication to assist college units in communicating better;
* The Lumina Adult Degree Completion Program fits into our strategic priorities where BRCC is committed to recruiting non-traditional students, 25 years and older, with some college credit ( Staff will watch the Lumina web to see when this program will be accepting applications); and

**SUSTAINABILITY**

Provide an update on the status of the sustainability plan outlined in your proposal.

* College Success Skills 101 (CSSK 101, a three credit hour college introductory course) was integrated with First-Class 101 (First Class/QEP 101, a two credit hour college introductory course). Both courses were to expand learning outcomes advocated through recommendations by SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools). The new course titled, CSSK 102, has a three credit hour format. Prior to integration, the college community was confused with “which course is better, *First-Class 101 or CSSK 101*?” Many students speculated the relevance of *First-Class* because it was only two credits with a similar course design as CSSK 101. Those students who enrolled in *First-Class* oftentimes added another class to their schedule to maintain full-time (12+ credit hours) status for financial aid and/or health insurance eligibility. In an effort to expand learning outcomes and course availability, the college approved integration of First-Class and CSSK. The underlying goal of CSSK 102 is educate a larger number of students about barriers to success before high-risk behaviors affect their performance, all done in an effort to “close the loop” among first-year students.
* The college will continue to investigate the effects of Learning Communities to assess its potential to enhance course integration, student success and retention. Analysis of focus group discussions and self-administered assessments indicated that students perceived learning communities allowed crossed referenced of content, realization of application, and the collective experience of everyone have a common experience as being new students interested in a topic or area of college transition. The learning communities foster this type of environment and actively seek to engage students in their learning which heightens each student sense of belonging and a sense of success. The college continues to study opportunities where additional learning communities can be implemented to create a richer, challenging, and more rewarding environment for new students. To date, there is greater need on the campus to expand first-year student experiences to include a variety of approaches to engage new students in campus life, intentionally integrate curricular coherence, maximize opportunities for active learning, and increase interaction between students and faculty (emotional connection); all of which can be accomplished through learning communities and other variations of content and social integration. The college is challenged to reconfigure time and space to create this atmosphere for particularly new students.
* The sharing of the annual report has become a consistent method for distributing information about the project’s progress on an annual basis. Information sharing among the Chancellor, executive cabinet members, deans, directors, and department chairs. These leaders then share it with other stakeholders they supervise and deem appropriate. After each receive and review report, they are encourage to use report as a part of their reporting mechanism and discuss it openly in a variety of settings to promote institutionalization of success.
* Title III STARS Gate (2009-2014) will continue to build upon efforts began by STARS Project. The ways in which these efforts were organized are tied to the strategic plan and priorities of the college. Title III furthers the efforts of the college to identify and better understand how developmental students progress;
* STARS Project Director now serves as Vice-chair of New Student Orientation. This appointment allows him to continue the use of Achieve the Dream five data models that will affect more incoming students;
* Investments by the college in Starfish Retention Solution (Starfish) and Communication Evolved (Comevo) embraces the use of technology to streamline workflow and create a more accessible environment which promotes lessons learned from project to sustain its momentum. Both technological measures allow the collection of performance milestones and serve as the primary hub for support services tracking. Starfish and Comevo will create a path of evidence that allows the college to review specific points along the pipeline during each semester to better understand and predict academic difficulty and interventions. The goal for both technology enhancements is to support the college in how it identifies and embraces data outcomes to better make evidence-based decisions the are aligned with institutional policies and resource allocations; and
* STARS Project Direct also serves on the One-Stop-Shop Council as Event Planner. The appointment gives him the lead in administering different approaches to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of comprehensive services. The ways in which these efforts are organized will be constructed around lessons learned from specific strategies developed through STARS project. To better sustain these efforts, leaders from each unit will have input and access to data collection so they can build additional inquiries and systems around results which promotes potential solutions and data transparency across the campus.

**FINANCIAL REPORT**

*(See Final Grantee Budget Report, LUM Budget narrative 09.10)*