MEMO

To: Dr. Vicki Riley

Kathy Herrington

From: Larry Tackett

Subject: Pilot Program for Evaluating English ALP – All campuses

Date: 28 Jan 2012

Copies: Christina Sullivan

**OVERVIEW**

The concept of using course redesign to improve student outcomes in transitional education classes has been embraced and partially implemented at WVNCC for the past two years. The objective of these initiatives is to allow students to accelerate their time through trans ed classes, as well as improve retention and thus college completion rates.

Thus far the majority of our efforts have centered on our math sequence (86/92/93) by offering students accelerated classes (math 92/93 same semester) or our new open, emporium model, math lab on the Wheeling campus. Our efforts for applying similar principles to the ENG 90 class have involved Bob Guy trying two different approaches, on a very limited basis:

* ENG 90 and ENG 101 run back-to-back in the same semester, with the normal number of contact hours for each.
* Using the ALP method (Accelerated Learning Program) that was developed by the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC). In this approach twelve students take a section of ENG 90 and also register for a normal section of ENG 101 that follows the ENG 90 course. The 101 course has a mix of traditional and trans ed students. The two courses run in parallel for the full semester, with the same instructor teaching both sections. Bob has run this approach once on the Wheeling, last fall. That class had an 88% success rate (n=8).

**PROPOSAL**

In order to determine if either of these two approaches make sense for our ENG 90 students it is important that we conduct a controlled, well documented pilot study of one of them, to start. Based on the documented success of the ALP method at CCBC I would like to recommend that we begin with a two semester, all campuses, evaluation of the ALP approach. This study will look at the following data points:

* Course success rates
* Success rates for next class (ENG 102, or other appropriate)
* Retention rates
* Cost implications (at CCBC the increased cost of limiting the number of students in ENG 90 was offset by the increased success and retention rates achieved)
* Focus group data to understand student experiences with this model of instruction

I would like to run this pilot study beginning with the fall 2012 semester, using this schedule:

New Martinsville: ENG 90 TR 10:00-11:15 am cap=12 Bob Guy

ENG 101 TR 11:30-12:45 pm cap=25 Bob Guy

Weirton: ENG 90 TR 1:00-2:15 pm cap=12 John Reho

ENG 101 TR 2:30-3:45 pm cap=25 John Reho

Wheeling: ENG 90 MW 10:00-11:15 am cap=12 Bob Guy

ENG 101 MW 11:30-12:45 am cap=25 Bob Guy

There would be similar schedules for spring 2013.

Bob has been invested in this approach since Steve Woodburn began evaluating various approaches for acceleration three years ago. I provided John with relevant literature about the ALP approach and he has expressed interest in doing this, as well.

**CONCLUSION**

As Chancellor Skidmore said at last fall’s all campus day, we need to evaluate and consider alternative methods to offer our transitional education students in order to improve success, retention, and completion rates. The current environment is not working sufficiently to produce the college graduates our state and nation need to compete in the world economy. Our Title III Grant centers on accomplishing these goals for our students by piloting and implementing new and innovative approaches to the problem. The ALP method is one approach that has shown promise at other institutions. In order to know if it will work for us we need to conduct a pilot study that evaluates the ALP method on all campuses at the same time, and for at least two semesters.

A key component of the ALP method is that the same instructor teaches the ENG 90/101 combination. This combination crosses division lines, which has the potential to cause problems with ‘bumping’ procedures if we continue to experience low enrollments. For this study to work and provide valid data, it is imperative that these classes by immune from ‘bumping’ procedures. It is unrealistic to expect that one course of the combination, or even both courses, could be turned over to a new instructor at the last minute before the semester begins. To measure the success of the ALP method requires faculty that are familiar with its theory and practice. Bob certainly is, and John will be before the start of the fall semester.

The success of the ALP method is documented in the literature. It provides improvements in student success, retention, and completion rates, as well as cost savings. Will it help us accomplish the same here? The only way to know is to conduct a well-designed, statistically significant pilot study to determine those answers. That is the study I am proposing.