ARC^2 Building Blocks for the Future: Utilizing Active Teaching Strategies to Improve Student Success

McDowell Technical Community College Quality Enhancement Plan
Executive Summary

The ARC^2 Building Blocks for the Future project focuses on the first-semester developmental studies student experience and developing the skills that these students need to be successful in completing their first semester and, subsequently, their program of study at McDowell Tech. Emphasis on advising, retention, and completion as well as creating an academic resource center makes up the ARC^2.

Approximately two-thirds of all new students at McDowell Tech place into developmental studies courses with their placement test scores. Only half of these students continue their program of study after their first semester. In response to this information, McDowell Tech is creating ARC^2 Learning Communities for all first-semester developmental studies students. The Learning Communities will combine developmental courses with the ACA 115 Success and Study Skills course. The students enrolled in the ARC^2 Learning Communities will complete a service-learning project that will assist in promoting collaboration and team-building skills while building a sense of community and civic responsibility among the students. Learning communities provide needed support to struggling students and have proven to be effective in improving student retention and graduation rates. The plan includes the addition of learning communities in the College Transfer Department in order to improve student success and create environments that stimulate higher learning and critical thinking.

The ACA 115 Success and Study Skills course will teach students the skills necessary to be successful in their courses and their program of study, as well as how to use the resources that are available to them at McDowell Tech. Eventually, all first-semester students at McDowell Tech, even those who do not place into developmental studies courses or are enrolled in an ARC^2 Learning Community, will take the ACA 115 Success and Studies Skills Course or ACA 122 College Transfer Success class. Ultimately, the ACA 115 and ACA 122 courses will be added to every associate degree and diploma program required course list.

In addition, McDowell Tech is developing an Academic Resource Center (ARC) that will provide support and tutoring opportunities for **all** students. The ARC will be an "open" computer lab with 20 computers and several study areas. The ARC technician will help to coordinate tutoring, test proctoring, and computer assistance. Part-time instructors will be hired to provide help with developmental course work while full-time instructors will offer assistance in their subject areas in the ARC during some of their office hours. No appointment will be necessary for students seeking assistance in the ARC. The ARC will be open and available for day and evening students.

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