

**Agency:** Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) Innovative Strategies in Community Colleges for Working Adults and Displaced Workers

**Grant Title:** Adult Technical Education Pathway (ATEP) Project

Community and technical colleges are not only major gateways to postsecondary education but are pathways to high demand, higher wage careers for dislocated workers, the under-employed, and those wanting to develop skills and education to ensure they stay working. These individuals are reflected in the two-year college system's fastest growing population --students that need adult basic skills. Revamping traditional basic skills instructional models to create higher student success rates and sustainable, cohesive education pathways is a critical need in higher education. Bellingham Technical College's Adult Technical Education Pathway (ATEP) project is planning and implementing a radical redesign of its traditional adult basic skills program. This three-year project is developing a cohesive structure for entering, transitioning and retaining basic skills students through the first year of college-level work, resulting in a credential. The project uses four strategies to revamp Bellingham Technical College's adult basic education program: professional development, student support, restructure of the teaching and learning environment and tracking of student progress along a continuum of momentum points towards the tipping point (one year of college coursework and a workforce credential). The work will result in a sustainable model and is being shared with other colleges through faculty presentations and a project web site where results, products and practices are posted at <http://btcbasfig.wikispaces.com>.

**Professional Development:** The Basic Skills faculty formed Faculty Inquiry Groups in Winter quarter 2010 after completion of a collaborative needs assessment. The FIGS researched and shared information, gathered data and documented their activities regarding high structure and high challenge teaching and learning practices. Faculty implemented curriculum and structural changes within their department in Winter and Spring quarters of 2010, developing, teaching and sharing lessons that incorporated their findings. Faculty increased participation in professional development opportunities, including state and national training and conferences on instructional strategies effective for basic skills populations and increasing retention and transition rates.

**Student Support:** As part of their work in Faculty Inquiry Groups, faculty and adviser investigated student support strategies, including retention, career exploration, and best practices of successful new student orientations. Faculty and staff collaborated to develop a seamless plan for basic skills student entry processes, including testing and paperwork requirements, and implemented a more intensive orientation. The department is developing a plan for on-going support services with input from students, advisers and faculty that addresses significant student barriers. Communication and continuous feedback, input and information sharing between directors, faculty and other advisers have been established.

**Restructure of the Teaching and Learning Environment:** Several elements of the ABE/ESL program and curriculum are in the process of faculty redesign using input from FIGs. Changes include creating contextualized classes in ABE/ESL, creating separate, modularized courses in particular areas, such as math, increasing integration of technology, and integrating a heavy emphasis in career and information literacy in all classes. Software learning platforms, wireless laptop carts and additional computers for Learning Center student use have been purchased and faculty are integrating more 21st century instructional technology in basic skills courses.

**Tracking of Student Progress:** Students are being tracked using WABERS and SAI systems. Student needs are being assessed through the use of department surveys, instructor observations, student lesson and course reflections, and written evaluations.