Virginia Peninsula Community College

2026-2030 Quality Enhancement Plan

Submitted to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

October 27-30, 2025

Table of Contents

Virginia Peninsula Community College's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)
VPCC Cares
October 27-30, 2025

Executive Summary

Virginia Peninsula Community College ("VPCC" or "the College") intends to improve student retention by embedding tutoring within introductory mathematics and English courses and providing faculty who teach those courses with comprehensive professional development on enhancing the classroom experience and fostering a greater sense of student belonging. To this end, the College has developed the *VPCC Cares* plan as its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for its 2026 Reaffirmation of Accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

The creation of an embedded tutoring program and delivery of supportive faculty development are complementary and intertwined strategies that together strengthen student connections across the College and increase student retention at VPCC. Strategies will be targeted to three specific gateway courses that were chosen to have the greatest impact on student success: ENG 111 - English Composition I, MTH 154 - Quantitative Reasoning, and MTH 161 - Precalculus I.

The *VPCC Cares* plan was developed collaboratively by representative faculty, staff, students, and the College leadership and is founded on analysis of student success trends and feedback as well as review of the literature on student retention and higher education best practice. The *VPCC Cares* plan will increase student pass rates, enhance students' sense of belonging at the College, and translate into improved retention rates and student success. Specifically, the *VPCC Cares* plan will achieve the following success outcomes:

1. Increase the pass rates for students in targeted courses.
2. Increase the sense of belonging reported by students in targeted courses.
3. Increase retention rates for students who participate in targeted courses.
4. Increase overall sense of belonging reported by students at the College.
5. Increase overall full-time and part-time student retention rates at the College.

To achieve these desired outcomes, the *VPCC Cares* plan enhances and strengthens the College's existing Tutoring Center and the Center for Teaching and Learning at the College to better support students and faculty. Embedded tutoring provides additional academic support to students within the structure of their classroom, without them having to seek additional services outside of class. The *VPCC Cares* faculty development plan meaningfully crafts a classroom environment that fosters student engagement with the content, the faculty, embedded tutors, and each other. These two strategies mutually reinforce and compound their effects on student success, retention, and completion. A comprehensive assessment plan has been developed to demonstrate the impact of these strategies on student success.

The *VPCC Cares* plan is a natural extension of the College's newly adopted *VPCC Culture of Care* and strategic investment in enhancing the student experience at the College. The plan leverages and strengthens existing organizational structures and resources sustainably, with oversight provided by the QEP Steering Committee. The College is well positioned to support and fund the plan, with additional support provided by the College's Educational Foundation. In pursuit of the College's mission to *change lives and transform our community*, the *VPCC Cares* plan will better support the success of all its students.

SECTION 1: Overview of Virginia Peninsula Community College

Virginia Peninsula Community College ("the College") proudly serves the cities of Hampton, Newport News, Poquoson, and Williamsburg, and the counties of James City and York. Founded as Thomas Nelson Community College in 1967, the College officially changed its name to Virginia Peninsula Community College in 2021 to better represent the students and communities served. The College enrolls more than 9,000 students in for-credit degree and certificate programs and more than 2,000 students in short-term workforce training programs and services, making the College the sixth largest institution within the Virginia Community College System (VCCS).

One of twenty-three VCCS institutions, the College is a comprehensive, public, two-year community college. For more than fifty-five years, the College has been pursuing its mission, *to change lives and transform our community through diverse, inclusive, and equitable education and workforce training, excellent support and services, and innovative partnerships*. The College enrolled its first 1,232 students during the fall semester of 1968 and has been accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award two-year associate degrees since 1970.

As an open enrollment institution, the College admits students who are high school graduates or the equivalent, or who are 18 years of age or older and able to benefit academically from study at the College. Additionally, the College has a robust dual enrollment program, where students can be dual enrolled in both high school and the College. To be eligible for dual enrollment, students must be rising high school juniors or seniors (including home schooled students), with school principal and parental permission, who demonstrate readiness for college-level credit, and maintain a cumulative high school GPA of 2.0 for career and technical education classes and 3.0 for transfer classes.

Classes are offered at either the Hampton or Historic Triangle campuses, online, or at one of several approved off-campus instructional sites. Off-campus instructional sites include many of the neighboring high schools, the Governor's School/New Horizons, the Southeast Higher Education Center, the Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Development, the Toano Trades Center in James City County, and a new trades center is being constructed in southeast Newport News. As of the 2025-2026 academic year, the College offers ten transfer associate degree programs, 18 career and technical education degree programs, and 40 certificate or career studies certificate programs.

The College serves a highly diverse region, and its student body closely reflects the demographics of the greater community in terms of gender, ethnic diversity, varied backgrounds, and a wide range of ages served. During the 2024-2025 academic year, nearly 58% of the students were female and more than 57% were considered minorities. By race/ethnicity, 42.5% of the College's students were White, 29.0% were Black, 11.3% were Hispanic, and 5.6% were Asian, with the remaining 12.3% identifying as another race, two or more races, or race not specified. The College serves students ages 16 and older, with 24.3% under 18 years of age, 47.3% from 18-24, and 28.4% were 25 or older.

The diversity of the College's students extends beyond basic demographics. Nearly one third (28%) of the students at the College are dual enrolled students and more than a quarter (27%) of students at the College are affiliated with the military, either active duty, reserve, retired, veterans, military spouse, or dependents. Only around 24% of students at the College attend classes full-time. Slightly more than 43% of students at the College are pursuing a transfer degree, nearly 15% are pursuing a career and technical education degree, and slightly more than 3% are pursuing a certificate or career studies certificate; the remaining students are not program-placed (the vast majority of which are dual enrolled students). The College has a rapidly growing athletics program with more than 100 student athletes (296% growth in the past four years).

SECTION 2: Identification of the Topic

The College's QEP was identified through its ongoing strategic and annual planning and evaluation processes. The College's mission to *change lives and transform our community* establishes a responsibility to ensure that students succeed academically, persist in their studies, graduate, and thrive beyond their time at the College.

To measure progress toward this mission, the College closely monitors key student success indicators, including retention, completion, and transfer rates. *Thrive 2027*, the College's strategic plan, underscores this commitment by prioritizing access, persistence, and success for all students. Within this framework, specific benchmarks have been established: increasing the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) 6-Year Completion Rate by at least one percentage point annually and improving IPEDS full- and part-time retention rates by at least two percentage points per year, with an acceptable threshold allowing for no more than a one-point decline.

While completion rates have improved, the College's graduation rate continues to trail both national averages and those of peer VCCS institutions. More pressing, retention rates have recently fallen below established thresholds. The Fall 2022 full-time cohort (depicted in **Figure 1**) declined by more than the acceptable limit, and while the Fall 2023 cohort declined by one-point, part-time retention (depicted in **Figure 2**) for that same year dropped by four points.

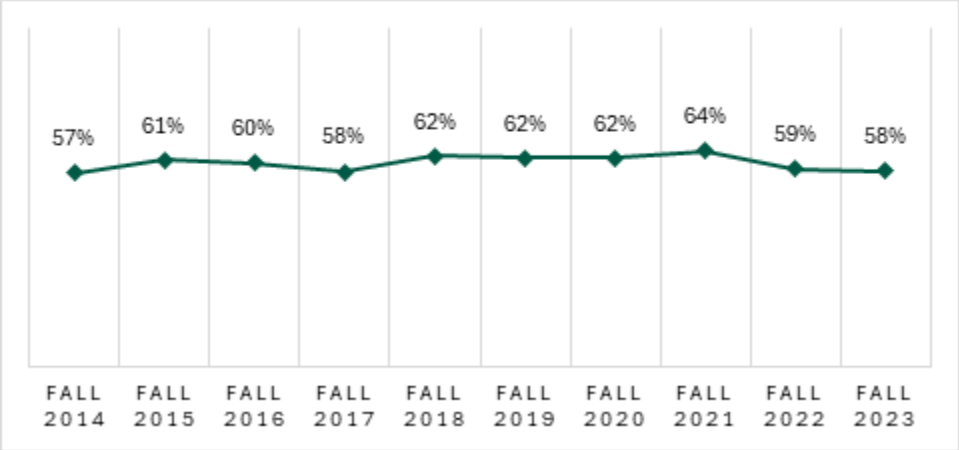

Figure 1. IPEDS Full-time, Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates Over 10-Year Period

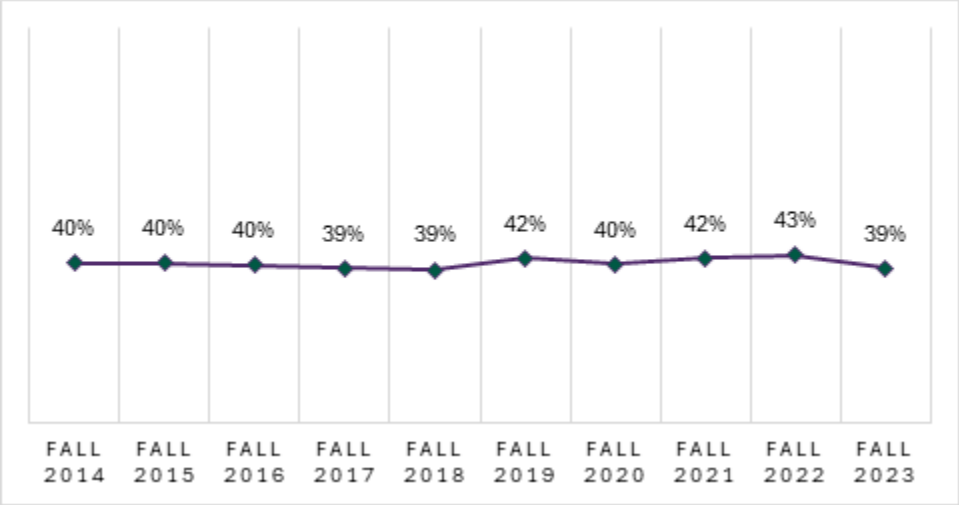

Figure 2. IPEDS Part-time, Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates Over 10-Year Period

These outcomes, confirmed through the College's evaluation processes, signaled that targeted, sustained retention strategies are critical to achieving the College's mission and strategic priorities.

Accordingly, as the College launched QEP planning, retention naturally emerged as the area of greatest need and opportunity. A cross-functional team of faculty, staff, students, and administrators convened as the QEP Topic Selection Committee in November 2023 to explore potential QEP topics. The membership of that team is detailed in **Table 1**. Their collective review of data, mission alignment, and institutional priorities affirmed that improving student retention is the most impactful strategy to advance student success and fulfill the College's promise to its community.

Table 1. QEP Topic Selection Committee

Committee Member	College Position	Representing
Steven Felker	Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness & Transformation	President's Cabinet
*JJ Bonavita	Director (interim)- Institutional Research	Mid-Level Manager
Lynsey LeMay	Instructor- Geology	Faculty
Lucinda Spryn	Assistant Professor- Chemistry	Faculty
Sonia Burford	Advisor	Staff
Joseph Fairchild	Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs	Mid-Level Manager
Seth Fisher	Director (interim)- Academic Advising	Mid-Level Manager
Kady Fortier	Director- Library Services	Mid-Level Manager
Tiye Smith	President- Student Government Association	Students
*Mel Wrona	Student	Students
*Oliver McLaughlin	Student	Students
Travoughn Lane	Student	Students

*Committee Leadership

The Topic Selection Committee reviewed the *Thrive 2027* Strategic Plan. Originally published in June of 2021, and later extended through the 2026-2027 Academic Year, the *Thrive 2027* plan expounds upon the College's vision to empower the College's community, and each student, to thrive and grow. The plan prioritized six goals: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Instructional Innovation; Powerful Partnerships; Modernized Marketing and Recruitment; Employee Investment and Development; and Transparent and Authentic Communication. The emphasis on ensuring success for all the College's students is consistent with efforts to improve student retention and contributed to the QEP Topic Selection and Development Committees' focus on accessibility and responsiveness.

Additionally, the QEP Topic Selection Committee reviewed other past and ongoing strategic initiatives and the results of the College's Spring 2023 Student Experience Survey. Initial conversations revolved around academic advising, transfer services, and career planning. The Committee designed a survey to solicit additional feedback regarding the College's strengths and weaknesses. The questions were designed to focus on specific student interactions rather than the College's organizational departments. For example, previous surveys asked overly simplified questions such as, "Thinking about your overall experience at the College, please indicate your level of satisfaction regarding Academic Advising." This question was rephrased into several questions that more fully captured the types of interactions students had with Academic Advising, including "From your experience, what is your perception of how well or effectively we assisted you with understanding what courses will transfer to other Colleges or Universities?". These questions better explore students' experiences with various offices and services at the College. The survey was administered by the College's Office of Institutional Research in November and December 2023.

A total of 398 students, faculty, and staff responded to the survey; 78% of the survey respondents were students, 13% were faculty, and 7% were College staff. The demographic composition of survey respondents was mostly representative of the College community. While responses varied across constituency groups (students, faculty, etc.), some general themes emerged. Students reported challenges with obtaining assistance with a variety of services, indicating struggles navigating the complexity of the College experience. Faculty, staff, and student respondents also reported feeling a lack of outlets to provide feedback and a lack of autonomy. Additional concerns regarding course scheduling, the condition of the campus buildings, and food options on campus also emerged. Faculty reported a growing gap between student preparedness for college and their expected level of performance. The Topic Selection Committee concluded that focusing on the student experience would benefit all students and positively impact student retention and completion. Based on the survey responses and review of data, the Topic Selection Committee developed four potential topic proposals:

1. reorganization and streamlining of student services and processes,
2. the creation of a "one-stop shop" for student support, mirroring successful programs such as TRiO,
3. enhanced college preparation efforts, and
4. initiatives designed to improve communication and transparency.

The QEP Topic Selection Committee shared the survey results and proposed QEP topics with the Student Government Association, Classified Support Staff Association, Council of Mid-Level Managers, and Faculty Senate in February 2024. Each constituency group was asked to provide feedback and help rank the topics. The constituency groups overwhelmingly preferred streamlining services. The remaining three topics were split evenly, with a slight preference for improving communication and transparency practices across the College. All results were then shared with the President's Cabinet in March of 2024.

The Cabinet worked with the QEP Topic Selection Committee during April 2024 to refine the project's focus, calling for further exploration of best practices contributing to improved student retention, including those utilized by successful programs such as TRiO.

2.A. Narrowing the Topic

As the Spring 2024 semester ended, the QEP Topic Selection Committee re-organized and expanded its membership to become the QEP Development Team. The QEP Development Team changed membership over the next year, with some team members being added, while others stepped away or graduated. **Table 2** fully accounts for all members who contributed to the development efforts.

Table 2. QEP Development Team

Committee Member	College Position	Representing
*JJ Bonavita	Director- Institutional Research	Mid-Level Managers
Joseph Fairchild	Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs	Mid-Level Managers
Keith Ferguson	Manager of Budget and Financial Analysis	Mid-Level Managers
Seth Fisher	Director- Academic Advising	Mid-Level Managers
Kady Fortier	Director- Library Services	Mid-Level Managers
*LaRhonda Johnson Horton	Dean of Retention and Student Success	Mid-Level Managers
Sonja Vega	Director of Student Support Services (TRiO)	Mid-Level Managers
Marc Vernon	Director of Financial Aid, Military and Veterans Affairs, and Scholarships	Mid-Level Managers
Michelle Dean	Assistant Professor- Art History	Faculty
*Lynsey LeMay	Instructor- Geology	Faculty
Lucinda Spryn	Assistant Professor- Chemistry	Faculty
Ian Taylor	Instructor- Economics	Faculty
Brooke Robertshaw	Assessment and Planning Coordinator	Staff
Sonia Burford	Academic Advisor	Staff
*Antonio Dill-Word	Presidential Fellow- Minority Male Initiative	Staff
Kris May	Executive Assistant and Project Manager- IET	Staff
Donald Payton	Associate Director of Accessibility	Staff
*Darren Raybourne	Academic Advisor	Staff
*Liz Rizzatto	Tutoring Coordinator	Staff
*Nathalia Matthews	President- Student Government Association	Students
*Mel Wrona	Student	Students
Tajalla Moslih	Student	Students
Ke'Jhaun Ross	Student	Students
Jailyn Brown	Student	Students

* Committee Leadership

The QEP Development Team spent the summer of 2024 researching the best practices associated with TRiO and other student support services at the College (the Tutoring Center, the Great Expectations program for foster youth, the minority male success initiative titled "The Shop," and the intercollegiate

athletics program). The Team also researched similar services available across other colleges and reviewed other QEP projects from the past five years.

Key strategies to support student retention and success began to emerge:

- Simplifying processes and supplying resources that make it easier for students to navigate the college (simpler processes, checklists, mobile applications, etc.).
- Successful programs intentionally made it easier for students to get help and support (one-stop shop).
- Persistent and intentional, high-touch outreach, encompassed in advising strategies such as Proactive/Intrusive Advising have demonstrated success.
- Support that extended beyond the first year, across the student's entire time at the College, was beneficial to retention and completion.
- Increasing the number and quality of touchpoints with students improved retention.
- Students with more connections to individual faculty and staff mentors and a larger peer network were typically more successful.
- Limited interventions did not improve retention; it took comprehensive change across many different units to create significant and lasting improvements in retention.

The QEP Development Team concluded that improving retention would involve a combination of strategies aimed at removing barriers (burdensome processes, access to support) and increasing high-touch support and mentorship. These strategies were consistent with practices utilized in successful programs such as TRiO. Finding ways to scale these practices to the broader student body could improve retention and narrow equity gaps in student success.

Parallel to the QEP development process, beginning in 2022, the College started a cross-constituent, collaborative project to develop a new creed to replace the outdated Code of Ethics and College Values. Officially adopted in February 2024, the *VPCC Culture of Care* was the culmination of 15 months of dialogue with students, faculty, and staff on what a culture of excellence looks like, and what expected behaviors and norms were expected at the College.

As the QEP Development team worked to refine the topic in fall of 2024, it became clear that the goals of the *Culture of Care* and the work of the QEP Development Team were closely aligned. Efforts to improve retention and student success would require a caring and supportive network of people and resources, which is a tangible representation of the *Culture of Care*. With a topic and focus finally emerging in late October 2024, the QEP Development Team drafted an initial framework for the Quality Enhancement Plan - the VPCC CAREs Framework. That framework is outlined below.

2.B. VPCC CAREs Framework

VPCC CAREs Framework

C- Collaborative- VPCC will foster a collaborative community focused on creating connections between students, faculty, and staff. We will prioritize building relationships with our students, treating them as individuals rather than customers. We will increase the number of touchpoints with students and create a supportive network of coaches and mentors that will support students across the College and help them to feel empowered to succeed.

- Strategies focus on ways to create or strengthen relationships with students across campus by increasing the number of touchpoints between students/staff/faculty. Strategies should address the way we interact with students in all offices across campus and in the classroom. The creation of CARE Teams that will partner students with advisors, faculty, and peers in supportive relationships and build a model of coaching/mentoring that provides students with ongoing and proactive support.

A- Accessible- VPCC will provide accessible and user-friendly services, resources, and support. We will streamline processes for efficiency, making it easier for students to navigate. By leveraging technology and adopting a student-centered approach, we aim to minimize barriers and create a seamless experience for our students.

- Strategies focus on creating services, resources, and support that are readily accessible and easy to navigate. Processes should be universally designed from a student perspective; they should be modern, efficient, and easy to navigate. Students should experience as few barriers as possible. Focus on process improvement, one-stop shop concepts, and better leveraging technology for transactional work.

R- Responsive- VPCC will create a supportive and responsive environment for all students. Faculty and staff are empowered and trained to be supportive and responsive to students' needs. Clear procedures will be developed to ensure students receive a seamless, supportive experience with a warm handoff when transitioning between offices. Professional development will be provided to equip our team with the knowledge and resources necessary to effectively serve our students.

- Strategies focus on creating policy, procedures, and best practices, as well as expectations for responsive service and the development and administration of professional development for faculty, staff, and students.

E- Engaging- VPCC will foster an engaging environment where students feel supported and connected throughout their academic journey. Focus will be centered on engaging students with their peers and creating opportunities to connect to one another, working to build peer-support networks, and developing a model of peer mentorship that will increase opportunities for community involvement, and more.

- Strategies focus on empowering students to support one another and intentionally fostering peer support networks. Strategies should also create opportunities for post-graduate success, including internships, career networking, professional readiness, connections with professional organizations, and transfer support.

The CAREs framework was an ambitious, multi-pronged set of complementary strategies designed to improve student retention and completion. As the Fall 2024 semester ended, the QEP Development Team was attempting to conceptualize what the implementation of this framework could look like and meeting with the College's constituencies to discuss the framework. While there was overall support for the CAREs framework, there was concern about the scope of the project and feasibility of implementing the framework as initially conceptualized.

In January of 2025, the QEP Development Team met with the College's SACSCOC Vice President during a scheduled advisory visit. Positive feedback was received about the collaborative and inclusive QEP development process and the clear focus on student success. Constructive feedback was received about the CAREs framework; it was noted that each element of the framework could be a separate project.

The QEP Development Team began to explore ways to focus on specific elements within the CAREs framework. The CAREs framework emphasized the importance of student connection, both with the College and with other students. The CAREs framework also emphasized the importance of creating a supportive student experience.

The QEP Development Team proposed several strategies that would be consistent with the CAREs framework. As the College had been making improvements to its Early Alert system, an emerging need was identified. Additional academic support was required, especially for students deemed to be at risk academically and within the courses traditionally identified as a barrier to student success: MTH 161 - Precalculus I, MTH 154 - Quantitative Reasoning, and ENG 111 - College Composition I. The discussion also revolved around strategies to develop opportunities for peer mentorship and building or strengthening connections between students. Finally, professional development of faculty and staff was believed to be a critical complementary strategy designed to improve students' experience and enhance students' sense of belonging at the College.

A QEP Planning Retreat was held on March 13, 2025, and subsequent planning and outreach meetings were held throughout the remainder of the Spring 2025 semester. Two key activities emerged as the focal points of the QEP - embedding tutoring within introductory mathematics and English courses and providing faculty who teach those courses with comprehensive professional development on enhancing the classroom experience and fostering a greater sense of student belonging. A subsequent literature review and focused review of institutional data confirmed these strategies as promising activities and ones likely to positively impact student retention at the College.

SECTION 3: Research to Inform QEP Development

3.A. Literature Review

The literature review examined national retention trends at community colleges and highlighted important research-based theories of retention. It focused on key factors such as students' sense of belonging, institutional attachment, and social and academic integration. Additionally, it reviewed effective retention strategies, with special emphasis on supplemental instruction and embedded tutoring.

Retention is a key metric for student success at institutions of higher education. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in the fall of 2022 the overall fall-to-fall retention rate of first-time undergraduate students at 2-year institutions nationwide was 63% (Irwin et al., 2024, p. 29). The rates are significantly lower for part-time students. However, community college retention has been improving nationally over the past two decades. According to a recent study of data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), retention rates among community colleges nationally have increased by an average of 4.9% between 2004-2017 (Monaghan & Sommers, 2022). Despite a dip in retention during the COVID-19 pandemic, community college retention rates have continued to improve on average. While changing enrollment patterns explain part of the increase, the researchers attributed improved academic and organizational practices across the sector for some of the success. These findings indicate that intentional focus and adoption of retention-conducive practices can yield positive results.

Tinto's Institutional Departure Model

Review of the retention literature included more than 50 years of research and a variety of theoretical models. In the sentinel paper, "Dropout in Higher Education: A Review and Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research," Tinto & Cullen (1973) elaborated on Spady's original thesis and developed what has become the most widely cited model of student attrition (**Figure 3**). Tinto and Cullen define dropout from an institutional perspective, with students leaving the college at which they were registered. Tinto and Cullen (1973) argue, "Dropout is a multidimensional process which results from the interaction between the individual and the institution, and which is influenced by the characteristics of both elements" (p. 41).

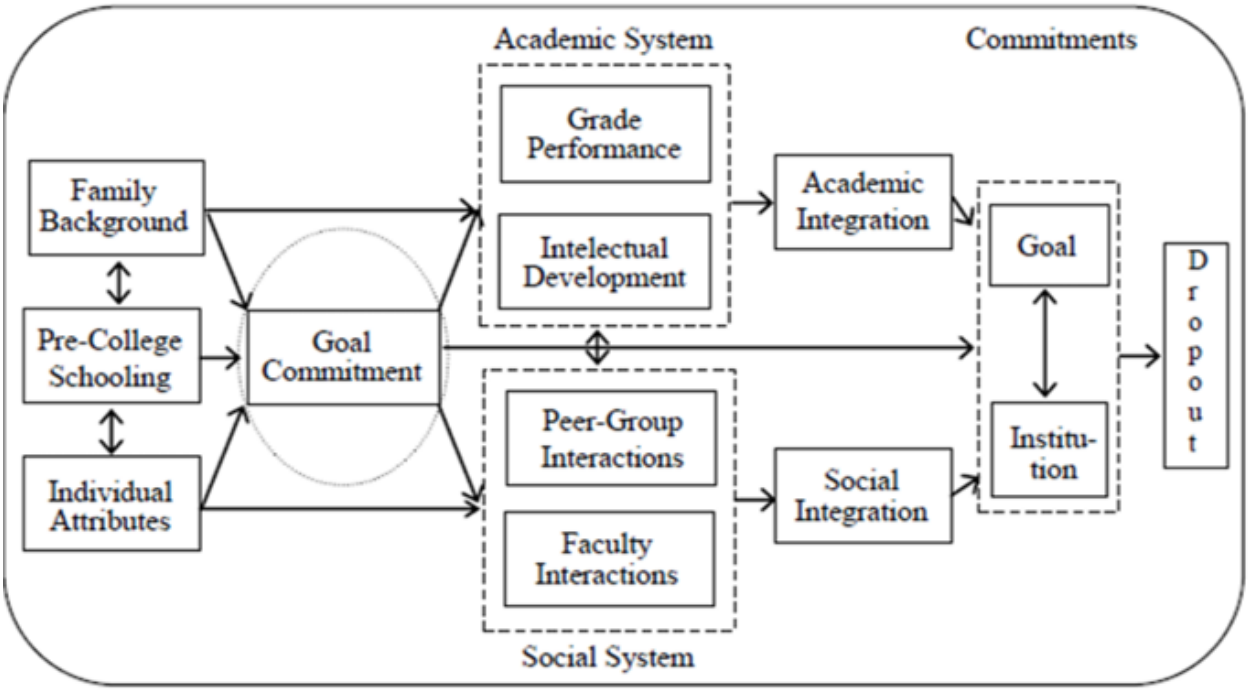

Figure 3. Tinto's Institutional Departure Model (Tinto & Cullen, 1973, p. 42)

Tinto and Cullen (1973) proposed that students enter college with a range of backgrounds, pre-college schooling, and individual attributes that impact the formation of their academic goals and commitment to those goals. Those students then interact with their institution within both a social and academic context. The student's ability to integrate (both socially and academically) is important for strengthening their goal and institutional commitments. Students who fail to integrate, either academically or socially, will have a lower commitment to their educational goals and therefore to the institution, which contributes to a greater likelihood of dropping out (Tinto & Cullen, 1973).

Tinto went on to modify his theory several times over the years (Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1987; Tinto, 1997) to address gaps in his original theory. Most notably, Tinto came to acknowledge the influence of external commitments, conceded an overlap between the academic and social systems, and elaborated on the effect of student effort and learning.

Numerous researchers expounded upon Tinto's work, subjecting the theory to extensive testing in different academic settings and providing validity to many of the concepts within the model (Nicoletti, 2019). Several alternatives to Tinto's original theory have been proposed (Bean, 1980; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980), though most accept the central tenets of Tinto's model, they differ in which factors were most likely to contribute to attrition. Others have attempted various integrations or expansions of these early theories (Kerby, 2015; Cabrera et al., 1992).

A frequent criticism of the major retention models is that they were developed using research on traditional students or students attending residential, 4-year institutions. Numerous researchers have questioned how well these models represent non-traditional students or community colleges, leading to several models related specifically to retention of community college students. Webb (1989) proposed a

model of community college student degree persistence based on the idea that Tinto's academic integration was well established while social integration was less clear in a commuter or community college setting. Webb illustrated the importance of the student's external environment and college fit (1989). Another model specifically for students in distance or online learning programs was proposed by Rovai (2003); Rovai (2003) integrated Bean & Metzner's model with Tinto's while emphasizing the specific student skills (computer literacy, information literacy, time management, reading and writing, computer-based interactions) and student needs (clarity of programs, self-esteem, identification with school, interpersonal relationships, accessibility to services) that were unique to online learners as well as the importance of pedagogy. Wiseman et al. (2004) explored the differences in sense of community, degree of involvement, and educational benefits for students of diverse cultures.

Socio-Academic Integrative Moments

While Tinto's model has been widely tested and validated, some contend that academic integration is less predictive of persistence than social integration within 4-year residential institutions. Contrarily, academic integration has been demonstrated to be a strong predictor of student retention at 2-year, non-residential colleges. Davidson and Wilson (2017) reviewed many of the persistence models in the literature and highlighted that the major point of contention between most of the competing models lies within the social integration component. Deil-Amen (2011) re-conceptualized Tinto's model by breaking down the boundary between the social and academic systems and proposing the concept of "socio-academic integrative moments."

Deil-Amen (2011) delved into the meaning of integration within the Tinto model, arguing that it is a subjective sense of belonging and membership to the college community that influences students' decisions to persist. This sense of belonging was developed through both social and academic experiences.

Deil-Amen also stressed the importance of the classroom experience. Deil-Amen (2011) concluded that, "For students with limited time, resources, and inclination to seek assistance and support outside of class, a framework that truly centers on the academic experience as the central vehicle of integration is critical" (p. 65). Tinto (1997) himself embraced the idea of less distinction between social and academic systems in his later modified model, "The classroom is the crossroads where the social and the academic meet" (p. 599). Deil-Amen proposed that the classroom serves as the focal point of integration at 2-year institutions and defined socio-academic integrative moments as interactions where, "The academic influence is coupled with elements of social integration to provide needed support and enhance feelings of college belonging, college identity, and college competence" (p. 73).

The Collective Affiliation Model

A more comprehensive conceptual model for community college retention was proposed by Davidson and Wilson (2017). Davidson and Wilson (2017) argued that previous models operate with a student deficit model, where attrition is caused by a failure of students to integrate with their college community. They concluded, "A careful examination of the literature reveals that, unlike residential students at 4-year institutions, community college student dropout is not rooted in the student's inability to *integrate* into the life of the institution. Instead, student dropout is the institution's inability to *collectively affiliate* with the student" (Davidson & Wilson, 2017, p. 518).

Davidson and Wilson's (2017) new persistence model for community college students (**Figure 4**) used the concept of collective affiliation to refer to a sense of membership within a group that involves a sense of shared identity, mutual support, and collective influence and action. They argued that community college students do not neatly compartmentalize their lives as described in previous models and described retention as the process of students cohesively balancing their role and membership in various communities (Davidson & Wilson, 2017).

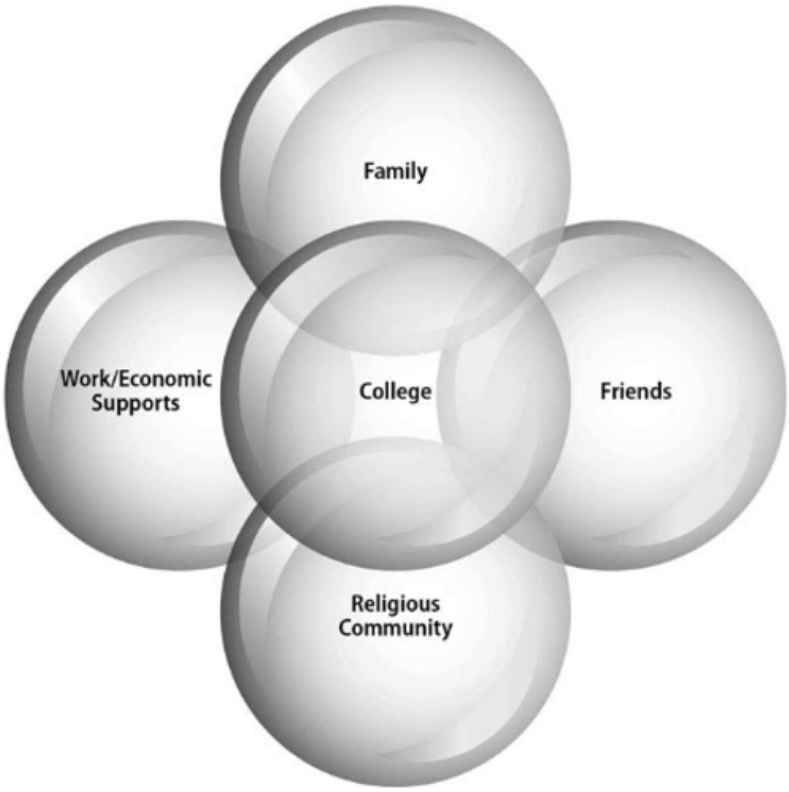

Figure 4. The Collective Affiliation Model (Davidson & Wilson, 2017, p. 523)

Davidson and Wilson (2017) argued that people have different social spheres, or communities, and their relationships and the relative importance of each community change over time. They recognized the on-going decision-making process related to persistence, as students attempt to balance these various spheres of belonging. As the relative importance of each community changes, competing prioritization may lead to a decline in how attached a student feels to a particular community (**Figure 5**). According to Davidson and Wilson (2017), attrition occurs when students disassociate with their college community.

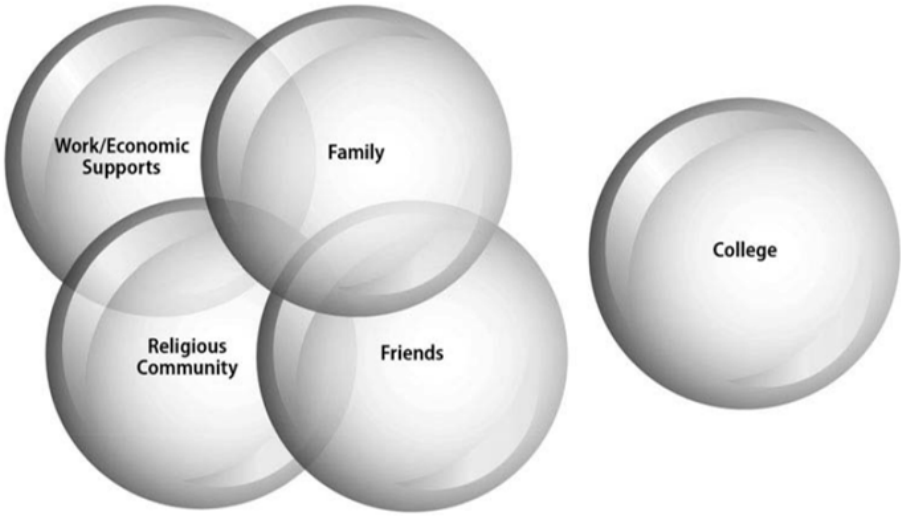

Figure 5. The Collective Affiliation Model- Low Collective Affiliation (Davidson & Wilson, 2017, p. 522)

According to the Collective Affiliation model, for an institution to improve retention, it needs to better respond to the needs of the student, rather than expect the student to adapt to the needs of the college.

Considering persistence in a more holistic manner is well-supported by additional research. A phenomenological study involving the interview of 131 students who had stopped out from community college revealed a variety of personal reasons that drove their decision to stop out (Sullivan, Bell, & Nielsen, 2023). Sullivan, Bell, & Nielsen reported that 19% of students interviewed stopped out for family or personal reasons, 12% for financial concerns, 10% due to work-related issues, and only 2% due to academic problems or lack of educational support. These results supported the idea that students' decision to persist is heavily influenced by the various other communities within their lives, favoring a more holistic approach to retention.

Sense of Belonging

There *is* consensus between the various persistence models that retention involves complex decision-making over time, and that the effects of students feeling integrated, connected, and like they belong at their institution promote retention. Measuring and meaningfully impacting these complex psychological processes is challenging. Hurtado and Carter (1997) discussed the challenges with conceptualizing Tinto's integration, arguing that integration has been variably defined across different studies and that integration has problematic implications related to how marginalized communities have been historically treated. Hurtado and Carter (1997) argued that many measures of integration were based on participation in activities or events rather than measuring the more subjective sense of belonging and membership to the college community. They drew upon Bollen and Hoyle's work in developing the Perceived Cohesion Scale, which included two dimensions: sense of belonging and feelings of morale associated with group membership. Hurtado and Carter (1997) favored the use of the Perceived Cohesion Scale, for which they claimed, "It is suited to understanding a variety of collective affiliations formed in large environments, that can contribute to an individual's sense of belonging to the larger community" (p. 328).

Hausmann, Schofield, and Woods (2007) elaborated on Hurtado and Carter's research, arguing that students' sense of belonging has been understudied within persistence literature and found students' sense of belonging to be a significant predictor of their intentions to persist. They defined sense of belonging as, "The psychological sense that one is a valued member of the college community" (Hausman, Schofield, & Woods, 2007, p. 804).

Hausman, Schofield, and Woods (2007) used a quasi-experimental design and administered surveys based upon Bollen and Hoyle's (1990) Sense of Belonging Scale to three trial groups. They found that sense of belonging was initially most strongly associated with social interactions with peers, faculty, peer support, and parental support, but over time, the sense of belonging generally declined. Academic integration (as measured by GPA and other factors) was associated with an increase in sense of belonging over time, while lower academic integration was associated with lower sense of belonging. These results show that social engagement by faculty and peers early in a student's college career helps to build a sense of belonging, but academic success over time helps to increase or maintain it. Their study also revealed that it is relatively simple to modify a student's sense of belonging (Hausman, Schofield, & Woods, 2007).

Another study by Wangrow et al. (2022) showed that college embeddedness, a construct similar to students' sense of belonging, contributed to students' intentions to persist, even when they experienced "shocks"- events that may prompt individuals to leave.

Adjustment to College

A student's decision to persist in college is a complex and ongoing decision-making process that is impacted by a host of factors. While differing models contest which factors are most important to student retention, other researchers have pursued a more comprehensive focus on student adjustment to college. Baker and Siryk (1984) summarized the research on adjustment into four categories: academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. Academic adjustment reflects the degree to which students adapt to the academic demands of the college and incorporates their attitudes towards their study, engagement, and academic achievement. Social adjustment reflects the student's integration into the social structures of the college and participation in activities and events or making friends. Personal- emotional adjustment reflects the students' experience with stress, anxiety, sleeplessness, or other personal demands of the college environment. Finally, institutional attachment refers to the extent the student identifies with the institution and has become attached to it (sense of belonging). Baker and Siryk (1984) argued that adjustment to college is multidimensional and is characterized by all four types, and they developed the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ). The SACQ has become the most widely used multidimensional measure of student's adjustment to college (Crede & Niehorster, 2012).

Crede and Niehorster (2012) conducted a meta-analysis of 237 studies (44,668 students) utilizing the SACQ to investigate student adjustment. They investigated how various student factors influenced their responses to the SACQ. They concluded that college adjustment is multi-dimensional and predictive of college grades, and college retention (Crede & Niehorster, 2012). There was a substantial impact of academic adjustment on GPA, but more noteworthy, the relationship between institutional attachment and retention was stronger than any other factor investigated (Crede & Niehorster, 2012). Adjustment to college was not heavily influenced by demographic characteristics or previous academic performance,

though social adjustment was more variable for minority students. College experience had varying results on student adjustment, with the most influence coming from alcohol and substance abuse variables. There were some effects from certain personality traits (i.e., agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness) and depression and anxiety were shown to influence results. Social support and problem-focused coping strategies also had positive effects on college adjustment.

Strategies for Improving Student Retention

The literature on student retention at institutions of higher education was rich in ideas and interventions that have been trialed. Eather et al. (2022) conducted a systematic literature review of student success interventions or programs designed specifically to improve student outcomes or retention. The researchers thematically grouped interventions into several categories: peer mentoring/peer-led study groups/peer tutoring/peer assisted learning, orientation and transition programs, first-year or foundation programs or courses, enabling programs (alternative pathways into post-secondary education, similar to developmental or bridge programs), probation programs (i.e., academic probation), and second year programs (Eather et al., 2022). The researchers concluded that peer mentoring programs are likely the most cost-efficient strategy (Eather et al., 2022). They also hypothesized, "A multi-pronged or multi-layered approach over the life of the student journey needs some investigation, given attrition and retention are not concerns isolated to a particular cohort, study area, or demographic group" (Eather et al., 2022, p. 234).

The Chronicle of Higher Education conducted a survey to investigate institutional initiatives designed to improve student success. Survey respondents were asked about the approaches their institutions had taken to benefit students. There were a variety of responses, including mental health services, tutoring, support programs for first year students, peer mentoring or advising, proactive advising, emergency financial assistance, curricular revisions, new facilities for student engagement, cross-departmental student success teams, learning communities, summer bridge classes, technology-based student support tools, and adaptive-learning technologies (Vyse, 2025).

The effects of wraparound student support services have a mixed impact on retention in the literature. Creation of integrated support services, including advising, developmental education, proactive financial aid support, food pantries, counseling, emergency grants, specialized services for returning students, veterans, childcare, and more are prevalent in the literature (Sullivan, Bell, & Nielsen, 2023). Advising is an oft-cited intervention to support retention, and a study conducted on the success of community college transfer students that investigated their persistence at their 4-year transfer destination highlighted the importance of advising to better facilitate the adjustment between schools. However, it was academic integration that was found to have the greatest impact on these transfer students' persistence (D'Amico et al., 2014).

Another study that investigated the effect of college spending on student graduation and retention found that spending on instructional support and academic support was strongly correlated with retention, and they found a potentially negative correlation with spending on student services (Dahlvig et al., 2020). A recent review and recommendations for developing institutional attachment within community colleges highlights the paradoxical role of faculty and staff in student retention, where a direct relationship between support staff and faculty is not clearly demonstrated, yet the lack of support staff and faculty

show a negative impact on retention (Schneider, 2022). Schneider (2022) goes on to emphasize the power of embedding interventions within the classroom, stating:

> *It is one thing for colleges to make support services available to students (tutoring, library services, advising, multicultural centers, childcare, recreation) and another thing to have students utilize those services. Getting students to use these services promotes institutional attachment. Again, since community college students make their connection in the classroom, faculty should embed retention and persistence assignments that require an interface with student services (p. 36).*

What seems clear from the literature is that prioritizing instructional and academic support and strategies that are embedded within the classroom seems to have the strongest effect on retention, especially for community college students, and other strategies should be balanced with student need.

Tutoring

A focus on peer mentoring and tutoring is also prevalent in the research (Sullivan et al., 2023). Supplemental instruction programs, in particular, were shown to be highly effective. A systematic review of the effectiveness of supplemental instruction (SI) supported a previous study by the U.S. Department of Education which found that supplemental instruction increased course grades, lowered the failure or withdrawal rate, and increased persistence compared with other students (Dawson et al, 2014). A meta-analysis on the effectiveness of peer-learning approaches (including supplemental instruction, peer-led team learning, and peer-assisted learning) found a moderate positive effect on academic outcomes (Bengesai et al., 2023). A study conducting propensity score analysis on the effectiveness of supplemental instruction found that supplemental instruction was positively associated with grades in the SI course, retention to the next fall semester, and retention in the subsequent fall semester (Bowman et al., 2023). Buchanan et al. (2019) found that supplemental instruction positively impacts all students, including those from underrepresented groups. Nkonki et al. (2023) explored the positive impacts of supplemental instruction outside of traditional success metrics. Supplemental instruction was found to contribute to students' acquisition of knowledge; assisted students in unlocking, exposing, and unpacking difficult content; attendance in SI sessions facilitated cultural assimilation at the university; acquisition of study skills; offered a sense of community and belonging; and developed attributes such as responsibility, independent learning, and self-monitoring (Nkonki et al., 2023).

While supplemental instruction is well-supported by decades of research, the strategy is still dependent on students attending extracurricular sessions. Shifting the tutors into the classroom, a model that has become known as embedded tutoring, has shown positive effects on GPA, retention, and student satisfaction (Doman, 2014). Embedded tutoring has been around for some time, but the model gained traction during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chaves et al., 2023). Research on the model is sparse, but the existing research suggests it is an effective model. Dvorak and Tucker (2017) argue that intentionally interwoven peer learning support programs show promise in increasing student engagement, persistence, and graduation. Students surveyed on their experiences with online embedded tutors felt more supported in their coursework, more connected in their courses, and had a deeper understanding of course content (Mendoza & Kerl, 2021). The students felt more confident, felt their submitted work had improved, and felt their performance in class was better because of their embedded tutoring. In another embedded

support program study, students who took part in the program had significantly higher one-term persistence rates and better academic performance compared to students who did not participate; these results were pronounced for first-generation students, minorities, and Pell-grant recipients (Tucker et al., 2020). A law passed in California in 2017, AB 705, did away with student placement. To adapt to the change and provide additional academic support for students who were no longer taking developmental courses, the California Community College System has adopted a widescale embedded tutoring program; early research is promising (Duffy & Burkander, 2023). The embedded tutoring models depicted across the literature vary widely; to provide for a more defined definition, four community college representatives recently collaborated to develop a model and best practices for embedded tutoring programs (Chaves et al., 2023).

Sense of Belonging in the Classroom

With a subjective sense of belonging being strongly predictive of retention, there is an emphasis on strategies to enhance supportive pedagogical practices across the curriculum (Sullivan et al., 2023). Schneider (2022) emphasizes the effects of wraparound peer-based learning communities, effective developmental education, and embedding pedagogical strategies across the curriculum to develop institutional attachment and support psychosocial development. There is a rich body of evidence to support high impact teaching practices and the benefits these practices have on the students. For example, team learning has been shown to increase course completion rates (Kreie et al., 2007). One study explored integrating social media into the course work with the express purpose of connecting students and cultivating a sense of belonging (Friess & Lam, 2018). Lambert and Maietta (2024) explore how physical and virtual campus space can be used to enhance belonging. Dulfer et al. (2025) explore teaching practices that enhance belonging in online classrooms, namely that online students seek to connect with the content, their instructor, and peers and good course design that promotes interaction and social presence increased student engagement and sense of belonging. Shatila (2024) explored how students' perceptions of connection with other classmates contributed to better academic outcomes in online courses. The literature supports that well designed courses and high impact pedagogical practices can meaningfully contribute to the development of student belonging.

Summary of Literature

In summary, improving college student retention is an increasingly important, yet challenging, priority across the nation. While Tinto's Institutional Departure model has been widely tested and validated, criticisms in his original conception of attrition leave room for more comprehensive models to co-exist. Specifically, the Collective Affiliation Model accurately represents the modern college student, especially those non-traditional students that make up a sizable portion of community college enrollment (Davidson & Wilson, 2017). Students must continuously juggle various priorities, responsibilities, roles, and identities and continually re-prioritize their time, attention, and energy. The more an institution can support students with their competing needs, the easier it will be for students to incorporate college into their lives. Embedding support strategies in the classroom offers perhaps the greatest opportunity to reach busy students.

Research consistently identifies the students' sense of belonging, institutional attachment, and adjustment to college among the most important predictors of student retention. A multi-pronged approach to enhance students' experience in ways that foster a sense of belonging is critical if meaningful

improvement of retention is to be achieved. While attrition is often caused by external pressures on students' time and focus, a heightened sense of belonging has been demonstrated to improve student persistence, despite significant disruptions or traumatic events in their lives (Wangrow et al., 2022).

The literature supports academic interventions, such as tutoring, as well as a high-impact strategy to enhance retention. Peer-based retention strategies have proven particularly effective. Additionally, well-designed courses and high impact pedagogical practices have been demonstrated to enhance student belonging. With the classroom being one of the most impactful components to the community college student experience, retention efforts should prioritize the classroom experience. Complementary strategies that are embedded within the classroom and address both the social and academic experiences of students, stand a better chance of effectively improving retention and completion, especially within the community college setting.

3.B. Review of Institutional Data

Gateway Courses

Three gateway English and mathematics courses, ENG 111 - English Composition I, MTH 154 - Quantitative Reasoning, and MTH 161 - Precalculus I, have been identified as particularly influential on student retention. These courses are required components of all transfer degrees and the majority of career and technical education degrees, as well as many of its certificate and career studies certificate programs.

ENG 111 is a requirement in every degree program at the College. More than 1,300 students enroll in ENG 111 each year (approximately 20% of fall enrollment and 12% of spring enrollment).

All transfer degrees and the majority of career and technical education degrees require students to take either MTH 154 or MTH 161. More than 800 students enroll in MTH 154 and around 700 students enroll in MTH 161 each year (more than 11% and 9% of fall enrollment and more than 10% and 7% of spring enrollment, respectively).

The ability to impact student outcomes and the student experience in these courses is particularly high. Subsequently, the influence of these courses on retention has been frequently explored. Over the past three years, an average of 87% of students who passed their first attempt at ENG 111 in the fall were retained in the spring semester; an average of 83% and 89% of students who passed their first attempt at MTH 154 and MTH 161 respectively, were retained. The average retention rates for students who were unsuccessful at their first attempt taking ENG 111, MTH 154, and MTH 161 were 50%, 52%, and 61%, respectively. **Table 3** summarizes the fall-to-spring retention trends associated with these courses.

Table 3. Fall-to-Spring Retention Rate (%)- First Attempt Course Success

Course	Fall-to-Spring Retention Rate (Students with Non-Passing Grade in the Course)	Fall-to-Spring Retention Rate (Students with Passing Grade in the Course)	Difference in Retention Rate (Passing Compared to Non-Passing)
MTH 154 - Quantitative Reasoning	52%	83%	**+31 percentage points**
MTH 161 - Precalculus I	61%	89%	**+28 percentage points**
ENG 111 - College Composition I	50%	87%	**+37 percentage points**

The impact of success in these courses extends beyond the subsequent semester and translates to a measurable difference in fall-to-fall retention. An average of 65% of students who passed their first attempt at ENG 111 in the fall were retained in the subsequent fall; an average of 56% and 66% of students who passed their first attempt at MTH 154 and MTH 161, respectively, were retained. The average retention rates for students who were unsuccessful at their first attempt taking ENG 111, MTH 154, and MTH 161 were 27%, 34%, and 43%, respectively. **Table 4** summarizes the fall-to-fall retention trends associated with these courses.

Table 4. Fall-to-Fall Retention Rate (%)- First Attempt Course Success

Course	Fall-to-Fall Retention Rate (Students with Non-Passing Grade in the Course)	Fall-to-Fall Retention Rate (Students with Passing Grade in the Course)	Difference in Retention Rate (Passing Compared to Non-Passing)
MTH 154 – Quantitative Reasoning	34%	56%	**+22 percentage points**
MTH 161 – Precalculus I	43%	66%	**+23 percentage points**
ENG 111 – College Composition I	27%	65%	**+38 percentage points**

The above statistics illustrate the impact of early academic success on retention, but it is noteworthy that the fall-fall retention rate, even among those who passed these courses on their first attempt, averaged at or below 66%.

Student Belonging

The research on retention efforts indicates that students' sense of belonging influences persistence rates more strongly than academic success. According to ReUp, a third-party contractor the College has hired to re-engage and re-enroll students who have stopped out from their studies, 53% of the students they have worked with had a GPA below 2.0 which supports the need for additional academic support. However, ReUp reports that students who have stopped-out report issues balancing their studies with other demands on their time as chief among their reasons for stopping out. **Figure 6** summarizes the reasons students working with Re-Up have attributed to their stop-out.

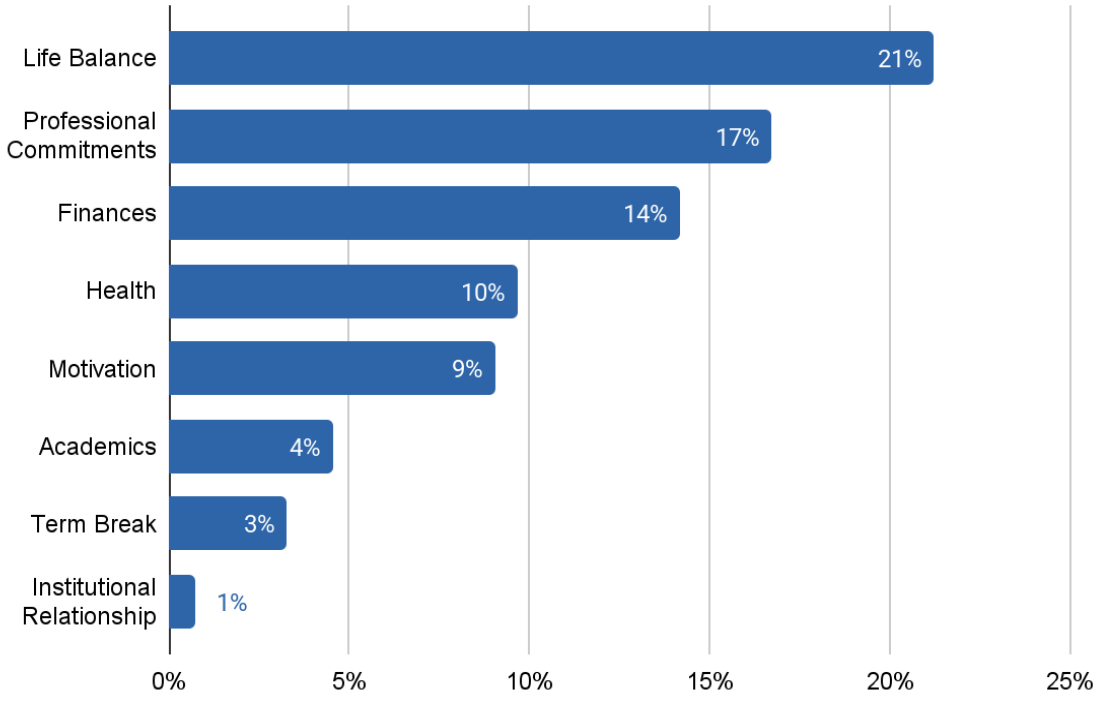

Figure 6. Reasons for Stop-Out

Research suggests that students who experience a stronger sense of belonging with their college, and can draw support from it, are more likely to persist despite external challenges (Wangrow et al., 2022). The annual Student Experience Survey results from Spring 2025 further evidence how the students' subjective sense of belonging influenced their perceptions and overall college experience. Several questions (listed below) were added to the Spring 2025 Student Experience Survey to evaluate student perceptions of the *Culture of Care* and their sense of belonging at VPCC.

Questions assessing students' sense of belonging:

- I feel comfortable being myself at this institution.
- I feel valued by this institution.
- I feel like part of the community at this institution.

Questions assessing students' experience of the Culture of Care:

- I treat others with respect and empathy, recognizing the inherent worth of every individual.
- Others treat me with respect and empathy, recognizing my inherent worth.
- I engage in open and respectful conversations and debates, sharing information and seeking insight.
- Others engage in open and respectful conversations and debates with me.
- I tackle challenges head-on and welcome change with creative and innovative ideas.
- I feel like my ideas count at this college.
- I feel like I matter to people at this college.
- I help other students grow and succeed by sharing what I know and offering support when they need it.
- I take responsibility for what I do and stay committed to reaching my goals and helping others reach theirs too.

Analysis of the survey results revealed that students who reported a stronger sense of belonging were statistically more likely to rate their overall academic and social experiences more positively. Of all other questions on the survey, the way students rated their overall experience at the College was most strongly influenced by their reported sense of belonging.

Embedded Interventions

Research indicates that community college students are less likely to engage with the college outside of class than students at residential 4-year colleges and universities. This is problematic, especially for students in need of additional wrap-around services. Among other factors that contributed to students stopping-out, ReUp reported lack of tutoring appointments, learning about tutoring too late, and not using tutoring as contributory to their decision to stop out.

The Tutoring Center at VPCC provides additional academic support to students. The Tutoring Center reported 877 appointments and 672 walk-ins in Academic Year 2024-2025 (AY24-25). Additionally, there were more than 1,000 live sessions and nearly 200 writing lab submissions recorded in Brainfuse (the College's online tutoring platform) during AY24-25. However, tutoring can only be effective if students utilize the service. During the Spring 2025 semester, 335 total academic alerts were referred to the College's Tutoring Center. The Tutoring Center attempted to engage them, but only 37 students (13.6%) responded (62 of the alerts were also re-directed to more appropriate resources based upon the details of the alert). Embedding wrap-around student support services, such as tutoring, into the classroom is a proactive way to enhance accessibility of those services.

Summary of Institutional Data Review

While student retention is a complex phenomenon, three courses were identified as being particularly influential on retention at the College - ENG 111- English Composition I, MTH 154 - Quantitative Reasoning, and MTH 161 - Precalculus I.

The review of institutional data supports the assertion from the literature that both social and academic components of the student experience are important. The creation of an embedded tutoring model is a promising strategy to increase retention, acknowledging that the best opportunity to support students is likely in the classroom. Embedded tutoring is, likewise, a socio-academic integrative strategy. Placing peer tutors in the classroom in a collaborative partnership with the faculty provides for both social connection and academic support. Lastly, peer tutors can serve as a crucial nexus to additional student support services, helping to identify and connect students with the additional support they need.

The review of institutional data also supports the crucial link between students' sense of belonging and retention. Results from the College's engagement with students who have stopped out confirm that student attrition is more heavily influenced by external factors. Student feedback confirms that stronger attachment to the College promotes a more positive overall experience, and research suggests that this has a powerful positive effect on retention. A focus on crafting classroom experiences that foster enhanced belonging to the College is a promising retention strategy.

SECTION 4: Implementation of *VPCC Cares*

Following two successive years of decline in the College's retention rate, the QEP Development Team sought to develop a plan to improve retention. The team developed the CAREs framework to guide their retention strategies, which was grounded in creating a supportive experience while fostering connections with and between students. The QEP emerged as the Development Team sought to focus the CAREs framework in a manner consistent with the findings from the literature review and review of institutional data.

The resulting *VPCC Cares* plan will embed peer-based academic support into gateway English and math courses, ENG 111 - English Composition I, MTH 154 - Quantitative Reasoning, and MTH 161 - Precalculus I, while engaging in comprehensive professional development to transform the classroom experience to better foster connections and belonging. The embedded tutoring intervention provides additional academic support to students in classes deemed to have the greatest impact for the most students. The *VPCC Cares* plan couples the embedded tutoring program with holistic and comprehensive professional development for faculty, designed to support the embedded tutoring model and increase students' sense of belonging within the classroom. Students who experience a stronger sense of belonging with their college are more likely to persist despite external challenges. It is the cultivation of this subjective sense of belonging, and the resulting enhancement of student success, that the *VPCC Cares* plan seeks.

The *VPCC Cares* plan reconceptualizes the classroom experience in gateway courses as a series of moments that can either enhance or detract from a student's sense of belonging at the College. When student interactions within these critical courses are positive, compassionate, and authentic, the students' sense of belonging to the VPCC community is enhanced. Embedding additional peer-based support and crafting engaging classroom environments in the courses that have the greatest reach is a comprehensive strategy that will strengthen student belonging at the College and promote student success.

4.A. Goals, Student Success Outcomes, and the *VPCC Cares* Model

The College's mission is to *change lives and transform communities*. The positive impacts derived from postsecondary education are limited when students do not persist until completion. Retaining and supporting students through the completion of their academic pursuits is a critical priority for the College and the central student success outcome of the QEP.

The *VPCC Cares* plan will improve student retention by embedding tutoring within introductory mathematics and English courses and providing faculty who teach those courses with comprehensive professional development that will enhance the classroom experience and foster a greater sense of student belonging. The coupling of an embedded tutoring program and a faculty development program will create an active learning environment where embedded tutoring can thrive. Together these two complementary programs are intertwined with strategies that together work to strengthen student connections across the College and increase student retention at VPCC.

Community college students differ from typical first-year students at 4-year universities, in that they do not reside at the College and are often balancing work and life outside of their studies more intensely than residential university students. Additionally, more than 70% of the College's students are classified as part-time students. Crafting a "first-year experience" is a common retention strategy deployed by 4-year universities but is challenging in the community college setting. ENG 111 - English Composition I, MTH 154 - Quantitative Reasoning, and MTH 161 - Precalculus I, were selected for the *VPCC Cares* plan because a) they are taken by the majority of all students, b) are typically taken early in student's college experience, and c) have a relatively low pass rate (high DFWI rate). The three courses chosen for the *VPCC Cares* interventions are predicted to have the greatest impact on student success and approximate what could be considered the "first-year experience" at VPCC.

***Goal*:** The overall goal of the *VPCC Cares* plan is to increase student retention at the College.

Student Success Outcomes: The desired student success outcomes for the *VPCC Cares* plan are as follows:

Course Success

1. Increase the pass rate (decrease the D, F, and withdrawal rate) for students taking targeted introductory English and math class sections that receive the plan's interventions compared to sections that do not.

Sense of Belonging

2. Increase the sense of belonging reported by students taking targeted introductory English and math class sections that receive the plan's interventions compared to sections that do not, measured through targeted questions on course evaluations.
3. Increase the overall sense of belonging reported by all students compared to initial baseline, measured through targeted questions in the College's annual Student Experience Survey.

Student Retention

4. Increase the retention rates for students taking targeted introductory English and math class sections that receive the plan's interventions compared to sections that do not, measured in the one- and two-semesters following their course.
5. Increase the College's overall full-time Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) retention rate to 65% or higher by 2030.
6. Increase the College's overall part-time Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) retention rate to 45% or higher by 2030.

Activities: The plan calls for activities that together provide additional academic support and increase the subjective sense of belonging experienced by students at the College.

1. Develop and implement an embedded tutoring program.
2. Provide faculty professional development that focuses on active learning strategies and specific high-impact pedagogical practices that augment the embedded tutoring program and foster a heightened sense of belonging among students.

Retention Model:

Figure 7, below, illustrates the *VPCC Cares* retention model. Inspired by Davidson & Wilson's Collective Affiliation Model (2017), it conceptualizes the student's experience at the College as a system of

interacting factors that influence their decision to persist and complete their program. Drawing additional inspiration from Deil-Amen's concept of retention through socio-academic integrative moments (2011), the student's experience is defined by the intertwined academic, social, and cultural interactions, experienced as a series of moments. This experience occurs through the interactions between students, faculty, staff, and the College itself. College personnel are hired and trained, and their professional development is critical to the resulting experience. In this way, students and the development of college faculty and staff are shown as primary inputs. Completion is shown as the primary output. Retention is influenced by both internal and external factors and is thus depicted as an interaction taking place between the student experience and the external factors that shape students' lives.

Integration of an embedded tutoring program creates additional socio-academic interactions that should enhance student belonging. Strategic faculty professional development equips math and English faculty with the knowledge and abilities to deliberately craft a classroom environment that supports the embedded tutoring program and fosters positive socio-academic interactions. These two interventions are outlined in purple.

The desired impact of these interventions, labeled in green font, is the development of students' sense of belonging, which is predicted to increase student retention. The goal of the *VPCC Cares* plan is for students in targeted introductory mathematics and English courses to have a more positive student experience that supports higher course pass rates, sense of belonging, and persistence rates. The two activities are described more completely in the sections below. The assessment plan was developed to test the validity of this model and demonstrate the impact of these strategies.

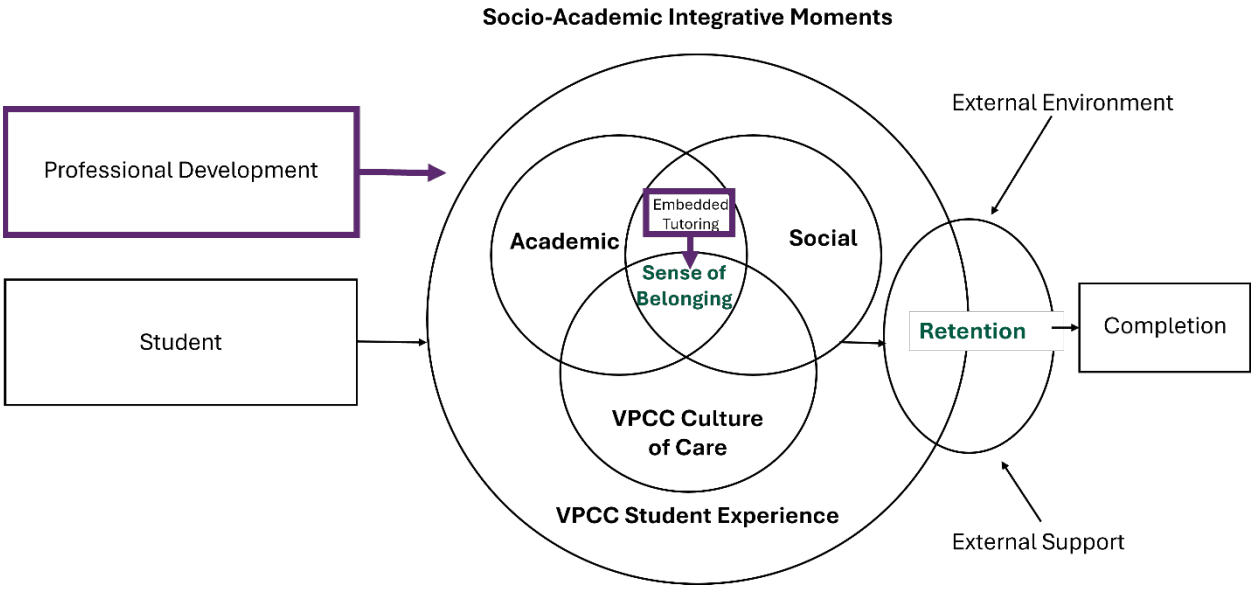

Figure 7. *VPCC Cares* Retention Model

4.B. Activities of the *VPCC Cares* Plan

Activity 1: Embedded Tutoring Program

VPCC currently employs a traditional tutoring model where full-time, part-time, and peer tutors are employed by the College to provide one-on-one and small group tutoring sessions outside of the classroom. The *VPCC Cares* plan introduces an embedded tutoring model to provide additional academic support in introductory mathematics and English courses that have traditionally been barriers to student success (ENG 111, MTH 154, and MTH 161).

The Current Tutoring Center at VPCC

The Tutoring Center at VPCC is organized within the College's Library Services. Each of the College's campuses hosts a Learning Resource Center (LRC), which enhances student confidence and success by creating an inclusive, nurturing, and supportive environment; providing comprehensive, relevant, accessible, and current resources and technology; and providing tailored support services and supplemental instruction for members of the VPCC community.

The Tutoring Center currently offers individualized academic support and supplemental instruction in mathematics, writing, and other general education or discipline-specific classes. The Tutoring Center is led by the Tutoring Coordinator who reports to the Director of Library Services. There is a physical tutoring center located at either campus location: adjacent to the LRC at the main Hampton campus or within the LRC at the Historic Triangle Campus site. All enrolled students can receive tutoring services, free of charge, on a walk-in basis or through scheduled appointments. Tutoring appointments can also be scheduled virtually. Additional after-hours tutoring services are available with Brainfuse, an online tutoring service that provides on-demand, live help or answers to specific topic questions. The Tutoring Center includes a dedicated Math Center and Writing Center for these challenging subjects.
In addition to the Tutoring Coordinator, the Tutoring Center currently employs a full-time writing and full-time math tutor and two part-time math tutors. Additionally, the Tutoring Center hires student peer-tutors in math, writing, and additional disciplines.

In addition to individual tutoring sessions, tutors also host supplemental instruction and group tutoring sessions and workshops and develop learning aides and study guides for the various disciplines they support. Tutors also actively collaborate with the College's faculty and have tutoring liaisons assigned to each academic division; these liaisons attend division meetings and help to ensure coordination between the tutors and the faculty. While the tutoring center has been successful at supporting students who seek assistance outside of class, many additional students would benefit from additional academic support.

The Embedded Tutoring Model

The embedded tutoring model within *VPCC Cares* is based on the understanding that students are more likely to take advantage of services when they do not need to seek them outside of class; the literature suggests this is particularly relevant to community college students. As elaborated on in the literature review above, embedded tutoring has shown positive effects on GPA, retention, and student satisfaction, and students from classes utilizing the embedded model report feeling more supported in their coursework, better connected to their courses, more confident, and having a deeper understanding of course content.

The embedded tutoring model differs from traditional tutoring and other commonly deployed academic support interventions (i.e., supplemental instruction and teaching assistants). Embedded tutors regularly attend class, not just as passive visitors, but as active participants. They work with the faculty to facilitate

learning activities and small group discussions within the classroom. Embedded tutors also host supplemental instruction or review sessions outside of class and they work in the tutoring center, conducting individual and group tutoring.

This model provides additional support to students and fosters interaction with the tutor, helping to develop a relationship between the tutor and students and increasing the likelihood of students participating in follow-up tutoring or supplemental instruction. The model also encourages active learning in the classroom and promotes collaboration between the tutors and faculty. Unlike teaching assistants, embedded tutors do not do administrative work (i.e., grading) or provide instruction within the classroom. Embedded tutors are typically other students (peer tutors), who have taken the class previously and excelled. This creates added benefit by creating additional opportunities for students to engage with the College and serve as peer tutors. Peer tutors will be supported by part-time or full-time professional tutors, who may also serve as embedded tutors. **Table 5**, below, outlines differences between the current tutoring academic support system, other common academic supports, and the proposed embedded tutoring support program.

Table 5. Embedded Tutoring Model vs Traditional Tutor, Supplemental Instruction, and Teaching Assistants

Activity	Embedded Tutor	Supplemental Instructor	Traditional Tutor	Teaching Assistant
Regularly attend class and facilitate active learning activities	✓	✓		✓
Participate in small group discussions or discussion boards in Canvas	✓			✓
Provide open tutoring hours outside of class	✓		✓	
Deliver study or review sessions outside of class	✓	✓	✓	✓
Administrative work (grading, etc)				✓

The embedded tutoring model supports the overall goals of *VPCC Cares* in several ways. First, early success in math and English courses have been shown to directly and positively influence student retention. By providing additional academic support in these challenging classes, students should be increasingly successful and build momentum in their studies going forward. By embedding the strategy in the classroom, it increases the likelihood of students utilizing tutoring services by making it more accessible to students. Additional support and connections may also transcend the classroom, allowing more students to be referred to the College's other support services. Finally, the model introduces another member to the team of supporting personnel (faculty, advisors, etc.) that helps students navigate their college journey.

Implementing Embedded Tutoring

Implementing an embedded tutoring program requires significant changes and investments to the Tutoring Center. Firstly, the job description for an embedded tutor (regardless of whether they are employed as full-time, part-time, or peer tutors) was developed, and is summarized below:

- Attends class sessions (in-person/ synchronous/ hybrid courses) or holds designated Zoom tutoring hours (asynchronous courses).
- Participates in discussion boards within classroom LMS.
- Works with students and facilitates discussion, as appropriate, during in-class activities.
- Develops and maintains familiarity with assigned course textbooks, syllabi, and course outlines.
- Hold scheduled group study sessions, assignment review, and other individual or group tutoring sessions outside of class.
- Provide additional workshops, seminars, or reviews for groups of students as needed.
- Connect students to campus resources as needed.
- Utilize a variety of software, instructional methods, and instructional resources to support students in achieving competence and confidence in the course content.
- Create and maintain supplemental instructional materials to address new and recurring topics and problems on an annual basis.
- Documents tutoring appointments and other administrative and reporting tasks.

Secondly, the implementation of the embedded tutoring model necessitates pedagogical changes to the classroom and coordination and cooperation with the faculty. Lesson plans must be adjusted to facilitate more active learning opportunities, where the tutor and professor interact with the students. Thus, the *VPCC Cares* plan necessitates faculty professional development and curricular development prior to the implementation of embedded tutoring. *VPCC Cares* plan details a phased implementation of embedded tutors within all regular (excluding dual enrolled) sections of ENG 111, MTH 154, and MTH 161 taught by full-time faculty.

In the first phase, willing faculty will volunteer to participate in the program and associated professional development in the year prior to the initiation of embedded tutors. Each subsequent year, new cohorts of faculty and tutors will be recruited, and the number of sections will expand. The target by year five of the *VPCC Cares* plan is to have embedded tutors in all regular sections of ENG 111, MTH 154, and MTH 161 taught by full-time faculty (and as many sections taught by adjunct faculty as possible).

Full-time faculty are expected to participate in professional development annually and have defined responsibilities that include curriculum development. The responsibilities of adjunct faculty are more limited, and they partner with full-time faculty mentors, course coordinators, and Program or Department Chairs as they develop their lesson plans. For these reasons, the VPCC Cares plan prioritizes the full-time mathematics and English faculty before beginning to expand to the adjunct faculty. Details of the accompanying faculty development plan are detailed in the section below.

Based on current class scheduling trends, there are approximately 19 sections of ENG 111 taught by full-time faculty during the fall semester, and 12 in the spring. Similarly, there are approximately 16 sections of MTH 154 and 12 sections of MTH 161 taught by full-time faculty during the fall semester, and 18 and 7 sections, respectively, taught in the spring. While the exact scheduling of class sections varies by semester and year, based on current trends, the fully phased *VPCC Cares* plan would require embedded tutors for nearly 15 English sections and 27 math sections taught by full-time faculty, per semester.

Table 6 details the projected number of class sections requiring embedded tutors each semester, for each year of the *VPCC Cares* plan. Year 5 calls for an undefined expansion to class sections taught by adjunct faculty as the *VPCC Cares* plan becomes institutionalized. Based on current enrollment trends, at full expansion (all sections of targeted English and math courses taught by full-time faculty), the *VPCC Cares* plan should impact nearly 600 students in English classes (between 5%- 9% of all students) and more

than 1,000 students in mathematics classes (around 12% of all students) during each fall or spring semester.

Table 6. Projected Number of Class Sections per Semester, by Year

Projected # Class Sections	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
English	3	7	10	14	15+
Math	5	15	22	26	27+

Tutoring Center Support Specialist

Implementing an embedded tutoring program will require additional investment in the Tutoring Center at the College. The Tutoring Center is currently directed by the full-time Tutoring Coordinator. To support the logistics of coordinating an increasingly complex embedded tutoring program, the College will be hiring a Tutoring Center Support Specialist to support the administrative needs of the program.

The Tutoring Center Support Specialist will report to the Tutoring Coordinator and will be responsible for supporting the operations of the Tutoring Center by managing front desk activities, facilitating virtual tutoring access, coordinating purchasing and inventory, and supporting the implementation of the Embedded Tutoring program. The job description for the Tutoring Center Support Specialist is summarized below.

- Manage daily front desk operations, including customer service.
- Run the front "room" for open Zoom tutoring hours, ensuring smooth virtual access and support for students and tutors.
- Coordinate purchasing and maintain inventory of supplies and materials for the Tutoring Center.
- Support the implementation of the Embedded Tutoring program, including tutor assignments, faculty coordination, and program evaluation.
- Help new tutors and student workers onboard.
- Assist with data collection and reporting related to tutoring services and program outcomes.
- Serve as a liaison between the Tutoring Center and other departments to ensure smooth operations and communication.
- Contributes strategic planning for tutoring initiatives.

Tutor Capacity

Additional tutors will be recruited to staff the targeted course sections while maintaining overall tutoring capacity. Embedded tutors are expected to work six hours per class section, per week. Approximately three hours will be spent attending class (in-person, or synchronous) or providing availability in discussion boards and other activities on Canvas (asynchronous). The other three hours will be offering optional individual or group tutoring sessions for the students in the class and staffing the Tutoring Center. As peer tutors progress in their studies and graduate, new peer tutors will need to be recruited and trained to replace them. This necessitates regular and ongoing peer tutor recruitment.

The *VPCC Cares* plan is phased, to gradually expand over the five-year period. While details of this phased expansion are included in the overall *VPCC Cares* Timeline (**Table 10**), the projected number and type of tutors necessary in each year of the plan are summarized in **Tables 7-8** below:

Table 7. Estimated Number and Type of Writing Tutors Required

Writing Tutors	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
FT Writing Tutor(s)	1	1	1	1	1
PT Writing Tutor(s)	1	1	1	1	1
Peer Writing Tutor(s)	0	1	2	3	4

Table 8. Estimated Number and Type of Mathematics Tutors Required

Math Tutors	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
FT Math Tutor(s)	1	1	1	1	1
PT Math Tutor(s)	2	2	2	2	2
Peer Math Tutor(s)	0	2	6	8	10

* The exact composition of full-time, part-time, and peer tutors can vary based on ability to hire. Additional full-time or part-time professional tutors could offset fewer peer tutors.

In addition to the recruitment and onboarding of embedded tutors, a handbook is being developed that will guide the orienting and activities of embedded tutors. Finally, a new technology platform is needed to better support the administrative needs of the Tutoring Center as it expands. The Tutoring Center has selected Accudemia, a technology platform that will support tutor scheduling and track student appointments and walk-ins. Accudemia automates tasks such as limiting appointment numbers and verifying course enrollment. User-friendly analytics and dashboards support more accurate and less labor-intensive reporting. The *VPCC Cares* plan includes funding for the tool throughout the life of the plan.

Summary – Embedded Tutoring

The embedded tutoring model supports the overall goals of the *VPCC Cares* plan by integrating additional academic support within the classroom. Embedded tutoring provides value to students by delivering personalized, proactive support directly within foundational and traditionally challenging courses. The embedded tutoring model is consistent with the CAREs framework, by making tutoring support more accessible and responsive to student needs. Not only are students more likely to engage with tutoring services, but the tutors can also connect students to other support at the College. The presence of an embedded tutor (especially peer tutors) also engages the students differently and provides the opportunity for additional connections between students. The program creates additional opportunities for students who serve as peer tutors.

The implementation of the embedded tutoring model necessitates pedagogical changes to the classroom and coordination and cooperation with the faculty. Thus, the embedded tutoring model also stimulates increased engagement in the classroom. Additional engagement and active learning activities can foster students forging stronger connections with their classmates, faculty, and tutors. Thus, the model enhances the classroom experience, both academically and socially, with a resulting increase in the students' sense of belonging. To facilitate the embedded tutoring model, comprehensive faculty professional development is necessary.

Activity 2: Enhancing Belonging Through Faculty Development

Classrooms that provide active learning experiences are optimal for the embedded tutoring model. Dedicated class time for students to collaborate together, and with their faculty and embedded tutors, is

critical to reap the benefits of the model. A more engaging classroom also has a powerful, positive effect on student belonging as well.

For many VPCC students, the classroom serves as the primary point of contact with the College. Research shows that specific high-impact pedagogical practices, such as peer-based learning, active learning, and well-designed courses, directly foster belonging. By empowering mathematics and English faculty with the skills to implement these strategies in their courses and classrooms, the College can enhance the academic experience to create a community where students not only succeed academically but also feel like they belong. For this reason, faculty professional development has been included as a high-impact and critical retention strategy within the *VPCC Cares* plan.

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

The *VPCC Cares* plan will enhance faculty development by investing resources in the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), the College's faculty development hub. The CTL, currently led by a steering committee and a teaching faculty member with reduced teaching load, has effectively coordinated programs like the College's monthly *Lunch & Learn* series and the annual *Colloquium of Excellence*. Additionally, the CTL currently manages the faculty professional development fund. However, the CTL's full potential is limited by its lack of full-time, dedicated staff.

To address the increased and ongoing need for faculty development that accompanies implementation of an embedded tutoring program, and the heightened level of student belonging the College intends to achieve, the *VPCC Cares* plan will strengthen the CTL as a more comprehensive and centralized hub for faculty support. This strengthened CTL, and the planned faculty development plan, is critical for mathematics and English faculty who are preparing to implement embedded tutoring in their classrooms. To provide the resources and support for dynamic, engaging instruction, the *VPCC Cares* plan re-conceptualizes the CTL, investing in its success and hiring a new faculty-ranked director.

The Director, Center for Teaching and Learning

The Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) will provide strategic leadership to enhance teaching excellence and innovation across the College. The Director will develop, implement, and assess faculty development programs, foster a collaborative environment for pedagogical advancement, and promote the use of effective and inclusive teaching practices and technology integration. The Director will collaborate with various stakeholders, manage the CTL's resources and budget, and advance teaching and learning at the College. Additionally, the Director will serve as a member of the Academic Affairs leadership team and support the coordination and implementation of strategic initiatives within Academic Affairs. Finally, the Director will coordinate the overall *VPCC Cares* plan, in partnership with the QEP Steering Committee. The job description for the Director of the CTL is summarized below.

- Provide strategic leadership and set priorities for the CTL.
- Oversee the development, implementation, and assessment of comprehensive and holistic faculty development programs and resources, including the *VPCC Cares* Faculty Development Plan.
- Foster a collaborative environment for pedagogical innovation and the exchange of best teaching practices.
- Support the diverse professional development needs of all faculty types (full-time and adjunct faculty) and provide resources for faculty to support their continual development.
- Collaborate with faculty, academic leadership, and other units to implement strategic initiatives; this includes overseeing the *VPCC Cares* plan.

- Remain current and knowledgeable and disseminate research and resources on teaching and learning.
- Build and maintain external partnerships to enhance CTL services and broader teaching and learning.
- Support faculty in assessment methods to improve student learning outcomes.
- Manage the CTLs budget and professional development funds.
- Serve as a member of the Academic Affairs Leadership Team, the chair of the CTL Steering Committee and the QEP Steering Committee, and a standing member of the Academic Assessment Committee.

VPCC Cares Faculty Development Plan

More specifically to the work of *VPCC Cares*, the Director of the CTL will be charged with developing a comprehensive and holistic professional development program that will support the embedded tutoring program and facilitate pedagogical practices that increase student engagement and belonging in the classroom. All full-time faculty teaching ENG 111, MTH 154, and MTH 161 will complete the development program, in the year prior to the introduction of embedded tutors to their classes.

VPCC Cares calls for a phased implementation of the professional development program. In the first phase, willing faculty will volunteer to participate in the professional development program. Each subsequent year, new cohorts of faculty will be recruited. The target by year five of the *VPCC Cares* plan is to have all full-time faculty teaching all regular sections of ENG 111, MTH 154, and MTH 161 (excluding dual enrolled sections) successfully complete the program. While full-time faculty are prioritized, the *VPCC Cares* development program will also be open to adjunct faculty teaching ENG 111, MTH 154, and MTH 161 courses. Efforts to expand the development program more intentionally to adjunct faculty will begin in Year 5.

The *VPCC Cares* faculty development program will be designed to be modular and able to be administered in different formats to meet varying scheduling needs. Modules will exemplify the type of interactive and engaging teaching that is being taught. Opportunities to workshop and redesign current assignments and lesson plans will be built into the development program. Modules will include topics such as active learning strategies, metacognition, neurodivergence, student engagement strategies, student support, and sense of belonging. The effectiveness of the faculty development program to impact teaching practices will be measured by peer evaluation using a modified Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol (RTOP).

In Year 1, five faculty (at least one English and one math faculty member) will be recruited to serve as RTOP evaluators. These evaluators will serve as the pilot cohort and will participate in the same development plan as described above. In each subsequent year, starting in Year 2, cohorts of approximately five faculty members will be recruited to participate in the development plan, and subsequently, in the embedded tutoring program. Faculty are encouraged to utilize their participation in the *VPCC Cares* development program towards the completion of their professional development goals.

Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol (RTOP)

The Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol was developed by a group in Arizona to support the preparation of K-12 teachers in 1998-99 (Piburn & Swada, 2000). The RTOP has been studied, and the theoretical constructs, reliability, and validity of the tool have been demonstrated. The RTOP methodology has been widely circulated and adopted in both secondary and post-secondary education, especially for teaching science and mathematics.

The RTOP was developed with a constructivist understanding of learning, that knowledge is not transmitted but actively built upon existing knowledge by the learner (Cobern, 1993). According to the constructivist model, students learn in a variety of ways, including working through conceptual conflict between old ideas and new ones, active discussion and sharing of alternate viewpoints, culture formation, and belonging to a community of learning. What becomes important for learning is that students are actively engaging with each other, their instructor, and the content. RTOP reinforces pedagogy that builds on students' prior knowledge, creates opportunities for collaboration, active learning, and community building, while also facilitating student reflection on their work and learning. An instrument to measure teaching in accordance with these principles was developed, and can be used to drive meaningful changes in teaching practices. The principles evaluated in RTOP are consistent with high-impact practices that engage students and enhance their connection with the institution and each other. Classrooms shaped by RTOP principles would be ideal for embedded tutoring models to function, and better foster student belonging.

The *VPCC Cares* plan adopts the RTOP instrument as a measure of classroom environments that are ready to effectively implement embedded tutoring and promote student belonging. The Director of the CTL will recruit and train faculty as RTOP evaluators, including holding norming sessions to ensure consistent and reliable scoring processes. These evaluators will then conduct an RTOP evaluation of the faculty entering the *VPCC Cares* faculty development program to establish an initial score. Feedback will be provided to faculty prior to the start of the development program. Following the faculty development program, and after having an opportunity to implement changes to their teaching, the participants will have a second RTOP evaluation. Thus, RTOP serves not only to assess the effectiveness of the development program, but also to drive changes in teaching practices that will lead to successful adoption of the embedded tutor program and enhancing student belonging. RTOP evaluation will be conducted professionally and confidentially. Results will be aggregated for assessment of the QEP but will not be reported at an individual faculty level.

Summary – Professional Development

The *VPCC Cares* plan is built on the understanding that student belonging is a powerful driver of retention and success. Research indicates that the classroom experience directly shapes a student's overall experience at the College and can directly contribute to their sense of belonging. The *VPCC Cares* plan makes a strategic investment in faculty professional development as a critical way of preparing mathematics and English faculty to embed tutoring within their classrooms in a way that is successful while fostering increased student belonging.

To these ends, the *VPCC Cares* plan directs the reorganization and enhancement of the Center for Teaching and Learning, allowing the CTL to realize its full potential as a centralized hub for faculty support. This transformation will be led by a new, faculty-ranked, director who will provide strategic leadership and foster a collaborative environment for pedagogical innovation. This transformation will also provide the necessary capacity and leadership to implement the comprehensive professional development program needed to support embedded tutoring and coordinate the broader *VPCC Cares* plan. The phased faculty development program makes use of the Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol (RTOP), a validated instrument to both measure its effectiveness and drive enhancement of current teaching practices.

4.C. Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Steering Committee

The *VPCC Cares* plan formally charges the QEP Steering Committee to remain intact and responsible for providing oversight and guidance over its five-year duration. The QEP Steering Committee will be

chaired by the Director of the CTL and will be responsible for providing annual reports to the College community and compiling the QEP Impact Report. The ongoing membership of the QEP Steering Committee is outlined in **Table 9** below.

Table 9. QEP Steering Committee Membership

Committee Member	College Position	Representing
*Lynsey LeMay	Director, Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL) (interim)	Faculty/Mid-Level Managers
Liz Rizzatto	Tutoring Coordinator	Staff
LaRhonda Johnson Horton	Dean, Retention and Student Success	Mid-Level Managers
Seth Fisher	Director, Academic Advising	Mid-Level Managers
JJ Bonavita	Director, Institutional Research	Mid-Level Managers
Brooke Robertshaw	Assessment and Planning Coordinator	Staff
Nicole Currier	Academic Dean- Arts, Business, Humanities, & Social Sciences	Mid-Level Managers
Dawn Hayden	Faculty- English	Faculty
Sergio Maria-Fagundez	Faculty- Math	Faculty
Elizabeth Kelso	Faculty- Math	Faculty
TBD	1-2 Revolving Student Representatives	Students

* Committee Chair

4.D. *VPCC Cares* Plan Detailed Timeline

This section and the information in **Table 10** below provides an overview of the phased implementation of *VPCC Cares*. While the QEP Development Team has been diligent in ensuring the proposed timeline is as accurate and feasible as possible, unanticipated change is inherent in any plan. To this end, the QEP Steering Committee will remain intact and meet regularly during the five-year plan. The QEP Steering Committee is empowered to adjust the details of implementation, as needed, over the life of the plan.

Table 10 presents tasks and milestones associated with VPCC Cares in the first column. The second column lists the tentative deadline. Semesters have been abbreviated for brevity (Fall 2025 is abbreviated as “FA25”, Spring 2026 is “SP26”). Year 0 has been included to account for the activities already being undertaken to prepare for the *VPCC Cares* plan’s official start in January of 2026.

The central activities of *VPCC Cares* occur in an annual cycle, where a new cohort of faculty and new peer tutors are recruited in the fall semester. The new faculty cohort undergoes RTOP evaluation in the fall, in advance of the professional development program. The faculty cohort participates in the development program in the spring and implements curricular changes throughout the spring and summer semesters. In the subsequent fall semester, the faculty are matched with embedded tutors, who were recruited, onboarded, and trained during the spring and summer. There is a kickoff event where the faculty and tutors collaborate and then implement the embedded tutoring program. Finally, the faculty participate in a second RTOP evaluation, and the QEP Steering Committee begins to collect data for later assessment. A new cycle then begins, with a new cohort of faculty and tutors. The QEP Steering Committee continues to monitor progress and is responsible for annual reporting on *VPCC Cares*.

Table 10. *VPCC Cares* Plan, Detailed Implementation

Year 0 (2025)	**Deadline**
Complete Development- *VPCC Cares* Plan	9/15/2025
SACSCOC Site Visit	Oct. 27-30, 2025
Hire Director, Center for Teaching & Learning	FA25
Hire Tutoring Center Support Specialist	FA25
Hire Additional or Vacant Full-time/Part-time Tutors	FA25
Recruit Potential Peer Tutors from FA25 Math/English Courses	FA25
Complete Development- Tutoring Handbooks, Embedded Tutoring Training	FA25
Procure Accudemia Technology Platform	FA25
Pilot Assessment Tool for measuring Belonging	FA25
Establish Baseline Measure- Student Belonging- Overall	FA25
Establish Baseline Measure- Student Belonging- ENG111	FA25
Establish Baseline Measure- Student Belonging- MTH154	FA25
Establish Baseline Measure- Student Belonging- MTH161	FA25
Establish Baseline Measure- Pass Rate- ENG111	FA25
Establish Baseline Measure- Pass Rate- MTH154	FA25
Establish Baseline Measure- Pass Rate- MTH161	FA25
Establish Baseline Measure- Retention- ENG111	FA25
Establish Baseline Measure- Retention- MTH154	FA25
Establish Baseline Measure- Retention- MTH161	FA25
Year 1 (2026)	**Deadline**
Complete Development- Faculty Development Program	SP26
Recruit and Train RTOP Evaluators	SP26
Pilot Faculty Development Program w/ RTOP Evaluators	SP26
Hire and Train Embedded Tutors	SP26
Pilot Embedded Tutoring w/ RTOP Evaluators	FA26
Recruit 1st Faculty Cohort	FA26
First RTOP- Cohort 1	FA26
Recruit Potential Peer Tutors from FA26 Math/English Courses	FA26

Year 2 (2027)	Deadline
Begin Compiling Annual Report- Year 1	Jan. 2027
Faculty Colloquium of Excellence- Belonging in the Classroom	Jan. 2027
Faculty Development Program- Cohort 1	SP27
Hire and Train Embedded Tutors	SP27
Annual QEP Report Out- Year 1	5/15/2027
Embedded Tutoring Kick Off	Aug. 2027
Embedded Tutoring- Cohort 1	FA27
Recruit Faculty Cohort 2	FA27
First RTOP- Cohort 2	FA27
Second RTOP- Cohort 1	FA27
Recruit Potential Peer Tutors from FA27 Math/English Courses	FA27
Year 3 (2028)	**Deadline**
Begin Compiling Annual Report- Year 2	Jan. 2028
Embedded Tutoring Kick Off	Jan. 2028
Embedded Tutoring Continues- Cohort 1	SP28
Faculty Development Program- Cohort 2	SP28
Hire and Train Embedded Tutors	SP28
Annual QEP Report Out- Year 2	5/15/2028
Embedded Tutoring Kick Off	Aug. 2028
Embedded Tutoring- Cohorts 1,2	FA28
Recruit Faculty Cohort 3	FA28
First RTOP- Cohort 3	FA28
Second RTOP- Cohort 2	FA28
Recruit Potential Peer Tutors from FA28 Math/English Courses	FA28
Year 4 (2029)	**Deadline**
Begin Compiling Annual Report- Year 3	Jan. 2029
Embedded Tutoring Kick Off	Jan. 2029
Embedded Tutoring Continues- Cohorts 1, 2	SP29
Faculty Development Program- Cohort 3	SP29
Hire and Train Embedded Tutors	SP29
Annual QEP Report Out- Year 3	5/15/2029
Embedded Tutoring Kick Off	Aug. 2029
Embedded Tutoring- Cohorts 1,2, 3	FA29
Recruit Faculty Cohort 4	FA29
First RTOP- Cohort 4	FA29
Second RTOP- Cohort 3	FA29
Recruit Potential Peer Tutors from FA29 Math/English Courses	FA29

Year 5 (2030)	Deadline
Begin Compiling Annual Report- Year 4	Jan. 2030
Embedded Tutoring Kick Off	Jan. 2030
Embedded Tutoring Continues- Cohorts 1, 2, 3	SP30
Faculty Development Program- Cohort 4	SP30
Hire and Train Embedded Tutors	SP30
Annual QEP Report Out- Year 4	5/15/2030
Embedded Tutoring Kick Off	Aug. 2030
Embedded Tutoring- Cohorts 1,2, 3, 4	FA30
Expand Faculty Development	FA30
First RTOP- Expanded Faculty Cohort	FA30
Second RTOP- Cohort 4	FA30
Recruit Potential Peer Tutors from FA30 Courses	FA30
Begin Compiling QEP Impact Report	**Jan. 2031**

4.E. *VPCC Cares* Plan Budget and Resources

The *VPCC Cares* plan will be funded through a combination of existing resources and new funding, with contributions from both the VPCC Educational Foundation and the College's operational budget. **Table 11** details the current, repurposed, and new assets being allocated to the *VPCC Cares* plan. Note that expenses in Year 1 are lower because the plan begins mid-year. Projected expenses also account for a 3% annual increase to cover rising costs and salaries.

Repurposed and reallocated resources include expenses related to the Tutoring Center, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), and a portion of time from existing faculty and personnel. The *VPCC Cares* plan necessitates dedicating all the Tutoring Center's current resources. Likewise, the annual budget for the Center for Teaching and Learning will be mostly reallocated, with most of its programming aligning with the *VPCC Cares* plan by its second year. Additionally, a portion of the time from both the Assessment and Planning Coordinator and faculty involved in RTOP evaluations, professional development, and curriculum development work will be redirected to support the plan.

New funding will also be used to support the *VPCC Cares* plan. In Fiscal Year 2025, new funds for software, supplies, branding, and marketing of the plan were allocated. The VPCC Educational Foundation has endorsed the *VPCC Cares* plan and committed initial funding of nearly $600,000 over three years to launch much of the plan, with the College gradually assuming these costs over the first three years. Should the *VPCC Cares* plan prove to be effective at increasing retention, as expected, the College has committed to funneling the increased revenue to sustain and expand the *VPCC Cares* plan.

Table 11. *VPCC Cares* Budget and Allocated Resources

Budget Item	Year 1 (2026)	Year 2 (2027)	Year 3 (2028)	Year 4 (2029)	Year 5 (2030)
Current & Repurposed Assets: Funding currently allocated or allocated elsewhere but will be reallocated to the QEP					
Tutoring Coordinator - Salary & Benefits	$ 48,612	$ 99,382	$ 101,622	$ 103,913	$ 106,282
Tutor - Writing (FT) - Salary & Benefits	$ 40,989	$ 83,682	$ 85,453	$ 87,275	$ 89,150
Tutor- Math (FT) - Salary & Benefits	$ 40,675	$ 83,031	$ 84,775	$ 86,572	$ 88,421
PT Professional Tutors - Wages	$ 37,189	$ 76,610	$ 78,908	$ 81,275	$ 83,714
Assessment & Planning Coordinator - Salary & Benefits (10%)	$ 5,319	$ 10,884	$ 11,136	$ 11,412	$ 11,659
Faculty- RTOP Evaluators (5 faculty per year, 5% of salary & benefits)	$ 31,807	$ 32,571	$ 33,362	$ 34,173	$ 35,010
Faculty- Professional Development and Curricular Design (5 faculty per year, 10% of salary & benefits)	$ 63,614	$ 66,728	$ 68,353	$ 70,024	$ 71,748
CTL Annual Budget	$ 6,000	$ 12,000	$ 12,000	$ 12,000	$ 12,000
Tutoring Center Annual Budget	$ 27,000	$ 27,000	$ 27,000	$ 27,000	$ 27,000
QEP Branding	$ 20,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Accudemia Software Platform	$ 3,700	$ 3,700	$ 3,700	$ 3,700	$ 3,700
Supplies and Marketing	$ 31,500	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Subtotal	**$ 356,405**	**$ 495,588**	**$ 506,309**	**$ 517,344**	**$ 528,684**

Budget Item	Year 1 (2026)	Year 2 (2027)	Year 3 (2028)	Year 4 (2029)	Year 5 (2030)
New Assets: Educational Foundation Funded					
Director, Center for Teaching and Learning - Salary & Benefits	$ 81,359	$ 83,423	$ 51,327	$ -	$ -
Tutoring Center Support Specialist - Salary & Benefits	$ 40,676	$ 41,516	$ 25,433	$ -	$ -
PT and Peer Tutors-Math and Writing-Wages	$ 40,000	$ 100,000	$ 80,000	$ -	$ -
Professional Development - Faculty	$ 20,000	$ 10,000	$ 10,000	$ -	$ -
Contingency	$ 10,924	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Subtotal	**$ 192,959**	**$ 234,939**	**$ 166,760**	**$ -**	**$ -**
New Assets: College Commitment					
Director, Center for Teaching and Learning - Salary & Benefits	$ -	$ 83,423	$ 119,763	$ 176,923	$ 184,475
Tutoring Center Support Specialist - Salary & Benefits	$ -	$ 41,516	$ 59,343	$ 86,573	$ 88,411
PT and Peer Tutors-Math and Writing - Wages	$ -	$ -	$ 48,743	$ 163,410	$ 186,952
Professional Development - Faculty	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 10,000	$ 10,000
Subtotal	**$ -**	**$ 124,939**	**$ 227,850**	**$ 436,907**	**$ 469,838**
Total	**$ 549,364**	**$ 855,466**	**$ 900,919**	**$ 954,251**	**$ 998,522**

4.F. Broad-Based Support

The plan originated through ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes at the College.

The College is committed to shared governance and has several established mechanisms for ensuring a collaborative approach in its decision-making. There are several standing constituency groups: the Student Government Association (SGA) represents students, the College Support Staff Association (CSSA) represents classified staff, the Faculty Senate represents teaching and professional faculty, and the Council of Mid-Level Managers (MLM) represents the Associate- or Assistant- Deans or Directors and the Deans and Directors, and the Associate Vice Presidents. The President's Cabinet consists of the College President, the Vice Presidents, and the Chief of Staff. All five constituencies meet at least monthly, and the leadership of each constituency group, as well as the mid-level and executive leadership of the College, meet together monthly as the College Council. Additionally, several bodies represent the

College's external constituents: the VPCC Local College Board is made up of representatives from each locality within the College's service area, and the VPCC Educational Foundation is an associated non-profit organization with a Board comprised of business leaders and other stakeholders in the community, that provides fundraising and support to the College.

The QEP Topic Selection Committee and subsequent QEP Development Team consisted of a collaborative and diverse group representing all major internal constituency groups at the College. Throughout the planning process, feedback was actively sought from the constituency groups or the College at large.

The following list details the occasions when feedback was actively sought from across the College.

- November 7, 2023- QEP Topic Selection Convenes.
- November 22, 2023- December 11, 2023- QEP Topic Selection Survey conducted for all members of the College community, including members of the Local College Board.
- February 2, 2024- Presented Results and Proposed Topics to SGA; Feedback survey used to collect feedback.
- February 13, 2024- Presented Results and Proposed Topics to FS; Feedback survey used to collect feedback.
- February 15, 2024- Presented Results and Proposed Topics to CSSA; Feedback survey used to collect feedback.
- February 20, 2023- Presented Results and Proposed Topics to MLM; Feedback survey used to collect feedback.
- February 27, 2024- Presented Results of QEP Topic Selection Committee work to President's Cabinet.
- April 24, 2024- President's Cabinet provided feedback on QEP Topic back to the QEP Topic Selection Committee.
- May 13, 2024- QEP Development Team convenes (QEP Topic Selection Committee was expanded as its' focus shifted to development).
- August 16, 2024- All College Day- Presented findings from QEP Topic Selection Committee and updated the College community on topic development process; feedback was solicited.
- November 11, 2024- Presented CAREs Framework to SACSCOC Reaffirmation Leadership Team; feedback was solicited.
- November 20, 2024- Presented CAREs Framework to College Council; feedback was solicited.
- January 8, 2025- Mid-Year College Update- Presented CAREs Framework and solicited feedback from the College community.
- January 21-22, 2025- Advisory Visit with SACSCOC Vice President; feedback received on the QEP.
- January 28, 2025- Met with Faculty Senate to discuss CAREs Framework.
- March 13, 2025- QEP Planning Retreat- topic solidified.
- March 17, 2025- *VPCC Cares* plan presented to SACSCOC Reaffirmation Leadership Team.
- March 18, 2025- Discussed *VPCC Cares* plan with MLM & CSSA.
- March 21, 2025- Discussed *VPCC Cares* plan with SGA.
- March 25, 2025- Discussed *VPCC Cares* plan with Faculty Senate.
- April 16, 2025- Presented *VPCC Cares* plan to Academic Affairs Leadership Team and discussed.

- April 24, 2025- Presented *VPCC Cares* plan to VPCC Educational Foundation and discussed.
- May 21, 2025- Initial Presentation of *VPCC Cares* plan to VPCC Local College Board and discussed.
- June 12, 2025- Updated VPCC Educational Foundation on *VPCC Cares* plan, and Foundation approved funding for the plan.
- July 8, 2025- Presented *VPCC Cares* plan at the President's Cabinet Planning Retreat
- August 1, 2025- Full presentation of *VPCC Cares* plan at VPCC Local College Board Retreat; QEP was discussed.
- August 18, 2025- Presentation of *VPCC Cares* plan at All College Day to the College Community; feedback was solicited.
- August 19 & 22, 2025- Presentation of *VPCC Cares* plan to Dual Enrollment faculty during Dual Enrollment Orientation; answered questions and discussed.
- August 28, 2025- Presentation of *VPCC Cares* plan to Dual Enrollment partner School District administrators; answered questions and discussed.
- September 5, 2025- Presentation of *VPCC Cares* plan at Academic Affairs Town Hall; discussion of the details of the plan with faculty.
- September 2025- Web page dedicated to the QEP being developed to share information and updates on the *VPCC Cares* plan.

SECTION 5: Assessment of *VPCC Cares*

The assessment plan strives to understand the impact of the *VPCC Cares* plan on course pass rates, students' sense of belonging, and retention. There are six key outcomes for the *VPCC Cares* plan:

Course Success

1. Increase the pass rate (decrease the D, F, and withdrawal rate) for students taking targeted introductory English and math class sections that receive the plan's interventions compared to sections that do not.

Sense of Belonging

2. Increase the sense of belonging reported by students taking targeted introductory English and math class sections that receive the plan's interventions compared to sections that do not, measured through targeted questions on course evaluations.
3. Increase the overall sense of belonging reported by all students compared to initial baseline, measured through targeted questions in the College's annual Student Experience Survey.

Student Retention

4. Increase the retention rates for students taking targeted introductory English and math class sections that receive the plan's interventions compared to sections that do not, measured in the one- and two-semesters following their course.
5. Increase the College's overall full-time Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) retention rate to 65% or higher by 2030.
6. Increase the College's overall part-time Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) retention rate to 45% or higher by 2030.

Additionally, the assessment plan explores the following questions:

- How does the intervention impact the students' sense of belonging in the classroom?
- How does students' sense of belonging impact course pass rates, retention, and completion of students' educational programs?

The *VPCC Cares* assessment plan incorporates a quasi-experimental design to evaluate its impact. An "intervention group" of students, enrolled within sections of ENG 111, MTH 154, and MTH 161, receives specific support through intentional faculty development and embedded tutoring. A comparable "control group" does not receive these interventions.

The scaled nature of the plan naturally forms control groups in two ways: some sections of the same courses participate in the *VPCC Cares* interventions earlier than others, and students not enrolled in the target courses during the program's timeframe serve as a control group.

The purpose of the embedded tutoring program is to provide additional academic support for students, within courses that have traditionally served as a barrier to student success. Additionally, the embedded tutor provides an additional connection point for students and promotes student belonging. Finally, the embedded tutoring model necessitates pedagogical practices that create opportunities for collaboration and interaction, which enhance opportunities for strengthening student belonging. The purpose of the faculty professional development program is to help faculty better integrate pedagogical practices that optimize the embedded tutoring model, embrace active collaborative learning practices, and foster student belonging in the classroom.

To assess the impact of the *VPCC Cares* plan, a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures will be implemented. Course pass rates will be measured and compared between intervention and control sections. Retention rates will be calculated for students in the intervention group, 1-semester and 2-semesters following participation in the *VPCC Cares* interventions. The College will continue to monitor full-time and part-time retention rates. Additionally, a Sense of Belonging Scale has been developed to be used within the annual Student Experience Survey and within course evaluation surveys.

To assess the impact of the professional development on faculty teaching practices, the Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol (RTOP) (Sawada & Piburn et al., 2002) will be utilized. A faculty evaluator will conduct an initial RTOP evaluation before faculty members participate in the professional development program and repeat the RTOP evaluation in the subsequent fall semester. The RTOP rubric will also be adapted into a survey that the participating faculty will complete, reporting on their perceptions of their teaching. Additionally, the RTOP rubric will be adapted into questions that are embedded within the course evaluation survey students receive, so they can report on their perceptions of the classroom environment. Finally, additional data will be collected, in the form of focus groups and interviews, to provide more context on the classroom experience from the perspectives of students, faculty, and tutors.

The outcomes are arranged from the most immediate anticipated impacts to the broadest anticipated impacts (Outcomes 1-6). The most immediate anticipated impact from the VPCC Cares plan will be improved academic performance by students within the targeted mathematics and English courses. As the development of student belonging is a core objective of the plan, it is anticipated that a perceptible change will occur in reported belonging, first within the targeted mathematics and English courses, and over time, more broadly across the College. The VPCC Cares Retention Model hypothesizes that the increased academic success and sense of belonging resulting from the interventions should culminate in an increase in student retention. This retention increase should be most immediately seen with students within targeted mathematics and English classes. With what approaches a quarter of the students enrolled in any given fall or spring semester taking one of the targeted mathematics or English courses, the increase in student retention should culminate more broadly across the student body, with positive impact on the overall IPEDS retention rates.

Table 12 details the *VPCC Cares* assessment plan and links a series of ten measures (**M1-M10**) with the plan's six main outcomes. The assessment plan also investigates two additional questions to provide context to the understanding of the *VPCC Cares* plan impacts.

Table 12. *VPCC Cares* Assessment Plan

Outcome	Measure	Who	Pilot	Implement
1. Increase the pass rate (decrease the D, F, and withdrawal rate) for students taking targeted introductory English and math class sections that receive the plan's interventions compared to sections that do not.	**M1.** Course Pass Rates	Students in participating sections of ENG111, MTH154, MTH161	Fall 2025	SP26, FA26, SP27, FA27, SP28, FA28, SP29, FA29, SP30, FA30

Outcome	Measure	Who	Pilot	Implement
1. Increase the pass rate (decrease the D, F, and withdrawal rate) for students taking targeted introductory English and math class sections that receive the plan's interventions compared to sections that do not. **2.** Increase the sense of belonging reported by students taking targeted introductory English and math class sections that receive the plan's interventions compared to sections that do not, measured through targeted questions on course evaluations.	**M2.** Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol, observation	Participating Faculty	Fall 2026	FA27, FA28, FA29, FA30
1. Increase the pass rate (decrease the D, F, and withdrawal rate) for students taking targeted introductory English and math class sections that receive the plan's interventions compared to sections that do not. **2.** Increase the sense of belonging reported by students taking targeted introductory English and math class sections that receive the plan's interventions compared to sections that do not, measured through targeted questions on course evaluations.	**M3.** Adapted Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol, survey	Participating Faculty	Fall 2026	SP27, FA27, SP28, FA28, SP29, FA29, SP30, FA30

Outcome	Measure	Who	Pilot	Implement
1. Increase the pass rate (decrease the D, F, and withdrawal rate) for students taking targeted introductory English and math class sections that receive the plan's interventions compared to sections that do not. **2.** Increase the sense of belonging reported by students taking targeted introductory English and math class sections that receive the plan's interventions compared to sections that do not, measured through targeted questions on course evaluations.	**M4.** Tutor Self-Reflection, Survey	Embedded tutors	Fall 2026	SP27, FA27, SP28, FA28, SP29, FA29, SP30, FA30
2. Increase the sense of belonging reported by students taking targeted introductory English and math class sections that receive the plan's interventions compared to sections that do not, measured through targeted questions on course evaluations.	**M5.** Sense of Belonging Scale, Course Evaluation Surveys	Students	Fall 2026	SP27, FA27, SP28, FA28, SP29, FA29, SP30, FA30
4. Increase the retention rates for students taking targeted introductory English and math class sections that receive the plan's interventions compared to sections that do not, measured in the one- and two-semesters following their course.	**M6.** Intervention Group Retention Rates (1-Semester, 2-Semester)	Student Cohorts	Fall 2026	SP27, FA27, SP28, FA28, SP29, FA29, SP30, FA30, SP31, FA31

Outcome	Measure	Who	Pilot	Implement
3. Increase the overall sense of belonging reported by all students compared to initial baseline, measured through targeted questions in the College's annual Student Experience Survey.	**M7.** Sense of Belonging Scale, Student Experience Survey	Students	Fall 2025	FA26. FA27, FA28, FA29, FA30
5. Increase the College's overall full-time Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) retention rate to 65% or higher by 2030.	**M8.** IPEDS Full-time Retention Rate	Students	Fall 2024 Cohort	FA25, FA26, FA27, FA28, FA29, FA30
6. Increase the College's overall part-time Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) retention rate to 45% or higher by 2030.	**M9.** IPEDS Part-time Retention Rate	Students	Fall 2024 Cohort	FA25, FA26, FA27, FA28, FA29, FA30
Additional Context: How does the intervention impact the students' sense of belonging in the classroom? How does students' sense of belonging impact course pass rates, retention, and completion of students' educational programs?	**M10.** Additional Assessment Data	Students, Faculty, & Tutors	Spring 2026	FA26, SP27, FA27, SP28, FA28, SP29, FA29, SP30, FA30, SP31, FA31

Figure 8 depicts how the *VPCC Cares* assessment plan aligns with *VPCC Cares* Retention Model. The assessment plan was developed to test the validity of the model as well as measure the plan's impact on the College's students.

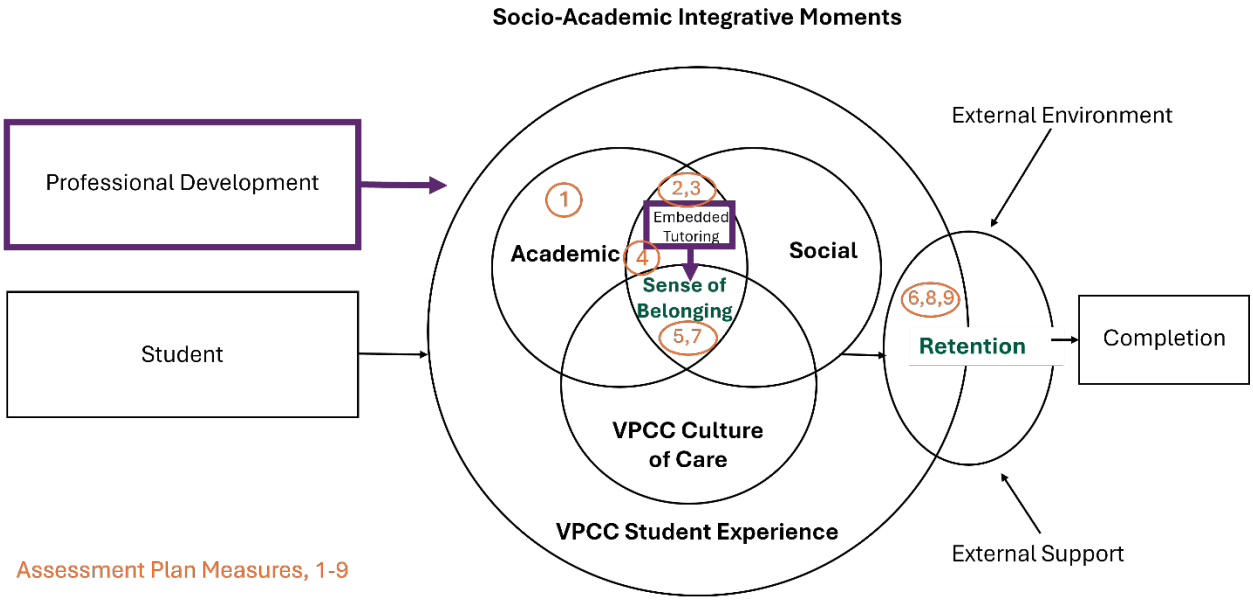

Figure 8. Assessment of *VPCC Cares* Retention Model

5.A. Sense of Belonging Scale

During the Spring 2025 semester, a scale was developed and incorporated into the annual Student Experience Survey, to baseline students' sense of belonging at the College. Additional questions were developed to assess the extent to which students experienced the College's *Culture of Care*. Survey items from the National Survey of Student Engagement were utilized to assess belonging, while the Office of Institutional Research developed questions utilizing language from the *Culture of Care*. Analysis of both sets of questions indicated that the entire set of questions measured similar constructs. Members of the QEP Development Team evaluated several other scales from the literature on measuring belonging. No one belongingness scale examined all the aspects of belonging that the QEP Development Team sought to measure. Consequently, the QEP Development Team created its own Sense of Belonging Scale.

The *VPCC Cares* Sense of Belonging Scale is an amalgamation of several similar belongingness scales discovered in the literature. As analysis revealed a link between the College's *Culture of Care* and student belonging, the *VPCC Cares* Sense of Belonging Scale incorporates elements of the *Culture of Care*, creating a measurement tool that aligns well the strategic priorities of the College. The Sense of Belonging Scale will be included within the annual Student Experience Survey, and a slightly modified version of it will be included in Course Evaluation Surveys (sent to students at the end of every course). **Table 13** details the *VPCC Cares* Sense of Belonging Scale and depicts the alignment between each question and respective elements of the Culture of Care and dimensions of belonging.

Table 13. *VPCC Cares* Sense of Belonging Scale

Item #	Survey Item	Culture of Care Alignment	Belonging Dimension
1	I can be myself at VPCC without fear of being judged.	Authenticity	Interpersonal Respect & Emotional Safety
2	I feel like part of the community at VPCC.	Compassion	Inclusive Belonging
3	I feel faculty and staff at VPCC are genuinely invested in my success.	Service, Responsibility	Supportive Institutional Relationships
4	When challenges arise, I feel supported and encouraged to keep going.	Effectiveness, Compassion	Resilience Through Support (Belonging Under Stress)
5	I feel like I belong at VPCC.	All Values (Holistic Culture of Care)	Direct Measure of Belonging
6	I am proud to be a student at VPCC.	Responsibility, Service	Institutional Attachment / Emotional Identification
7	I feel like I matter to people at VPCC.	Service, Effectiveness	Mattering

In addition to the Sense of Belonging Scale, three other survey tools have been developed as part of the *VPCC Cares* assessment plan. Questions from the RTOP were modified into a Faculty Self-Reflection tool for faculty and several questions to be incorporated into the Course Evaluation Surveys. Finally, a Tutor Self-Reflection tool was developed to assess the experience of the embedded tutoring model from the tutors' perspective.

5.B. *VPCC Cares* Annual Reporting

The College's Assessment and Planning Coordinator, in consultation with the QEP Steering Committee, will be responsible for compiling an annual report of the *VPCC Cares* plan implementation and effectiveness. This written report shall include all relevant metrics (detailed above) and shall be prepared by May 15 each year, beginning in 2027. The Annual Report shall be presented to the College leadership and community annually.

SECTION 6: Summary of *VPCC Cares*

As part of its 2026 Reaffirmation of Accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), Virginia Peninsula Community College has presented *VPCC Cares* as its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). In pursuit of its' mission to *change lives and transform communities*, the College is committed to the success of every student. The plan was developed to address declining student retention rates. By investing strategic efforts and resources into an embedded tutoring program and the fostering of belonging in courses that have a demonstrable impact on student success, the College is embracing its commitment to the *VPCC Culture of Care* and mission. The *VPCC Cares* plan is founded on a review of the literature and analysis of student performance and institutional data. Thus, the *VPCC Cares* plan arose from its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes and is well aligned to the College's strategic plan and priorities.

The *VPCC Cares* plan was developed through a broad-based collaborative process. A large and robust group of individuals representing the College's faculty, staff, leadership, and students collaborated for nearly two years to develop the plan. Input was sought from the College community at each stage in the plan's development and continued refinement. The *VPCC Cares* plan was officially debuted at the College's August 2025 All College Day, to widespread support. Ongoing outreach will continue throughout the Fall 2025 term to continually engage the broader college community and the College's external partners. The *VPCC Cares* plan maintains continual representative oversight through the QEP Steering Committee and provides for annual reporting to the broader college community.

The *VPCC Cares* plan was developed in pursuit of continued student success. The positive impacts sought by the College in pursuit of its' mission are limited when students do not persist until completion. Retaining and supporting students through the completion of their academic pursuits is a critical priority for the College and the central student success outcome of the QEP. The focus on embedded support and shaping the classroom experience seeks to meet the students where they are. Selection of three gateway courses that have a demonstrated impact on student retention is designed to produce the greatest positive impact for the largest number of students. Improved course pass rates and enhanced student belonging will directly contribute to more students persisting and graduating.

The *VPCC Cares* plan seeks to achieve lasting improvements by strengthening existing resources, rather than developing new ones. A stronger Tutoring Center, in tighter collaboration with the teaching faculty, will better support students across the College. A well-resourced Center for Teaching and Learning will have transformative effects on classrooms across the College, well beyond the 5-year life of the QEP. By reallocating existing funds and with the support from the VPCC Educational Foundation, the College has the resources and capacity to initiate and implement the *VPCC Cares* plan. Strong buy-in from the students, staff, faculty, and leadership of the College will contribute to the sustainability of the plan.

The *VPCC Cares* assessment plan is focused on demonstrating the impacts on course completion, student belonging, and student retention. Immediate, short-term improvements in course completion and sense of belonging in the classroom are expected to grow and multiply over time. As these measures translate into greater student success and increased retention, the College has committed to funneling the increased revenue into sustaining and expanding the *VPCC Cares* plan, so that it grows into the fabric of the *VPCC Culture of Care*.

In summary, the College has a Quality Enhancement plan that (a) has a topic identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes; (b) has broad-based support of institutional constituencies; (c) focuses on improving specific student success outcomes; (d) commits resources to

initiate, implement, and institutionalize the QEP; and (e) includes a plan to assess its' impact on student success. The College is compliant with SACSCOC Standard 7.2.

References

Aljohani, O. (2016). A comprehensive review of the major studies and theoretical models of student retention in higher education. *Higher Education Studies, 6*(2).

Baker, R.W., & Siryk, B. (1984). Measuring adjustment to college. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 31*(2), 179–189. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.31.2.179

Bean, J. (1980). Dropouts and turnover: The synthesis and test of a causal model of student attrition. *Research in Higher Education*, *12*(2), 155-187. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00976194

Bean, J., & Metzner, B. (1985). A Conceptual Model of Non-traditional Undergraduate Student Attrition. *Review of educational research, 55*(4), 485-540. http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/00346543055004485

Bengesai, A.V., Amusa, L.B., & Dhunpath, R. (2023). A meta-analysis on the effect of formal peer learning approaches on course performance in higher education. *Cogent Education, 10*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2203990

Bollen, K.A. & Hoyle, R.H. (1990). Perceived Cohesion: A Conceptual and Empirical Examination. *Social Forces, 69*, 479-504. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/69.2.479

Bowman, N.A., Preschel, S., & Martinez, D. (2023). Does supplemental instruction improve grades and retention? A propensity score analysis approach. *The Journal of Experimental Education, 91*(2), 205-229. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.2021.1891010

Buchanan, E. M., Valentine, K. D., & Frizell, M. L. (2019). Supplemental Instruction: Understanding Academic Assistance in Underrepresented Groups. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, *87*(2), 288–298. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.2017.1421517

Cabrera, A., Castaneda, M., Nora, A., & Hengstler, D. (1992). The convergence between two theories of college persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education,* 143-164. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1982157

Chaves, S., Lee, V., Morris, S., Reinecke, A., Tome, A. (2023). An embedded tutoring model. *Learning Assistance Review, 28*(2), 151-185. Retrieved from https://www.nclca.org/resources/Documents/Publications/TLAR/Issues/28_2.pdf

Cobern, W.W. (1993). Contextual Constructivism: The impact of culture on the learning and teaching of science. *Scientific Literacy and Cultural Studies Project, 11*, 1-24. Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1010&context=science_slcsp

Crede, M., & Niehorster, S. (2012). Adjustment to college as measured by the student adaptation to college questionnaire: A quantitative review of its structure and relationships with correlates and consequences. *Educational Psychological Review, 24*, 133–165. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-011-9184-5

Dahlvig, C.A., Dahlvig, J.E., & Chatriand, C.M. (2020). Institutional expenditures and student graduation and retention. *Christian Higher Education, 19*(5), 352-364. https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2020.1712561

D'Amico, M.M., Dika, S.L., Elling, T.W., Algozzine, B., Ginn, D.J. (2014). Early integration and other outcomes for community college transfer students. *Research in Higher Education, 55*, 370-399. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-013-9316-5

Davidson, J.C., & Wilson, K.B. (2017). Community college student dropouts from higher education: toward a comprehensive conceptual model. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 41*(8), 517-530. https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2016.1206490

Dawson, P., van der Meer, J., Skalicky, J., Cowley, K. (2014). On the effectiveness of supplemental instruction: a systematic review of supplemental instruction and peer-assisted study sessions literature between 2001 and 2010. Review of Educational Research, 84(4), 609-639. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654314540007

Deil-Amen, R. (2011). Socio-Academic Integrative Moments: Rethinking Academic and Social Integration among Two-Year College Students in Career-Related Programs. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *82*(1), 54–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2011.11779085

Doman, E. (2014). Utilizing tutors in the classroom: an extension of supplemental instruction to increase student performance and retention. *Georgia Educational Researcher, 11*(1), https://doi.org/10.20429/ger.2014.110105

Duffy, M. & Burkander, K. (2023, November 15). *Embedded tutoring in California community colleges: perspectives from the field on a promising practice* [Conference presentation]. Association for the Study of Higher Education Policy, Minneapolis, MN, United States. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED645857.pdf

Dulfer, N., Gowing, A., & Mitchell, J. (2025). Building belonging in online classrooms: relationships at the core. *Teaching in Higher Education, 30*(4), 1024-1040. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2024.2349993

Dvorak, J. & Tucker, K. (2017). The case for intentionally interwoven peer learning supports in gateway-course improvement efforts. *New Directions for Higher Education, 180*, 43-52. https://doi-org.eztncc.vccs.edu/10.1002/he.20260

Eather, N., Mavilidi, M.F., Sharp, H., Parkes, R. (2022). Programmes targeting student retention/success and satisfaction/experience in higher education: a systematic review. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 44*(3), 223-239. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2021.2021600

Fong, C. J., Davis, C. W., Kim, Y., Kim, Y. W., Marriott, L., & Kim, S. (2016). Psychosocial Factors and Community College Student Success: A Meta-Analytic Investigation. Review of Educational Research, 87(2), 388-424. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316653479

Friess, E. & Lam, C. (2018). Cultivating a sense of belonging: using Twitter to establish a community in an introductory technical communication classroom. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 27*(4), 328-346. https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2018.1520435

Hausmann, L.R.M., Schofield, J.W., Woods, R.L. (2007). Sense of belonging as a predictor of intentions to persist among African American and White first-year college students. *Research in Higher Education, 48*(7). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-007-9052-9

Hurtado, S. & Carter, D.F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education, 70*(4), 324-345. https://doi.org/10.2307/2673270

Irwin, V., Wang, K., Jung, J., Kessler, E., Tezil, T., Alhassani, S., Filbey, A., Dilig, R., Bullock Mann, F. (2024). Report on the condition of education 2024. National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

Jenkins, D., Lahr, H., & Brock, T. (2024). Lessons from two major evaluations of guided pathways. Community College Research Center. https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/lessons-two-major-evaluations-guided-pathways-1.pdf

Kerby, M. B. (2015). Toward a New Predictive Model of Student Retention in Higher Education: An Application of Classical Sociological Theory. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *17*(2), 138-161. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025115578229 (Original work published 2015)

Kreie, J., Headrick, W., & Steiner, R. (2007). Using team learning to improve student retention. *College Teaching, 55*(2), 51-56. https://doi.org/10.3200/CTCH.55.2.51-56

Lambert, C.P., & Maietta, H. (2024). Reframing higher ed spaces and belonging: lessons learned from the COVID-19 experience. *Impacting Education, 9*(4), 37-42. https://doi.org/10.5195/ie.2024.410

Mendoza, D.F. & Kerl, E. (2021). Student perceived benefits of embedded online peer tutors.

Learning Assistance Review, 26(1), 53-73. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1317160.pdf

Monaghan, D.B. & Sommers, O.K. (2022). And now for some good news: trends in student retention at community colleges, 2004-2017. *Research in Higher Education, 63*, 425-452. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-021-09656-6

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2024, June 27). Persistence and Retention: Fall 2022 Beginning Postsecondary Student Cohort. Retrieved June 9, 2025, from https://nscresearchcenter.org/persistence-retention/

Nicoletti, M. (2019). Revisiting the Tinto's Theoretical Dropout Model. *Higher Education Studies, 9*(3). 52-52. https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v9n3p52

Nkonki, V.J.J., Dondolo, V., & Mabece, K. (2023). The confluence of supplemental instruction (SI) programme factors on selected student outcomes in a historically disadvantaged university. Education Sciences, 13(11). https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13111145

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1980). Predicting Freshman Persistence and Voluntary Dropout Decisions from a Theoretical Model. *The Journal of Higher Education, 51*(1), 60-75. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1981125

Piburn, M. & Swada, D. (2000). *Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol (RTOP): Reference Manual*. National Science Foundation. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED447205

Rovai, A.P. (2003). In search of higher persistence rates in distance education online programs, *The Internet and Higher Education, 6*(1), 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7516(02)00158-6

Schneider, D.E. (2022). Understanding and improving community college student retention: a review with recommendations for developing institutional attachment. *Community College Enterprise, 28*(1), 28-40. Retrieved from https://home.schoolcraft.edu/cce/28.1.28-40.pdf

Shatila, S.L. (2024). Not alone when I'm feeling stressed: online adult learner connection and retention. *Adult Education Quarterly, 74*(I), 43-61. https://doi.org/10.1177/07417136231184570

Sullivan, P., Bell, A., & Nielsen, D. (2023). The complex nature of student retention at America's community colleges. Community College Review, 51(3), 311-336. https://doi.org/10.1177/00915521231163855

Tinto, V., & Cullen, J. (1973). Dropout in higher education: a review and theoretical synthesis of recent research. Office of Education (DHEW), Contract OEC-0-73-1409, 99. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED078802.pdf

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research, 45*(1), 89-125. https://doi.org/10.2307/1170024

Tinto, V. (1997). Classrooms as communities: exploring the educational character of student persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education, 68*(6), 599-623. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.1997.11779003

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures for Student Attrition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tucker, K., Sharp, G., Quingmin, S., Scinta, T., Thanki, S. (2020). Fostering historically underserved students' success: an embedded peer support model that merges non-cognitive principles with proven academic support practices. *The Review of Higher Education, 43*(3), 861-885. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2020.0010

Vyse, G. (2025). Sustaining change: efforts to expand student success. Chronicle of Higher Education. Retrieved from https://connect.chronicle.com/rs/931-EKA-218/images/Sustainging-Change_InsightsReport.pdf?_gl=1*7wpmos*_ga*MTE4OTM2NTY5OC4xNzQ4NzIxNTA5*_ga_WPH6W31S6Y*czE3NDg3MjE1MDkkbzEkZzAkdDE3NDg3MjE1MDkkajYwJGwwJGgw

Wangrow, D.B., Rogers, K., Saenz, D., Hom, P. (2022). Retaining college students experiencing

shocks: the power of embeddedness and normative pressures. *The Journal of Higher Education, 93*(1), 90-109. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2021.1930839

Webb, M. (1989). A Theoretical Model of Community College Student Degree Persistence. *Community College Review*, *16*(4), 42-49. https://doi.org/10.1177/009155218901600406

Wiseman, R.L., Gonzales, S.M., Salyer, K. (2004). A cross-cultural analysis of students' sense of community, degree of involvement, and educational benefits. *Intercultural Communication Studies, XIII*(1). Retrieved from https://www.kent.edu/stark/ics-2004-vol-13-no-1-salyer

VIRGINIA PENINSULA® COMMUNITY COLLEGE

CULTURE OF CARE

The **Virginia Peninsula Community College** mission is to change lives and transform communities. Our mission is accomplished through continuous improvement, grounded in a desire for excellence, and demonstrated by our culture of care. This culture is built on the foundation of compassionate engagement, authentic communication, responsible teams, effective outcomes, and servant leadership. We believe that by embodying specific behaviors, we create an environment where our students, employees, and community can thrive. **As a member of this community, I commit to these behaviors:**

COMPASSION

1. I treat others with respect and empathy, recognizing the inherent worth of every individual.
2. I prioritize a healthy integration of personal, professional, and learning goals.
3. I practice active listening, valuing diverse perspectives and seeking to understand before responding.

AUTHENTICITY

1. I engage in open and respectful conversations and debates, sharing information and seeking insight.
2. I ensure clarity and completeness through collaboration and updates on projects and initiatives.
3. I address conflicts directly and professionally, focusing on identifying mutually beneficial solutions.

RESPONSIBILITY

1. I take ownership of my role, and I am dedicated to achieving individual and collective goals.
2. I make informed and transparent decisions, through collaboration and inclusivity, that are aligned with core values.
3. I empower others by providing autonomy, embracing commitments, and acknowledging contributions.

EFFECTIVENESS

1. I approach challenges and embrace change with creativity and innovation, demonstrate flexibility, and proactively adjust strategies to meet evolving needs.
2. I leverage diverse expertise and experiences to drive new initiatives and provide holistic support.
3. I set clear, collaborative, and ambitious goals, and exceed expectations.

SERVICE

1. I seek opportunities to make a positive impact and create an atmosphere of emotional well-being and belonging.
2. I model behaviors and values that I expect from others, inspiring dedication and creating a culture of integrity.
3. I support individuals with achieving their full potential through investments in personal and professional growth.

Adopted February 2024

EMPLOYEE WORK PROFILE

WORK DESCRIPTION/PERFORMANCE PLAN

Parts I, II, III, and IV are written or reviewed by the supervisor and discussed with the employee at the beginning of the evaluation cycle.

PART I – Position Identification Information	
1. Position Number:	00012
Essential Position:	☐ Yes ☒ **No**
Eligible for Telework	☒ **Yes** ☐ No Special Note: Decisions regarding the feasibility of a position being telework-eligible will be based on the duties, operational needs, and will be the final decision of the supervisor. The Standard Telework Agreement form must be filled out and submitted to Human Resources.
2. Agency Name & Code; Division/Department:	Virginia Peninsula Community College, Learning Resources Center
3. Work Location Code:	293
4. Occupational Family & Career Group:	29110- Educational & Media Services
5. Role Title & Code:	Trainer & Instructor 1 / 2911
6. Pay Band:	3
7. Work Title:	Embedded Learning Specialist (Math and/or Writing)
8. SOC Title & Code:	25-9041 Teacher Assistants
9. Level Indicator:	☒ **Employee** ☐ Supervisor ☐ Manager
Does employee supervise 2 or more employees (FTEs)?	☐ Yes ☒ **No**
Employees Supervised:	
10. FLSA Status:	☐ Exempt ☑ **Non-Exempt**
Exemption/Partial Exemption Test (if applicable):	☐ Yes ☐ No
11. Supervisor's Position Number:	
12. Supervisor's Role Title & Code:	Education Support Specialist III & 29144
13. EEO Code:	C
14. Effective Date:	7/21/2025

PART II – Work Description & Performance Plan	
15. **Organizational Objective:**	We change lives and transform our community through diverse, inclusive, and equitable education and workforce training, excellent support and services, and innovative partnerships. The Learning Resources Center (LRC) is an integral part of the academic units that report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The LRC advances the mission of the college through a comprehensive, readily accessible collection of VPCC curriculum related informational materials, instructional technologies, and other academic support services that meet the educational needs of students, faculty, and staff.
16. **Job Description:** *Please provide a description of the duties and purpose of the position*	Acts as embedded tutor for assigned math and/or English classes. Attends class regularly, providing individual and small group instruction, assistance, and resources to currently-enrolled students in math and/or writing courses. Holds individual and group appointments with students outside of class. Works closely with faculty to plan class activities, exchange feedback, and troubleshoot situations.

17. **Minimum Qualifications - Required** Knowledge, Skills & Abilities (KSAs); competencies required to successfully perform the work *Please provide minimum requirements of the position; these are the must haves*	• Demonstrated understanding of foundations necessary for success in associate degrees and certificate-level career and technical programs and courses. • Excellent communication and strong active listening skills. • Patience, flexibility, ability to vary teaching methods and resources according to student needs. • Ability to work independently and collaboratively. • Familiarity with word processing and spreadsheet software, databases, and electronic communications. • Problem-solving skills and good attention to detail. • Ability to work a flexible schedule that may include evening and weekend hours.

18. Education, Experience, Licensure, Certification required for entry into position:	• For Embedded Math Tutors, successful completion of MTH 154, MTH 161, or equivalent. For Embedded Writing Tutors, successful completion of ENG 111 or equivalent.
	• Preferred qualifications include:
	  ○ Teaching and/or tutorial experience at the high school or two-year college level.
	  ○ Experience working with adult learners and underserved populations.
	  ○ Experience with learning management systems such as Canvas or Blackboard.

% Time	19. Core Responsibilities	20. Measures for Core Responsibilities
	A. Performance Management (for employees who supervise others)	This is not a supervisory position
50%	A. In-class Activities	• Attends class sessions (for in-person, synchronous, and hybrid courses) and/or holds designated Zoom tutoring hours (for asynchronous courses). • Posts Canvas announcements and monitors the discussion board. • Provides accurate, helpful, courteous instruction to students in assigned courses. Works with students one-on-one and in small groups during class. • Ensures students are aware of all campus resources available to them. • Develops and maintains familiarity with assigned course textbooks, syllabi, and course outlines.

40%	B. Individual and Small Group Instruction Outside of Class	• Provides accurate, helpful, courteous instruction to students in assigned courses. Works with students one-on-one and in small groups outside of class. • Holds scheduled group study sessions for test review or paper review. • Accurately diagnoses students' needs and works with students to achieve student competence and confidence in the subject. • Uses a variety of instructional methods and resources appropriate to the individual. • Develops and maintains familiarity with online tutoring methods and software.
5%	C. Record Keeping	• Enters and maintains schedule in Outlook/Brainfuse on a weekly basis. • Maintains accurate records of Tutoring Center utilization using Brainfuse. • Assists students with making, cancelling, and checking in for appointments and walk-ins. • Files appointment summaries within 24 hours of tutoring appointments. • In coordination with the Tutoring Coordinator and other tutors: o prepares semester and academic year reports that are submitted to the tutoring coordinator by the agreed deadline. o participates in LRC planning and uses report information to propose goals, workflows, and policies for the Math Center.
5%	D. Supplemental Learning Support	• Creates and maintains supplemental instructional materials to address new and recurring topics and problems on an annual basis. • Guides students to appropriate supplementary resources such as media, tutorial software, and learning websites. • Previews and evaluates resources for their appropriateness and application for use with students. • Provides additional workshops in the form of seminars or reviews for groups of students. Content and frequency of workshops will be discussed with LRC administration based on current needs.

21. Special Assignments	22. Measures for Special Assignments
A.	
B.	
C.	

Optional

EMPLOYEE WORK PROFILE

WORK DESCRIPTION/PERFORMANCE PLAN

Parts I, II, III, and IV are written or reviewed by the supervisor and discussed with the employee at the beginning of the evaluation cycle.

PART I – Position Identification Information	
1. Position Number:	
Essential Position:	☐ Yes ☒ **No**
Eligible for Telework	☒ **Yes** ☐ No Special Note: Decisions regarding the feasibility of a position being telework-eligible will be based on the duties, operational needs, and will be the final decision of the supervisor. The Standard Telework Agreement form must be filled out and submitted to Human Resources.
2. Agency Name & Code; Division/Department:	Virginia Peninsula Community College, Learning Resources Center
3. Work Location Code:	293
4. Occupational Family & Career Group:	
5. Role Title & Code:	
6. Pay Band:	
7. Work Title:	Tutoring Center Support Specialist
8. SOC Title & Code:	
9. Level Indicator:	☒ **Employee** ☐ Supervisor ☐ Manager
Does employee supervise 2 or more employees (FTEs)?	☐ Yes ☒ **No**
Employees Supervised:	
10. FLSA Status:	☐ Exempt ☑ **Non-Exempt**
Exemption/Partial Exemption Test (if applicable):	☐ Yes ☐ No
11. Supervisor's Position Number:	
12. Supervisor's Role Title & Code:	Education Support Specialist III & 29144
13. EEO Code:	C
14. Effective Date:	7/21/2025

PART II – Work Description & Performance Plan	
15. **Organizational Objective:**	We change lives and transform our community through diverse, inclusive, and equitable education and workforce training, excellent support and services, and innovative partnerships. The Learning Resources Center (LRC) is an integral part of the academic units that report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The LRC advances the mission of the college through a comprehensive, readily accessible collection of VPCC curriculum related informational materials, instructional technologies, and other academic support services that meet the educational needs of students, faculty, and staff.
16. **Job Description:** *Please provide a description of the duties and purpose of the position*	Manages daily front desk operations, including internal and external communication and customer service. Runs the front "room" for open Zoom tutoring hours, ensuring smooth virtual access and support for students and tutors. Coordinates purchasing and maintains inventory of supplies and materials for the Tutoring Center. Facilitates the implementation of an Embedded Tutoring program, including tutor assignments, faculty coordination, and program evaluation. Helps onboard new tutors and student workers. Assists with data collection and

	reporting related to tutoring services and program outcomes. Contributes to strategic planning for tutoring initiatives.

17. **Minimum Qualifications - Required** Knowledge, Skills & Abilities (KSAs); competencies required to successfully perform the work *Please provide minimum requirements of the position; these are the must haves*	• Strong organizational skills with the ability to manage multiple priorities and meet deadlines. • Excellent written and verbal communication skills. • Ability to work independently and collaboratively with diverse teams. • Proficiency in using office software (e.g., Microsoft Office Suite, Zoom, scheduling systems). • Ability to maintain confidentiality and handle sensitive information with professionalism. • Strong problem-solving and decision-making abilities. • Ability to work a flexible schedule that may include evening and weekend hours.
18. Education, Experience, Licensure, Certification required for entry into position:	• Demonstrated experience in administrative support or project coordination. • Ability to work effectively in a college or academic environment. • Proficiency with standard office technology and software. • Preferred qualifications include: o Experience working at a two-year or four-year college or university. o Familiarity with tutoring programs or student support services. o Experience with scheduling software or purchasing systems.

% Time	19. Core Responsibilities	20. Measures for Core Responsibilities
	A. Performance Management (for employees who supervise others)	This is not a supervisory position
45%	A. Project Management	• Lead the design and rollout of the Embedded Tutoring program. • Assign tutors to courses and coordinate with faculty for alignment. • Develop and maintain timelines, goals, and deliverables for tutoring initiatives. • Monitor program effectiveness and gather feedback for continuous improvement. • Collaborate with other departments to ensure program integration and support. • Contribute to strategic planning and long-term vision for tutoring services. • Evaluate program outcomes and prepare reports or presentations for stakeholders.

45%	B. Front Desk Operations	• Manage daily front desk activities, both in-person and virtual. • Run the Zoom "front room" during open tutoring hours to assist students and tutors. • Provide customer service to students, faculty, and visitors. • Troubleshoot access issues and ensure smooth virtual tutoring experiences. • Coordinate purchasing and maintain inventory of tutoring supplies. • Assist with onboarding new tutors and student workers.
5%	C. Record Keeping	• Maintains accurate records of Tutoring Center utilization. • Assists students with making, cancelling, and checking in for appointments and walk-ins. • In coordination with the Tutoring Coordinator and other tutors: o prepares semester and academic year reports that are submitted to the tutoring coordinator by the agreed deadline. o participates in LRC planning and uses report information to propose goals, workflows, and policies for the Tutoring Center.
5%	D. Interdepartmental Liaison	• Serves as a point of contact between the Tutoring Center and other departments. • Facilitates communication and collaboration across units. • Addresses operational issues and ensure alignment with institutional goals.

21. Special Assignments	22. Measures for Special Assignments
A.	
B.	
C.	

Optional

23. Agency/Departmental Objectives	24. Measures for Agency/Departmental Objectives

ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROFESSIONAL FACULTY POSITION DESCRIPTION

Position Title	Director, Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)
Position Number	FA0XX
Supervisor Position Title	Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
Statement of Economic Interest	Yes
Effective Date	January 5, 2026

Job purpose

Virginia Peninsula Community College (VPCC) is located on the Virginia Peninsula in the heart of Hampton Roads, a region renowned for being the birthplace of America and home to communities rich in culture and industry. Bordering the Chesapeake Bay, the region boasts beaches, major attractions, world-class museums, and a vibrant visual and performing arts scene. The area is known for its economic vitality, which includes being home to several military bases, ship building facilities, the NASA Langley Research Center and Jefferson Lab, major colleges and universities, and varied commercial industries and enterprises.

VPCC is a comprehensive community college, offering a variety of programs of study leading to an associate's degree, certificate, or career studies certificate. In addition to the many popular transfer degree programs, the college is known for its strong career & technical programs and its outreach to the community as a partner and leader in workforce development.

Founded in 1967, VPCC serves over 8,500 students each year in credit instruction and over 2,500 in non-credit instruction and workforce services. The College is served by over 80 full time faculty, 200 adjunct faculty, and 150 staff members. Faculty and staff are strategic and responsive, committed to understanding and meeting the needs of the region.

The College has two campuses, one in Hampton and the Historic Triangle Campus located in Williamsburg. The College also has a satellite site at the Southeast Higher Education Center in Newport News. The communities served by the College are the Cities of Hampton, Newport News, Poquoson, and Williamsburg, and the Counties of James City and York.

The Director for the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) provides strategic leadership to enhance teaching excellence and innovation across the College. This involves developing, implementing, and assessing faculty development programs; fostering a collaborative environment for pedagogical advancement; and promoting the use of effective and inclusive teaching practices, including technology integration. The Director for the CTL collaborates with various stakeholders, manages the CTL's resources and budget, and engages in research to advance teaching and learning at the College. The Director for the CTL reports to the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and performs other duties as assigned by the Vice President.

Duties and responsibilities

- Provide strategic leadership and set priorities for the CTL aligned with the College's mission.
- Oversee the development, implementation, and assessment of comprehensive faculty development programs and resources (i.e., workshops, new faculty orientation, Lunch and Learns, Colloquium of Excellence).

- Foster a collaborative environment for pedagogical innovation and the exchange of best teaching practices, including technology integration.
- Support the diverse professional development needs of all faculty types (full-time and adjunct faculty) and provide resources for faculty in developing their portfolios, APPDOs, and promotional packets.
- Collaborate with faculty, academic leadership, and other units to implement strategic initiatives.
- Remain current and knowledgeable about and disseminate research on teaching and learning.
- Build and maintain external partnerships to enhance CTL services and broader teaching and learning.
- Support faculty in utilizing assessment methods to improve student learning outcomes.
- Manage the CTL's budget and professional development funds.
- Serve as a member of the Academic Affairs Leadership team.
- Serve as the Chair of the CTL Steering Committee.
- Serve on the Academic Assessment Committee
- Fulfill other duties as needed.

Qualifications

Required Qualifications:

- A master's degree from a regionally accredited college or university
- A minimum of five (5) years of experience in a higher education setting with demonstrated success in teaching, faculty development, or a related area.
- Proven experience in developing and delivering professional development programs for faculty.
- Strong understanding of current trends and best practices in teaching and learning.
- Strong organizational skills and the ability to manage multiple initiatives.
- Commitment to and experience with active and applied learning methodologies and multiple teaching modalities.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to work collaboratively with various stakeholders (faculty, academic leadership, staff).

Preferred Qualifications:

- Experience leading teams, projects, or committees.
- Experience in securing external funding (grants, philanthropic support) for strategic initiatives.
- Experience in a community college system.

Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol (RTOP)

Daiyo Sawada
External Evaluator

Michael Piburn
Internal Evaluator

and

Kathleen Falconer, Jeff Turley, Russell Benford and Irene Bloom
Evaluation Facilitation Group (EFG)

Technical Report No. IN00-1
Arizona Collaborative for Excellence in the Preparation of Teachers
Arizona State University

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name of teacher _____ Announced Observation? _____
(yes, no, or explain)

Location of class _____
(district, school, room)

Years of Teaching _____ Teaching Certification _____
(K-8 or 7-12)

Subject observed _____ Grade level _____

Observer _____ Date of observation _____

Start time _____ End time _____

II. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND AND ACTIVITIES

In the space provided below please give a brief description of the lesson observed, the classroom setting in which the lesson took place (space, seating arrangements, etc.), and any relevant details about the students (number, gender, ethnicity) and teacher that you think are important. Use diagrams if they seem appropriate.

Record here events that may help in documenting the ratings.

Time	Description of Events

III. LESSON DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

		Never Occurred				Very Descriptive
1)	The instructional strategies and activities respected students' prior knowledge and the preconceptions inherent therein.	0	1	2	3	4
2)	The lesson was designed to engage students as members of a learning community.	0	1	2	3	4
3)	In this lesson, student exploration preceded formal presentation.	0	1	2	3	4
4)	This lesson encouraged students to seek and value alternative modes of investigation or of problem solving.	0	1	2	3	4
5)	The focus and direction of the lesson was often determined by ideas originating with students.	0	1	2	3	4

IV. CONTENT

Propositional knowledge

6)	The lesson involved fundamental concepts of the subject.	0	1	2	3	4
7)	The lesson promoted strongly coherent conceptual understanding.	0	1	2	3	4
8)	The teacher had a solid grasp of the subject matter content inherent in the lesson.	0	1	2	3	4
9)	Elements of abstraction (i.e., symbolic representations, theory building) were encouraged when it was important to do so.	0	1	2	3	4
10)	Connections with other content disciplines and/or real world phenomena were explored and valued.	0	1	2	3	4

Procedural Knowledge

11)	Students used a variety of means (models, drawings, graphs, concrete materials, manipulatives, etc.) to represent phenomena.	0	1	2	3	4
12)	Students made predictions, estimations and/or hypotheses and devised means for testing them.	0	1	2	3	4
13)	Students were actively engaged in thought-provoking activity that often involved the critical assessment of procedures.	0	1	2	3	4
14)	Students were reflective about their learning.	0	1	2	3	4
15)	Intellectual rigor, constructive criticism, and the challenging of ideas were valued.	0	1	2	3	4

Continue recording salient events here.

Time	Description of Events

V. CLASSROOM CULTURE

	Communicative Interactions	Never Occurred				Very Descriptive
16)	Students were involved in the communication of their ideas to others using a variety of means and media.	0	1	2	3	4
17)	The teacher's questions triggered divergent modes of thinking.	0	1	2	3	4
18)	There was a high proportion of student talk and a significant amount of it occurred between and among students.	0	1	2	3	4
19)	Student questions and comments often determined the focus and direction of classroom discourse.	0	1	2	3	4
20)	There was a climate of respect for what others had to say.	0	1	2	3	4

Student/Teacher Relationships

21)	Active participation of students was encouraged and valued.	0	1	2	3	4
22)	Students were encouraged to generate conjectures, alternative solution strategies, and ways of interpreting evidence.	0	1	2	3	4
23)	In general the teacher was patient with students.	0	1	2	3	4
24)	The teacher acted as a resource person, working to support and enhance student investigations.	0	1	2	3	4
25)	The metaphor "teacher as listener" was very characteristic of this classroom.	0	1	2	3	4

Additional comments you may wish to make about this lesson.

Faculty Self-Reflection

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 0-4 (0-Never, 1- Rarely, 2- Sometimes, 3- Often, 4- Always).

#	Self-Reflection Item	0	1	2	3	4
1.	I designed instructional strategies and activities that respected students' prior knowledge and preconceptions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	I used instructional strategies that engaged students as active members of a learning community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	I allowed student exploration before introducing a formal presentation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	I encouraged students to seek and value alternative modes of investigation or problem solving.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	I allowed student ideas to influence the focus and direction of the lesson.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.	I ensured the lesson addressed fundamental subject concepts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.	I promoted coherent conceptual understanding.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.	I demonstrated a solid grasp of the subject matter.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.	I included appropriate opportunities for abstraction (symbolic representations, theory building).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.	I explored and valued connections with other disciplines and real-world contexts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.	I provided opportunities for students to represent phenomena using multiple means.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12.	I encouraged students to make predictions, estimations, or hypotheses and to test them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13.	I engaged students in thought-provoking activities involving critical assessment of procedures.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14.	I encouraged students to reflect on their learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15.	I fostered intellectual rigor, constructive criticism, and the challenging of ideas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16.	I supported students in communicating their ideas using various means and media.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.	I asked questions that triggered divergent thinking.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

#	Self-Reflection Item	0	1	2	3	4
18.	I encouraged a high proportion of student talk, including peer-to-peer dialogue.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19.	I allowed student questions and comments to shape classroom discourse.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20.	I maintained a climate of respect for all contributions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21.	I encouraged and valued active participation from all students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22.	I supported students in generating conjectures, alternative strategies, and interpretations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.	I demonstrated patience with students as they worked through challenges.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.	I acted as a resource person, supporting and enhancing investigations rather than directing all learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25.	I listened attentively to students and let their thinking guide instructional choices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Course Evaluation Questions

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 0-4 (0-Never, 1- Rarely, 2- Sometimes, 3- Often, 4- Always).

#	Self-Reflection Item	0	1	2	3	4
1.	There was a climate of respect for what others had to say in this class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	Active participation was encouraged and valued in this class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	In this class I was encouraged to make guesses, try different ways to solve problems, and think about what the evidence means.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	In general, the instructor was patient with students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	In this class my instructor helped me by giving support and ideas to make my investigations better.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.	I can be myself in this class without fear of being judged.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.	I feel like part of the community in this class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.	I feel like the instructor(s) in this class are genuinely invested in my success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.	When challenges arise, I feel supported and encouraged to keep going in this class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.	I feel like I belong in this class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.	I am proud to be a student at VPCC.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12.	I feel like I matter to people in this class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Tutor Self-Reflection Survey

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 0-4 (0-Never, 1- Rarely, 2- Sometimes, 3- Often, 4- Always).

#	Self-Reflection Item	0	1	2	3	4
1.	I adapted my support strategies to respect students' prior knowledge and preconceptions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	I contributed to creating a welcoming, inclusive learning environment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	I encouraged students to explore ideas before providing direct answers or explanations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	I helped students consider multiple ways of approaching a problem or concept.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	I adapted my tutoring based on ideas or needs expressed by students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.	I reinforced key concepts and skills emphasized in the lesson.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.	I supported students in building a clear, connected understanding of the material.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.	I maintained a strong working knowledge of the subject matter to assist students effectively.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.	I encouraged students to use abstract thinking or higher-level reasoning when appropriate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.	I helped students connect the lesson to other disciplines or real-world applications.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.	I encouraged students to use different ways of representing ideas (models, drawings, graphs, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12.	I prompted students to make predictions or hypotheses and think about how to test them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13.	I engaged students in thought-provoking activities or questions that deepened their understanding.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14.	I encouraged students to reflect on their learning process and strategies.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15.	I promoted respectful, constructive dialogue when students shared or debated ideas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16.	I helped students express their ideas clearly using a variety of formats.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.	I asked open-ended questions that encouraged creative or divergent thinking.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

#	Self-Reflection Item	0	1	2	3	4
18.	I supported and encouraged student-to-student discussion and collaboration.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19.	I responded to student questions in ways that encouraged further curiosity and exploration.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20.	I helped maintain a climate of respect for all student contributions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21.	I encouraged and validated active participation from all students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22.	I helped students generate and evaluate multiple approaches to a problem or concept.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.	I demonstrated patience while students worked through challenges or confusion.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.	I acted as a learning resource, providing guidance while allowing students to take ownership of their learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25.	I listened actively to student needs and adjusted my support accordingly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐