

# Gaston College

## Title III Initiative

Year 1 Accomplishments  
2009-2010

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Title III is a grant program funded by the U. S. Department of Education. Also known as the "Strengthening Institutions Grant," it was created in 1965 to provide colleges and universities with the resources to strengthen and improve their institutions.



## TITLE III AT-A-GLANCE

*The overall objectives for the Title III grant at Gaston College are to improve the success and retention of at-risk (on financial aid) and highly at-risk (on financial aid and enrolled in at least one developmental course) students by improving advising services, data tracking, and outcomes assessment. In an effort to achieve these goals in an effective yet timely fashion, the Title III staff decided to focus on providing interventions to students enrolled in selected sections of ACA 118 (College Study Skills) and ACA 122 (College Transfer Success) beginning in January, 2010. These holistic advising interventions are focused on providing personalized academic advising and career planning services one-on-one and in group settings. A total of 105 at-risk students were holistically advised during the 2009-2010 academic year--far surpassing the grant's target of 67. As a result, the Fall 2010 retention rate for this group exceeds 60%--15% above the grant's goals. Additionally, 10 of the grant's 11 first-year objectives have been met, and 20 of the 21 year-one tasks have been successfully completed, including creating a Student Academic Emergency Fund and providing professional development opportunities for Gaston College faculty and staff.*



The U. S. Department of Education awarded Gaston College a five-year Title III grant in 2009 for \$1,592,228 to help at-risk students. Funding is being awarded as follows:

Year 1 = \$322,780

Year 2 = \$307,409

Year 3 = \$314,355

Year 4 = \$321,129

Year 5 = \$326,555

Under the Student Services division and Dr. Silvia Patricia Rios-Husain, Title III staff are located within the Office of Persistence and Retention on the second floor of the David Belk Cannon (DBC) building:

- Wanda Wyont, *Director of Title III and Persistence and Retention*
- Dr. Kim Van Wie, *Title III Coordinator/Assistant Director*
- Dr. Mary Gunn, *Data/Outcome Analyst*
- Adele Earls, *Student Success Counselor*
- Tanisha Williams, *Student Success Counselor*

## THE COLLEGE'S STRATEGIC INITIATIVES 2009-2013

| STRATEGIC INITIATIVES  | GOALS  |
|--|--|
| Serve the Lifelong Learning Needs of a Diverse Population and Workforce              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase accessibility, availability, and delivery of educational programs to meet the diverse needs of our students, businesses, and industries</li> <li>• Develop new programs to meet the changing employment needs of the region</li> <li>• <b>Increase student enrollment and retention to meet the growing need of our community</b></li> <li>• Proactively increase, understand, and celebrate diversity of our region, students, faculty, and staff</li> <li>• Promote the development of “soft skills” necessary for students to function successfully in the workplace and community</li> </ul> |
| Provide Seamless and Effective Student-Focused Services                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ensure advising and registration processes are effective and student focused</b></li> <li>• Ensure continuous review of a comprehensive enrollment management plan</li> <li>• Increase campus activities and services to improve student life and community connections</li> </ul>   |
| Ensure Quality Educational Practices   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Provide faculty and staff opportunities for professional development</b></li> <li>• <b>Ensure excellence in teaching and learning</b></li> <li>• Develop strategies to ensure quality staff and faculty for the future</li> <li>• Comply with all standards of regulatory bodies that govern the quality of educational programs at GC</li> </ul>  |
| Provide the Essential Resources to Support Quality Educational Programs and Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure the financial, facility, material, and personnel resources needed to sustain support services, educational needs, and training requirements of the community</li> <li>• <b>Upgrade technology to provide quality academic experiences and efficient administrative and student support services</b></li> <li>• <b>Foster innovation throughout the institution</b></li> </ul>  |

Items in bold are directly aligned with Title III goals and objectives.

## TITLE III FIVE-YEAR GOALS

| KEY GOALS  | MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES   |
|--|---|
| <b>1) Increase the success and retention rate of at-risk students</b>  | <p>1.1) By September 30, 2014, increase by 20% the retention rate of at-risk (AR)* students.</p> <p>1.2) By September 30, 2014, increase by 50% the retention rate of highly at-risk (HAR)** students.</p> <p>1.3) By September 30, 2014, decrease the number of students in repayment by 20%.</p> <p>1.4) By September 30, 2014, increase by 10% the passing rate of students in developmental courses from 77% in 2003 to 87%.</p> <p>1.5) By September 30, 2014, 80% of faculty teaching developmental and gatekeeper courses will have received training on best practices, teaching techniques, and process education.</p> <p>1.6) By September 30, 2014, curriculum changes will require 100% of at-risk students to enroll in an ACA course.</p> |
| <b>2) Improve the academic advising process for at-risk students</b>   | <p>2.1) By September 30, 2014, at least 50% of at-risk students will receive holistic advising.</p> <p>2.2) By September 30, 2014, 90% of counseling and advising staff will receive appropriate training in holistic advising techniques, including customer service, financial aid, career development, decision-making, individual student education plan (ISEP), and group advising.</p> <p>2.3) By September 30, 2014, a comprehensive career development virtual office will be available to GC students and community members.</p>   |
| <b>3) Consolidate data tracking and outcome analysis related to retention, persistence, and academic success in order to make timely managerial decisions based on concrete and easily accessible data</b> | <p>3.1) By September 30, 2014, a permanent data tracking system is in place and data are routinely used for decision making and program improvement.</p> <p>3.2) By September 30, 2014, 50% of the Student Affairs Leadership Team (SALT) will be proficient in retrieving, analyzing, and incorporating tracked data into their daily practices.</p>   |

*For the purpose of this grant:*

*\* At-risk students are financial aid recipients*

*\*\* Highly at-risk students are financial aid recipients who are enrolled in at least one developmental course*

## YEAR-ONE OBJECTIVES

| YEAR ONE OBJECTIVE  | 2009-2010 RESULTS   |
|---|---|
| <b>1.1) By September 30, 2010, increase the retention rate of at-risk students from 48% (Fall 2006) to 52%.</b>   | 67% (185 out of 277) of at-risk students who enrolled in Spring or Summer 2010 registered for Fall 2010 (after the 10% date).   |
| <b>1.2) By September 30, 2010, increase the retention rate of highly at-risk students from 34% (Fall 2006) to 44%.</b>  | 61% (74 out of 122) of highly at-risk students who enrolled Spring or Summer 2010 registered for Fall 2010 (after the 10% date).  |
| <b>1.3) By September 30, 2010, the number of students in repayment will have decreased by 4%.</b>   | Percentages of students in repayment decreased from almost 10% in 2006-2007 to 8% in 2009-2010. In 2006-2007, there were 205 students in repayment and a total of 2,073 students on Financial Aid. In 2009-2010, there were 274 students in repayment and a total of 3,428 students on Financial Aid. |
| <b>1.4) By September 30, 2010, increase the passing rate of students in developmental courses from 77% (in 2003) to 79%.</b>  | 98% (131 out of 134) of the highly at-risk students who received a grade in their developmental courses received a passing grade (A, B, C) during the Spring 2010 term; 100% (2 out of 2) earned a passing grade during the Summer 2010 term.   |
| <b>1.5) By September 30, 2010, 13 faculty members teaching developmental and gatekeeper courses will have received training on best practices and teaching techniques and in process education.</b> | 102 faculty members participated in Title III-sponsored professional development activities during the 2009-2010 grant year.  |
| <b>1.6) By September 30, 2010, 50% of the students enrolled in ACA courses will earn a grade of C or better.</b>  | Of those at-risk and highly at-risk students who received grades in their Title III ACA courses, 92% (166 out of 180) earned a C or better during the Spring 2010 term; 96% (27 out of 28) earned a C or better during the Summer 2010 term.  |

## YEAR-ONE OBJECTIVES

| YEAR ONE OBJECTIVE  | 2009-2010 RESULTS   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>2.1) By September 30, 2010, at least 67 at-risk and highly-at-risk students will have received holistic advising.</b></p>   | <p>100 at-risk and 5 highly at-risk students received holistic advising during the 2009-2010 grant year. This advising includes four interventions—two for the at-risk and four for the highly at-risk students.</p>  |
| <p><b>2.2) By September 30, 2010, 20 staff members will have received appropriate training in holistic advising techniques including customer service, financial aid, career development, decision-making, individual student education plan (ISEP) and group advising.</b></p> | <p>61 Gaston College staff members participated in professional development opportunities through Title III during the 2009-2010 grant year.</p>  |
| <p><b>2.3) By September 30, 2010, career development information will be available on the college website.</b></p>  | <p>Online career assessment software (MBTI) was purchased. In collaboration with the Director of Counseling and Career Services, implementation will take place in Spring 2011.</p>   |
| <p><b>3.1) By September 30, 2010, a data tracking system will be identified and purchased.</b></p>  | <p>Data hosting software, Student Success Program (SSP), and server hardware were purchased. SSP was developed by Sinclair Community College, which is working with client institutions to successfully implement this online program. SSP will allow counselors to build an Individual Student Education Program (ISEP) for each student, and to track successful accomplishment of ISEP outcomes. An agreement has been signed between Gaston and Sinclair which includes a license agreement, data hosting arrangements, database programming, and consulting.</p> |
| <p><b>3.2) By September 30, 2010, two members of the Student Affairs Leadership Team (SALT) will be trained in retrieving, analyzing, and incorporating tracked data into their daily practices.</b></p>  | <p>Title III staff members will be trained on using the tracking software. It will then be “rolled out” to other Student Services staff and ACA faculty. Data from Colleague and Informer are currently incorporated into the daily practices of all members of Title III and the Student Affairs Leadership Team.</p>  |

## YEAR-ONE TASKS

| SPECIFIC TASKS   | STATUS   |
|--|--|
| 1. Employ Title III Coordinator,<br>2. Success Counselors and<br>3. Data/Outcome Analyst               | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>All four full-time Title III staff members were employed by January 5, 2010.  |
| 4. Appoint Title III Oversight Committee   | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>The Persistence & Completion Committee (PARC) was chosen as the oversight group, 10/09.   |
| 5. Review and verify activity design   | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>Developed the implementation plan. Launched newsletter and website, 1/10; Facebook page, 9/10.  |
| 6. Purchase electronic career software   | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>300 units of the online version of Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI) were purchased at a discount, 8/10.   |
| 7. Initiate first contact with at-risk and highly-at-risk students within the first two weeks of class | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>First contact made with 106 at-risk (AR) and 88 highly at-risk (HAR) students in the Spring 2010 semester; 21 AR & 10 HAR initial contacts made in Summer 2010.   |
| 8. Research and purchase a web-based tracking system to identify and track student needs               | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>Formerly RetentionZen, now Student Success Program (SSP) educational management software, was purchased in 2009.  |
| 9. Develop retention student workshops, content, and delivery methods                                  | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>110 students participated in four different retention workshops: Math Skills (65), Time Management (27), Test-Taking (3), and PowerPoint (15).  |
| 10. Attend financial aid conference to strengthen knowledge base about financial aid                   | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>Title III staff participated in a 40-hour Financial Aid Professionals course, 5/12-5/25/10.   |
| 11. Develop a Welcome to GC program for highly at-risk students  | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>Developed and presented 12 Welcome to GC expanded orientation sessions the first week of Fall 2010 classes. Presented to 159 students: 62 AR & 97 HAR students.   |
| 12. Holistic Advising philosophy and process is outlined   | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>Holistic Advising Manual is complete and includes the processes for administering and evaluating the two prescribed interventions for the at-risk and four prescribed interventions for the highly at-risk students. 105 students were holistically advised in 2009-2010. |

## YEAR-ONE TASKS

| SPECIFIC TASKS  | STATUS  |
|---|---|
| 13. Develop Individual Student Education Plans (ISEP) for highly at-risk students                                   | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>27 students (17 AR & 10 HAR) enrolled in two sections of ACA 118 this summer were instructed on how to use Program Evaluation within WebAdvisor via Intervention #3.   |
| 14. Enroll highly at-risk students in ACA 118. Arts and Sciences majors will have the option of ACA 118 or ACA 122. | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>132 at-risk (AR) and 111 highly at-risk (HAR) students enrolled in 14 pilot ACA 118/122 sections during Spring 2010; 22 AR and 11 HAR students enrolled in ACA 118 in Summer 2010.   |
| 15. Career development information is reviewed  | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>Success Counselors have reviewed career development resources and have sent the links to Tech Services for uploading to our website.   |
| 16. Provide personal assistance to students completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)         | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>Conducted STARS (Scholarship Tracking and Review System) on-line scholarship application sessions, 3/10; Success Counselors provide ongoing individual FAFSA assistance to students.   |
| 17. Conduct group advising sessions for highly at-risk students   | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>Intervention #2 Advising/FAFSA Assistance<br>Spring 2010 = 145 contacts (85 AR & 60 HAR);<br>Summer 2010 = 31 contacts (21 AR & 10 HAR).<br>Results from pilot ACA sections reflect a 26% increase in pre- and post-test scores (69%-95%). |
| 18. Require highly at-risk students to see a counselor prior to dropping from a course                              | Proposal developed and presented to Student Affairs Leadership Team (SALT), 9/29/10.  |
| 19. Develop a proposal to Student Government (SGA) to establish a Student Emergency Loan fund                       | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>GC established a donor-funded student academic emergency fund, Fall 2009; 77 students received \$15,902.35 during the 2009-2010 grant year.  |
| 20. Provide Professional Development Workshops at varied times  | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>163 faculty and staff participated in Title III-funded professional development activities.  |
| 21. Plan Part-Time faculty orientation & faculty mentoring  | <b><u>Completed</u></b><br>21 ACA faculty participated in Title III training in 2009-2010: 100% reported satisfaction.  |



# THE INTERVENTIONS TO BUILD STUDENT SUCCESS

## HOLISTIC ADVISING

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The holistic advising process at Gaston College consists of two prescribed interventions for at-risk\* students and four prescribed interventions for the highly at-risk\* student population. “The first intervention is geared toward initial academic advising and the administration of a career assessment inventory. The second intervention consists of personalized advising, outline of available academic resources, and discussion of advising results. The third intervention may deal with any issues that have been identified by the early alert system and will further discuss career planning and develop an individual student education plan. The fourth intervention will finalize the education plan and solidify advising and registration for the second semester” (Gaston College Title III Grant, p. 20).

### FIRST CONTACT: WELCOME TO GC

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The grant requires that Title III staff make contact with at-risk and highly at-risk Gaston College students within the first two weeks of the semester. The overall purpose of this initial contact is to make the students enrolled in ACA 118 (Academic Development) feel welcome at the College and to emphasize a team approach between the Success Counselors and the ACA Instructor in helping students become successful and achieve their goals.

Title III Success Counselors work with the ACA Instructor prior to the beginning of each term to arrange an appropriate time to visit the class, preferably the first class session. Although not all students enrolled in the ACA courses receive financial aid, the entire class benefits from the contacts and content of the presentations. A script has been developed and is followed for every class. Students are informed of the resources available through the grant, including: assistance with completing the FAFSA, career planning, workshops, individualized academic advising, and transfer planning. A Student Profile form is distributed and completed by each student. The form captures the students’ contact information, educational and career goals, employment status, interests, and skills. This information is used by the Success Counselors to develop a holistic advising plan best suited to each student’s individual needs and goals. The first contact class visit typically lasts 15 minutes and reaches between 25-30 students, of whom approximately 65% are Title III-eligible participants.

### #1: DISCOVER CAREER ASSESSMENT

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Success Counselors have developed a script for providing information about DISCOVER, an online career planning tool, to targeted Title III grant students enrolled in selected course sections. The Success Counselors developed an evaluation form to assess student satisfaction with DISCOVER. The evaluation form was reviewed by the Title III Coordinator and Data/Outcome Analyst and approved by the Director, Persistence and Retention. The script and evaluation form are presented and administered, respectively, during a designated class session of ACA 118-Academic Development.

Title III Success Counselors coordinate with the ACA Instructor prior to the beginning of each term to arrange an appropriate time to visit the class, preferably the second or third week of class. DISCOVER login “tokens” are pre-assigned prior to the class session by the Title III Success Counselor and distributed to each student at the beginning of the class session along with a written set of instructions for navigating through the DISCOVER program. After introducing herself, the Success Counselor assists students with logging onto the computers and into the DISCOVER program. Students begin by completing a series of three self-assessments: Abilities, Interests and Values. A minimum of 30 minutes will be needed. Upon completing all three inventories, students review their results by clicking on the Inventory Summaries link. Ten (10) minutes will be needed to briefly discuss the remaining DISCOVER tabs (Occupations, Majors, Schools, Job Search, Portfolio, Discovery Wheel, etc.). Students will be able to review salaries, educational levels,

# THE INTERVENTIONS TO BUILD STUDENT SUCCESS

degree offerings, and other characteristics related to their search. Once students have completed exploring DISCOVER, ten (10) minutes will be needed to wrap-up, answer questions and administer the evaluation. The evaluation is a 10-item paper and pencil instrument designed to assess the students' perception of the value and usefulness of DISCOVER. Intervention #1 typically lasts one hour and reaches between 25-30 students, of whom approximately 65% are Title III-eligible participants.

Completed evaluation forms are given to the Data/Outcome Analyst who enters the data into a template in Excel. Using SAS, the Data/Outcome Analyst produces statistics that summarize evaluation results and provides a report to the Title III Coordinator. Application of Intervention #1 is indicated on Success Counselor tracking sheets provided by the Data/Outcome Analyst who compiles, analyzes, and reports summary results from these sheets after the semester ends and provides this report to the Title III Coordinator.

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## #2: FINANCIAL AID & PRE-ADVISING

Success Counselors have developed a script and a pre- and post-test to assess student comprehension regarding information about financial aid and advising and present this information to targeted Title III grant students each semester. The script and pre- and post-test are presented and administered, respectively, during a designated ACA 118 course section session. Ideally, the presentation is facilitated approximately two weeks before the advising and registration sessions for returning students begin. This way, students receiving the intervention have time to meet with the Success Counselor in follow-up appointments if needed.

At the beginning of the presentation, the Success Counselor shares the purpose of the presentation. Then, the five-item pre-assessment is administered. Once collected, the Success Counselor begins the session by sharing information about Financial Aid, including: application dates and processes, location of the Financial Aid offices, and a brief timeline for awards. Additionally, information about the STARS (Scholarship Review and Tracking System) online scholarship application program is shared. Next, the Success Counselor discusses academic advising and introduces students to the nuances of course planning and registration. Detailed explanations of the course schedule, commonly used abbreviations, types of courses (e.g., seated, online, hybrid), ways to develop a schedule, and descriptions of the courses are highlighted. A Pre-Advising Worksheet is distributed to the students along with a list of student responsibilities and expectations during the advising and registration process. Lastly, the student is informed of the various ways to register for classes including meeting with an advisor, phone registration, and WebAdvisor. At the end of the session, the same five-item test administered at the start of class as a pre-test is now given as a post-assessment (printed in a different color and re-named) to gauge the students' increase in knowledge regarding the advising and financial aid processes at Gaston College. Intervention #2 lasts approximately 30 minutes and reaches between 25-30 students, of whom approximately 65% are Title III-eligible participants.

Pre- and post-assessment scores are given to the Data/Outcome Analyst who enters the results into a template in Excel. Using SAS, the Data/Outcome Analyst produces statistics that compare pre- and post-test results to see if there is test performance improvement and provides a report to the Title III Coordinator.

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## #3: PROGRAM EVALUATION IN WEB ADVISOR

Success Counselors have developed a script for providing information about Program Evaluation, an online degree audit program in Web Advisor, to targeted Title III Grant students enrolled in selected course sections of ACA 118.

Title III Success Counselors work with each ACA Instructor prior to the beginning of each term to arrange an appropriate time to visit the class, preferably the 9th or 10th week of class. Each Counselor facilitates her assigned ACA class with a developed script, sample academic evaluation, and log on instructions.

## THE INTERVENTIONS TO BUILD STUDENT SUCCESS

Students are first informed of the purpose of Intervention #3 (to learn how to complete an online degree audit in WebAdvisor) and reminded about financial aid deadlines and advising/registration periods. Log-in instructions and sample academic evaluation handouts are prepared prior to the class session and administered at the beginning of each class. Students are introduced to six component areas (Student Information, Credits/GPA, Statuses, Education Requirements, Placement Scores, Student Notes) of the academic evaluation. Detailed explanations of the six areas are highlighted and illustrated by the Success Counselor. The handout provided (academic evaluation) identifies each component area in an easy-to-read format. While the Success Counselor is available and able to review this document and assist the student in understanding their success plan and plan of study, it is critical that the student defer to their assigned faculty advisor (if applicable) for final advising and registration. Intervention #3 typically lasts 30 minutes and reaches between 25-30 students, of whom approximately 65% are Title III-eligible participants.

The Success Counselors developed a four-item pencil and paper assessment of student satisfaction with Program Evaluation. It was approved by the Title III Coordinator, Data/Outcome Analyst and Director, Persistence and Retention. The script and evaluation form are presented and administered, respectively, at the end of the presentation. Completed evaluation forms are given to the Data/Outcome Analyst who enters the data into a template in Excel. Using SAS, the Data/Outcome Analyst produces statistics that summarize evaluation results and provides a report to the Title III Coordinator. Application of Intervention #3 is indicated on Success Counselor tracking sheets provided by the Data/Outcome Analyst who compiles, analyzes, and reports summary results from these sheets after the semester ends and provides the report to the Title III Coordinator.

### #4: INDIVIDUAL STUDENT EDUCATIONAL PLANS (ISEP)

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Success Counselors meet individually with Title III Grant students for the purpose of developing an individual student educational plan (ISEP) that includes academic and career goals. Students discuss with the Success Counselor their Web Advisor Program Evaluation/degree audit and then select courses for the next semester(s).

Success Counselors make appointments to meet with the students in their offices on an individual basis. Counselors also contact students via email and/or phone to follow up after Intervention #3 is administered. Ideally, these meetings will occur near the Advising and Registration period so that the student is best able to implement their academic plan for the upcoming semester. Session times can vary. Most individual meetings with students last between 30 minutes to an hour. Students are free to meet with a Success Counselor more than once when needed. In fact, this is strongly encouraged.

The Success Counselor reviews the printout of student's Program Evaluation (as instructed during Intervention #3). As needed, the Counselor will refer to the Gaston College Catalog, website, and/or curriculum sheet to determine the best and most accurate academic plan for that student-based on their individual test scores, academic background, work/family commitments, etc. While the Success Counselor is available and able to review this document and assist the student in understanding their success plan and plan of study, it is critical that the student meet with their assigned faculty advisor (if applicable) for final advising and registration. Students will then be instructed to register online using Web Advisor. This may be completed during the advising session, or the student may register from home at a later time. Advisors will follow up with the students and document all successful online registrations on each student's Advising Record sheet and Excel tracking sheet.

Intervention #4 is indicated on tracking sheets provided by the Data/Outcome Analyst who compiles, analyzes, and reports summary results from these sheets after the semester ends and provides the report to the Title III Coordinator.

