

Front Range Community College

Case Study Report – Data as of May 2013

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INTRODUCTION

In 2011, Colorado received a \$17.3 million Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. The grant-funded project—the Colorado Online Energy Training Consortium (COETC)—has two principal purposes: 1) enhance the state’s energy-related programming by transforming curricula into more accessible formats using technology and mobile learning labs, and 2) develop and implement a redesign of the state’s developmental education (DE) program. Project goals include expanding access to degree and certificate programs in energy-related fields, increasing retention and completion of certificate and degree programs at the community college level, and developing a trained workforce for changing job market.

The COETC project involves the thirteen colleges in the Colorado Community College System (CCCS) and two local district colleges, Aims Community College (Aims) and Colorado Mountain College (CMC).

CCCS contracted with Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations (Rutgers) to be the COETC third-party evaluator. In this role, the Rutgers team created and implemented a multi-faceted research assessment design that includes quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.

A major component of Rutgers’ COETC evaluation is a cohort study that compares the educational outcomes for students enrolled in traditional courses to those for students enrolled in COETC-developed and funded courses. In particular, this research focuses on COETC’s second goal as described above. The study’s objective is to assess the success of DE courses restructured under the guidelines of the Colorado State Task Force on Developmental Education Redesigns (State Task Force) and the success of the redesigned energy courses at the seven participating energy colleges. Specifically, it will evaluate the impact of factors such as demographics, Accuplacer scores, course registrations, student grades, employment status, and wages on rates of retention, program completion, and employment after graduation. The methodology consists of quantitative analyses of student and course data from Fall 2011 through Spring 2014 along with qualitative analyses of student experiences.

Toward the end of the Spring 2013 semester, Rutgers distributed four reports covering the study data collected to date from individual colleges and the consortium as a whole: “Integrated Year End Report,” “Career Coach Caseloads Analysis,” “Redesigned Course Outcomes,” and “Master Course List.” This case study provides an interim report, based on data provided in these reports, on the progress to date of Front Range Community College (FRCC) under the COETC grant as of May 2013.

The sections that follow 1) outline the overall study methodology and data sources, 2) provide background information on FRCC and its student population, 3) summarize the goals and primary elements of FRCC’s COETC program, 4) describe the redesigned energy program and redesigned DE courses (math and English/reading) and present data on enrollment and

outcomes, 5) assess the success of the career coaching program instituted by FRCC as part of its COETC program, and 6) conclude with recommendations for FRCC specifically and for the consortium colleges in general with regard to their COETC-funded programs.

METHODOLOGY/DATA SOURCES

Quantitative Analysis

During the first project year, Rutgers worked closely with CCCS to refine the quarterly reports required from each of the system's participating colleges. Rutgers has used data from these reports to track progress and to provide the foundation for other data collection. In collaboration with CCCS, the district colleges, and college career coaches, Rutgers developed and revised an Electronic Student Case File (ESCF) to capture data relating to the COETC career coaches' work with grant-eligible students. (The ESCF records demographic and academic information and tracks the issues and goals coaches and students work on and any referrals made.) In addition, Rutgers designed a pre-course survey to collect information on student expectations about course work and career goals. The colleges administered this survey to students in traditional and redesigned DE courses in Fall 2012.

The Rutgers team has also been working closely with CCCS and the district colleges to access the Banner student system (and CMC's data system) to track student progress and achievement and to collect and analyze data for the cohort study.

Qualitative Analysis

Rutgers' qualitative evaluation focuses on COETC process issues and the experiences of project team members and participating students, faculty, and staff at the 15 colleges in the COETC consortium.

As part of this analysis, team members reviewed relevant documents, text answers from quarterly reports, ESCFs, pre-course survey results, and materials and websites developed by the State Task Force, CCCS, and/or individual colleges. Rutgers team members have conducted phone and in-person interviews with project leads, faculty involved in the restructuring and/or teaching of DE and energy courses, instructional designers, data coordinators, senior college administrators, and, whenever possible, students. We conducted on-site interviews at FRCC on November 6, 2012. The team members have analyzed transcriptions of phone and in-person interviews to identify program achievements to date, best practices, and critical issues for follow-up. Some of the responses from these interviews are quoted in this report.

Rutgers team members have also participated in conference calls with project leads and career coaches and joined in webinars. In addition, they have observed and participated in forums sponsored by CCCS, such as sessions on DE redesigns.

COLLEGE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF STUDENT POPULATION

As the largest two-year college in Colorado, Front Range Community College (FRCC) enrolls more than 31,000 students annually at its campuses in Westminster, Longmont, Fort Collins, and Brighton and online for career/technical programs and guaranteed-transfer degrees. Spring 2012 enrollment totaled 21,126 students. Sixty-nine percent (14,577) of these students were part-time and 20 percent (4,225) identified themselves as belonging to a minority. FRCC's student population is 58 percent women (12,253) and 42 percent men (8,872).

The school offers four associates degrees (Arts, Science, Applied Science, and General Studies) and over 100 certificates that range from Emergency Medical Services to Welding. It has over 60 academic programs beginning with Accounting and ending with Women's Studies. These programs include an AAS degree in Electro-Mechanical and Energy Technology with an Electrical/Mechanical Concentration at the Larimer campus (Fort Collins) that focuses on qualifying students for entry-level positions in manufacturing industries and maintenance of electrical equipment in energy industries. It also offers certificate programs in subject areas such as electrical/electronic systems and clean energy technology. In 2012, the college awarded 1,466 associate degrees and 1,722 certificates.

FRCC'S COETC GOALS AND PRIMARY PROGRAM ELEMENTS

FRCC's overall goals for the COETC grant in energy were twofold. One, it set out to align training programs with present and future workforce needs and to assist students in completing training programs to gain employment in the rapidly growing clean energy field. Two, it aimed to enhance the FRCC technological infrastructure by transitioning the existing clean energy technology programs into online and hybrid formats.

FRCC also planned to redesign of its DE program to increase retention of low-skilled workers and accelerate their progress through the sequence.

FRCC'S REDESIGNED ENERGY PROGRAM

Colorado will likely experience strong growth rates in the green energy sector as the existing labor force of statewide utility companies ages into retirement. The power companies who worked with FRCC to support the COETC grant proposal stated they expect 40 percent of their workforce to retire in the next five years. To respond to this need, FRCC redesigned its clean energy technology program to encompass new innovative processes in clean energy manufacturing, project development, operations, and maintenance. The redesigned training focuses on helping workers build on their existing skill sets and transition into sustainable jobs.

FRCC originally planned to focus on three particular certificate programs: wind, solar, and smart grid. During the grant period, however, a shift in the job market and political environment prompted FRCC to eliminate the wind and solar certificate programs. These

energy sectors were not producing enough jobs to warrant creating the two programs. Instead, FRCC decided to focus its efforts on creating coursework and certificates in general manufacturing with electro/mechanical and power options and on teaching skills applicable to a wide range of employers. Initially, the certificate program was called Manufacturing Technology but this was later changed to Precision Machining Technology.

During its COETC project, FRCC identified development of computer skills as particularly important to position students for work in the green energy sector. With this in mind, FRCC worked to transition the relevant coursework to online and hybrid courses, which increased program accessibility and flexibility for students while helping them develop the technological skills they require for jobs. To supplement the new technology-enabled programs, FRCC planned to offer a variety of laboratory and hands-on learning opportunities for students. These components are still being developed. Also the school abandoned its initial proposal for a mobile learning lab (MLL) because it determined the lab would not serve the program as well as on-campus facilities and equipment.

Under the COETC grant, FRCC redesigned its clean energy technology program to better align it to present and future workforce needs. Four priorities have guided the program development: (1) meet industry needs, (2) strengthen online and technology-enabled learning, (3) accelerate progress of low-skilled workers, and (4) improve student retention and shorten program completion time.

Energy Redesign Innovative Models and Practices

Online and Hybrid Courses. When FRCC abandoned the MLL idea, it turned its focus to converting as many courses in the clean energy technology program as possible to online, hybrid, and/or compressed formats, as this quote bears out.

We concluded then what we would try and do is we would try and move as many of our classes to a hybrid type of format as we possibly could so that if you were, for example, in Colorado Springs, you could take a lot of the course content online and then parachute into Fort Collins two or three times a semester or something like that.

Hands-on Learning. FRCC is working to significantly increase the amount of hands-on lab time for students. The lack of this time has been a particular faculty concern:

I say it to anybody who asks me about it, if there is a criticism of the program it's that we need to really increase the hands-on in the laboratory content

FRCC has worked over the last two years to get more lab equipment and move the "book learning" aspect online in hybrid formats. The idea is to add lab content to existing courses eventually.

Industry Partnership. FRCC has worked hard to meet actual and future workforce needs. In doing so, it modified the initial grant proposal several times as it contacted employers to research changing local and regional needs:

So we wanted to make sure that the certificate program would meet the needs of the business community. I went out and interviewed 33 companies in our service region; different types of companies, small job shops and large corporations. Tried to understand how critical the need was for machinists and what kind of skills they were looking for.

Energy Redesign Challenges

Staffing. Hiring staff and getting them “up to speed” has been a main issue at FRCC. Finding qualified personnel has been difficult for several reasons. One that faculty discussed was the newness of many of the industries they are working in and the ability of potential instructors to earn a higher wage in the private sector. As one faculty member pointed out, “Generally people that have the background and the skill to teach the program—to teach this kind of material—are still in the game making money.”

Recruitment. The FRCC service area does not have many individuals who are eligible for Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), so recruitment had to be done among other populations, such as in high schools or through corporate partners, to stay within the grant solicitation guidelines.

Sustainability. Faculty and staff have expressed concern regarding the program’s sustainability after the grant ends. Students receiving noncredit training cannot receive financial aid, which means the \$2,000 cost of a certificate program may be unaffordable for some.

Mobile Learning Lab. As noted, the original proposal called for creating a mobile lab to “connect the energy programs offered at each of the three FRCC campuses and further extend access to the training programs for TAA workers regardless of where they reside within [the] service area.” It became apparent early on that the lab was not technically or financially feasible, and FRCC killed the concept. The reasons for this action included questions about the cost, the use, and the challenge in finding a qualified faculty member to drive the lab. Some also had concerns about the fund allocation for an MLL in the grant proposal. Faculty also wondered if the lab would be the best way to serve students. In the end, FRCC decided it would be better to invest in creating hybrid and online options and building on-campus lab capacity for hands-on learning.

Shift in Sector Employment. FRCC intend to use internships and targeted certificate programs that responded to local employer needs and addressed gaps in existing energy industry training programs. The initial short-term certificate courses FRCC proposed were later altered as the college gained more knowledge regarding the changing job market environment and to avoid

duplicating certificates available elsewhere. FRCC chose not to pursue solar and the wind certificates because local employers in these areas were laying off rather than hiring. As mentioned above, the school shifted its focus more toward general manufacturing.

Redesigned Energy Course Outcomes

To help determine the ongoing effects and outcomes of courses redesigned under the COETC grant, FRCC’s project leads reported to the Rutgers team on their redesigned courses and the modality used by the energy program. This information appears below.

FRCC offered three unique redesigned energy courses in five unique sections through Spring 2013.¹ All of the courses have been offered in the most recent term. Table 5 displays the course rollout by term along with the number and percentage of total students served by the course each term.

Table 5. FRCC Redesigned Energy Course Offerings by Term		
Term and Year	Percentage of Total Redesigned Energy Population (All Subjects)	Number of Students (Redesigned Energy Population)
Spring 2013	100.0	52
Total	100.0	52

In terms of overall student retention, 50 students (96.2 percent) who registered for redesigned energy courses persisted in the course, while 1 student (1.9 percent) dropped the course and 1 (1.9 percent) withdrew after the term started.

Table 6 presents the course offerings by subject. At FRCC, 76.9 percent students served by the redesigned energy program were enrolled in an energy course and 23.1 percent were enrolled in a contextualized energy course.

¹ FRCC also offers noncredit energy. We do not have a system in place yet to track noncredit students. We are, however, exploring the idea of instituting such a system.

Subject	Percentage of Total Redesigned DE Population (All Subjects)	Number of Students (Redesigned DE Population)
Energy	76.9	40
Energy Contextualized	23.1	12
Total	100	52

FRCC'S REDESIGNED DE PROGRAM

FRCC's primary goal for redesigning DE courses involved creating a sequence where students could develop employer-desired skills in reading, English, and math more quickly. By accelerating and mainstreaming DE courses and providing additional support from teachers and counselors, FRCC made it possible for developmental students to complete their DE and college-level coursework in one semester.

As part of this process, FRCC designed compressed, modularized DE math courses for delivery in computer labs. These courses enabled students to learn at their own pace with an instructor on hand to offer help as needed. We describe these redesigns, as well as those for reading and English courses, in more detail below.

English/Reading DE Redesign

FRCC redesigned three developmental English courses to provide academic interventions for participating students. The strategy built on a prior grant project in which faculty compressed two developmental-level nontransferable English courses. They also provided supplemental support for students by establishing learning communities organized around the redesigned courses. These included three online learning communities.

English/Reading Redesign Innovative Models and Practices

Mainstreaming DE Courses. As of May 2013, FRCC had redesigned English 090 as a support class for students who require developmental English while enrolled in English 121 (a college-level class). Students are not required to complete separate 090 assignments. They simply use the course to brush up on the skills they need to finish the college-level course. English 090 students also do not need to purchase a separate textbook for the course—a significant cost saver for them.

Involving Students in Learning Communities. For its English 090/121 combination, FRCC adopted a “learning community” model that involved other disciplines. For example, students taking 090/121 can become part of a Philosophy 111 or Literature 115 learning community at the Larimer campus. This gives students the opportunity to develop and maintain a sense of involvement and interaction with other students who share similar learning objectives and issues.

Blending Reading and English Courses. On FRCC's Westminster campus, students testing into English 060 now can take the course blended with Reading 060 or Reading 090.

Developing Teaching Guides. FRCC's DE team keeps journals, meets regularly while teaching, and creates teaching guides to help them work together better and expand the number of faculty able to teach the DE courses. We will explore the implementation and impact of these teaching guides further in future reports.

Embedding Advisers. FRCC now has an embedded adviser who meets with students in classes about five times a semester. The adviser suggests ways for students to facilitate their studies (using time management for example) and encourages them to bring up other issues that concern them. As reported by the adviser, students often use this time to discuss topics that range from career planning to external problems such as domestic abuse.

English/Reading Redesign Challenges

Faculty Resistance. Combining English and reading into an accelerated course met some resistance from faculty. The concern they voiced was that "reading will be subsumed by writing." Consequently, faculty are working to re-orient the conversation from "subsuming" to "integrating" to ensure that this collaboration will be beneficial across disciplines.

Insufficiency of Accuplacer Exam. Faculty pointed to several difficulties with the Accuplacer exam. Students often do not understand its importance or take it seriously, so they may place into remedial classes without actually needing them. The Writerplacer, an essay portion of the Accuplacer exam, is meant to assist in placement, but advisers are viewing scores rather than reviewing the written material.

Math DE Redesign

FRCC plans to use three developmental math courses to accelerate the progress of low-skilled workers. This approach will feature a compressed course and a self-paced modularized course to prepare students for transfer-level courses, along with a course combined with transferable discipline-specific math courses.

Math Redesign Innovative Models and Practices

Employing an Emporium Model. FRCC is in the developmental stage of creating a modularized content-delivery system to allow students to take the modules they need at their own pace without having to sit through a semester-long course. This approach will be especially helpful given the philosophical shift away from a focus on transferring students to four-year universities onto providing students with multiple pathways into the labor force.

Instituting Self-Pacing. The technology components integrated with the redesigned courses give students the ability to work on their own time. FRCC was in the planning and approval stage for this technology during the evaluation period. Future reports will evaluate its implementation.

Math Redesign Challenges

Student Anxiety. Returning and first-time adult students are often nervous about taking college-level math courses. Compressed/accelerated courses can add more pressure, especially for individuals with full schedules.

Transfer Credits. Some at FRCC expressed concern that certain math redesign paths may work for students at FRCC but not work as well for students transferring to other schools. If a student completes prerequisites at FRCC in the newly designed pathways, the college wants to be certain those classes will qualify as prerequisites if a student transfers to another community college or a four-year university.

Space Issues. Programs like the proposed emporium model modularization require computer labs. This could require relocating classes already using the labs. This use of space and the cost to maintain redesigns after the grant are major concerns for FRCC administrators.

Redesigned DE Course Outcomes

To help determine the ongoing effects and outcomes of courses redesigned under the COETC grant, FRCC's project leads reported to the Rutgers team on their redesigned courses and the modality used by developmental education. This information appears below.

FRCC offered 19 unique redesigned DE courses in 115 unique section offerings through Spring 2013. Approximately 20 percent of these courses were in the most recent term. Table 1 displays the course rollout by term along with the number and percentage of total students served by the course each term.

Table 1. FRCC Students Enrolled in DE Redesigned Courses by Term		
Term and Year	Percentage of Total Redesigned DE Population (All Subjects)	Number of Students (Redesigned DE Population)
Spring 2012	45.4	790
Fall 2012	37.0	645
Spring 2013	17.6	306
Total	100.0	1741

In terms of overall student retention, 1,567 students (90 percent) who registered for redesigned DE courses persisted in the course, while 42 (2.4 percent) dropped the course during the add/drop period and 132 (7.6 percent) withdrew after the term started.

Table 2 presents the number of students enrolled in redesigned DE courses by subject. At FRCC, nearly half (50.6 percent) of the students served by redesigned DE courses were in math, 30.5 percent in English, 5.6 percent in reading, and 13.3 percent in contextualized courses.

Subject	Percentage of Total Redesigned DE Population (All Terms)	Number of Students (Redesigned DE Population)
English	30.5	531
Math	50.6	881
Reading	5.6	98
DE Contextualized	13.3	231
Total	100.0	1741

Table 3 shows the number of students at FRCC enrolled in redesigned DE classes by course title.

Course Title	Percentage of Total Redesigned DE Population (All Terms)	Number of Students (Redesigned DE Population)
Academic Achievement Strategies	0.9	16
Writing Fundamentals	3.0	51
Basic Composition	19.3	336
English Composition I : CO1	8.3	144
Basic Reading Skills	0.5	9
College Preparatory Reading	2.9	50
Foundations of Reading	2.2	39
Fundamentals of Mathematics	19.2	230
Combined Intro/Inter Algebra	0.9	16
Compress Pre Alg w/Basic Math	17.5	305
Pre-Algebra	14.4	250
Introductory Algebra	3.6	62
Intermediate Algebra	1.0	18
Cultural Anthropology : SS3	1.8	32
Ethics : AH3	1.0	17
General Psychology I: SS3	1.8	32
Intro to Literature I: AH2	2.4	41
Intro to Philosophy: AH3	3.3	58
Western Civ:Antiquity-1650 HI1	2.0	35
Total	100	1741

Table 4 presents the grouped mean grade for each individual course. In the months ahead, Rutgers will compare section means to departmental means and include the results in later reports.

Table 4. FRCC Academic Outcomes for Redesigned DE Courses	
Course Title	Course Mean Grade (All Terms and Redesigned Sections Combined)
Academic Achievement Strategies	1.3846
Writing Fundamentals	2.5714
Basic Composition	2.5033
English Composition I : CO1	2.4923
Basic Reading Skills	2.4444
College Preparatory Reading	2.9302
Foundations of Reading	2.5000
Fundamentals of Mathematics	2.9770
Combined Intro/Inter Algebra	2.0625
Compress Pre Alg w/Basic Math	2.0875
Pre-Algebra	2.5000
Introductory Algebra	2.8545
Intermediate Algebra	3.2941
Cultural Anthropology : SS3	1.5862
Ethics : AH3	2.6154
General Psychology I: SS3	2.6333
Intro to Literature I: AH2	3.1714
Intro to Philosophy: AH3	2.4912
Western Civ:Antiquity-1650 HI1	2.3125

CAREER COACH

Under the COETC grant, the career coach position is meant to facilitate student access to careers in the energy sector and to assist students with any academic and non-academic issues that inhibit their progress or ability to complete a course of study. The coaching functions were envisioned to include career counseling and referrals, academic advising related to career choices, and counseling and referrals for a wide range of social and financial support services. To conform to the COETC's intent, eligibility for career coach services requires students to be participating in a redesigned DE course or a TAACCCT-supported energy course/program, to have Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) eligibility (or be TAA-like), to be unemployed, and/or to be eligible for other U.S. Department of Labor programs.

Initially, FRCC decided to have the career coach serve energy students primarily. Consequently, it placed the coach in the energy department and did not link the position directly to the college

advisement office and other student services. Now FRCC is having the coach work with DE students and beginning to think about how this position fits into its existing advising framework. We will discuss the nature and outcome of these efforts in future reports.

Since FRCC's energy program features closed enrollment, students must see an adviser before they begin. The career coach has taken on the responsibility of advising students prior to enrollment. She lets prospective students know by email that they must meet with her before starting the program. After the initial "intake" appointment, she keeps in touch in person on campus during the school year to mentor students and develop greater rapport with them. The coach has noted that her office location in the energy classroom wing at FRCC has been helpful in making contact since students must pass it to reach their classrooms. The location also allows the career coach to spend time in the hall and in other nearby areas where energy students congregate. On the other hand, the location may prove to be a barrier as coach works more with DE students. We will examine this issue in future reports.

FRCC's career coach noted that, after the initial contact she makes during registration, her involvement so far with students has been more in relation to emergencies than advising and/or mentoring them on their future careers.

While the coach's location has proven helpful with regard to energy students, her office space has created certain challenges. The coach shares her office with a faculty member, which can make advising students difficult, especially regarding personal problems.

When Rutgers first visited FRCC, the COETC project director was also serving as the career coach, which created time constraint difficulties for both positions. Since that visit, FRCC has hired a new career coach. We will discuss her role at the college and her performance in future reports.

FRCC's Electronic Student Case Files

As mentioned above, ESCFs help career coaches track student progress with goals. Rutgers hopes that FRCC's ESCF data will help it better understand student challenges and best intervention practices, as well as the impact of coaching services on student retention and completion rates.

The career coach creates an ESCF for each student when they first meet and then inputs additional information from subsequent visits and interactions. Of the students registered by FRCC's career coach as of May 23, 2013, 68 (88 percent) had an active electronic ESCF file and 9 (12 percent) did not.²

² Rutgers defines an active ESCF file as a "response in progress" in which student information has been entered into the ESCF but not submitted to the record. Career coaches can return to and update information in active ESCFs. An ESCF that has been closed or submitted to the system by the career coach is considered inactive.

Career Coaching Eligibility Targets

At FRCC, the career coach has registered 77 students so far, which represents roughly 12 percent of the 625 students targeted under the grant.³

Career Coaching Eligibility Distribution

After reviewing active ESCF files and cross-referencing these with students enrolled in all redesigned courses, as certified by the project lead, Rutgers has identified the student eligibility for career coaching for 57 percent of all registered students.⁴ Table 5 displays the eligibilities of the students using the career coach along with the breakdown of how many students fall into each eligibility category. As the table shows, 1.3 percent of students are TAA-eligible and 23.4 percent are TAA-like. Another 16.9 percent of those recorded as TAA-like have enrolled in one or more redesigned courses⁵, 15.6 percent in energy courses and 1.3 percent in contextual or multiple redesigned courses.

Table 5. Eligibility of Students in FRCC's Career Coach Caseload		
Eligibility Criteria	Percentage of Students in Caseload	Number of Students (Caseload Population)
TAA-Eligible	1.3	1
TAA-Like	23.4	18
DE Redesigned	2.6	2
Energy Redesigned	11.7	9
TAA + Energy	15.6	12
TAA + Contextualized	1.3	1
Multiple Redesigned	1.3	1
Unknown	42.9	33
Total	100.0	77

³ We note here that students registered by the career coach may not have an active ESCF file. In order for the student to be considered registered, the career coach has to fill in basic information such as ID number and name but does not have to initiate an ESCF file. Alternatively, a student in this count may have been served by the career coach and the student's ESCF submitted. Such ESCFs are considered inactive.

⁴ FRCC's redesigned noncredit courses have no course registration number. We do not, as yet, have a method for tracking students in these classes.

⁵ The original redesigned course list validation provided by the project Lead included the CRN 62945. This course is not included in this analysis due to an error in submission. The correct CRN should be 62845. We will include this course offering in our next update.

SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED AND INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES

Career Coach Location

The career coach office's proximity to energy classrooms has allowed her to develop informal mechanisms for meeting students and maintaining contact. Students are more likely to contact her in person than via email. The one downside has been the space restrictions. The coach shares office space with a faculty member. This means the coach has to schedule carefully. Two students cannot be in the office at the same time, for example. Also, when conversations require privacy, the coach has to schedule a meeting when the faculty member will not be in the office.

Career Coach's Data Collection

The career coach collects demographic data not available in the college data systems via paper forms. This helps her avoid having to ask questions that may make students uncomfortable on the initial visit, a technique that is useful in establishing and maintaining rapport with students.

SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES

Level of Student Involvement with Career Coach

The career coach challenges have primarily related to encouraging students to use the service. Only a small percentage of her caseload seeks advising regularly. Most often they come to her with emergencies such as problems stemming from the challenge of balancing intense school work, jobs, and home schedules. The academic pressure comes in part from the pace of accelerated courses. Consequently, FRCC's career coach reports that her role has been mostly as personal counselor rather than a general academic and career adviser.

Career Coach's Workload

The career coach has expressed concern that her increased responsibilities from adding DE students will reduce the amount of personal service she can provide to students. With her current caseload, the coach can recognize faces and recall names. This means she can respond to students on a more personal level, reach out to them when she sees them on campus, and touch base with them regularly. With a greater caseload, she will likely not be able to do these things.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FRCC

- Two of FRCC's primary concerns center around not having enough hands-on learning for students and how best to recruit successfully for certificate programs after the grant period. Encouraging employers and corporate partners to offer more internships would be a step toward solving both issues. Corporate partners could benefit from sponsoring interns and the internships would provide students with more hands-on learning and

establish relationships with potential employers. FRCC might also call on students who have earned certificates and obtained employment to be “ambassadors” for recruiting more students into the programs.

- FRCC should provide more detailed information on the energy program to interested students. The career coach noted that many students with an interest in the program were not fully aware of what it involves or were unprepared for the heavy course load.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSORTIUM SCHOOLS

- FRCC continues to research the labor market and current employment needs in its service area with an eye toward adjusting its coursework as necessary. Other schools might be well served by adopting similar strategies.
- Course hybridization frees up in-class time for hands-on lab activities, can help speed student progress in class, and helps make the energy program more responsive to employer needs.