

Organization Background and Needs Statement

Cumberland County College (CCC) is an open-access community college dedicated to providing quality educational services to a diverse student body and to creating collaborative relationships in the county that enhance residents' quality of life. CCC was founded in 1966 in response to the need for higher education and community development in an underserved region of New Jersey. The College's enrollment grew to 4,188 students by fall 2011, and 646 students graduated in 2012. In the state's southern reaches bordering the Delaware Bay, Cumberland County ranks at the bottom of key state prosperity measures, with the lowest median family income, areas of deep poverty, low educational attainment, and highest unemployment rate.¹

The county's economic problems are long term and systemic. Decline of the historic glass and food-processing industries has left blue-collar workers ill-prepared for today's service- and knowledge-based economy. The College's efforts to foster student success and completion and to develop a 21st-century work force are challenged by the county's lack of higher education traditions; nearly 80% of CCC's students are first-generation college students. Those efforts are further complicated by the county's low levels of college preparation – nearly 80% of CCC's entering freshmen must take developmental education courses in reading, English or math before they can begin college-level work. The student population is highly diverse and comes from a range of neighborhoods and backgrounds. In 2011, the student population was 23.9% Latino, 21.4% African American, 3.2% minorities of other ethnic origins, and 51.5% white non-Hispanic. Many CCC students are economically disadvantaged and cannot persist in their college education. For example, 34% of all first-time, full-time degree-seeking freshmen enrolled in fall 2010 dropped out in fall 2011, and dropout rates for some ethnic groups are much higher.²

The College's new Strategic Plan for 2012-2017, entitled "Engage, Inspire, Transform,"³ signals a fundamental shift from a focus on open access to an emphasis on improving student success and completion. To help more students complete degrees, CCC's leadership believes the College must engage students in relevant, hands-on learning that contributes to the solution of community needs and problems while building student leadership qualities. To implement Strategic Plan Direction 2, Goal 8 ("Collaborate with community groups to develop and integrate Service Learning into academic and non-academic programs"), the College has developed a detailed strategy to guide development of its service-learning program.⁴ It will promote academic success while addressing important community issues and building new partnerships.

Project goals, population served, and projected timeline

The College is requesting a \$25,000 grant to help support development of its service learning program. This effort will ultimately produce a curriculum linked to specific community projects that will engage students in meaningful work that motivates them to succeed.

The College's goals and objectives guiding the service learning effort are to recruit key players (faculty, staff, student advocates, and community partners), develop and launch training efforts, and establish a core of courses that include service learning. Service learning is highly flexible: Numerous ways exist for service learning to provide students the opportunity to apply the concepts learned in class. Nearly every educational discipline provides a unique community service opportunity. Some examples include environmental stewardship through soil or water

¹ Cumberland County, 14% unemployment, June 2012, N.J. Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Labor Force Estimates for 2012 by area.

² Cumberland County College Fact Book, 2011-2012, Table 4.2, Fall to Fall Retention.

³ <http://www.cccnj.edu/pdf/cccstrategicplanbook.pdf>

⁴ "A Strategy for Community Engagement: Service Learning at Cumberland County College," by Kim Ayres, Ph.D.

testing (Biology); youth and adult language literacy and tutoring (English and Liberal Arts); youth mentoring, anti-gang counseling and assistance for senior citizens (Social Services); development of community gardens and horticulture techniques (Agriculture); delivery of health care services (Nursing); radon testing and energy efficiency assessments (Engineering Technology), and tax-filing guidance and tutoring in financial literacy (Business).

The population to be served by service learning includes students, faculty and staff members of CCC and a diverse cross section of residents and organizations. Faculty members will learn a new pedagogy that strengthens their and their students' connections to the broader community. It will augment students' collegiate experiences by providing a framework for applying the concepts taught in the classroom to real-life activities that reinforce learning and provide the satisfaction of substantive volunteerism. They will learn about leadership, and collaboration, and community partners will benefit from meaningful interaction with students.

This initiative will pursue the following goals and objectives along the stated timeline:

- Recruit "pioneer" faculty members for leadership roles in service learning, summer 2012;
- Launch initial faculty training efforts and workshops in service learning, fall 2012;
- Recruit/obtain commitments from community partners for student placements, fall 2012;
- Utilize faculty incentives to promote development/implementation of courses, fall 2012;
- Launch the first round of new service-learning courses, spring 2013;
- In partnership with Stockton College, develop a service-learning conference/workshops for community college faculty and staffs in southern New Jersey, spring 2013;
- Establish a service-learning resource room for faculty and staff, spring 2013;
- Recruit/develop student advocates in student life/leadership programs, spring 2013;
- Offer faculty mini-grants for innovative strategies/course design, spring 2013.
- Launch faculty mentoring led by "pioneer" service-learning instructors, fall 2013;

Service-Learning Assessment Plan

The College has made an institutional commitment to measure performance of service-learning programs through continuous assessment. A Strategic Plan committee of faculty and staff will shepherd the program's development and assessment by establishing baselines for existing and newly developed service-learning courses. Future progress will then be measured against the 2012-13 benchmarks. Key fall 2012 benchmarks that will serve as markers include:

- Number of programs of study with service learning components as of fall 2012;
- Number of community partners contributing service-learning placements as of fall 2012;
- Number of student participants as of fall 2012;
- Number of faculty participating in the service-learning program as of fall 2012.

Through the strategic planning process, the college has set a goal of increasing each benchmark by 20% in years 2-5 of the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan. In addition to the benchmarks, students, faculty and community partners will be surveyed to obtain reliable data on the impact and operation of the service-learning project. Students will be required to reflect critically on their service-learning experience. Community partners will be asked to evaluate student performance. Finally, staff and faculty will evaluate the pedagogy of service learning and its impact on student learning, leadership and the institution.

Institutional Commitment and Sustainability

As the College implements its new Strategic Plan, its leadership has designated the civic engagement of students through service learning as a clear priority. In pursuit of that objective,

the College has allocated \$7,500 in institutional funds to fund the position of Service Learning Coordinator to lead development of the program in its first year. The College has also committed \$25,000 in institutional funds in FY 2013 to support implementation of the service-learning program and Strategic Direction 2, Goal 8. The College recently became a founding member of the New Jersey Chapter of Campus Compact, “a national coalition of almost 1,200 college and university presidents ... who are committed to fulfilling the civic purposes of higher education.”⁵ Thus, the sustainability of CCC’s service-learning initiative will be strengthened by membership in this recognized network of service-learning experts and committed funders. Grants from private funders are also being sought to support the initiative.

Publicity Plan

If funded, this grant award and information about the service learning program will be publicized through photographs and news releases to local and regional media. The development and accomplishments of the service learning program will be publicized throughout the implementation of the five-year Strategic Plan using the College’s Opportunity Magazine (circulated to 65,000 county households), its website and online social networking websites.

Cumberland County College Service Learning (SL) Proposal Budget				
Category	Budget narrative	TD grant funds	CCC support	Total cost
Staff incentives				
1 contact-hour stipends for faculty who develop, launch SL courses	\$800/stipend x 24 faculty members in Years 1 and 2	\$19,200		
Student incentives				
Leadership stipends for SL student advocates to assist faculty	Stipends @ \$200/stipend x 20 students in Years 1 and 2	\$4,000		
Program Development				
Activities, materials, design, supplies, insurance	\$25,000 x 1 year for first year of program development		\$25,000	
Professional development				
Professional development and training for faculty and staff	Fees for Stockton/CCC/TD SL conference @ \$45 each x 30 staff members	\$1,350		
Professional development for faculty/staff	Continental breakfast/lunch for Stockton/CCC/TD conf. @ \$15 each x 30 staff members	\$450		
Contractual				
Service learning coordinator	\$7,500 per contract year for first year of program dev.		\$7,500	
Staff time				
Grant director	2% of salary to monitor grant spending and achievement		\$1,114	
Totals		Total TD funds	Total CCC support	
		\$25,000	\$33,614	\$58,614

⁵ Campus Compact: Educating Citizens, Building Communities; <http://www.compact.org/about/history-mission-vision/>