STUDENT
SUCCESS IS
ABOUT PEOPLE

FEATURING
CIVITAS LEARNING
PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

LEARNING
BRIEF

Brian Macon *Math Professor*

BIG IDEAS

LEARNING-CENTERED STRATEGIES TO BUILD PATHWAYS ACROSS THE ECOSYSTEM OF EDUCATION

VALENCIA COLLEGE

RANKED FIRST IN U.S.

for number of Associate degrees awarded among two-year schools

5 CAMPUSES

1967 YEAR ESTABLISHED

70,000+ STUDENTS ENROLLED EACH YEAR

100+ DEGREE PROGRAMS

NAMED TOP COMMUNITY COLLEGE *by the Aspen Institute in 2011*

Joyce Romano   *Vice President, Student Affairs*

ESTABLISHING INSTITUTIONAL READINESS

Fostering a Culture Focused on Evidence

In 2004, Valencia College was among the first 26 of 300+ institutions (today) working with Achieving the Dream to figure out how to build a culture of evidence. "The premise behind the work was that if you put data related to student success in front of people, they would know exactly what to do, and the decisions on improving the system and the culture would logically follow," said Kurt Ewen, Presidential Fellow. "But that is anything but true. What we have learned is that institutional reform requires a shared vision of student success data that helps to clarify the student experience, and a plan to bring people together in order to develop a common understanding of the path to improvement."

There was a change in the conversation at Valencia

"We discovered we could have more leverage on student performance if we understood the value proposition we were making to students. Rather than treat students as neutral variables, we would use data to make rational value propositions to them and their families that would cause them to aspire for college, prepare for college, persist in college, and succeed."

PRESIDENT
Sandy Shugart | *Valencia College*

around this time – a shift toward a focus on assessment as the foundation of a good teaching culture, with faculty driving initiatives to change the conditions of learning and to increase student performance.

The "big idea" – that the purpose of assessment is to improve learning, and that assessment must be designed around learning is why in 2012, Valencia partnered with Civitas Learning™. The college recognized that data on student performance across the system was an essential first element in uncovering where the institution could get the most lift on student performance, and that predictive analytics could help those at the front lines of education shape more effective pathways – intentionally.

Valencia was a key partner in the development of Civitas Learning Inspire™ applications designed to help faculty and

advisors assess students' risk of non-persistence and design interventions and outreach to improve their likelihood of success.

Before embarking on their journey to implement predictive analytics, the institution had to consider (1) its long history of having faculty deeply involved in the work as a precondition of its validity; (2) the fact that approximately 70% of students coming in were not ready for college and needed remediation in one

area or another; and (3) that any use of data and analytics only made sense if it helped Valencia improve the quality of its relationship with the University of Central Florida (UCF) by leveraging federated data that could be shared and displayed in a way that was meaningful to faculty, staff, and students.

"We are sharing data down to the click level so that every assignment submitted, thread comment, discussion post, and other course activities can become actionable information that can be used to help students be more successful."

DIRECTOR, ENTERPRISE APPLICATION SERVICES
Alex Lazarbal | *Valencia College*

Alex Lazarbal   *Director, Enterprise Application Services*

Assessing the Power and Purpose of Analytics Applications

Kurt Ewen *Presidential Fellow*

Destinations, the annual summer program at Valencia brings 200 full- and part-time faculty together for five weeks in order to deliberate and design strategies for teaching. In 2014, ten faculty members in the program became the first to get access to Inspire for Faculty as a tool to help fulfill the "action research" requirement of their tenure, whereby faculty try and test approaches to learning in order to find what works best.

Math Professor Brian Macon was the faculty member leading Valencia's work with Inspire, assessing its power and purpose. He was also one of the first instructors at Valencia to teach online when the college was exploring those environments where students tend to withdraw at a higher rate than face-to-face, and where innovation was needed to address the

challenge. "We had some deep conversations. What data did we really want access to? Should we have prior knowledge of a student's success in a prior course? How could we validate the data we were seeing on day one of a course?" said Macon. "Ultimately we agreed that any data that could help us help students succeed in our classes was data we wanted access to and would use responsibly."

With five classes, with 26 students each, for a total of 130 students every semester, Communication Professor Courtney Lewis leverages Inspire for Faculty to scale and improve communication with students and streamline the process of engaging with those who have hurdles to overcome. He looks at insights for students taking a hybrid course for the first time. "On day one, I can make

"One of my favorite things about Inspire for Faculty is that I can see students' engagement right up front and personalize email outreach to those whose engagement has dropped for one reason or another. One student replied thanking me for being interested in his progress in the class, shared some of the things going on in his life, and explained that the class was very important to him. After some email exchanges and phone calls, he increased his grade by approximately 10 percentage points."

MATH PROFESSOR
Brian Macon | *Valencia College*

"We are building on a culture that already exists and leveraging the capacity of our faculty to use classroom-based action research to develop and test new ways of improving student engagement and learning. Unlike traditional sources of feedback that required faculty to wait until after the conclusion of a course to get information on the impact of a new strategy, Inspire creates the opportunity for faculty to monitor changes in student engagement on a daily basis."

PRESIDENTIAL FELLOW
Kurt Ewen | *Valencia College*

sure they can follow along, turn in assignments, and do the tasks required for them to persist," said Lewis.

Lisa Macon, Computer Science Professor and Dean, Division of Engineering, Computer Programming, and Technology, teaches students who come very naturally to the online environment and who expect instructors to be as giving in their communication to students as students are expected to give in the class discussion. Before Inspire, Professor Macon kept large spreadsheets with information about her students to track their engagement. Today, Inspire for Faculty has not only streamlined that process but also helped Professor Macon turn her attention to strategies to re-engage students who may be struggling in a course, as well as to "raise the ceiling" for highly-engaged students. English Professor Neal Phillips is also using the app as a motivational tool by building some transparency around his use of the application, and planning projects that give students the opportunity to earn extra credit for improving their engagement score in the course.

Lisa Macon *Computer Science Professor*

"This summer we have the opportunity to partner with The Astronauts Memorial Foundation and NASA on a summer research experience for Valencia students in engineering. Students will go to the Cape, take a tour, and meet scientists who will challenge them with problems around space exploration and living in space. The students are expected to take the problems back to Valencia, be mentored by the scientists via Skype, and come back in a month to present their proposals. I'm using Inspire for Faculty to select students for this program, so my decision will be backed by data, not anecdotal."

COMPUTER SCIENCE PROFESSOR
Lisa Macon | *Valencia College*

Courtney Lewis *Communication Professor*

Supporting College Transition, Readiness

In addition to the ability to leverage action research to design teaching strategies, LifeMap® is another one of the seven competencies for educators at Valencia. LifeMap is a program developed to help students make sense of their learning journey and to better decide "what to do when" in order to achieve their career and education goals. "Many of our students are first-generation so the whole world of higher education is new to them," said Joyce Romano, Vice President of Student Affairs. "We have to be very intentional about thinking in terms of a curriculum and the advising learning outcomes and pedagogies we use to help students learn about their learning."

The five stages of LifeMap – from college transition, to lifelong learning – have unique programs and services, as well as success indicators to assess what is working. Advising is incorporated into every stage as a part of students' ongoing progression and it

When most people hear language like "big data," they are thinking about a world where individuals are even more isolated, where people are not people but nameless components of the mass experience. This kind of experience is particularly challenging for students trying to learn in an online class. We have to figure out how we create and use tools that allow students to be themselves, and for faculty to recognize and respond to them as individuals. Inspire allows for the possibility to make students visible to faculty and advisors in a way that hasn't been possible before."

PRESIDENTIAL FELLOW
Kurt Ewen | *Valencia College*

is where predictive analytics can improve the institution's understanding of what is driving unique student needs, how to provide smooth transitions, track progression, and personalize assistance. Moreover, analytics are being used in the project to redesign a LifeMap student experience course, which is required of all 10,000 new students – 20% of whom are anticipated to take the course online.

Bridges Across the Ecosystem of Education

Helping students understand not only what they are doing, but why, is critical to Valencia's mission to help them be more successful. "When we looked at our value proposition to students, we realized it wasn't about us, but about where students wanted to arrive," said President Shugart. "For about 50 percent of them, it was a four-year college."

Valencia has set out to build pathways and bridges across the ecosystem of education – from K-12 to higher education – starting with the creation of the DirectConnect initiative, a guaranteed pathway to admission at UCF. Students know

Sandy Shugart   *President*

from the time of their first semester courses that credits will transfer seamlessly once they successfully complete the appropriate 60 semester credit hours at Valencia. But the collaboration doesn't end there. Students in the program also receive preferential admission to select bachelor's degree programs at UCF, joint advising from UCF and Valencia to ensure a smooth transition, the option to take UCF courses at the main campus or on Valencia's West or Osceola campuses, and access to UCF staff available on-site at Valencia's West and Osceola campuses to help with

advising, admissions, financial aid and academic support. The program was recognized by Excelencia in Education as America's top program for increasing academic opportunities and success at the associate level.

In addition to both Inspire applications, Valencia has plans to implement the Civitas Learning Illume™ application to understand what the complete student experience looks like, shine a light on which student population data the institution should dive into, ask better questions, and design better systems. ▪

"What's wonderful about our work with Civitas Learning is that if we can be successful in this region, we will have data from across the ecosystem of education, and as our model evolves we won't have to go back to design data collection and organization – it will all be there. More importantly, the models of intervention will be coming from the data, not from a best practices model."

PRESIDENT
Sandy Shugart | *Valencia College*

Civitas Learning™ **is building a community** of higher education institutions to bring leading-edge technology, design thinking, and data science together to help a million more students learn well and finish strong. Using predictive analytics platform and engaging applications, institutions can bring deep insights to decision makers and personalized recommendations to the front lines of learning to measurably improve student success.

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civitaslearningspace.com