

PORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
BREAKING THROUGH PROJECT
YEAR TWO MID-YEAR REPORT
July 2007

Although this is the Year Two Mid-Year Report, this report actually marks the completion of the first full, continuous academic year for the Mott Program. The first half-year, January-June 2006, could be termed a start-up phase, with hiring of staff, recruiting of students, scheduling of classes, and the launching of the first cohorts on the four campuses all taking place within a few short months. In July 2006 we had the opportunity to review our progress and plans and make some adjustments, resulting in some significant program changes and stronger recruiting for the 2006-07 academic year. Now, in July 2007, we had a full year of follow-up data on the original Mott cohort from Winter 2006 as well as data on the new cohorts who have enrolled in Fall 2006 and Winter 2007.

Strengths:

Recruiting was strong: 80 students began in Fall 2006, and 65 in winter 2007. More time to recruit, increasing the number of visits to DE classes and presentations to academic advisors, enhanced brochures and other materials, and favorable word of mouth all contributed to increased interest in the Mott program and better opportunities for Mott advisors to pre-interview applicants, set and clarify expectations for participation in the program, and make sure students joining were well-informed, appropriate, and prepared. The 145 students who enrolled in the Mott Program this academic year exceeds the target number of 120 students for the year.

Retention: as identified in previous reports, student attrition remains a major concern. Mott Advisors cite multiple non-academic issues that complicate students' attempts to succeed. Those issues include: time management, organizational skills, adjusting to college life, navigating the college system, developing consistent attendance patterns, following through with tutoring, problem solving personal issues, self-management issues, personal counseling needs, domestic violence, homelessness, and health concerns. However, even with all these obstacles, the Mott Program's wrap-around services model has shown measurable improvements in student retention and credit completion.

Highlights from the Evaluation of our first Winter 06 cohort include:

- Among those who passed College Survival and Success in the Winter of 06, the Mott group overall average a higher number of terms enrolled, successfully complete more credits, and successfully complete more lower division transfer credits as compared to the nonMott group.

These findings held true for subgroups of the Mott cohort including non-minority students, female students, financial aid recipients, and less than full time students.

Among minority students who passed College Survival and Success in Winter 2006, the Mott group earned a higher GPA as compared to the nonMott group. (See Appendix A.)

Retention results are also positive for students who enrolled in the Mott cohorts in Fall 06 and Winter 07. Mott Advisors report that many students completed the first-term cohort class but chose not to enroll for the second term cohort. Nevertheless, these students remained enrolled in college, continued meeting with their Mott advisor for academic advising and support, and continued in pursuit of their goals. To better capture data on students in this group, Mott advisors on each campus reported on how many students remain on their advising case load, whether or not they completed the first-term cohort class or enrolled in the second-term cohort. When the question was asked in this way, Mott Advisors reported that 83% of students this year *either* completed the first term and/or remained on the advisors' case load after one term, and that 78% of students *either* completed two terms and/or remained on the advisors' case loads at the end of two terms. This data compares favorably to the benchmark that of *all* new DE students, only 59% will remain enrolled in college after two terms. (See Appendix B.) It has been noted by advisors that even some students who have withdrawn from school continue to contact them by phone and/or office visits in order to stay connected and plan their return to college after they resolve their personal issues.

Other Benefits of the Mott Program:

Advising Training was piloted: in partnership with Seattle Jobs Initiative, PCC piloted Enhanced Advising Training for its Mott Advisors, with emphasis on cultural competence, intercultural communication, the culture of poverty, making appropriate referrals to community resources, and professional boundaries and self-care. PCC and Seattle Jobs Initiative reported on this Enhanced Advising Training at Breaking Through Peer Learning Conferences in Albuquerque and Portland. PCC Counseling Department Chair Catherine Sills, who helped facilitate the pilot at PCC, also participated in an advisory group meeting in Seattle in June to revise the training curriculum based on the PCC pilot. This Enhanced Advising Training will become the basis for future advisor training at PCC.

Various instructional models were piloted: the second term of the MOTT cohort experience includes classes on Study Skills and Career Exploration. On the different campuses, the two classes were run in different configurations--sequentially, concurrently, and fully integrated—creating an opportunity for instructors to experiment with different curricular models and compare results. In addition, tutoring resources were adapted to different student needs and campus structures along a continuum from simply adding resources to existing tutoring operations to customizing tutoring resources to student needs, schedules, and demands (for example, more math tutoring on one campus versus hands-on, over-the-shoulder computer literacy tutoring on another). These different responses to student needs and campus structures has encouraged a climate of flexibility and experimentation that serves to stimulate faculty work on developing additional options for curriculum and academic support.

Professional Development: as a result of its work as a Breaking Through leadership college, PCC has participated in new, ground-breaking projects with JFF, including the SJI Enhanced Advising Training noted above, a special report for JFF on recruiting for the Mott Program, and a video featuring Mott students and staff to highlight the benefits of the wrap-around student services model for other Breaking Through participants. PCC also hosted the April 2007 Breaking Through Peer Learning Conference, showcasing its Career Pathways, Adult Basic Skills Bridge Program, and Career and Technical Education programs. These further involvements with JFF and the Breaking Through project have provided many extremely valuable professional development opportunities for Mott advisors and other staff.

Mandatory Advising pilot and new initiative: this year, PCC piloted mandatory advising for all new DE students and made a commitment to institutionalize this practice through its 2007-08 budget initiatives. The college will create four new advising positions as well as greatly increase funds to hire part-time advisors during busy enrollment periods. This college commitment to expand advising resources to meet the needs of pre-college students is part of a general increase in awareness by the college leadership of the value of wrap-around student services, an increased awareness supported by the Mott Program initiative and other grant funded programs.

Free One-Credit Counseling and Guidance Classes/Expanded First-Term Experience: this year, PCC also piloted free one-credit Counseling and Guidance courses for new students and began the process of revising its New Student Orientations to address the needs of developmental, second language, and other pre-college students more effectively. The college is committed to expanding and enhancing these orientations and courses with additional funding through its new budget initiatives. As with Mandatory Advising, this college commitment to expand and enhance First Term Experience orientation and classes to meet the needs of pre-college students is part of a general increase in awareness by the college leadership of the value of front-loaded student services, an increased awareness supported by the Mott Program initiative and other grant funded programs.

Pre-College Retention Summit: the Mott Program and other grant funded student support initiatives were specifically cited at PCC's Pre-College Retention Summit as Best Practices in advising and form the basis for recommendations to expand mandatory advising to all new students who place into DE, who complete ESOL level 5, and/or enter the college after completing PCC's GED program.

Challenges:

Linkages between MOTT Advisors and other college services: as identified in previous reports, in an institution of PCC's size and complexity, with MOTT advisors on four campuses, CTE programs distributed across various campuses, and Career Pathways located primarily on one campus, the Southeast Center, developing awareness of the MOTT program and services, communication among staff, referral practices, and collegial relationships takes time, repetition, and intentionality. Representatives from the MOTT program provide information regularly at Advising meetings district-wide, and, as

noted above, the Mott Program was cited as an example of a Best Practice in advising at a recent PCC Pre-College Retention Summit.

Progress to CTE Degrees and Certificates: although Mott cohort students show measurable improvements in retention and credit completion, even completing more transfer credits than comparable nonMott students, improved progress toward CTE degrees and certificates has not been demonstrated. This may be because most students continue to work toward completing developmental and pre-requisite classes prior to enrolling in CTE programs.

Campus Highlights:

Cascade Campus:

- Cascade Campus hosted the campus visit for the Breaking Through Peer Learning Conference in April, 2007. Health Professions, Multimedia, and Emergency Services programs were highlighted. Student panels featuring successful Mott students were particular highlights of the campus visit, leading to a JFF-PCC project to create a video featuring Mott students to be produced by PCC's own Multimedia program.

Rock Creek Campus:

- Rock Creek Campus has done the most to fully integrate the second term cohort classes, Study Skills for College Learning and Career and Life Planning. The two courses are co-taught, with student self-assessments on learning styles and study skills evaluated alongside career interest inventories and personality assessments. Students then reflect on and develop self-awareness through use of these instruments and use the information in planning school and work.

Southeast Center:

- Based on an ongoing assessment of student needs, the Mott Program at the Southeast Center is working on revising its fall term orientation for new Mott students as well as piloting having the College Survival and Success class meet in a computer classroom in order to offer basic computer literacy training as a part of the ongoing course curriculum.

Sylvania Campus:

- Sylvania Campus offered the first evening cohort organized around a College Survival and Success class that meets one evening per week.

PROGRAM REVISIONS

- Bus Passes: On the recommendation of the Mott Advisors, Mott Program Managers made free bus passes available to Mott students in the spring term in order to support their class attendance and program participation. The advisors reported that students' attendance and participation improved.

- Additional free class in the third term: again, at the recommendation of the Mott Advisors, Mott Program Managers added a free class for students who complete the two terms of cohort classes in College Survival and Success, Study Skills for College Learning, and Career and Life Exploration. This free third-term class can be used toward completing developmental classes or other program prerequisites or toward beginning study in a particular Career and Technical Education program. We believe this free class in the third term will act as an incentive for students to remain enrolled in the cohort class for the two full terms of the program.

CONCLUSION/NEXT STEPS

- MOTT program managers and staff will continue to try to develop higher awareness of the MOTT program and services across the college district and strengthen communication among staff, referral practices, and collegial relationships
- MOTT program managers and staff will continue to take advantage of professional development opportunities provided by participation in the Breaking Through initiative, including attending the the NCWD/Breaking Through conference in Savannah in October 2007 and the Breaking Through Peer Learning Conference in Denver in 2008. Work with SJI to revise the Best Practices Workshop is ongoing, and plans are to offer the workshop again at PCC in the coming year.
- MOTT program managers and staff will continue to work toward the institutionalization of wrap-around student services in the form of new student orientation, case management, college success courses, cohort experience, and tutoring support for low skilled students. As noted in the July 2006 report, PCC is developing the MOTT/Breaking Though project as a prototype of wrap-around student services for low skilled, developmental students. These wrap-around services have become part of the college district planning and budgeting processes, as noted above. Data from MOTT will offer documentation of an increase in student retention in CTE and academic programs, utilizing wrap-around student services strategies.