

**Building on the Foundations:
A Plan for Achieving Excellence for New Students**

Pulaski Technical College
North Little Rock, Arkansas
Foundations of Excellence®
Final Report
2006-2007

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Executive Summary

Since its conversion to a technical college in 1991, Pulaski Technical College has already made great strides on the pathway to achieving excellence. The entire college—faculty, staff, and administrators—has worked tirelessly to meet student needs, and as a result of those efforts, PTC already has a very strong foundation upon which to build future successes.

At the end of the Foundations of Excellence® self-study process, however, it is clear that there are several major areas that must be addressed in order for the college to continue to make progress. The college clearly needs to strengthen its assessment practices to include **assessment** of all areas of the college and use of assessment data to drive recommendations and actions. In addition, **student success strategies** need to be refined in some areas and new approaches need to be executed in other areas. All of these proven strategies rely on the college's commitment to **staffing and organizational changes**, which must occur to ensure that the recommendations outlined in this report are implemented. Great changes can occur, but they will have little efficacy if deliberate and sustained **professional development** is not an integrated part of the culture. That professional development must address the needs of PTC's student **diversity**; each identified group needs specialized instruction and support to be successful. Of course, all of these strides require the continued improvement of **instruction**, especially as it relates to the strategies for improving student success and increasing retention. Finally, the **policies and practices** that affect new students should be revised to ensure consistency and effectiveness. Above all, the college needs to become proactive and systematic in its efforts on behalf of its new students. Working together, faculty, staff, and administrators at Pulaski Technical College can provide new students with the very best that the state of Arkansas has to offer by building on these foundational elements.

The Foundations of Excellence® Process

During the 2006-2007 academic year, Pulaski Tech was fortunate to be one of only four two-year colleges in Arkansas selected to participate in the Foundations of Excellence® (FoE) project through a Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation grant. Administered by the Policy Center on the First Year of College in Brevard, North Carolina, this project uses a model for Excellence® that can be used to help colleges create an approach to meeting the needs of new students.

Over the course of the year, a Task Force consisting of nearly 100 participants representing faculty, staff, and administration undertook the monumental task of examining the current policies, procedures, and practices at PTC regarding our new students. In order to do so, the college used the Foundations of Excellence® process and the nine Foundational Dimensions® (see below) to guide its work. These nine Dimensions provide an aspirational model for the beginning college experience and a structure to guide the self-study process. For each of the nine Dimensions, a committee was formed to determine how PTC measures up against each a specific aspect of the first-year experience. At the end of the process, each Committee presented a report of its findings. In turn, these findings became part of the overall plan that PTC completed and submitted to the Policy Center at the end of the year.

In addition to providing the Foundational Dimensions® as guidelines, the FoE® project was structured in a way that allowed the college to guide itself through the process of examining our current practices, procedures, and policies. Utilizing FoEtec™, an electronic reporting platform, participants could very easily access pertinent information about the current practices at PTC regarding the first-year student in the **Current Practices Index (CPI)**. In addition, each Dimension Committee was provided a series of **Performance Indicators** that allowed each Committee to analyze the college's performance in a given criteria or category.

The Policy Center also provided a **Faculty/Staff Survey** and a **Student Survey** that specifically addressed the nine Foundational Dimensions®. This allowed the Steering Committee to have current, relevant information to use in its reports.

Pulaski Technical College was privileged to have the talents of two outstanding **Task Force Advisors** to guide us through the self-study process. **Dr. John Gardner** serves as the Executive Director of the Policy Center on the First Year of College and is no stranger to the two-year college experience. He started his career teaching at a two-year public college and "retired" in 1999 after 32 1/2 years. He served as Executive Director of both the first-year seminar course, University 101, from 1974-1999, and the National Center from 1986-99. From 1983-96, he also served as Vice Chancellor/Associate Vice Provost for Regional Campuses and Continuing Education. **Dr. James P. Bruns** served as vice president of academic and student affairs at Mississippi State Technical Community College, in Knoxville, Tennessee. He previously served as vice president for academic affairs at Carroll Community College, in Westminster, Maryland, from 1993 to 1996. From 1979 to 1990, Bruns served as chair of the Division of Social Science at Dundalk Community College, in Baltimore, Maryland. Bruns holds a B.S. in education and an M.A. in teaching from Miami University, in Ohio, and an Ed.D, from Ball State University.

PTC was also fortunate to have the support and participation of a very dedicated administration. Dr. Dan Bakke, President of PTC, took an active role in the FoE process, attending Steering Committee meetings and promoting the project on campus and to the Board of Trustees. In addition, other administrators demonstrated their commitment to the project by offering not only their support, but also their presence and input. These key administrators' presence and support proved invaluable to making the process move smoothly.

Issues that Emerged

During the course of the self-study process, the Steering Committee identified several key areas that need to be addressed. Fortunately, the Steering Committee recognized that PTC is a college that has established an excellent foundation upon which to build and that many of the recommendations it is making involve fine-tuning and polishing existing structures. Interestingly, the nine Dimension Committees' findings were surprisingly similar, and many lively discussions took place about these findings.

◆800 to 8,000 in under 15: Rapid Growth

One factor that was discussed at length was the effect of **very rapid growth**. As a young college that has experienced tremendous growth, PTC has had to learn to adapt quickly in order to maintain day-to-day functions. In addition, funding has not kept pace with this rapid growth, and the college has struggled to provide the best possible programs and services on a very limited budget. For example, one major area that remains woefully inadequate is the number of full-time faculty. The college relies heavily on adjunct faculty to teach classes in which large numbers of new students are enrolled. In some areas, the ratio of part-time to full-time faculty is 9:1. Research has shown that students are more likely to be successfully complete courses that are taught by full-time faculty. Student success is at the center of the college's mission, and PTC is a college that has worked tirelessly to promote student success. Therefore, the Foundations of Excellence® self-study was a well-timed gift to the college. It has allowed us to assess what we are doing well and what we could do better. As we continue to mature, we will now have a plan that can guide us in our decision-making processes.

◆What is the “New-Student Experience”?

Another issue that became quite obvious is the college does not have a clearly articulated or practiced set of beliefs about **the new-student experience**. Certainly, the college has always operated with the success of all of its students foremost in policy decisions, but there has never been an integrated approach to the new-student experience that involves all areas of the college, that has clearly defined outcomes and goals, and that is centrally organized. In addition, because close to 90% of new students at PTC need at least one developmental education course, it is essential that the college focus its attention on meeting the needs of these students as they begin their college careers. Finally, although assessment is widely practiced at PTC, there has been little widespread utilization of assessment results to guide changes and program improvement regarding the new student experience.

◆We Need to Talk about This: Communication

One major impediment the Steering Committee discussed is **communication**. As a college that was originally converted from a vocational-technical school in 1991, PTC has become a comprehensive two-year college. However, in some aspects, the college continues to operate at the unit level and has not worked to form a cohesive approach to new students that is needed at a school of this size and with this mission. Communication is the key to doing such. If nothing else, the self-study process has allowed PTC to open the lines of communication between individuals from all areas of the campus community. This has been an exciting year as we have examined our current practices with the goal of enhancing our ability to set even higher standards for student learning, retention, and success during the first year.

Early Successes and Improvements: On the Right Path

It occurred to us early in the process of the self-study that there were many ideas that the college could implement now rather than later with little effort or cost. As individuals and departments on campus caught the “excellence” bug, amazing changes occurred by those who were either directly connected to the Foundations of Excellence® self-study or by those who were influenced by committee members.

♦We Have 155 Great Ideas

One early success was the creation of the “155” document that contained a list of ideas that were generated at the opening convocation on August 14, 2006, when the faculty, staff, and administration of the college were asked what Pulaski Technical College could do to be an institution of excellence for first-year students. The list of ideas was compiled into the “155” to generate discussion and to encourage easy and immediate changes.

♦Know Thy New Students

Other early successes included **the addition of an asterisk next to the names of students who are new to the college on class rosters.** The idea behind designating new students on rosters is to encourage faculty to easily identify those students who may need extra time and help navigating a new place and culture.

♦PTC’s New Students Matter

The biggest step in the right direction of becoming an institution of excellence was the product of the Philosophy Dimension Committee, which produced the first **new-student philosophy statement for the college. This philosophy statement was approved by the appropriate committees on campus and will appear in the catalog for fall 2007.**

New Student Philosophy Statement
Pulaski Technical College is committed to the academic, personal, and professional development of its students. The quality of the new student experience is critical to the achievement of the college’s mission and lays the foundation upon which future educational successes will be built. This commitment obligates the PTC community to cooperatively and intentionally structure programs, activities, and services to promote the success of new students.

♦More Great Ideas in Action

Other items that were put into action before the self-study was completed, but that grew out of the discussion that was generated during the year, include:

♦ **A common book experience** for College Seminar; the creation of co-curricular events for fall 2007 that will weave the common book experience (*Warriors Don’t Cry*) into the discussions and celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Central High Crisis; the addition of a professional development book club, which will read and discuss *Declining by Degrees* for fall 2007 and participate in the screening of PBS’ newest documentary on higher education, specifically community colleges (*Discounted Dreams*);

- ♦ Training for faculty and staff on an **electronic grade book**, which will fit into an Early Alert program;
- ♦ A proposed **budget** for the Foundations of Excellence® Action Items.

Recommendations for Achieving Excellence

The Foundations of Excellence® self-study confirmed that Pulaski Technical College is indeed “dedicated to your success,” which is the college’s motto. After completing this project, it is clear, though, that there are areas that need attention. Because the college is serious about excellence, it must continue to assess its practices and make changes that produce excellence. As a result of the self-study process, the following areas for improvement have been targeted:

- 1. Assessment**
- 2. Student Success, which includes:**
 - A. Orientation**
 - B. Advising**
 - C. Communication**
 - D. College Seminar**
 - E. Early Alert**
 - F. Co-curricular Activities**
- 3. Staffing and Organization**
- 4. Professional Development**
- 5. Diversity**
- 6. Instruction**
- 7. Policies and Practices**

As a result of its work, the Steering Committee makes the following recommendations:

1. Assessment

- ♦ Institutional Research Expansion
- ♦ Data-Driven Campus

PTC is dedicated to student learning, and at the center of student learning is the need to assess. At the current time, assessment is widely, if unevenly, practiced; as a relatively new school, most units, departments, and divisions have worked to establish an effective assessment program. However, effective use of assessment data and widespread, consistent assessment has been limited at best. In order to become a data-driven campus, it is imperative that **the college’s Institutional Research capacities be expanded**. The goal of doing such would be to allow the college to compile information more efficiently and effectively and to allow meaningful data to be collected in a consistent manner for use by faculty and staff in its decision-making process.

2. Student Success

- ♦ Orientation
- ♦ Advising
- ♦ Communication
- ♦ College Seminar
- ♦ Early Alert
- ♦ Co-curricular Activities

PTC is dedicated to the success of all of its students, but special attention needs to be paid to the college’s new students. In order to meet the unique needs to this particular population, **the college needs to be systematic in its approach and develop a clearly articulated strategy for dealing with all of its new students, regardless of field of study**. Fortunately, the college has established an excellent foundation of services and should continue to build on them. Those

practices and procedures that foster student success should be the focus of the college's efforts, and from the moment any new students step foot on campus, they should expect excellence, especially in the following areas:

A. Required Orientation

PTC is currently in the process of revising its new student orientation. The goal of this orientation is to support student success by not only welcoming students to campus, but also by engaging, informing, and supporting them at the very earliest opportunity. **All new students must participate in an orientation session (traditional or online) before they can register.**

B. Advising

At the current time, new students must meet with an advisor before registering. However, continuing students may enroll for subsequent course work without seeing an advisor. This practice is not in the best interest of the students. **Advising should be intentional, intrusive, and required for all students. Ideally, students should be assigned an advisor who serves as their advisor during their academic career.** Fortunately, the college received a Title III grant that will address advising and will create, pilot, and implement a thoroughly researched and appropriate strategy for advising. The Action Item Task Force (see "Implementation") will work cooperatively with Title III staff to carry out this recommendation.

C. Communication

Communication needs and processes at the college have not kept pace with the rapid growth. At every level of the college—the unit, department, division, and campus-wide—communication strategies must be addressed and strengthened in order to ensure that there is consistency in the efforts made on behalf of students. One of the areas that almost all nine Dimension Committees agreed needed attention was expectations. PTC's new students do not always have a clear idea of what is expected of them, and faculty/staff have not clearly and consistently articulated these expectations to new students. Most importantly, **the college must address its means of communication with students. At a minimum, the college needs to provide student email accounts, but also, existing means of communication (the website, the college catalog, and course syllabuses, for example) must be utilized more effectively to serve as major vehicles for delivery of information to students.** Creating a culture in which students and faculty are expected to communicate electronically will be key in making sure this strategy is effective.

D. College Seminar

At the current time, College Seminar is required only for students who need two or more developmental courses. However, all new students could benefit from the information covered in this course. **College Seminar needs to be restructured to meet the needs of all PTC students, regardless of discipline, and required of all new students.**

E. Early Alert

At the current time, early alert activities (means by which faculty can make students aware of their progress) are nearly non-existent. Given the high attrition rate, the high DFWI rate in gateway courses, and the high number of at-risk students who attend this college, **the college should put into place a meaningful and comprehensive early alert system.**

F. Co-Curricular Activities

Research proves that students who "connect" with their college are much more likely to persist than students who do not. Although the college has been pro-active in advocating student involvement, there has been limited participation (due in large part to the makeup of the student

body). Therefore, the college **should explore appropriate activities for the student population and increase opportunities (through formal structures) for meaningful student engagement outside of the classroom that supports efforts within the classroom.**

3. Staffing and Organization

- ◆ Creation of Committees/Organizational Structures
- ◆ Hiring
- ◆ Student Involvement on Committees

At the current time, there is no overarching structure to administer or monitor activities on behalf of new students. In order to provide effective support to our new students, the college must be intentional in its approach to these efforts. The college should **create a structure that supports its commitment to new students, including a committee specifically dedicated to meeting the needs of new students. Students should be recruited to serve on all standing committees.** In addition, in its hiring practices, the college should **be proactive in hiring faculty and staff with a clear commitment and appreciation of the needs of PTC's unique student population. The college should also prioritize hiring faculty in areas in which there is high enrollment of new students.**

4. Professional Development

- ◆ Instructional Methods
- ◆ Assessment

It is the responsibility of each member of the college community to continue to grow and develop as a professional. However, the college has an obligation to meet the professional development needs of its employees in order to ensure that those employees can offer the best possible service to new students by establishing a Center for Teaching Excellence and by creating and funding a director and support staff to run professional development programs. **Moreover, the college should make professional development's initial focus on meeting the needs of new and diverse students.** Specifically, "College Seminar" training (instructional methods that work for new students) and assessment training should be easily accessible for faculty and staff, both full-time and part-time

5. Diversity

- ◆ Professional Development
- ◆ Student Support
- ◆ Hiring
- ◆ Instruction

PTC has an extremely diverse student body, and the current policies and practices do not always address the needs of that student body, nor does the composition of the faculty reflect the composition of the student body. To address this particular need, **hiring practices and policies need to be proactive in order to recruit qualified minority applicants to the college.**

6. Instruction

- ◆ Learning Communities
- ◆ Instructional Methods
- ◆ Honors

PTC is committed to providing the highest possible quality of instruction for its students. At the current time, it has been difficult due to lack of funding and demands on a limited number of faculty to explore and adopt best practices in instructions. **The college must take steps to first gather and assess current instructional methodology and then explore options (such as**

learning communities) for alternative methods of course design and delivery. In addition, the college should strive to meet the needs of special populations, such as academically high-achieving students.

7. Policies and Practices

- ◆ Course Repeat Policy
- ◆ Class Size
- ◆ Registration Deadline
- ◆ Student Identification
- ◆ Campus-wide Attendance Policy
- ◆ Online Course Enrollment Restrictions

In order for students to be successful, they must trust that college is consistent in its application of stated and written policy and practice. Additionally, students must trust that the college will continue to adopt any policy that would increase their chances for success. **The college should evaluate its practices regarding those policies and procedures that have been identified as being directly connected to student success.**

Implementation

As the Foundations of Excellence self-study year comes to a close, it is now time to turn the college's attention to the implementation year. It is crucial that we address the concerns that were documented in this report and by the Dimension Committees. The entire campus community must work toward making changes that will benefit not only our college, but more importantly, our first-year students. Both of PTC's Task Force Advisors have encouraged us to put a group in place to ensure that the process of improvement continues.

To this end, an Action Item Task Force for 2007-2008, which will work on the action items from the self-study, is being formed, and as of May, 20 people have volunteered to serve. This group will work to ensure that the Action Items are acted upon. This task force, which will be comprised of volunteers from all areas of the campus, will begin its official work until August 2007.

Conclusion

Although the findings and recommendations above can help guide the college as it moves forward in its efforts to achieve excellence, the most important outcome to emerge from this self-study process is an energy and excitement about possibilities. The college has begun a very important conversation about excellence, about our new students, and about our future. Individuals from all over campus have entered into this conversation, bringing with them ideas and vision. The final report submitted here will not be effective if the conversation stops. To this end, the Action Items below are the specific means by which the Action Item Task Force will work cooperatively and collaboratively with appropriate college units to effect the changes that need to be made in order for Pulaski Technical College to be an institution of excellence.

The Foundations of Excellence® Report Card

This report card represents the final step in the Foundations of Excellence process. It is the culmination of a nine- to twelve-month effort of analysis and planning focused on the first year. This report card is based on an aspirational model of the first year produced in 2003 by the Policy Center on the First Year of College and its research partners in collaboration with 219 four-year colleges and universities. That model, consisting of nine Foundational Dimensions,® identifies characteristics of excellence in the first year. Because the Dimensions focus on institutional structures, policies, and processes (the decisions institutions make about organizing and delivering the first college year), the model is useful in confirming effective practice and/or providing direction for improvement efforts. The core work of the project was conducted by your institution's Foundations of Excellence Task Force with assistance from the Policy Center on the First Year of College and Educational Benchmarking, Inc. By using a series of performance indicators and a variety of data sources, the Task Force carefully reviewed the campus efforts that align with each Dimension. These reviews resulted in a collective judgment about your institution's level of achievement on each of the performance indicators.

The final step in the process was to produce single-grade indicators of the institution's achievement of each Dimension. Because these grades are based on judgments made by your campus task force, they are not intended to be used in comparison to any other institution or in a ranking system. The Foundations Report Card can be used most effectively as an indicator of relative grades within your institution. The grades reflect the best collective judgment of the task force and are supported by the evidence collected during the project. Grades will not be made public by the Policy Center in any manner that identifies individual institutions.

Foundational Dimensions	Grade
<p>Foundations Institutions intentionally cultivate learning environments for new students that emerge from a philosophy of two-year colleges as gateways to higher education. The philosophy is explicit and easily understood. It is consistent with the institutional mission, reflects a consensus of internal and external constituencies, and is widely disseminated. The philosophy is also the basis for organizational policies, practices, structures, leadership, and resource allocation to support the new student experience. (Philosophy)</p>	C
<p>Foundations Institutions provide a comprehensive, coordinated, and flexible approach to the new student experience through effective organizational structures and policies. These structures and policies guide and align all aspects of the new student experience. Through effective partnerships, critical stakeholders such as instructional, administrative, and student services units provide a coherent experience for new students that is enhanced by ongoing faculty and staff development activities and appropriate budgetary arrangements. (Organization)</p>	D
<p>Foundations Institutions deliver curricular and co-curricular learning experiences that engage new students in order to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with the institutional mission, students' academic and career goals, and workplace expectations. Both in and out of the classroom, these learning experiences promote critical thinking, ethical decision making, and the lifelong pursuit of knowledge. (Learning)</p>	D-
<p>Foundations Institutions make new students a high priority for faculty and staff. A culture of responsibility for the experiences of new students characterizes these institutions. This culture is realized through high-quality instruction, services, and support as well as substantial interaction with students both inside and outside the classroom. Campus leaders nurture this culture and support it by appropriate institutional recognition and rewards. (Campus Culture)</p>	D
<p>Foundations Institutions facilitate appropriate student transitions beginning with outreach and recruitment and continuing throughout the period of enrollment. They communicate clear curricular/co-curricular expectations and possibilities, and they provide appropriate preparation and support for educational success. They are forthright about their responsibilities to students as well as students' responsibilities to themselves and the institution. These institutions create and maintain communication with secondary and other postsecondary institutions, families, employers, community agencies, and other sources of support for students. (Transitions)</p>	D
<p>Foundations Institutions serve all new students according to their varied needs. These institutions anticipate, identify, and address the needs of traditional and non-traditional students in response to their individual abilities, backgrounds, interests, and experiences. These efforts are subject to assessment and adjustment as needed. Institutions also ensure campus environments that are inclusive and safe for all students. (All Students)</p>	D-

<p>Foundations Institutions ensure that new students experience ongoing exploration of diverse ideas, worldviews, and cultures as a means of enhancing their learning and participation in pluralistic communities. Institutions cultivate an open and civil community in which students interact with people from varied backgrounds and cultures. These institutions guide students to reflect on ideas and values different from those they currently hold, and explore their own cultures and the cultures of others. (Diversity)</p>	C-
<p>Foundations Institutions promote student understanding of the various roles and purposes of higher education and those unique to two-year institutions, both for the individual and society. These roles and purposes include learning for personal growth, career enhancement, workplace preparation and retraining, transfer for additional education, engaged citizenship, and serving the public good. Institutions encourage new students to examine their motivation and goals with regard to higher education in general and to their own college. Students are exposed to the value of both a general education and focused study in an academic or career field. (Roles and Purposes)</p>	D
<p>Foundations Institutions conduct assessment and maintain associations with other institutions and relevant professional organizations in order to effect improvement. Assessment provides feedback to new students to guide their learning, to faculty to guide their teaching, and to the institution to guide planning, resource allocation, decision making, and improvement of programs and policies. As a way to facilitate improvement, these institutions are knowledgeable about current practices at other institutions as well as relevant research and scholarship. (Improvement)</p>	C

Recommended Action Items:

Assessment (*High priority*)

- **DATA-DRIVEN CAMPUS:** In order to become a data-driven college, assessment activities must be a part of the culture on campus and drive improvement initiatives. In addition to assessing student learning within the classroom, the college should conduct systematic assessment for areas outside of academic that serve first-year students, such as SOAR, on-line orientation, Learning Assistance Center, placement testing and College Seminar.
- **IR:** In addition, it is essential that the college expand the size of the Institutional Research office.

Student Success: Advising (*High priority*)

COMPREHENSIVE: The College should continue development of a comprehensive advising program. NACADA consultants should be used as a first step in development of the advising program. A select group of faculty and staff should attend the NACADA summer advising institute. Title III funds can assist with related expenses.

MANDATORY: All new students are given an advisor who will remain their advisor throughout their academic career at PTC. Assigning an academic advisor to all students would provide academic support by ensuring students, throughout their career at Pulaski Technical College, receive correct academic information, accurately follow their degree plan, assist with the proposed early alert system, and will directly effect retention. In addition, supplying students with a personal contact on campus will support their social and safety needs. All continuing students must speak with an advisor and obtain a PIN number before registering for classes each semester after their first semester. New students should meet with advisor one hour per semester for advisement and counseling.

AVAILABILITY: The college should be committed to providing tools for assisting students in their goal of success. Student Services and Academic Advising must be available at all campuses for students in day, evening, weekend and online classes during the heaviest registration periods. In addition, academic advising should be provided year round by trained faculty and staff.

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION: The college should designate specific advisors for students enrolled in developmental education courses. These advisors need to be a high priority for the retention and success of this under-prepared population. In the absence of funds, release time should be awarded to developmental faculty to assume these critical duties.

TRAINING: All advisors are to be trained the same way with consistent information.

PLACEMENT: Computer Skills Assessment:

A computer skills assessment administered during the COMPASS test could pinpoint students in need of a basic introductory computer course. All students taking the COMPASS would take this computer assessment. However, incoming transfer students and students who have taken the ACT would have the option to be assessed. This basic computer skills course could be developed through the Division of Education and Academic Success with the input from the Business Division and Computer Information Systems Division. Instructors currently teaching the Computer Concepts course and business courses would be utilized to teach this course.

PLACEMENT: Orientation for Online Students:

The college should require an orientation for students taking online classes.

PLACEMENT: Prerequisites:

The college should reevaluate its placement strategies. Specifically, it should examine the current prerequisites for college courses with extensive reading and writing requirements. In addition, the college should reevaluate the first-year student placement process in conjunction with the Title III Grant. The college should consider requiring students to complete all developmental course work before allowing students to take college-level course work for the sole reason of qualifying for financial aid

Student Success: Early Alert (*High priority*)

The college should provide a simple early alert system that will offer not only performance and grade information but also tools for intervention. To be meaningful, the process must be multi-tiered and include appropriate units on campus. An effective early alert system will include at a minimum an Academic Alert form that faculty can use, midterm grades for students*, and notification and response from appropriate support mechanisms.

If a student is notified of a poor grade and wishes to take the steps to improve that grade, the Learning Assistance Center and their designated academic advisor, with additional training, would provide the services needed to assist the student and provide additional academic and social support.

*As an aid to instructors, the College is exploring an electronic grade book system and/or using Blackboard and/or Campus Connect.

Student Success: Co-Curricular Activities (*High priority*)

The college should establish a program of co-curricular activities and should provide more on-campus and out-of-classroom activities that focus on learning and tie into the curriculum. First, a survey instrument should be developed to determine the out-of-class activities of interest to students and their families. Cultural and other co-curricular activities need to be more accessible and family-friendly in order to serve the college's population. Special consideration needs to be given to the needs of working parents. In addition, co-curricular activities are an ideal vehicle for faculty to infuse diversity into the curriculum. Finally, co-curricular activities must also be evaluated for their effectiveness.

Student Success: College Seminar (*High priority*)

Students with 30 hours or less of credit who meet one of the following criteria—placement into developmental classes, declared university transfer student, or undecided student-- should be required to complete this course during the first or second semester of enrollment. If an analysis proves that doing so actually increases the chances for success, the college should require all first year students to take College Seminar.

Because the need exists for fostering the skills necessary for a student to achieve success at PTC, it is recommended that College Seminar be redesigned to serve all PTC students. This may involve developing unique introductory courses that would be beneficial to the broader PTC student population. As with any

program or redesigned course, there needs to be an assessment instrument that evaluates the success of students who complete such a course. This information would be used to make further improvements to the course and to first-year support units.

Student Success: Orientation (*High priority*)

ON-CAMPUS DELIVERY: The college should require a mandatory on-campus orientation program for first-time entering students. Orientation targeted to specific groups (such as developmental education students) or majors should be explored. Faculty should be involved in the development of an orientation program and participate in the delivery of sessions.

ONLINE DELIVERY: The current online orientation should be revised to include the same information as on-campus orientation. A mechanism to track student completion of the orientation and to measure understanding of the material should be incorporated.

Student Success: Communication (*High priority*)

OF EXPECTATIONS: The college should establish learning goals and expected learning outcomes for not only first year students, but for the overall student population. Additional information concerning academic expectations and the realities of college life should be added to the college Web site and college catalog. Faculty should develop this web space to include the amount of time needed for assignments, expectations of faculty, sample assignments, study strategies, and grading criteria. In addition, faculty and staff should use the college catalog and website consistently to ensure that new students are fully aware of all PTC policies and the expectations of becoming a student.

OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY: In addition, the college should promote and disseminate departmental philosophy statements to provide students with guidance and justification for the requirements of their course of study. These statements can be used to lay a foundation for success by clarifying the reasons for particular classes and the purposes and benefits of a higher education. These statements are found in the catalog and on the college website; however, these statements should be discussed during orientation and advising and at the class level.

VIA STUDENT EMAIL: The college should also establish a student email system. Student email should be used to notify students of events, programs, and other college information. While a student email system will provide the college with another means of communication with students, the method must be monitored and reviewed to make sure that we are using it effectively.

STUDENT HELP: -The college should establish a telephone 24/7 Help Center. A telephone help center would aid in the recruitment and retention of students, provide exceptional customer service, and would increase the communication across campus.

Staffing and Organization (*High priority*)

The college should establish a comprehensive organizational structure for coordinating first year curriculum, policies, and service. The structure could be a council comprised of all college department directors and deans involved in new student enrollment, advisement, education and student services to oversee the aspects of first year initiatives at PTC. This council would report to the Vice President for Instruction concerning initiative outcomes. Another option could involve the creation of a well-funded position to oversee the implementation and continued focus on the FYE. Eventually, an existing committee such as the Student Success Committee may be able to monitor, guide, and create policy that will address the particular concerns of PTC's new student population. Regardless of structure, one task this group or individual must do is create, under the direction of the Vice President for Instruction, an ad hoc committee specifically charged with determining the reasons for high DFWI rates in all courses, but with emphasis placed upon high enrollment, first-year, courses.

The college should increase the number of full-time faculty members. Specifically, the college should prioritize hiring in those areas where new students are likely to have their very first contact with a college instructor. The college should focus its efforts on areas with high DFWI, such as English and math and developmental courses, in order to improve the full-time faculty to student ratio. The college must also be intentional in its hiring practices. Job advertisements should include a statement concerning involvement with new students, and job interviews should include information and questions about the same.

The college should increase counseling, advising, and other Student Services staff in order to provide a positive college experience that includes adequate guidance from the very beginning of their college career.

As an institution of excellence, Pulaski Technical College should take steps to see that students are involved in standing committees so that students will have an opinion in the decisions made on their behalf and will have a stronger voice on campus. A student representative will be appointed to each standing committee from the Student Government Association and the Student Ambassadors.

Professional Development (*High priority*)

Through an increase in budget, staff, and space, the college must promote and support professional development activities for faculty and staff. The college should provide professional development in the areas of instructional methodology and pedagogy for those areas with high DFWI and for the classes that have a high enrollment of new students; there should also be professional development on instructional technology. The college can hire presenters and educators from outside the PTC community to speak on best practices and the area of new-student success factors and strategies.

The college should produce and utilize a comprehensive resource manual to use for training, professional development, and reference for all faculty and staff. Specific focus would be on strategies for working with new students and promoting their success both in and out of the classroom.

In order to develop and maintain an efficient, knowledgeable, and prepared faculty and staff, new and adjunct faculty and staff should be trained consistently and comprehensively.

The Institutional Research office should conduct workshops to explain the importance of institutional research and assessment.

Diversity (*High priority*)

The college must address the unique needs of its increasingly diverse student population.

HIRING: The college should be proactive in recruiting qualified minorities. Hiring committees need to be made aware of the diversity needs of individual departments and/or units when selecting faculty and staff. The college should create an Affirmative Action Committee whose chief responsibility would be guiding policies and practices regarding hiring and retaining minority faculty and staff.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: The college should provide diversity and sensitivity training and then train college employees to provide training.

INSTRUCTION: The college should identify best practices, strategies, and programs that best serve diverse populations. In addition, instructional units should add a portion to the curriculum in all disciplines that incorporates the global experience.

STUDENT SUPPORT: The college should establish a one-stop center on campus that provides students with information and referrals to existing social services available in the community. The college should also offer space to these agencies on campus. The college should hire a person to coordinate these efforts.

Instruction (*High priority*)

LEARNING COMMUNITIES: The college should create and support learning communities in order to increase student retention and academic achievement, increase student involvement and motivation, improve student time-to-degree completion, and enhance student intellectual development.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS: The college should document current instructional methods across the curriculum and then begin institutional analysis of the efficacy of these methods.

HONORS: The college should create an honors program to recruit and meet the academic needs of this segment of the student population.

Policies and Practices (*High priority*)

COURSE REPEAT POLICY: The college needs to adhere to stated board policy regarding repetition of courses to prevent students from repeating courses without limit. The college should enforce a limit on the number of times a student can repeat a developmental education class without achieving a C or better.

CLASS SIZE: The college should decrease class size in areas with high DFWI rates.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: The college should enforce board policy regarding the enrollment of students after the first class day.

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION: The college should require each student to have and carry a student identification badge.

CAMPUS-WIDE ATTENDANCE POLICY: The college should create a campus-wide attendance policy that consistently uses the WX or F assignment among all departments.

RESTRICTIONS ON ONLINE COURSES: The college should place restrictions on enrollment in online courses. If students do not succeed in any online course in which they have enrolled, they may not take subsequent online course unless they have or until they achieve a GPA of 2.0 or better.