

1.4 The Student Success Initiative

The Student Success Initiative will **emphasize to students the application of critical thinking skills for Student Success**. This initiative is the result of three important realizations. First, students are increasingly coming to college under prepared to learn at a high level. This lack of preparedness can be attributed to myriad causes ranging from the growing “teach-to-the-test” emphasis in public education, to the increased enrollment of non-traditional students. This is by no means a new trend for open-admissions community colleges, but one that is nonetheless affecting institutions of higher education at every level.

Second, students benefit tremendously when they are encouraged to think critically about their academic, professional, and personal goals. When students think critically about their assignments, courses, and programs of study in the context of these goals, they are more likely to be successful. In this sense, improving student learning starts with improving how students think about their own learning. Robotham (2004) describes this as “the development of metacognition, where individuals are able to metaphorically stand back and observe their learning. Only by developing in individuals an awareness of how they learn, can learning be improved” (p.67). To achieve this, Robotham (2004) suggests “developing task-specific knowledge as a support for further learning, enhancing awareness of, and skill in, employing learning approaches appropriate to particular learning tasks, and seeking to match course requirements and personal goals” (pp.67-68).

Third, the earlier students are introduced to the principles and applications of critical thinking at the college level, the more likely they will be able to transfer critical thinking skills from one context to the next. They will also have more opportunities to apply critical thinking to their course work. The benefit of emphasizing to students what critical thinking is and how it can be applied for success at CFCC is that students will recognize both the means and the ends of their educational experience. Additionally, by exposing students to a common definition and conception of critical thinking, the likelihood of the reinforcement and transference of students’ critical thinking skills is increased.

Horstman and White (2002) describe three best practices for Student Success instruction: “brain-based teaching,” “cooperative learning,” and “constructivism” (pp.8-11). They also describe six classroom structures that facilitate these best practices: “integrative units,” “small group activities,” “representing-to-learn,” “classroom as workshop,” “authentic experience,” and “reflective assessment” (pp.11-12). These practices and structures closely align with best practices to facilitate critical thinking skills, particularly in the sense that students are encouraged to construct their own knowledge and understanding (“constructivism”), actively learn (“classroom as workshop”), and apply skills in novel contexts (“integrative units”). Bringing instructional principles such as these to bear in ACA III: College Student Success, as well as student success workshops and campus activities is the primary thrust of this initiative.

The implementation of this initiative involves meeting three specific objectives through a series of interrelated actions that will result in the meaningful improvement of students’ abilities to think critically about Student Success. These objectives, actions, and their measures for success will be fully integrated into the college’s planning and institutional effectiveness process. Furthermore, the responsibilities and resources for the implementation of this initiative will be clearly designated.

1.4.1 Initiative Objectives

First Objective

The first objective of this initiative is to **encourage students to think critically about their strategies for college and professional success**. This objective will be met by helping students develop the critical thinking skills necessary for success in their academic and professional endeavors with an emphasis on personal responsibility, time management, and setting goals.

Second Objective

The second objective of this initiative is to **enable students to maximize their learning potential using critical reading, effective communication, and information literacy skills**. This objective addresses the foundational skills required for critical thinking at the college level. It will improve students' abilities to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate college-level texts and research sources.

Third Objective

The third objective of this initiative is to **introduce students to applied critical thinking in a variety of learning contexts**. This objective will emphasize to students the importance of recognizing that academic and professional disciplines have distinctive standards of reasoning. This will improve students' abilities to consider and choose the reasoning strategies most appropriate for a given assignment, course, or program of study. Ideally, students will come to see the college's diverse and interrelated programs as communities where the application of knowledge transcends the accumulation of facts.

1.4.2 Rationale and Strategies for Student Success Initiative

Objectives	Rationale	Strategies
1. Encourage students to think critically about their strategies for college and professional success	When students think critically about college and professional success, they make better choices that result in improved learning, retention, and student satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a more substantial critical thinking emphasis in existing Student Success course, ACA: 111 (College Student Success) 2. Increase enrollment in ACA: 111; encourage new students to complete course 3. Emphasize the importance of critical thinking in orientation and student success workshops
2. Enable students to maximize their learning potential using critical reading, effective communication, and information literacy skills	These skills are the foundations upon which more sophisticated critical thinking skills are built; the sooner students develop these skills, the more successful they will be	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase enrollment in ACA: 111 course with an emphasis on critical thinking; encourage new students to complete course 2. Offer more student workshops on foundational academic skills relating to critical thinking 3. Develop a substantial Learning Resource Center (LRC) orientation for ACA 111 and as stand-alone workshop

Objectives	Rationale	Strategies
3. Introduce students to applied critical thinking in a variety of learning contexts	Students will improve their critical thinking skills by learning how critical thinking works in different academic and professional contexts	1. Use collaboration and team teaching among ACA III instructors to highlight how critical thinking is applied similarly and differently in various fields and disciplines 2. Encourage faculty and support staff from diverse areas to conduct student success workshops

1.4.3 Outcomes and Assessments for Student Success Initiative

Outcomes	Assessments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students completing ACA III and/or student success workshops will report and demonstrate gains in critical thinking and foundational Student Success skills ✓ Improved GPA and retention for students who complete ACA III and/or student success workshops ✓ 25% Increase in ACA III enrollment each semester of implementation ✓ New student success workshops and enhanced orientation activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Common pre and post test in ACA III ✓ Analysis of subsequent student performance, including GPA, retention, and objective critical thinking post-test ✓ Student evaluations of teaching (ACA III) ✓ Pre and post student success workshop surveys ✓ Pre and post LRC orientation survey ✓ Instructional portfolios for ACA III and student success workshops
Measures of Success	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Eighty percent of students completing the critical thinking enhanced ACA course will demonstrate significant gains in their ability to apply critical thinking skills to Student Success problems on common pre and post exam (ongoing assessment beginning in Fall 2007) 2) Students completing critical thinking enhanced ACA course and/or student success workshops will achieve at higher levels than non-completers based on G.P.A., retention rates, satisfaction surveys, and exit critical thinking exam (ongoing assessment beginning in Fall 2007) 3) Participation in student success workshops will increase each year (ongoing assessment beginning Spring 2007) 	

I.4.4 Implementation Calendar for Student Success Initiative

Phase One: “Laying the Foundation” (Fall 2006—Fall 2007)

Start/Finish	Action	Results	Responsibilities
August 2006/ Ongoing	✓ Develop and offer student success workshops emphasizing the application of critical thinking to learning strategies, time/personal management, and information literacy	✓ CFCC will build upon its existing Student Success student workshops with an increased emphasis on critical thinking; at least two workshops will be offered each semester	Student Success Committee; QEP Committee
August 2006/ Ongoing	✓ Provide information about the QEP and critical thinking to new students during orientation activities	✓ Entering students will be familiar with the QEP and CFCC’s definition and learning outcomes of critical thinking	Student Success Committee; QEP Committee; Student Development staff
January 2007/ Ongoing	✓ ACA instructors and support staff will receive training from organizations such as the <i>National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition</i> (U of SC) and <i>The Summer Institute on First-Year Assessment</i>	✓ ACA instructors and support staff will develop new strategies to facilitate and assess students’ critical thinking skills in a Student Success course	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee; Professional Development Committee
January 2007/ May 2007	✓ Enhance ACA III: College Student Success course description, course outline, and first day handouts to reflect increased emphasis on critical thinking, learning strategies, and information literacy; incorporate CFCC’s critical thinking learning outcomes into course design and assessment of student learning	✓ ACA instructors will shift their instructional and assessment focus toward a greater emphasis on CFCC’s critical thinking learning outcomes	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee
January 2007/ May 2007	✓ Develop an enhanced ACA III online template for Distance Learning applications	✓ ACA course with critical thinking emphasis will be available for Distance Learning students	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee
January 2007/ May 2007	✓ Develop a substantial LRC orientation for ACA III and as stand-alone workshop	✓ Students will have a systematic orientation for utilizing the LRC through critical thinking and information literacy skills	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee; LRC staff

Start/Finish	Action	Results	Responsibilities
January 2007/May 2007	✓ Develop pre and post assessments of students' critical thinking skills for ACA course including a comprehensive common final	✓ Direct and indirect assessment tools will be used to describe students' gains in critical thinking skills at this course level	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee
January 2007/Summer 2007	✓ Encourage increased ACA enrollment through advising, orientation, and promotional activities	✓ More students will enroll in ACA III sections for Fall 2007 semester	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee; Faculty advisors; Student Development staff

Phase Two: "A New Focus" (Fall 2007—Fall 2009)

Start/Finish	Action	Results	Responsibilities
August 2007/December 2007	✓ Implement revised course objectives, learning outcomes, and assessments in ACA course	✓ ACA instructors will apply their training and course revisions to improving students' critical thinking skills in ACA course	ACA instructors
Ongoing	✓ Develop and offer student success workshops emphasizing the application of critical thinking to learning strategies, time/personal management, and information literacy	✓ CFCC will build upon its existing Student Success student workshops with an increased emphasis on critical thinking; at least two workshops will be offered each semester	Student Success Committee; QEP Committee
Ongoing	✓ Provide information about the QEP and critical thinking to new students during orientation activities	✓ Entering students will be familiar with the QEP and CFCC's definition and learning outcomes of critical thinking	Student Success Committee; QEP Committee; Student Development staff
Ongoing	✓ Additional ACA instructors and support staff will receive training from organizations such as the <i>National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition</i> (U of SC) and <i>The Summer Institute on First-Year Assessment</i>	✓ ACA instructors and support staff will develop new strategies to facilitate and assess students' critical thinking skills in a Student Success course	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee; Professional Development Committee
August 2007/December 2007	✓ Encourage increased ACA enrollment through advising, orientation, and promotional activities	✓ More students will enroll in ACA III sections for Spring 2008 semester	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee; Faculty advisors; Student Development staff

Start/Finish	Action	Results	Responsibilities
August 2007/ May 2008	✓ Assess impact of ACA course on students' critical thinking skills and subsequent Student Success using direct and indirect methods	✓ Usable data on the impact of critical thinking emphasis in ACA course will be compiled and shared with appropriate stakeholders	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee
January 2008/ May 2008	✓ Increase enrollment in ACA III by 25%	✓ More students will have the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills as they relate to Student Success	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee
January 2008/ August 2008	✓ Encourage increased ACA enrollment through advising, orientation, and promotional activities	✓ More students will enroll in ACA III sections for 2008 Summer and Fall semesters	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee; Faculty advisors; Student Development staff
August 2008/ May 2009	✓ Increase enrollment in ACA III by 25% each semester	✓ More students will have the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills as they relate to Student Success	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee
August 2008/ December 2008	✓ Encourage increased ACA enrollment through advising, orientation, and promotional activities	✓ More students will enroll in ACA III sections for 2009 Spring semester	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee; Faculty advisors; Student Development staff
August 2008/ May 2009	✓ Assess impact of ACA course on students' critical thinking skills and subsequent Student Success using direct and indirect methods	✓ Usable data on the impact of critical thinking emphasis in ACA course will be compiled and shared with appropriate stakeholders	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee
January 2009/ August 2009	✓ Encourage increased ACA enrollment through advising, orientation, and promotional activities	✓ More students will enroll in ACA III sections for 2009 Summer and Fall semesters	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee; Faculty advisors; Student Development staff

Phase Three: "A Broader Vision" (Fall 2009—Fall 2012)

Start/Finish	Action	Results	Responsibilities
August 2009/ May 2010	✓ Increase enrollment in ACA III by 25% each semester	✓ More students will have the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills as they relate to Student Success	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee

Start/Finish	Action	Results	Responsibilities
Ongoing	✓ Develop and offer student success workshops emphasizing the application of critical thinking to learning strategies, time/personal management, and information literacy	✓ CFCC will build upon its existing Student Success student workshops with an increased emphasis on critical thinking; at least two workshops will be offered each semester	Student Success Committee; QEP Committee
Ongoing	✓ Provide information about the QEP and critical thinking to new students during orientation activities	✓ Entering students will be familiar with the QEP and CFCC's definition and learning outcomes of critical thinking	Student Success Committee; QEP Committee; Student Development staff
Ongoing	✓ Additional ACA instructors and support staff will receive training from organizations such as the <i>National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition</i> (U of SC) and <i>The Summer Institute on First-Year Assessment</i>	✓ ACA instructors and support staff will develop new strategies to facilitate and assess students' critical thinking skills in a Student Success course	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee; Professional Development Committee
August 2010/ December 2010	✓ Encourage increased ACA enrollment through advising, orientation, and promotional activities	✓ More students will enroll in ACA 111 sections for Spring 2011 semester	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee; Faculty advisors; Student Development staff
August 2010/ May 2011	✓ Assess impact of ACA course on students' critical thinking skills and subsequent Student Success using direct and indirect methods	✓ Usable data on the impact of critical thinking emphasis in ACA course will be compiled and shared with appropriate stakeholders	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee
January 2011/ August 2011	✓ Encourage increased ACA enrollment through advising, orientation, and promotional activities	✓ More students will enroll in ACA 111 sections for 2011 Summer and Fall semesters	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee; Faculty advisors; Student Development staff
January 2011/ August 2011	✓ Explore efficacy of requiring ACA course for all or some programs based on assessment data from 2007-2011	✓ CFCC will make an evidence-based decision on requiring ACA 111 for students in all or some programs of study and revise program requirements accordingly	Student Success Committee; ACA instructors; QEP Committee; Leadership Team
August 2011/ May 2012	✓ Increase enrollment in ACA 111 by 25% each semester	✓ More students will have the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills as they relate to Student Success	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee

Start/Finish	Action	Results	Responsibilities
August 2011/ May 2012	✓ Assess impact of ACA course on students' critical thinking skills and subsequent Student Success using direct and indirect methods	✓ Usable data on the impact of critical thinking emphasis in ACA course will be compiled and shared with appropriate stakeholders	ACA instructors; Student Success Committee
Summer 2012/ Fall 2012	✓ QEP Committee and Student Success Committee will prepare an impact report on the Professional Development Initiative and share results with college community	✓ The college community will understand the impact of the Student Success Initiative on instruction, service, and student learning and establish additional Student Success goals	QEP Committee; Student Success Committee

1.4.5 Student Success Initiative Resources by Year

The following estimates account for the projected costs of increasing enrollment in CFCC's college success course. Estimates for professional development activities relating to the Student Success Initiative are included in the Professional Development Initiative budget projections.

Academic/Fiscal Year 2007-2008

Pilot 10-12 sections of CT enhanced ACA course (\$27/contact hour)	5184
Total	\$5,184

Academic/Fiscal Year 2008-2009

Pilot 12-15 sections of CT enhanced ACA course (\$28/contact hour)	6720
Total	\$6,720

Academic/Fiscal Year 2009-2010

Pilot 15-20 sections of CT enhanced ACA course (\$29/contact hour)	9280
Total	\$9,280

Academic/Fiscal Year 2010-2011

Pilot 20-25 sections of CT enhanced ACA course (\$30/contact hour)	12000
Total	\$12,000

Total Estimated Expenditures for Student Success Initiative

Total	\$33,184
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1.4.6 Summary

This initiative involves both expanding the college's offering of its Student Success course and enhancing campus-wide activities that present students with opportunities to develop their critical thinking skills. It is expected that these efforts will positively affect students' abilities and dispositions to apply the critical thinking skills necessary for success in academic and professional settings. It also complements the General Education and Professional Development initiatives by helping students develop a base of skills and a conception of critical thinking that can be built upon by subsequent instructional and service efforts.