

# Assessment and a Model for Successfully Facilitating Students' Persistence

by

Dr. Carolyn Princes, Director  
The African American Cultural  
Center/Project ROCS

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# Quotable

“Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental.”

--W.E.B. Dubois

“To succeed in a chaotic environment, graduates will need to be intellectually resilient, cross-culturally and scientifically literate, technologically adept, ethically anchored, and full prepared for a future of continuous and cross-disciplinary learning“ (AAC&U, 2007, p. 15).

# Quotable

“ Learning about cultures and social structures dramatically different from one’s own is no longer a matter just for specialists” (Ibid.)

“Intercultural learning is already one of the new basics in contemporary liberal education; it is essential for work, civil society, and social life” (Ibid.).

“Assessment requires the use of multiple methods, both direct and indirect? (Green, 2008, p. 15).)

# Introduction

In preparing for this presentation, I came across several quotes which I felt would serve as a nice introduction to this presentation. I found that they fit well within the foundation for this paper.

My presentation concerns the dynamics and assessment of Project ROCS (*Retaining Our College Students*). In doing so, I want to share with you some philosophical or theoretical considerations, primary intricacies of the program, and our approach to assessment, which I feel has made it valuable and perhaps easier for us.

# Introduction

In general, Project ROCS – *Retaining Our College Students* is a comprehensive retention Initiative at Indiana University of Pennsylvania that attempts to facilitate the academic and personal success and college persistence of entering, first-year students through mentoring and focusing on the students' unique cultural backgrounds and learning styles.

After several meetings with students of the African American Cultural Center in 2001, the project was proposed and implemented by the university in fall 2001.

Made possible through State, university, and department funds, the program has revealed relative success with its participants.

This is to say that, along with analysis of the students' second-year persistence rates and graduation rates, evaluation of their CGPA's, learning outcomes, satisfaction levels, responses to open-ended questions, and observations of their college involvement, all reveal basically positive results, especially in relation to a similar group of non-participating students. The reasons may be just as varied and as diverse as are the services provided.

The project's overall concept is driven by my many years of work with "disadvantaged, "under-represented, under-prepared and/or physically challenged students, especially in terms of my many years of work with a federally-funded TRIO program called SSS (Student Support Services).

Several questions helped to guide me in preparing this presentation, which involves a complex and often difficult issue :assessment of the impact of such a program on students. My premise however, is that, while assessment may be complex and difficult, it doesn't have to be.

Indeed, assessment is taxing, but I believe that it can be made much easier if, for instance:

1. One establishes an initial assessment plan
2. Sets and observes achievement of specific, concrete, and measurable objectives
3. Utilizes on-going and diverse evaluation methods
4. As much as possible, have a good grasp in advance as to what it is that you want or need to evaluate and why
5. Be creative and thoughtful about the task
6. Possess the right attitude and
7. Strive to foster an environment where assessment and evaluation are viewed more as a cultural phenomena than as a chore.

The questions that guided the development of the presentation were as follows:

# Questions

1. How do we know whether we are achieving the things that we said we would?
2. How do we measure what we hope to achieve?
3. How do we know whether we are doing the right things?

# Project ROCS Assessment

Assessment of Project ROCS' impact and its students' achievements are continuous, on-going, varied, and made easier through formative, summative, and procedural objectives and evaluation. Further, the project itself touches many of the imperatives laid down by such organizations as AAC&U.

In fact, the overall project can be viewed as a "hands-on" learning endeavor, having an ultimate goal of facilitating the students' college success by helping them to become more engaged academically, socially, and personally in college life and in the achievement of several learning outcomes.

Thus, to address the effectiveness of the project and its outcomes, it seems more appropriate to begin with a focus on the reverse of the three questions that helped to guide me in the development of this presentation. This involves some philosophical and theoretical considerations.

# How Do We Know If We Are Doing the Right Things?

## **Philosophical and Theoretical Considerations**

First, societies as AAC&U state that we must help students become “intentional learners,” and educators must become “more intentional about the kinds of learning students’ need” and “of effective educational practices that help them learn to integrate and apply their learning” (AAC&U, 2007, p. 4).

Through its 2005 initiative, Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP), AAC&U therefore set forth “four essential learning outcomes” it believes students must possess if they are to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond, but noted that,

college students today “need improvement in twelve areas of learning,” which were identified by research conducted by Hart Research Associates.

Second, AAC&U proposed a new definition of liberal education, which has traditionally focused on “studies in the arts and sciences disciplines” (p. 3) and the accumulating of course credits” (p. 5).

To this end, this new definition of liberal education focuses on helping students “to build real-world capabilities” (Ibid.).

# Liberal Education Re-Defined

Liberal education as now defined by AAC&U :

“A comprehensive set of aims and outcomes that are essential both for a globally engaged democracy and for a dynamic, innovation-fueled economy” (Ibid, p. 11).

# Liberal Education Re-Defined

With this definition, AAC&U suggests that educator will have “a framework for excellence” and with it as a focus, students should therefore receive:

“An education that intentionally fosters, across multiple fields of study, wide-ranging knowledge of science, culture, and society; high-level intellectual and practical skills; an active commitment to personal and social responsibility; and the demonstrated ability to apply learning to complex problems and challenges” (Ibid., p. 4).

# Suggested Learning Outcomes

Third, consistent with the new definition of liberal education, AAC&U proposes four essential learning outcomes, which will serve as an impetus for their strategies through 2012. They outcomes are as follows:

1. Integrative Learning
2. Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world
3. Intellectual and practical skills
4. Personal and social responsibilities

# Areas of Learning that Need Improvement

Fourth, Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., an agency commissioned by AAC&U to conduct a survey of employers' views on "the accountability challenge" to help them with understanding "how colleges should assess and improve student learning," established that today's students were in need of improvement in twelve learning areas.

In their 2007 research, Hart Research Associates interviewed 301 employers who were chief executives at their respective employers.

In descending order, they found that student improvements were needed in the following areas:

# Areas of Learning that Need Improvement

1. Teamwork
2. Ethical Judgment
3. Intercultural Skills
4. Social Responsibility
5. Quantitative Reasoning
6. Oral Communication
7. Self-Knowledge
8. Adaptability
9. Critical Thinking
10. Writing
11. Self-direction
12. Global Knowledge

# Employers View of Recent College Graduates

Fifth, of these 12 areas, Hart Research Associates indicated that students were better prepared in the first three areas (team work, ethical judgment and intercultural skills) but were least prepared in five areas (global knowledge, self-direction, writing, critical thinking, and adaptability).

In sum, they indicated that while employers believed the students needed improvement in all twelve areas, the conclusion was that:

# Employers View of Recent College Graduates

1. Employers “believe that today’s students demonstrate solid skills in:”
  - a. Teamwork
  - b. Ethical judgment
  - c. Intercultural skills
  
2. On the other hand, the most serious finding is that employers believe today’s students “lack preparedness in:”
  - a. Global knowledge
  - b. Self-direction
  - c. Writing

# How Do We Know If We Are Doing the Right Things?

## **Assessment as a Culture**

Sixth, to further assist in answering this question, we need to explore what current research says about assessment. Overall, assessment can be defined from several Domains, and typically it involves the evaluating the achievement of goals and objectives.

In Student Affairs, Green (2008) has indicated that “assessment is to enhance the learning experience” (p. 16). Its primary purpose, he states, is to “provide Student Affairs Officers (SSAO’s) and other student affairs educators with useful data

and evidence to appropriately make decisions to enhance the overall student experience-with learning as its core.” (p. 14). As several inquirers also state:

“Assessment is an on-going process” which requires multiple methods to establish achievement of goals and objectives.

This seems particularly true in light of the current focus on “essential learning outcomes” and on a diverse population of more “non-traditional students.” Given its complex nature, assessment should then be seen more as a culture than as a task to be completed.

Particularly in Student Affairs (and perhaps in other domains as well), the current state of affairs is as Green and others espoused:

“Gone are the days of simply counting the number of students who attend student-affairs-sponsored programs and events and of simply asking students to complete satisfaction surveys. Student affairs divisions provide educational experiences that are needed,” but now, they must be accountable for those experiences and document them” (Ibid., p. 14).

The new focus of liberal education and on the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century students must hold true for areas of education and higher education in particular.

# Assessment as a Culture

If assessment in colleges and Universities are to achieve the objectives for students that are needed today, there must be a creation of what Green (2008) has termed “an assessment culture.”

Given the task at hand, this would appear to be especially true for first year programs as Project ROCS. In fact,

“In a society as diverse as the United States, there can be no ‘one-size-fits-all’ design for learning that serves all students and all areas of study” (AAC&U, p. 4).

If assessment is seen as culture, it should then become ingrained into the mere fabric of college teaching and

become continuous, conscious, and on-going. New and creative methods are likely to arise and then assessment should become a lot easier and less of a choice and of a chore, particularly when the reason for doing so is adequately perceived.

In this new environment of globalization, diversity, and an emphasis on the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century student, the research also stresses the role of traditional assessment strategies.

# Traditional College Assessment Strategies

In sum, AAC&U and others argue that higher Education assessment must take on new meaning given the new paradigms for helping students to achieve. While important as they are, exploring variables as those shown below “alone,” can no longer be an acceptable means of evaluating most educational programs.

As Hart Research Associates and AAC&U indicated, the reason being is that they can not “reveal whether students are obtaining what they need from higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” The now less desired, particularly as stand alone, traditional, assessment variable are as follows:

# Stand Alone, Traditional Variables No Longer Acceptable As Evidence of Success

1. Enrollment Rates
2. Persistence Rates
3. Graduation Rates

# Assessment Strategies Currently Recommended

Evaluating for the proposed desired learning outcomes of students in higher education today appears to have taken on a new direction. According to more recent research, assessment strategies that are considered “valuable tools for both students to enhance their knowledge and develop important real world skills, as well as for employers to evaluate graduates’ readiness for the workplace [are evaluations that involve supervised]” (Ibid., p.1):

# Assessment Strategies Currently Recommended

As indicated by research by Hart Research Associates, the least acceptable assessment strategies of students' learning outcomes are evaluations that involves multiple choice and standardizes tests of institutions overall student outcomes. The most acceptable are shown below and include evaluations of supervised:

1. Internships
2. Community-based Projects
3. Comprehensive Senior Projects.
4. Individual student essay tests
5. Electronic portfolios of student work
6. Multiple choice tests of general content knowledge.

# Assessment and Project ROCS

The foregoing philosophical and theoretical considerations set the background that should assist in determining whether we are doing the right things in terms of Project ROCS activities and related assessment approaches.

Through these approaches, the Project ROCS has been able to establish that project participants, particularly in relations to similar, non-participating students, achieve:

# Assessment and Project ROCS

- Higher CGPA's
- Higher 2nd-year Persistence Rates
- High Satisfaction Levels Reported
- High Level of Campus Involvement
- Commendable Graduation Rates

Also, in respects to similar national and local data as second-year persistence and graduation rates, we have observed commendable results as well. The following sessions provide more detailed information on Project ROCS, its assessment strategies, and several outcomes.

# Project ROCS Defined

- As stated at the outset, Project ROCS is a comprehensive retention initiative of the African American Cultural Center at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
- It focuses more on the participants' own unique cultural backgrounds and learning styles.
- It is theoretically based, culturally driven holistic and collaborative in approach.
- It serves entering, first-time, primarily African American, Hispanic and Board of Governor scholars (BOG students)
- It offers a wide array of educational, cultural, social, and academic services, while keeping in mind the students unique cultural background, and learning styles.

# Project ROCS' Goals

- Provide a wide and comprehensive array of educational, cultural, social, and personal and social development activities that focuses on the students' own unique cultural backgrounds and learning styles.
- Facilitate students' college adjustment, integration, involvement, success, and satisfaction.
- Facilitate students' persistence to second year and ultimate college graduation.

# Project ROCS' Goals

- Help students' become academically and socially engaging in the college experience from the outset.
- Facilitate the making of learning as real, immediate, active, and culturally specific.
- Facilitate students' establishment of themselves as a learning community.
- Help adequately prepare students in learning outcomes that are needed in an increasing global and diverse society.

# Project ROCS' Unique Features

1. Holistic, Collaborative approach
2. Culturally-driven/Theoretically- based
3. Individual, personal, one-to-one, intensive attention
4. Interactive interventions.
5. Provide students with regular office and personal contacts.
6. Formal/informal environment
7. Personal caseload advisors
8. Assigned students peer mentors (only successful upperclassmen)
9. Provide participants with an opportunity to participate in an early arrival, pre-fall program called CUSP (College Undergraduate Success Programs).

# Project ROCS' Unique Features

10. Opportunity to receive 1-graduation credit in only one week.
11. Participants receive unconditional mid-term progress reports.
12. Component of and tied closely to IUP African American Cultural Center
13. Offers an array of cultural enrichment activities at little or no costs.
14. Opportunities to interact with faculty inside and outside of the classroom.
15. Large core of faculty/staff volunteers.
16. Enrollment in the AACCC Association Boosters Club.
17. Consideration for membership in the program's Circle of Scholars and Hall of Fame.
18. Limited services provided students throughout their college career.
19. Students who participate in the program have been found to achieve very favorable outcomes.

# Project Design

## Target Population

- Entering, first-year, minority freshmen (primarily African American and Hispanic students ) and Board of Governor (BOG) scholars.
- Attempts to exclude students who are enrolled in another structured university support program (e.g., Honors' College, Developmental Studies).
- Minority Scholars (BOG students) required to enroll in the program; represents approximately 34% of the total program population.
- Sophomore component targeting students from a branch campus (Indiana Punxsutawney Campus) scheduled for institution in Fall 2008)
- The number of students served varies year to year; depends on university enrollment
  - 89 served in 2005-06
  - 97 served in 2006-07
  - 121 served in 2007-08

# Project Design (cont'd)

## Staffing

- Director (also serves as director of the African American Cultural Center)
- Full-time, Professional Program Coordinator (created in 07-08; temporary hire)
- Caseload Advisors: Graduate Students (2-3)
- Peer Outreach Assistants (undergraduate peer mentors) - 10 paid students
- BOG Scholars: Volunteer Peer Mentors
  - Number varies yearly: 15 in 2007-08
  - BOG freshmen required to BOG students in sophomore year or complete 10 hours per semester of volunteer community service
  - Decision based on CGPA; need 2.8 or above
- Office assistants (5-6)
- Volunteer faculty/administrators (45-50)

# Project Design

**Services**: Designed to help students:

1. Better negotiate and integrate into a college systems and campus environment across disciplines.
2. Acquire the appropriate study, social and personal development skills.
3. Foster more culturally-specific, sensitive and active learning
4. Create a learning community; form a network of learners.

# Program Services

1. Individual, one-to-one, intensive, personal attention
2. Assigned peer mentors
3. Personal caseload advisor
4. Study skills/personal development workshops
5. Academic courses
6. Curriculum databank
7. Cultural enrichment activities
8. Opportunities to establish personal relationships with a faculty member in and outside of the classroom
9. Volunteer community services
10. Selected social/recreational activities at little or no cost
11. Opportunities to become more involved in campus life
12. Opportunities for special recognition  
– Circle of Scholars/Hall of Fame/Special Recognition Awards

# Program Components

1. Required courses:
  - Introduction to Higher Education (DVST 150)
  - Learning Strategies (DVST 160)
  - Career Exploration (DVST 170)
2. Early arrival opportunity: CUSP Course
3. Limited sponsorships to CUSP
4. Curriculum Databank
5. Weekly study groups
6. Needs assessment interviews
7. Bi-weekly contacts/academic monitoring
8. Mid-term progress reviews
9. Cultural enrichment activities
10. College empowerment /personal development workshops

# Program Components (cont'd)

11. Faculty/student  
receptions/interactions
12. Priority consideration for the AACCC  
programs and services
13. Reward/recognition programs
14. Staff training program
15. Program evaluation programs
16. Program/staff pledges and  
confidentiality statements
17. Project brochure.
18. Office Newsletter.

# Methodology

## How Do We Achieve What We Do?

1. Collaborative  
Advising & Testing  
Developmental Studies  
Career Services  
Frederick Douglass Institute  
Community Agencies  
Registrar  
Financial Aid  
Faculty  
Others as needed
2. Participants' Enrollment, Identification, Selection
3. Summer/fall Orientation Participation
4. Application/intake Process
5. Fall Welcome Packages
6. Staff selection, requirement, training.

7. Participants' Requirements
8. Weekly staff meetings
9. Reward/recognition activities
10. Interactive/active learning
11. Focus on establishing a community of learners
12. Assessment/Evaluations
13. Active/inactive enrollment

# Participants' Requirements

- Complete a Project ROCS Application and AACC Booster Club Application.
- Complete a needs assessment and intake interview.
- Participate in a weekly study group.
- Enroll in DVST 150, 160, & 170 for 1 graduation credit each.
- Participate in 2-3 personal development/college survival skills workshops.
- Maintain bi-weekly contacts or meetings with a Caseload Advisor and/or Peer Outreach Mentor Have at least 2-3 contacts with a faculty member outside of the classroom.
- Participate in 2-3 cultural enrichment, personal development and leadership activities per semester.

# Participants Requirements (cont'd)

- Complete 10 hours of volunteer community service per semester.
- Serve as a Peer Mentor to incoming freshmen during their sophomore year or complete 10 hours of volunteer community service per semester; decision is based on grades.
- Provide program with a copy of semester class schedules.
- Authorize Project ROCS to obtain semester transcripts and academic progress reports from faculty.
- Sign confidentiality statement and program contract.

# Participants

## Requirements (cont'd)

- Participate fully in proposed educational plans and other academic, cultural enrichment and personal development activities of Project ROCS.
- Participate in Project ROCS opening or orientation seminars, receptions, and/or meetings.
- Complete and fulfill a Peer Outreach Mentor contract with the assigned Project ROCS Mentor.
- Conduct mid-semester interviews with a Project ROCS Caseload Advisor.

# How Do We Measure What We Hope to Achieve?

## **Project ROCS' Assessment and Evaluation Strategies**

As previously stated, multiple strategies are used to assess and evaluate the outcomes of Project ROCS. In addition to being formative and summative, evaluation is on-going, continuous, participatory, theoretically based, and most, if not all objectives and services are tied to State, university, division and departmental objectives as well as to the needs of the target population and to higher education goals and societal needs in general. In fact, the project as a whole tend to be an experiential learning project that aims to facilitate active learning and to make it real and immediate.

# Project ROCS' Assessment and Evaluation Strategies

Overall, the Project's evaluation is guided by an assessment plan that contains some very specific and concrete objectives. Data is obtained through a variety of means and comparisons of data are also observed in relation to national and longitudinal data.

## Why/What Do We Evaluate?

1. Evaluate to determine how we are doing as a program.
2. Evaluate to determine impact of specific events/programs: event specific outcomes
3. Evaluate to determine students' achievement, progress and outcomes.
4. Evaluate to determine needed changes/future directions.

A summary of the project's assessment and evaluation strategies follow:

# Summary of Project ROCS' Assessment and Evaluation Strategies

1. Guided by an Assessment Plan
2. Sets, maintains and analyzes outcomes of some very specific and concrete objectives for guiding
3. Tied to State, University, Division and Departmental goals and objectives
4. Obtains qualitative, quantitative, procedural, historical Data.
5. Utilizes traditional assessment systems.
6. State/Division End of Year Reports
7. Bi-weekly meetings/contact with mentees
8. Needs Assessments
9. Mid-term Reviews
10. Program Evaluation Data
11. Event-specific Evaluation
12. Participants' Evaluation Data

# Summary of Project ROCS' Assessment and Evaluation Strategies (cont'd)

13. Mentor/Staff Evaluations
14. Anecdotal Data
15. Learning Outcome Data
16. Regular d Data  
Collection/Maintenance
17. Weekly Staff
18. Meetings/Caseload Reviews
19. Event Attendance Reports
20. Awards Program
21. Open Door Policy
22. Observations and tangible evidence  
of students' involvement.
23. Comparisons of  
national/longitudinal Data
24. Event/student participation Data
25. Advisory Board
26. Involves almost everyone.

# Summary of Project ROCS' Assessment and Evaluation Strategies (cont'd)

27. On-going, continuous, formative, and summative
28. Communication of outcomes.
29. Pre- and post-test evaluations
30. Course Evaluation Data

## **Various Project ROCS Outcomes**

Follows are presentations of various Project ROCS outcomes.

# National/Longitudinal Data

## Comparisons of 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Persistence Rates IUP/Project ROCS/U.S. Minority 1999 – 2007

### Table 1

Category	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
<b>Overall</b>	<b>72.5%</b>	<b>71.2%</b>	<b>74.4%</b>	<b>76.1%</b>	<b>73.17%</b>	<b>76.0%</b>	<b>76.73%</b>	<b>75.77%</b>
<b>African American Students</b>	<b>62.1%</b>	<b>60.2%</b>	<b>58.4%</b>	<b>67.03%</b>	<b>53.04%</b>	<b>64.60%</b>	<b>82.07%</b>	<b>74.53%</b>
<b>Latino/Hispanic Students</b>	<b>75.9%</b>	<b>72.7%</b>	<b>77.8%</b>	<b>76.47%</b>	<b>72.41%</b>	<b>84.21%</b>	<b>65.32%</b>	<b>62.50%</b>
<b>U.S. Minority</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>80.6%</b>	<b>82.0%</b>	<b>76.2%</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Project ROCS</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>90%</b>
<b>Non-ROCS</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>61%</b>

**Table 2**  
**Project ROCS - Retaining Our College Students**  
**Demographic Profile of Participants 2006-2007**

Category	Number of Students		
	Enrolled	Mentorship Only	Combined
<b>Class Standing</b>			
Freshman	79	18	97
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	19 (24%)	4 (22%)	23 (24%)
Female	60 (76%)	9 (50%)	69 (71%)
No Response	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
NA	0 (0%)	5 (28%)	5 (5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>79 (100%)</b>	<b>18 (100%)</b>	<b>97 (100%)</b>
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
African American	53 (67%)	9 (50%)	62 (64%)
African	6 (8%)	1 (6%)	7 (7%)
Caucasian	3 (4%)	1 (6%)	4 (4%)
Hispanic	10 (13%)	0 (0%)	10 (10%)
Multiracial	5 (5%)	1 (6%)	6 (6%)
Native American	0 (0%)	1 (6%)	1 (1%)
Other – Haitian (1), Jamaican (1)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)	2 (2%)
NA	0 (0%)	5 (27%)	5 (5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>79 (100%)</b>	<b>18 (100%)</b>	<b>97 (100%)</b>
<b>Resident Type</b>			
Rural	8 (10%)	4 (22%)	12 (12%)
Urban	42 (53%)	6 (33%)	48 (50%)
Suburban	21 (27%)	2 (11%)	23 (24%)
No Response	8 (10%)	1 (6%)	9 (9%)
NA	0 (0%)	5 (28%)	5 (5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>79 (100%)</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>97 (100%)</b>
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>			
Catholic	11 (14%)	0 (0%)	11 (11%)
Christian	22 (28%)	1 (6%)	23 (24%)
Baptist	7 (9%)	4 (22%)	11 (11%)
Jewish	0 (0%)	1 (6%)	1 (1%)
Methodist	3 (4%)	0 (0%)	3 (3%)
Pentecostal	2 (3%)	0 (0%)	2 (2%)
Muslim	2 (3%)	1 (6%)	3 (3%)
Seventh Day Adventist	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
Other – Black (1), Pagan (1) Wiccan (1)*	2 (3%)	1 (6%)*	3 (3%)
No Response	27 (34%)	5 (28%)	32 (33%)
NA	2 (3%)	5 (28%)	7 (7%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>79 (100%)</b>	<b>18 (100%)</b>	<b>97 (100%)</b>
<b>First Generation</b>			
Yes	40 (51%)	5 (28%)	45 (46%)
No	35 (44%)	8 (44%)	43 (44%)
No Response	4 (5%)	0 (0%)	4 (4%)
NA	0 (0%)	5 (28%)	5 (5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>79 (100%)</b>	<b>18 (100%)</b>	<b>97 (100%)</b>

**Table 3**  
**Project ROCS – Retaining Our College Students**  
**Student Contact Data 2006-2007**

<b>Educational, Personal Development, Cultural Enrichment, and Community Service Activities</b>					
<b>Events</b>		<b>Fall 2006</b>		<b>Spring 2007</b>	<b>Totals</b>
No. of Events Offered		15		13	28
No. of Participants		398		321	719
Average No. of Participants Per Event		27		25	26
Total No. of Students		97		95	192
Participants' Contact Data					
Type of Contacts		No. of Contacts			Totals
Orientation Sessions		5809		3116	8925
Individual Counseling		338		255	593
Group Counseling		103		47	150
Classroom Instruction		312		369	681
Referrals		82		18	100
Cultural Enrichment		384		118	502
Tutoring and L/C		31		1	32
Total Contacts		7059		3926	10,985
Average Contact Per Participant		73		41	57
Average Participant Per Event		18		12	15
Participants' Volunteer Community Service Data					
No. of Activities		58		21	79
No. of Students Participating		28		20	48
Total Volunteer Hours Completed		291.6		178.5	470.1

**Table 4**  
**Project ROCS - Retaining Our College Students**  
**Enrollment in Developmental Studies (DVST) Courses**  
**2006 – 2007**

<b>DVST Courses</b>	<b>No. of Students</b>			<b>Grand Total</b>
	<b>ROCS (n=79)</b>	<b>NROCS (n=18)</b>	<b>Total (N=97)</b>	
<b>Required</b>				
150	63 (80%)	11(61%)	74 (76%)	74 (28%)
160	60 (76%)	8 (44%)	68 (70%)	68 (26%)
170	52 (66%)	8 (44%)	60 (62%)	60 (22%)
Total	175 (87%)	27 (13%)	202 (100%)	202 (76%)
<b>Other DVST Courses</b>				
091	NA	NA	8 (8%)	8 (3%)
092	NA	NA	5(5%)	5(2%)
093	NA	NA	12(12%)	12(4%)
110	NA	NA	28 (29%)	28 (11%)
250	NA	NA	1(1%)	1(.0%)
281	NA	NA	5(5%)	5(2%)
Total	NA	NA	59 (61%)	59 (22%)
<b>ADVT Courses</b>				
170	3 (4%)	1 (6%)	4 (4%)	4 (2%)
Total	178 (67%)	28 (11%)	59 (22%)	265 (100%)

**Table 5**  
**Project ROCS Award Program 2006 – 2007**

<b>Type of Award</b>	<b>No. of Students</b>	<b>% of Total Enrolled</b>
Special Recognition Award	67	51%
Certificates of Participation	8	6%
Student Scholar Awards	7	5%
Distinguished Scholar Awards	9	7%
Distinguished Service Awards	3	2%
Circle of Scholars	24	18%
Hall of Fame Awards		
Continuing Students	6	5%
New Inductees	3	2%
Mentee of the Year Awards	2	2%
Mentor of the Year Awards	2	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 6**  
**Project ROCS – Retaining Our College Students**  
**Students' Academic Standing 2006 – 2007**

**Fall 2006**

	Enrolled Students		Mentorship Only (NROCS)		Totals
<b>Good Standing</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>62 (64%)</b>
<b>Probation</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>31 (32%)</b>
<b>Withdrawals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2 (2%)</b>
<b>Dismissed</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2 (2%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>97 (100%)</b>

**Table 1a: Spring 2007**

	Enrolled Students		Mentorship Only (NROCS)		Total
<b>Good Standing</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>62 (66%)</b>
<b>Probation</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>8 (9%)</b>
<b>Withdrawals</b>	<b>3*</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2*</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>5 (5%)</b>
<b>Dismissed</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>19 (20%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>94 (100%)</b>

**Table 1b: Academic Year 2006-2007**

	Enrolled Students		Mentorship Only Students (NROCS)		Totals
<b>Good Standing</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>62 (64%)</b>
<b>Probation</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>18 (19%)</b>
<b>Withdrawals**</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>9 (9%)</b>
<b>Dismissed</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>8 (8%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>97 (100%)</b>

\*Withdrew in good standing

\*\*Includes two freshmen who withdrew in good standing; Also, a total of 3 enrolled freshmen withdrew, representing 5% of 67 entering freshmen served.

\*\*4 Enrolled and 3 Mentorship Only students withdrew in good standing

# Project ROCS' Student Learning Outcomes

## I. Learning Outcomes

	Average Mean Scores_
1. Provides me with a warm, welcoming and caring environment.	4.50
2. Helps me with my integration to college life.	4.25
3. Helps me to establish a network of learners.	4.17
4. Helps me to focus on academic excellence.	4.08
5. Helps me with my college adjustment.	4.08
6. Helps to excite and motivate my interest in learning.	4.00
7. Helps me to feel comfortable in meeting with or contacting a faculty member.	4.00
8. Inspires me to meet with faculty members about my coursework.	3.92
9. Helps me to establish a sense of community at IUP.	3.83
10. Helps to enhance my self-confidence about my ability to be successful in college.	3.83
11. Helps to enhance my self-concept.	3.67

## II. Program Evaluation

1. Overall evaluation of Project ROCS staff.	4.50
2. I would like to see Project ROCS continue.	4.42
3. Overall evaluation of Project ROCS.	4.33
4. Project ROCS is beneficial and helpful to students.	4.25
5. Overall, I am satisfied with the programs and services	

# Learning Outcome and Program Evaluation Data

Of those responding to an evaluation questionnaire, the following results were obtained:

1. 81% of the project participants reported that the project helped them to establish a sense of community at IUP and to involve themselves with a network of learners.
2. 85% indicated that the project helped them with their adjustment to college life.
3. 80% reported that the project helped to provide them with a warm, caring, and welcoming college environment
4. 73% indicated the project helped with their college integration.
5. 82% reported that the project helped them to focus on academic excellence;
6. 72% indicated it helped to excite and motivate their interest in learning.
7. 86% indicated the project was helpful and beneficial to students.
8. 95% indicated overall satisfaction with the Project's staff.

# Learning Outcome and Program Evaluation Data

10. 91% of the enrolled students were in taken and needs assessed by mid- term of the fall semester.
11. 87% participated social, cultural, or leadership activities.
12. All participants were provided with an opportunity to participate in 2-3 personal development and college survival or study skills workshops.
13. 91% of the project's participants met with or had contact with a faculty member in a non-classroom setting
14. 91% attended a personal development, college survival or study skills workshop.
15. 44% received tutorial services, of which 100% indicated they were satisfied with the tutoring services.

**Table 7**  
**Project ROCS' Report of Students**  
**Graduation Status 2001-2004**

Class	ROCS				NROCS			
	4-yr Rates	5-yr Rates	6-yr Rates	Totals	4-yr Rates	5-yr Rates	6-yr Rates	Totals
2001-02	6 of 30 (20%)*	2 of 30 (6%)	0 (0%)	8 of 30 (27%)	4 of 25 (16%)	3 of 25 (12%)	1 of 25 (4%)	8 of 25 (32%)
2002-03	7 of 22 (32%)	2 of 22 (9%)	0 (0%)	9 of 22 (41%)	6 of 36 (17%)	4 of 36 (11%)	1 of 36 (3%)	11 of 36 (31%)
2003-04	7 of 17 (41%)	1 of 17 (6%)*	NA	8 of 17 (47%)	5 of 24 (21%)	NA	NA	5 of 24 (21%)
2004-05	1 of 40 (3%)	NA	NA	1 of 40 (3%)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Totals	21 of 109 (19%)	5 of 52 (10%)	NA	24 of 109 (22%)	15 of 85 (18%)	7 of 61 (12%)	2 of 61 (3%)	24 of 85 (28%)

\*Includes 1 student who graduated in 3 1/2 years

## Table 8

### Some 2007- 2008 Outcomes

Category	2005-06		All Students	2006-07		All Students	2007-08	
	ROCS	NROCS		ROCS	NROCS		ROCS	NROCS
SAT Scores								
Verbal	513	495		451	444		477	453
Math	507	405		446	464		478	443
Combined	1021	990		897	907		955	897
GPA Status	Fall	Spring		Fall	Spring		Fall	Spring
Good Standing	80%	50%		71%	33%		70%	60%
≥ 2.0	82%	56%	73%	76%	47%	65%	71%	60%
CGPA	2.68	2.10		2.51	2.10		2.35	2.07
Dismissals	12%	25%		6%	17%		21%	31%
Dean's List				33 (48%)	7 (25%)		28 (37%)	10 (22%)
Retention Rates	74%	60%	76%	89%	61%	81%	79%	69%

Project ROCS – *Retaining Our College Students*  
The African American Cultural Center  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania



What Students' Say!!!

The Question?

What do you like most about Project ROCS?

- Project ROCS exposed me to many places and people I can utilize to help me during my college career.
- I like the mid-term [progress reports]. They help to keep you on task.
- The faculty and staff; they are very comforting and helpful when it came to my grades.
- That a large part of the staff is students; as an incoming freshman, it's a better experience from students rather than faculty.
- The many activities that are given and how helpful my mentor was.
- The cultural enrichment activities and workshops
- It allows me the opportunity to interact with other students in my position as well as meet new people.
- My mentor.
- The one thing that I liked was that ROCS faculty was always there to give assistance and they never treated us like children, but instead they encouraged us to perform like mature adults. I liked the trips and enjoyed the receptions with food.
- I liked how involved ROCS is with my progress and grades.
- Mentors.
- The staff is very friendly and always willing to help.



# Written Responses to an Evaluation Question Spring 2007

**Question:** In a brief statement, please describe what you like most about Project ROCS?

## Responses

1. Project ROCS exposed me to many places and people I can utilize to help me during my college career.
2. I like the mid-term warning interview. They help to keep you on task.
3. The faculty and staff. They were very comforting and helpful when it came to my grades.
4. That a large part of the staff is students. As an incoming freshman, it's better to have experiences from students rather than faculty.
5. The many activities that are given and how helpful my mentor ... was.
6. The cultural enrichment activities and workshops.
7. Allows me the opportunity to interact with other students in my position as well as with meeting new people.
8. My mentor.
9. The one thing that I liked was that ROCS faculty was always there to give assistance and they never treated us like children, but instead they encouraged us to perform like mature adults. I liked the trips and enjoyed the receptions with food.
10. I liked how involved ROCS was with my progress and grades.
11. Mentors.
12. The staff was very friendly and always willing to help.
13. Their dedication to getting students involved.

No Responses: 10

# Conclusions

A combination of traditional and current or new assessment practices of programs and students and methods are needed to assist today's college students. Providing for all students is critical but more focus needs to be on underprepared or underrepresented students, who have typically been the college minority but are increasingly becoming the college majority.

The preparation of these students and the attainment of currently desired learning outcomes as defined by such organizations as the American Association of Colleges and Universities by all students are needed for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. As AAC&U indicated that "in a demanding economic and international environment, Americans [as with all humans] will need further

learning beyond high school” (p.1) and the fact that teaching and learning across the curriculum will be vital to success today and tomorrow, one can no longer relegate the attainment of these objectives to traditional liberal education that focus on the “arts & science disciplines.”

Nor can the practice continue to be one that steers under prepared students to community colleges and/or vocational areas or hold the belief that such institutions will provide them with the skills they need today without viewing them under a new paradigm. For example, this includes one that involves a new definition of liberal education and how to achieve its desired learning outcomes.

With the change in focus comes a new for a new perspective about college assessment and evaluation as well.

Overall, on examining the literature, it is apparent that Project ROCS, the comprehensive retention initiative at Indiana University of Pennsylvania that targets typically under-represented students is doing the right thing, both in program content and assessment and evaluation measures. Its methodology, procedures and the focus it maintains reflect not only the needs of the students but also that of contemporary literature and research. The assessment measures are multiple and varied and the outcome data suggest that the project is achieving the things that it said it would.

Although more can be done and continuous improvement remain a goal, including the aim of making assessment to be seen as a “culture,” it is hoped that

this presentation provided evidence that reflects that the overall program and that the successes provided demonstrate not only a possible program model for similar students, but also, revealed possible assessment strategies that maybe helpful.

I hope this was especially true in regards to helping to make education assessment of a first year program be viewed less as a “chore” and more as a task that can be seen as one that is more easily to implement by those concerned with evaluating and assessing first year experience programs, particularly those programs that targets under prepared or under-represented students.

” First and foremost, these students are less likely to enroll in college, and second,

once enrolled, are more likely to face challenges that prevent them from being successful in college and remaining there until graduation. Many are racial/ethnic minorities, and a large number are students from low-income backgrounds. More and more, these students (or people) are predicted to make up the larger portion of society.

For example, in the U.S. alone, expectations are that approximately “40.6% of the population in less than [one] decade will consist of minorities [and people of color]” (Cornerstone of Excellence, 2006, p. 37). At the same time, it is expected these people will represent some 50% of those entering the workforce” (Ibid.). Thus, we can’t

afford to leave them or any student out of the higher education arena.

Nor can we continue with the old paradigm of education assessment. Seeing it as a culture may also help with wider, broader, and creative implementation. Hopefully, this discussion of Project ROCS and its assessment strategies will help to facilitate this perspective.

In sum, while a major conclusion in America higher education arena is that assessment must take on a new meaning, programs as Project ROCS could serve as a model to assist in the programming, assessment, and evaluation of services for the more “traditional students” in higher education as well.

A different approach to assessment may be the major key to making it an easier task.

Again, as in the U.S., we are faced with “an unprecedented opportunity and challenge to provide for more students than ever before with the kind of life-enhancing liberal - and liberating education that was once available only to a fortunate few.”

Therefore, it seems logical to conclude by reiterating that “there can no longer be ‘one size fits all design for learning that serves all students and in all areas.’” (Ibid., p. 4).

And so, this should be the case with program evaluation and assessment of the impact of first year experience programs on students.

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