

**FRONT DOOR PROJECT
RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
FINAL REPORT
APRIL 2007**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: PAGE 2
MEMBERSHIP: PAGE 4
FULL REPORT: PAGE 5

FRONT DOOR PROJECT REPORT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 2006, the Front Door Project was launched to investigate ways to improve the “front door” of Raritan Valley Community College. The charge for the Front Door Project stated, “The degree to which programs and information are streamlined, accessible, and understandable will determine the degree to which the students feel welcome, believe they have made a good choice, and develop the commitment necessary to support retention.” Between October 2006 and March 2007, the Front Door Project Committee, comprised of over twenty administrators, staff, faculty, and students, met to define the front door, figure out its limitations, and create recommendations. Throughout this endeavor, the Front Door Project Committee has worked hard to create a student-centered vision for RVCC’s front door. All of our recommendations contribute to this vision, and it is a vision we hope can be fostered and maintained with the help of an ongoing Front Door Project Committee.

Issues

- I. Students have difficulty accessing Student Services (including Recruiting, Admissions, Advising and Counseling, EOF, Finance, Financial Aid, Registrar, Student Activities, and Transfer and Career Services)
 - a. Offices are hard to find and not laid out logically
 - b. Offices don’t have enough space for students or employees
 - c. Offices are not ADA compliant
- II. Students lack space to engage with each other
 - a. Student space itself is limited
 - b. Offices that provide Student Activities are cramped and understaffed
- III. Various types of RVCC information (policies, procedures, campus events, location of offices, etc.) for students, employees, and visitors are poorly organized and difficult to find (whether it is in person, online, or on the phone)
- IV. Members of the community don’t often perceive RVCC as a viable option for their educational and cultural needs

Major Recommendations

- I. Enhance Student Services
 - a. Establish an Admissions Department
 - b. Bring all Student Services together
 - c. Create Dean of Students to coordinate all Student Services
- II. Build New Space for Student Services
 - a. Short Term: reconfigure College Center
 - b. Long Term: build Student Center for Student Services and Student Activities
- III. Create Information Center
 - a. Staff the Information Center
 - b. Create Campus Calendar
 - c. Address increased call volume during peak times
- IV. Improve Appearance and Access to the College
 - a. Make front entrance more accessible to people with disabilities
 - b. Improve signs
 - c. Increase parking

- V. Enhance the Online Front Door
 - a. Move to Content Management for the Website
 - b. Continue upgrades to Lion's Den
 - c. Make website ADA compliant
- VI. Strengthen community front door
 - a. Strengthen programs and outreach for high school students
 - b. Strengthen programs and outreach for teachers, guidance counselors and other high school personnel
 - c. Strengthen College-wide support for off campus sites (Bound Brook, Franklin)
 - d. Strengthen overlap and communication between CCE and credit bearing courses
- VII. Effectively manage cross-cutting issues
 - a. Improve information sharing
 - b. Think systemically
 - c. Strengthen sustainability
- VIII. Create Front Door Standing Committee for accountability

FRONT DOOR PROJECT COMMITTEE

Co-Chairs

Evelynne Blatt
Karen Gaffney

Sub-Committee Chairs

Angela Bodino
Rosemarie Gorini
Patti Kletz
Violet Willensky

Members

Amy Anderson
David Evers
Rebecca Hege
Nancy Jordan
Nancy Lestrangle
Mike Machnik
Julie Maginn
Paul Michaud
Jose Olivares
Danielle Parenti
Kathleen Petrillo
Marcia Reeves
Agnes Rezende
David Ross
Jennifer Schiller
Mary Sullivan
Mary Jo Zachary
Jennifer Zois

**FRONT DOOR FINAL REPORT
APRIL 2007**

STUDENT SERVICES

For a variety of reasons, students have difficulty accessing Student Services (including Recruiting, Admissions, Advising and Counseling, EOF, Finance, Financial Aid, Registrar, Student Activities, and Transfer and Career Services). The RVCC Graduating Student Survey of General Student Satisfaction revealed some of these problems. Comparing the December 2006 responses to the December 2005 responses is particularly significant because the increase in student credit hours from Fall 2005 to Fall 2006 was the biggest increase in credit hours since 2003. According to the results of the survey, when comparing December 2006 responses to December 2005 responses, the satisfaction of Staff Helpfulness declined overall and in each category. Students who were “very satisfied” in December 2005 totaled 49%, but in December 2006 that category dropped to 42%, a 7 point drop accounting for a significant 14.3% decline in satisfaction. A less dramatic change was seen in students who were “satisfied” in December 2005; they totaled 36%, but in December 2006 that category dropped to 35%, a 1 point drop accounting for a mere 2.8% decline in satisfaction. Taken as a whole, the combined totals were 85% in December 2005 but only 77% in December 2006, an 8 point drop accounting for an overall decline in satisfaction of 9.4% in one year.

Appearing below is a more detailed table *reflecting the ten worst overall declines* in total “excellent” and “good” rankings for service quality from that survey:

**GRADUATING STUDENT SURVEY
QUALITY OF SERVICES
DECEMBER 2005 VS. 2006 GRADUATES**

<u>DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE</u>	INCREASE/(DECLINE) %		
	Excellent	Good	Total
Academic Advisement	-30.2%	-	-25.3%
Bookstore	0.0%	20.8%	-14.1%
Billing Services	-30.6%	-7.5%	-18.4%
Career Information	-4.3%	16.3%	-12.1%
Cafeteria	-26.7%	18.8%	-21.3%
Transfer Counseling	-27.9%	16.7%	-22.8%
Financial Aid	-31.9%	23.1%	-12.3%
Learning Labs	5.7%	31.6%	-13.7%
Library	-25.6%	-5.0%	-15.7%
Registration	-30.0%	8.1%	-11.7%

One can easily see that academic advisement, transfer counseling, billing services, financial aid and registration – *all student service-related departments* – appear on this list with significant satisfaction ranking declines in one year. These results reveal that Student Services are not adequately meeting the needs of our current student population.

This problem is particularly alarming because not only does Student Services lack the resources to serve the current student population, but also these offices will be even less equipped as the student population increases. Some of the most eye-opening demographic statistics that will clearly have a significant impact on the college were cited in the Environmental Scan dated October 2006. The report indicated that the number of high school graduates in New Jersey will increase by more than 29% between 2002 and 2013, a statistical increase which also carries through to Somerset and Hunterdon counties. In addition, the college is expecting an increase in the proportion of the RVCC student body that is low income, minority or first generation college-bound. Thirdly, students over age 35 have declined by 15% in the past five years, and the declining population trend of adults aged 25 to 44 is expected to continue through 2015 in Somerset and Hunterdon counties. The increase in population in general requires an increase in resources, but the expected increase in special populations which require more one-on-one time will even further stretch the already limited resources of Student Services.

The declines in Student Services described above need to be swiftly and properly addressed so that the increase in incoming students, *which will be proportionately younger and more disadvantaged than RVCC's historical average student*, can be satisfactorily serviced. These new students will clearly need considerably more support than we have been able to provide in the past due to financial constraints and competing priorities.

The following recommendations are based on the need for a more streamlined approach to student services as well as increasing the consistency and availability of student services. The lack of a coordinating mechanism for student services is evidenced by the lack of a centralized area for all student services locations as well as a lack of coordination in the administration of student services. Due to the shortages in staffing many offices are stretched thin in an effort to simply provide basic student services. The students at RVCC deserve better, and in order to provide that, the College must invest in increased staff in the form of an Admissions Department as well as a Dean of Students position. In addition to the need for coordinating administratively, student services offices are currently on a variety of schedules and located in a fashion that is not conducive to students' needs. In addition, students appear to get "lost" in the admissions process. The committee recognized the need for a "checklist" to be created for different student populations to guide them through the admissions process. In addition, this checklist could be used campus wide by anyone attempting to assist students.

Establish an Admissions Department with Admissions Counselor positions

With the recruiters off campus a great deal of time, there is no one consistently on campus charged with the important duty of providing a proper welcome to a potential new or transferring student. There are some Enrollment technicians who provide an application form to the interested student, and process the completed application, but an Admissions counselor would serve as the first in-person contact for these new additions to our educational community. The counselors would be able to answer any questions about the college and its procedures and

generally make the student feel welcome at a time that most students feel unsure and confused. This necessary addition to customer service would reinforce the feeling that the student made the right choice when deciding to attend RVCC.

Create an Admissions Checklist

Create an instructional checklist that also serves as an outline to help guide the student step-by-step through the entire enrollment-to-class attendance process, including relevant time frames and deadlines for each step. The checklist should be created for each type of new student. It would also be helpful to students if we could provide them with a campus map that would identify the site of pertinent locations and departments, such as the Bookstore, the Cafeteria, Enrollment Services, Finance, Testing, etc.

Improve hours of Student Services

All Student Services should be open during the same business hours to serve students. This includes availability during extended hours when expected heavy in-person registration periods occur. We should further enhance students' payment options by utilizing a secured tuition payment drop box to allow students to physically deposit payment envelopes after hours and on weekends while they are on campus and the payment window is closed. The proper receipt can be mailed to the student on the next business day after the payment is processed. We could place one near the front entrance of the college and another by the Finance Office.

Create a more accessible Recruiting Office

The Recruiting Office must be accessible to students who enter the front of the College. In addition, the office must be open and inviting to potential students and their families. The Recruiting Office needs a more prominent office space that allows students to easily locate the office and to travel efficiently from Recruiting to other Student Services. This office must be in an area that reflects the warm, inviting image the College wishes to portray.

Open the space for the Testing Center

The existing entrance to the Testing Center is isolated and tunnel-like; it is not readily visible to anyone outside the Testing Center. Not only is it unattractive, but it also presents security risks, especially on evenings and weekends when there is only one staff member in the Testing Center. The Testing Center should be expanded into the space currently used by Media Services, thereby relocating the Testing Center entrance onto the main hallway and creating windows along the hallway area for better light and visibility. The Testing Center would also be a lighter, more open and attractive space if the dropped ceiling could be redesigned to allow light from the existing skylights to come in. The air system needs to be upgraded as it gets much too hot in the Testing Center for students to be comfortable while taking tests in hot weather. The excessive heat is also not good for the students, staff or equipment.

Create Proper Signage

Signs should be obvious from all entrances of the College that direct students to a variety of areas, including Student Services. These signs should be clear and easy to read. In particular, signs need to be created to direct students from the front of the college (including the Testing Center) to the College Center.

Create Dean of Students to coordinate all Student Services

The departments that work within Student Services currently report along three chains of command. There is no position that seeks to coordinate the efforts of Student Services in order to decrease duplication of effort and provide support with an understanding of how the college functions. Creating a Dean of Students to coordinate the work of all Student Services mentioned above will allow for all Student Services to coordinate their efforts in providing their services to students. This position would coordinate and provide support for informational student programs, coordinate college experience courses as well as direct the retention efforts begun under the Title III grant. This position would also seek to decrease duplication of effort by the many offices within Student Services as well as provide support and leadership for activities already in place. This position should also oversee all student judicial affairs and strengthen Student Government by incorporating students into the judicial process. Examples of coordination of services include: hold financial aid fairs in conjunction with Open Houses to inform students about financial aid; establish “best practices” where students can set up appointments with counselors via an online appointment book; establish a practice where students would be asked to fill out a confidential survey after their use of a school service (each department’s directors can then review and monitor the surveys on a regular basis and utilize the responses to continually improve customer service). Additional examples include considering the possibility of providing students with an incentive to register and pay early, such as discounted tuition, to motivate students who might normally wait until one or two weeks before classes start. If this incentive is successful, it should spread the impact of registering students over a greater amount of time, thereby reducing long lines during typically peak registration periods. Student Ambassadors could also help during peak registration periods (two weeks before classes begin) and during the evening hours.

LOCATION OF STUDENT SERVICES

Student Services are spread throughout the College and many require students to travel through one department to speak with another department. Examples include EOF, Recruiting, and Financial Aid. Also, visitors find it difficult to find these services when entering through the front of the College. There are no signs when entering the front of the College that direct students to the College Center for most Student Services. Offices are desperately short on space, causing slow response to student inquiries as well as giving students the perception that the College does not value its Student Services. Student Services, including Admissions, Advising and Counseling, EOF, Finance, Financial Aid, Registrar, Recruiting, Student Activities, Testing, and Transfer and Career Services, are currently understaffed and overcrowded. Efforts are underway to correct staffing issues in some offices, and this trend will need to continue to other offices as our population increases. Without any increased staffing, Student Services offices are already short on space, and the space they are located in is inappropriate. Metal walls, a lack of sufficient office space, no direct student access to some departments, and other overcrowding conditions means that students’ privacy is not protected when they are meeting with a Student Services representative in almost any area.

Short Term Recommendations

Rearrange the first floor of the College Center so that it houses offices that interact with students on a daily basis (Admissions, Advising and Counseling, EOF, Finance, Financial Aid, Registrar, Student Activities, and Transfer and Career Services)

The first floor of the College Center is mostly used for these Student Services, but there are some other unrelated offices on this floor as well. These non-student service offices should be moved in order to allow the appropriate amount of space for a short term physical reorganization of Student Services. Such non-student service offices could be moved to some of the soon-to-be vacated space on the first floor of Somerset. For example, College Advancement could be moved to Somerset so that Recruiting could be moved where College Advancement currently is, which would place Recruiting directly across from Student Activities. Furthermore, another example is that the Central Stores/Mailroom could be moved out of the College Center so that space could be used for Student Services. If Central Stores/Mailroom is moved, offices that need a “front face,” like Registration/Admissions, Advising/Counseling, EOF, and Financial Aid, could be reorganized to take advantage of that space and door availability. Other rooms vacated on the first floor of Somerset could be used as regular classrooms, since we are short on those. We also suggest that one of those classrooms be turned into a quiet study lounge for students. We recommend that these short term recommendations be completed before the Fall 2007 semester begins.

Long Term Recommendations

Build a Student Center to house all Student Services

Despite any short term changes made to the College Center, that space is still not remotely sufficient to house our current Student Services, let alone house what will have to be an expansion in Student Services to accommodate a projected rise in enrollment. A space must be created where all Student Services have appropriate space as well as direct student access. Many offices share student documents so the concept of a centralized “back office” with individual “front offices” is proposed. While creating such a space in the existing front of the college was an option we liked because it brought all relevant offices together near the “front door,” this option ultimately did not seem feasible because of the lack of space for such offices and the lack of parking. A new Student Center should be built to house all Student Services, including Admissions, Advising and Counseling, EOF, Finance, Financial Aid, Registrar, Recruiting, Student Activities, Testing, and Transfer and Career Services. In this centralized place, prospective and current students would find assistance with all aspects of their college experience. The building should not be physically connected to the current mass of campus buildings, but rather be built a short distance away near Lot 5. Locating the building away from the current structures allows for ample parking, which is already built, as well as an opportunity for students to have a place away from classrooms for their Student Services. This building must include ample space for student lounges, offices for Student Activities staff, offices for student government, and cubicles and storage for club use. In addition, the building should have wireless internet access and plugs for students to bring their laptops. Sufficient space for snack bars, TV rooms, and a game room should also be included. As part of this increase in staffing and space for Student Services, student athletics must be staffed more appropriately, with more sports available and more appropriate space and equipment for student athletes.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Lack of access to information is a campus-wide issue. Offices across campus do not have access to basic information about other offices on campus. The lack of information affects not only the College’s ability to effectively disseminate information to students but also the College’s ability to effectively disseminate information within itself. Through the creation of a well-staffed

information center, campus calendar, and call center during peak times, students and visitors from the community will have the opportunity to speak with someone to answer their basic questions as well as be properly directed for more in-depth information.

Create an Information Center

There is a current need for a central repository of all RVCC-related information. An Information Center could provide basic information, like Student Services FAQs and other printed material. The Information Center should be staffed by an in-person and phone information team who can answer all basic questions about student-related issues, events, and the College in general. To help create this Center, restore the Evening Administrator position and add that position to this Information team. For now, the current Welcome Center Desk can be utilized to house this team. When it is feasible at a later date, create an Information Center in the Student Center. Students, visitors, and employees will turn to the Information Center for all general information including, but not limited to: office locations, phone numbers and emails, final exam schedule, location of events on campus, etc. The Information Center will be accessible in person, on the phone, and via email and the web.

Staff this Information Center appropriately

The Information Center needs to be staffed during normal business hours by people who are equipped to answer general questions about all aspects of the College, including Student Services, the Theatre, the University Center, and the Planetarium. People who staff the Information Center should be college employees and not security personnel. They would be responsible for answering basic student and visitor questions as well as directing students and visitors to the appropriate offices.

Create a Campus Calendar

The Information Center must be aware of all events on campus and their locations. There is currently a project underway to centralize the creation of a Campus Calendar, and this work must continue. The project involves the development of a campus calendar that would be available on the Lion's Den and the College website. The calendar would provide a comprehensive listing of all events and activities on campus, as well as important dates and deadlines. A campus calendar is being created by the Marketing department, but support is needed to assist in making sure that the project is sustainable and requires as little manual intervention as possible. The calendar should be maintained by the Marketing department in conjunction with the Information Center. The electronic bulletin boards that are in the process of being installed could also reflect the events in the Campus Calendar.

Create a Call Center

Admissions, Advising and Counseling, Finance, and Registrar's offices all experience exceptional call volume during peak registration times. Many students attempting to contact these offices will call any office on campus until someone answers a phone in order to speak with someone and avoid leaving a message. Much call volume may be due to students contacting these offices multiple times. Students contacting high volume numbers during peak times could then have their call routed through this call center, staffed by people with general knowledge about various Student Services. Students with more in-depth questions could have a message taken and their call returned by the appropriate office.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

There are a variety of concerns regarding the physical appearance of and access to the College. The College sits on a beautiful campus, with a pond, wetlands, rolling hills and a view of the surrounding areas. However, students and visitors tend not to see this beauty because they are instead either figuring out where they need to go or noticing the garbage strewn around campus, which takes away from the natural setting. Finally, the campus is not as accessible as it should be to people with physical disabilities, a serious problem because there is an ever increasing population of students and visitors to the College who have physical disabilities. As this population increases, the limited accommodations that the College offers will be stretched beyond its ability to provide access and opportunity to them

Improve General Appearance

There is often garbage strewn about the campus that should be picked up more frequently. Perhaps more outdoor garbage cans and recycling bins would be helpful. Weeds should also be cut back and landscaped more frequently. Also, the walkways between parking lots and building should be well lit at all times that the campus is open.

Increase Visitor Parking

Until a Student Center is built where prospective students would park at, some parking spots in the current Visitors' lot should be designated for prospective students. In addition, people who need to quickly drop something off or pick something up don't have a convenient place to park, so a spot could be designated for that as well. Also, a shuttle going between campus and the North Branch train station, for example, could alleviate parking and encourage those without cars to come to campus.

Create walkways to access entire campus

Students, employees, and visitors would be able to appreciate the campus grounds more fully if there were walkways covering those grounds. Creation of a park and a walking trail would not only contribute to the beauty of the campus but also encourage students, faculty, and staff to spend more time being active in accordance with the College initiative "One World: Health and Wellness". Also, when the College is open all paths and roadways should be clear of ice and snow. After recent storms many entrances have not been accessible due to ice and or snow.

Recommendations specific to improving access to the college for people with disabilities

Increase parking

The campus is currently experiencing a shortage of handicapped parking and building accessibility campus-wide. There is no designated drop off area at the front door for students with physical disabilities. In addition, there are not enough handicapped parking spaces at the front door, or campus wide. The current work around to this problem has been for handicapped students to request entrance to parking lot 6 which is gated and to park in the handicapped spaces there. This reduces the number of handicapped spaces available to faculty and staff.

Improve walkways, elevators, ramps, and stairways

All ramps and stairways should be well lit, have good lines of sight and have the proper handrails. Elevators are frequently out of service for long periods of time. There should also be more signs noting where ramps and elevators are. Elevator doors should open wider and for

longer times. The elevator buttons need to be at a more appropriate height. All areas need to be accessible; the cyber café, for example, is not. Stairs should be well lit and labeled so that persons with visual impairments will know where they are for safety reasons. Traveling to the Arts building in a wheelchair is difficult due to the steepness of the walkway from the Physical Education Building to the Arts Building, so that should be improved. Finally, walkways should be properly plowed so that students in wheelchairs can navigate these walkways safely.

Automate doors

Not all areas of the College have sufficient automated door openers to accommodate these students. Also, access to different buildings on campus is limited by the physical set up of the campus. Not all Student Services have adequate automated door openers, and most classrooms lack them as well.

Improve signage

Not all signs have Braille, and this should be standard across campus.

Improve classroom access

There are no lab tables for students with disabilities in the Science building. Many computers across campus are also not accessible for those in a wheelchair.

Improve access to rest rooms

Rest rooms are difficult to enter and exit without assistance due to the heavy the doors. Also, stalls should be designated for those with disabilities. Many of the sinks in restrooms are not accessible to someone in a wheelchair.

Improve access to Student Services

All Student Services should be accessible by automated door openers. Also, all personnel in Student Services should be accessible by students with disabilities. There are many staff members that students with disabilities are unable to meet with unless that staff person moves to someone else's office. In addition, the Library and Testing Center should be equipped with more sound proof rooms to accommodate students using assistive technology or other services that require talking.

Create Campus-wide Training

Faculty, staff, students, and visitors with disabilities should have information regarding plans for students with disabilities in case of emergency.

ONLINE FRONT DOOR

While there is a lot of information available online, it is not always updated or easy to find. The design of the website is not consistent throughout, and all pages are not updated on a regular basis. The web site has recently added "text only" links to all pages, but a move to make the main site ADA compliant should still be a major consideration. In addition to the web site, Lion's Den is a wonderful resource for students, faculty, and staff. Improvements to Lion's Den should also be continued.

Shift to Content Management

An assessment of our website was conducted in early 2007 by Sungard. Navigation, broken links, and lack of CSS (style of designing websites that is ADA compliant) were listed as the three areas that were most in need of attention. The RVCC website uses frames, which are an outdated technology, in order to keep the look of the pages across the site consistent. There is no system of governance in place to prioritize the major changes needed for the website or to monitor the status of the entire site. There is not a current culture of personal/department responsibility for content updates; funneling those things through one person is inefficient. Many pages, for example have not been updated in a few years. While it is possible that there are no changes required to these pages, it is also possible that the source of much of the misinformation or incorrect information may be due to the lack of ability to monitor the updating of these pages. Create a governance body to oversee web initiatives, and subsequently create a policy and culture that support decentralized content updating, facilitated by a content management tool. From a technology standpoint, this would allow RVCC to streamline both its web design and content functions, and allow for easy global branding or visual changes. From a content standpoint, a simple web interface and automated reminders to keep content current should encourage individuals to maintain their own website areas, with workflow and content approval options where needed. The implementation of this new system would require training by the representatives from each department who are responsible for the website for that department. This new training and management would be a jumpstart to review the website as a whole and in terms of each department to determine the validity of the information stored on the site.

Continue to develop Channels

Admitted, non-registered students have their own tab in Lion's Den to provide them with personalized information to help them begin their career at the College. Currently, Channels are being rolled out that simplify the use of ROARs for faculty, staff, and students. Channels should continue to be implemented not only for these groups, but also for prospective students. In addition, more emphasis should be put on new students using Lion's Den to access services rather than calling or coming to campus. By increasing the use of Lion's Den, students will be able to complete registration, grading, financial aid and student accounting transactions without the need to come to campus and wait in line.

Continue to make the website ADA compliant

The website has been recently been made ADA compliant by the use of a text only link option for those using the site. However, effort should be put into the recreation of the site under content management as listed above to increase the likelihood that the site could be accessible to those using assistive devices without having to link to a text only version.

COMMUNITY FRONT DOOR

High School and Community Outreach

Many students who come to RVCC directly out of high school are unprepared for the rigors of higher education. In addition, there is a need to provide a more seamless connection between secondary and post secondary sectors without creating the "grade 13" mentality.

Strengthen and clarify information about Concurrent Enrollment

The Concurrent Enrollment Program (CEP) is a partnership between Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) and high schools whereby qualified high school juniors and seniors enroll in a credit-bearing college course as a part of their high school day. CEP is designed to meet the educational, economic and social demands of the Twenty-first Century as identified by high school faculty, students, and parents: addressing dissatisfaction felt among capable senior high school students who have completed most of their graduation requirements by the end of their junior year; offering creative and alternative means of financing four years of higher education; and fostering partnerships between secondary and post-secondary institutions of higher education that provide improved educational services. The program has received validity of grades within English I, and there has been consistency in standards and assessment. A number of colleges are interested in expanding this program, and enthusiastic testimony from students who have gone on to college is compelling evidence of the success of the program. Information on Concurrent Enrollment is hard to find on the College's website and the registration process can be discouraging to students as well as those administering the program. A new director of Academic Outreach has been hired to coordinate all high school outreach efforts. One of her many goals will be to streamline the process for students to enroll and pay for the program. BANNER should be fully utilized to ensure consistently correct registration for these courses. In addition, the professional development afforded English faculty and adjuncts by Title III can be extended to CEP faculty to help reduce the need for remediation among College freshmen, and an annual meeting should draw together counselors from participating schools to address possible problems and suggestions for change. In the future, the program should be expanded to new schools as well as new subjects such as math and foreign language. Also, the ASPIRE program at Franklin High School should be more visible and integrated into the outreach to teachers for professional development.

Strengthen and clarify information about Early Credits

The High School Scholars Early Credits Program at RVCC is a program for high school juniors and seniors. These students may enroll in college level courses on the campus and receive College credit upon satisfactory completion of those courses. Depending on the course(s) taken, credits may be used for satisfaction of degree requirements at RVCC or another college. Similar to the CEP, information on this program is hard to find and once found it is listed in multiple places giving conflicting information. The College should create a simple consistent process for students to register for these courses. Improvements have been made for the registration process for upcoming semesters, but due to the recent resignation of program's coordinator, the program is need of leadership in order to create consistency in the program.

Strengthen Somerset Academy for Health and Medical Sciences

America's best and brightest students in the areas of math and science are already two years behind their international counterparts by the eighth grade, and it becomes necessary for colleges and universities to help them catch up. In order for the American economy to remain competitive in a global marketplace, innovation in the areas of math, science, and technologies is increasingly crucial. Vocational education is often disconnected from the contexts and rigor of traditional academic education and interdisciplinary teaching. Advancing content knowledge in the domains of math and science is an ongoing need in the secondary school sector. The curricular connections between the secondary and postsecondary sectors are disconnected rather than seamless, particularly in the skill sets essential in math, science, and composition. The

Health Academy has recruited cohorts of the most gifted and talented students in math and science from bicounty high schools, and prepared for them an accelerated curriculum that allows them to graduate with a high school diploma and associates degree in four years. Somerset Academy for Health and Medical Sciences is a four-year, full-time program dedicated to advancing the educational and personal development of all students seeking careers in the allied health field as doctors, nurses, medical technicians, medical assistants, and health care managers. The partnership between Somerset County Vocational & Technical H.S. and Raritan Valley Community College will give exceptional students enrolled in the program a chance to earn an Associate Degree in Allied Health from RVCC while still in high school. The Academy encourages collaborative conversations among College and secondary school faculty in the areas of English, math, and science. The Academy curriculum encourages interdisciplinary teaching, service-learning, applications of technology, and the integration of vocational perspectives into academic course-work. The program should be included in all high school outreach. Continuous work is needed to ensure the success of Academy students in their early college coursework. The content must also be aligned to the content standards of the high school and college curriculum.

Strengthen and clarify information about the University Center

The University Center at Raritan Valley Community College offers a convenient way for adult learners in Somerset and Hunterdon Counties to obtain baccalaureate and graduate degrees certificates, from an expanding number of accredited colleges and universities. The University Center offers a wide range of degree programs to choose from, whether you want to return to college to continue your education, or you need an advanced degree or certificate to move forward with your career. Given the resignation of the program's coordinator, the University Center is in need of leadership, as well as updated information. The mission of the University Center should be clarified, and the position of the Assistant Dean filled immediately. An internal steering committee should be formed to review existing and future educational pathways as well as the overall operations of the University Center. Further, the University Center needs greater visibility with space and signage, a real "front door". Also, the information, both in print and on the website, needs to be clarified and updated.

Strengthen the Writing Agenda

The first report of the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, *The Neglected 'R,'* issued in April 2003, recommends that "Higher education should address the special role it has to play in improving writing." In fact, it calls for "a writing revolution" that places the teaching of writing at the center of schooling nationwide. All prospective teachers, no matter their disciplines, should be provided with courses that demonstrate how to teach writing. Meanwhile writing instruction in colleges and universities should be improved for all students. The second report, *The Ticket to Work*, extends this need to improve writing in the workplace, and the third report, issued in May 2006, looks at *School Reform*. In spite of its place at the center of schooling, writing is the "Neglected 'R,'" and the Commission calls for a "Writing Revolution." The RVCC website should have information that is easy to find. Also, a timeline should be created so that information and programs are created and published in a timely fashion.

Marketing and Recruitment

Implement BANNER Recruitment Module

Currently, not all student contact information (for students in the early phase of the recruitment process) that is collected is stored in the BANNER student information system. Targeted marketing and recruitment toward CCE and other internal subgroups is weak. Data about Alumni that identifies outcomes is not collected. Follow-up work is needed on additional recommendations developed in the CLARUS reports. RVCC has a variety of recruitment events that attract students, and RVCC Alumni are successful both in career and transfer. There is also a large group of potential students in the Police academy and CCE. CLARUS study and high school outreach programs have established baseline information on the College's image in the community.

Increase targeted marketing and recruitment

Create transition procedures to utilize the BANNER recruitment module to track and report on outreach to students and student contacts. Begin targeted marketing and recruitment of Policy Academy graduates.

Showcase faculty and student achievements

RVCC faculty have a depth of knowledge that exceeds their areas of expertise that should be showcased. Such publicity would assist in the recruiting process, and prospective students would benefit from interaction with and relationships begun with faculty during the recruitment process. Highlight success stories of Alumni on both the college website and during the recruitment process. Increase the use of faculty in the recruiting process.

Consider hiring a consulting service

Consider employing a professional consulting service to establish college "branding" (companies to consider include Noel/Levitz, Goal Quest, and SAS Educational Practice).

Continue to address issues raised in the CLARUS high school scan

Recommendations from this scan included capturing RVCC's "high tech" aspect more effectively in the recruiting material (both print and on-line) and targeting high school students' parents and guidance counselors more effectively. These issues have begun to be addressed, and such efforts should continue.

Bound Brook

In 2006, the College and the Bound Brook schools entered into a mutually beneficial partnership aimed at addressing the following identified needs: the acute learning resource needs of Bound Brook High School (in terms of technology, media, and facilities support); the needs of the district to offer enhanced learning opportunities for high school students as well as parents of school students who need to learn to speak English; and the College's need for a facility to offer a range of courses to this otherwise underserved community and thereby extend the post-secondary access for some individuals and create convenient close to home/work scheduling options for others. The number of courses running and students being served is growing, creating on-going challenges for coordination and seamless service. In the Fall 2006 semester, 58 students were enrolled and in the Spring 2007 semester, that number more than doubled to 126 students in 9 sections. Further growth is projected for the 2007-08 academic year, with semester

enrollments projected to be in the range of 175-200 students. The College has used some available grant resources for start up to pay for minimal staff coordination, laboratory, and technical enhancements.

Fund the Bound Brook initiative

The College needs to allocate operating funds for a part-time coordinator to address and resolve the many issues that arise on an ongoing basis. Funding is also needed to continue the hourly position of Building monitor who at once serves the security needs of the school building as well as the “front door” by greeting and signing in faculty and students as they enter the building.

Franklin Center

The Franklin Center, created in 2000, was founded to offer an RVCC education to students who did not want to travel to the main campus. The Franklin Center is accessible by public transportation and located near a variety of other services such as restaurants and shopping. The location offers an education to a community from within that community and has the ability to provide public outreach and leadership. However, the Franklin Center’s course offerings are inconsistent, and support is not provided to the Franklin Center to provide all of the services provided at the main campus. Academic advising, academic support, student accounting and student activities are examples of services not fully provided to students at the Franklin Campus.

Strengthen support for the Franklin Center

In recent semesters, academic advising and academic support has increased for students at the Franklin Center. However, students are not able to complete a degree at the Franklin Center as many courses are not offered there. The College should make a commitment to provide all of the courses for selected degree programs at the Franklin Center. By combining good academic advising, specialized courses could be offered on an annual basis allowing students, with the correct planning, to complete their entire degree at the Franklin Center. Also there are extreme timing delays in processing information from the Franklin Center. A system should be created to allow information that is received at the Franklin Center that must be processed by the main campus to be done so within a timely fashion.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Information Sharing

Policies and procedures are not always available either between departments or within a department.

Cross Train employees

We should cross-train front-line employees in student service-related departments across the college to be able to properly answer a wide range of student questions. This will eliminate the need for students to be sent to multiple departments (either in person, by phone, or by e-mail) to obtain answers to the relatively simple and usually repetitive questions. This will also result in the front-line employee more effectively listening to all the students’ questions to properly answer, resolve problems and/or forward the student to the correct department, and eliminate any “runaround.”

Create FAQs

We should collaboratively create a college-wide list of “FAQs” (Frequently Asked Questions) and their appropriate responses to be used by all departments and post them on the RVCC website for faculty, staff and students to access. It would also be helpful to create a college-wide Internal Glossary that can be referred to by all departments, so that faculty and staff could understand the often specialized terminology of other departments.

Systemic Thinking

The College encourages initiative and free thinking in its employees as a way of creating new ways to innovate and succeed in the face of shrinking resources. As a result, many different areas of the College have developed different ways of completing the same task. Also, not all departments are taking full advantage of the integrated systems on campus such as BANNER, the Lion’s Den and Microsoft Outlook. Innovation and development that happens behind the scenes is not seen by the College community as a whole, and as a result, there is duplication of ideas and work being done on many levels.

Develop procedures within all departments to use the integrated systems in order to decrease workload

For example, all student information pertaining to the Early Credits and Concurrent Enrollment programs need to be stored and processed within BANNER so that all departments needing access to this information can access this information as necessary. In addition, use of the Lion’s Den portal should be expanded to allow access for students in the recruitment process to encourage interaction with the College and to help make their transition easier.

Sustainability

Due to the lack of resources, many projects are implemented quickly and without thought to sustainability. In addition, these projects may not make full use of all resources due to lack of awareness of their availability.

Create sustainable projects

All projects undertaken at the behest of the Front Door Project Committee Report should do so with the idea of sustainability in mind. Communication should be enlisted at all levels of the College in order to determine ways that technology can be fully used in order to decrease the long term need for manpower. An example of this is the Campus Calendar. This calendar should be implemented using as much technology as possible to reduce the manpower required to monitor and publish the Calendar. The implementation of Content Management for the website is an example of implementing a more sustainable solution than the one currently in place which requires more manpower.

THE FUTURE OF THE FRONT DOOR

The Front Door Project Committee has spent a great deal of time researching issues related to the College’s front door and produced recommendations based on that research that should bring the College’s actual front door in line with how the College wants to present itself.

Create a long-term Front Door committee

The Front Door Project should remain a committee. The purpose of the committee would be to provide guidance on the recommendations submitted in this report as well as to review any new issues that are found relating to the front door.

APPENDIX

1) Sullivan, John. "RVCC Report on the State of Student Affairs." June 2006.

2) Front Door Project Committee's recommendation that, based on a visit, Brookdale's campus provided some good models for us:

We visited Brookdale Community College and thought the CAR Building (Center for Admissions and Registration) provided an attractive appearance and excellent function for visitors and new students. The front of the building had been redesigned with an open, airy appearance (lots of windows), and a good functional layout. The entrance had automatic doors, and the foyer had clear signs and an elevator.

Brookdale's Student Life Center was very open and welcoming. The atmosphere was happy and relaxed. The bookstore looked more like a Barnes & Noble than a college bookstore. Textbooks were located in the back. The Dining Room had doors leading to a spacious outdoor patio with very attractive tables and chairs, like café tables, not picnic tables. There was plenty of open space to sit and talk with fireplaces and flat screen TVs.

The following documents are in the public folders with this report:

3) Adelman, Clifford. "How to Design a Web Site That Welcomes Prospective Applicants." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 27 Oct. 2006: B26.

4) Results of the Mystery Shopper Questionnaire

5) Sample FAQs

6) Letter to Superintendent David Livingston

7) Writing Agenda

htm

From the issue dated October 27, 2006

COMMENTARY**How to Design a Web Site That Welcomes Prospective Applicants**

By CLIFFORD ADELMAN

It is no secret that the community-college population enrolled for credit has grown younger since 1990. With more students entering directly from high school, the communication links between community colleges and secondary schools have become more crucial than ever. Foremost among those links is the community-college Web site, for it is there that both high-school students and guidance counselors should find clear information on offerings, paths to credentials or transfer, application procedures and deadlines, placement testing, estimated cost of attendance (tuition, fees, books, etc.), and financial aid.

Prospective students must be able to navigate a site easily to get the information they need. A well-designed Web site increases the chances that they will arrive better prepared both academically and procedurally, and decreases the chances that they will become frustrated and give up their inquiries. This is not point-zero marketing: High-school students already know that a particular college exists and roughly where it is located; have an image of the institution based on accounts of other students they know who have attended; and are far more fluent in Web-based communications than we acknowledge.

The designs of many community-college Web sites, I've discovered, do not reflect that common sense.

I recently adopted the persona of a high-school junior with average grades logging onto community-college Web sites to figure out what I would need to do to prepare, enroll, and settle in. By posing as a prospective student, I wanted to find out how well these Web sites are serving the information needs of students coming in directly from high school, and how the sites might be improved.

I chose 27 community colleges for my exploration. Each of them enrolled 7,500 or more credit-seeking students, at least 55 percent of whom were under the age of 22 — in other words, a group of community colleges that ought to be experienced in dealing with high-school students.

The first encounter with each community college was its portal page. Upon arriving at each one, I asked whether I could see myself — as a high-school student — anywhere on that page, so that I would know where to begin to find out about basics. There are a number of positions on a portal page where I would naturally look, positions that might be labeled "prospective students," "future students," "new students," or even "high-school students." The placement of those sorts of categories should be in prime visual real estate. They might be in a list set flush to the left or right margins of the page, like Venetian blinds, or in

a horizontal banner of "radio buttons" at eye level, along with categories like "current students," "faculty and staff," "alumni and friends," "local businesses," and "trustees."

But only 15 of the 27 Web sites contained obvious doorways for students like me on their portal pages. An additional nine offered entry to the information I was seeking through the label of "Admissions" or through radio buttons labeled "Apply Now!" or "Apply Online!" On two of the sites, the only way to find out where you might be going was through a pull-down menu of links leading to "admissions." On one site, the only access was through a "search" box. On sites like those, prospective students would have to be persistent to find the information they need.

Web sites can present too much information at one time, too. One of the classic guidelines for Web banners is never to include more than seven radio buttons. But some of the community-college Web sites I looked at presented two banners offering a dozen or more major links on each of them, inevitably reducing the font size of their labels to barely visible.

A portal page should instantly convey to users that it will help them navigate the site with a "contact us" link and a search box. Only 10 of the 27 community colleges on my tour offered a "contact us" link, but 24 did provide search boxes. Unfortunately the latter were sometimes necessary; for example, in eight cases, a search box was the only way to reach any information about tuition and fees.

Along the branches of inquiry subsequent to the portal, there should be links that loop back either to the beginning of that branch or to the site's home page. The loops serve to rescue anyone who gets lost. But only 17 of the 27 institutions provided such loops, half the time inconsistently.

Web sites of community colleges should offer high-school students information on the following:

- What they need to do in high school to prepare for a successful community-college education.
- Application procedures and deadlines.
- Placement testing.
- Tuition, fees, and other costs of attendance.
- Finances and financial aid, including definitions and procedures.
- What parents need to know.
- Advisement and orientation.
- Registration.
- What to expect in the first year.

Twelve of the 27 Web sites did not offer any information about preparation, and eight others discussed high-school courses only in relation to dual-enrollment programs (and even that information was hard to find). In other words, those colleges were doing little on their Web sites to advise prospective students — whether they are aiming for an occupational program or transfer to a four-year institution — about recommended high-school course work. The remaining seven colleges pushed high-school preparation into the category of placement testing. They referred users, by way of links, to the Web sites

of testing companies for examples of questions that appear on standard community-college placement tests. But links to online practice tests do not tell high-school students what they really need to do to prepare. Some of the sites included radio buttons that linked to "success strategies" but also required user names and passwords. Whatever productive advice those strategies might reveal is therefore available only to current, not prospective, students.

One of the more grievous oversights of community-college Web sites, compared with the sites of four-year institutions, is their neglect of parents. Presumably they play key roles in the lives of high-school students preparing for college. But on most of the community-college Web sites I examined, parents were nearly invisible. Where you could find mention of them — five sites said nothing, and 11 required the use of a search box — parents were addressed under the categories of financial aid (10 cases) or orientation (four cases), or as functionaries signing evidence-of-residency papers. If community colleges want parents to be involved in their children's entry into postsecondary education, they must begin that relationship when prospective students are still in high school. A good place to start would be a radio button or prominent link for parents, either on the portal page or at the beginning of the "admissions" sequence.

Both parents and students, of course, will want to know how much the wonderful education on the community-college horizon will cost. Every one of the 27 community colleges eventually said something about tuition and fees. Eventually. To their credit, three institutions placed the link in prime real estate on the portal page, and another three offered student expense budgets, positioned in the admissions sequence just before the link to financial aid. Others, however, placed their information on tuition and fees under "frequently asked questions," in drop-down menus with as many as 80 topics, or invited students and families to pay online before they knew the amount in question. Life is strange; so are Web sequences.

To be fair, some community-college Web sites are doing a good job. Two of those I visited offered month-by-month planning tools for high-school students, starting in September of their senior year. Two others directed students to "early bird" days at high schools, where they could take tests measuring basic skills and sample live classes. But all four of the sites buried those opportunities under links to "recruitment services" — not exactly a transparent label in a high-school student's search protocol. Another site provided extensive detail on math courses: why one needs them, what the community college offered, sample problems from each course, and how to succeed. But the information could be found only at the end of a long chain of Web pages and was presented as guidance only for currently enrolled students. Too bad because that kind of advice is exactly what community colleges should be offering prospective students.

So what should community-college administrators and faculty members do to improve their Web sites?

First, read some of the literature on information architecture and Web-site design. Next, adopt a student persona (high school, continuing, returning, transfer, international, continuing-education), listing, in order of importance, what you want to know. Then start at the portal page and experience what it takes

to find the information. Note at which points in your search you get lost. Note where you hit dead ends. Note where you find the information out of sequence or on a level of the site other than the one you expected. Find three or four other colleagues, including a senior administrator, who will adopt the same persona and engage in the same process. Compare notes. Come to a consensus about what needs to be changed on the site. Use the senior administrator to take a detailed description to the director of information technology. Negotiate a redesign. Monitor and evaluate changes as they are phased in. Observe the smiles on arriving students' faces.

Clifford Adelman is a senior associate at the Institute for Higher Education Policy. He recently left the U.S. Department of Education, after 27 years as a senior research analyst. He is the author of "Moving Into Town — and Moving On: The Community College in the Lives of Traditional-Age Students," a 2005 report for the Department of Education.

<http://chronicle.com>

Section: Community Colleges

Volume 53, Issue 10, Page B26

[Copyright](#) © 2006 by [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#)

[Subscribe](#) | [About The Chronicle](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Terms of use](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Help](#)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES

1. Are Distance Education courses *REAL* college courses?

Yes, they carry the same college credit as other college courses, and you register for a Distance Education course just as you would for any other college-credit campus course.

Best of all, Distance Education courses are fully accredited and they look the same on your transcript as other college-credit classes. A college instructor grades your assignments and exams and is available should you need any help. And the college credits you earn can be applied to graduation requirements and to earning a degree.

2. What's different about Distance Education courses?

The only difference between Distance Education courses and other college-credit classes is the way you learn. Traditional courses require you to attend lectures or seminars at the campus. In a Distance Education course, you learn interacting with your teacher and fellow students via computer. You still must understand the concepts, read a textbook, turn in assignments, and take exams; however, most students agree that Distance Education courses are much more convenient because they give you more schedule flexibility.

3. How often do I have to come to campus?

You may have to go to campus to attend an orientation session, buy your textbooks and take exams. Some courses require NO attendance on campus. See the Course Welcome Pages for course requirements (click Term/Session, then course name).

4. When can I start?

Like regular college-credit courses, Distance Education courses are usually offered on a semester basis. Most start in late August or September, January, and May. Be sure to register early; Distance Education courses can fill up just like traditional courses.

5. How do I get my textbooks and other course materials?

You can purchase your books at the campus bookstore, or you can order your books by mail or fax and the bookstore will send them directly to you. See the Course Welcome Pages for course requirements (click Term/Session, then course name).

6. Is there an instructor for the Telecourse?

RVCC assigns a faculty member to design and guide the courses. He or she grades your assignments and exams and can answer any questions you may have through phone calls, voice mail, e-mail, letters, fax, or face-to-face meetings.

7. How many Distance Education courses can I take?

That depends on many factors. You should contact an RVCC advisor for assistance.

8. With Telecourses, can I really study at home, at my own pace?

Yes! Telecourses give you the flexibility to decide when and how you'll study. But this kind of independent learning also requires a lot of self-discipline. Are you the type of person who can plan and organize your time wisely? Are you self-motivated? Do you have good reading and writing skills? You can take a quick self-quiz to see if Distance Education courses are for you.

*** [DISTANCE LEARNING APTITUDE TEST](#) ***

Remember, Distance Education provides a different and more convenient way of learning, but not necessarily an easier way.

9. How much does a Distance Education course cost?

The current cost per-credit of RVCC online courses and NJ Virtual Community College Courses is posted here www.raritanval.edu/registration/tuition.html. There are no additional fees associated with them.

10. Will I have the same campus privileges as other students?

Yes. All Distance Education students are welcome to use the college library and other campus resources.

11. Can I get financial aid?

Perhaps. For more information, contact RVCC's Financial Aid Office at (908) 526-1200, extension 8268, as early as possible. Financial aid deadlines are often much earlier than registration deadlines.

12. Can I take Distance Education courses and on-campus courses at the same time?

Yes! In fact, many students find that Distance Education courses allow them to accelerate the progress they make toward earning their degrees by enrolling in a combination of Distance Education courses.

13. Will there be an advisor available to help me?

Certainly! If you are working toward a degree, you'll want to talk to an advisor.

FINANCE

1. How much is the tuition? Are there any additional fees? Are the fees the same for in-county and out-of-county residents?

Tuition and Fees

Tuition (beginning Fall '06)	
Standard Tuition	\$84 per credit
RVCC On-Line Courses and NJ Virtual Community College Course*	\$96 per credit. No fees charged

Fees	
Application Fee	\$25
General Registration fee (all students including Senior Citizens; not for on-line courses)	\$21 per credit hour
Course/Lab fee (all students including Senior Citizens)	\$60 per lab (or similar) course
Technology Fee (all courses except on-line)	\$50 per semester
Enrollment Service fee (all courses except on-line)	\$30 per semester
Developmental Student Fee	\$15 per developmental student per semester
Official Transcript Fee	\$ 5
Returned Check fee	\$25
Late Registration Fee	\$25
Graduation fee	\$30
International Student Processing Fee	\$200 per semester
Replacement Diploma Fee	\$15
Nursing Student Fee	\$250 per semester
Parking Fee	\$2 per credit
Student Hospitalization	\$22.50

NOTE: The above do not include *special* course and lab fees

NOTE: Students registered for 12 or more credits *in the Fall or Spring Semesters* are assessed a \$22.50 health insurance fee unless an insurance waiver is completed

Questions regarding Tuition or Fees? Call (908) 526-1200 ext. 8258

[back to Registration](#)

2. How can I pay?

Cash, check or money order (payable to RVC College), or credit card (Discover, Mastercard or Visa).

3. What are the business hours?

8:00 am – 6:00 pm Monday through Thursday

8:00 am – 5:00 pm Friday

4. Are there any special rates for seniors, EMT's, etc.?

High School Scholars Early Credits Program	\$100.00 for first course per semester; additional courses at regular rates, including fees.
Hunterdon / Somerset Gold Card Senior Citizens , Minimum Age 65:	You must register during the 5 business days immediately prior to the beginning of the part of the term (i.e. full semester, late start, etc.) the course is in to receive this discount — Only Fees Apply. If you register earlier than 5 business days immediately prior to the beginning of the part of the term (i.e. full semester, late start, etc.) the course is in, you will be charged at the regular rate of \$78 per credit plus fees.
National Guard & Reserves ,	Free tuition for up to 15 credits per term, for individuals only. Fees Apply.
Volunteer Firefighters, Emergency Medical Personnel	Tuition waiver of up to \$600 per year and \$2,400 lifetime per family of volunteer. Fees Apply.
September 11th Victims' Families	Free tuition for children and spouses of victims. Fees Apply.

5. What is the FERPA law?

Family Educational Rights and Privacy (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 protects the privacy of education records, establishes the right of students to inspect and review their education records, and provides guidelines for the contesting of inaccurate or misleading data.

Students have the right to inspect and review all education records maintained by the College. The College is not required to provide copies unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for students to inspect the records.

Students have the right to request that the College correct records believed to be inaccurate or misleading. If the College decides not to amend the record, the student has a right to a formal hearing with the Dean of Academic and Student Services. After the hearing, if the College still decides not to amend the record, the student has the right to place a statement with the record commenting on the contested information in the record.

The College will not release any confidential information from a student's record without the written consent of the student, with the exception of the following: to College officials with a legitimate educational interest, to other institutions at which a student seeks or intends to enroll, to certain government officials in order to carry out lawful functions, to appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student, to organizations conducting certain studies for the College, to accrediting organizations, to individuals who have obtained court orders or subpoenas, and to persons who need to know in cases of health and safety emergencies.

The College may disclose directory information without the written consent of the student. Directory information includes the following: name, address, telephone number, email address, dates of attendance, enrollment status, class, previous institutions attended, major field of study, awards, honors (including Dean's/President's list), degrees conferred including date, past and present participation in officially recognized activities, height and weight (for athletes only), and date and place of birth. Students may request the withholding of disclosure of directory information. To ensure that a request is properly processed, it must be submitted on the official "Request to Prevent Disclosure of Directory Information" form, which is available in the Student Enrollment Center. In order to prevent all disclosures of directory information, the official request must be filed prior to the first day of the semester. However, the College will accept requests at any point during the semester. The request will remain in effect until the student submits signed authorization to allow disclosure of directory information. The College assumes that failure on the part of any student to specifically request on the official form the withholding of release of directory information indicates individual approval of disclosure.

Students have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the College to comply with the requirements of FERPA. Contact the Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202

6. What designates a full-time student?

Students enrolled for twelve (12) or more credits are attending full-time.

7. What payment plans are available?

For the Spring & Fall semesters, Sallie Mae (TuitionPay) is available which allows the student to pay for the semester in 4 monthly installments. Payments are made directly to Sallie Mae. Recommendation: To provide students with payment plan information prior to registration.

What is Cooperative Education?

Cooperative Education offers students an on-the-job training program directly related to their academic major and career interests. Students earn credit for working, and sometimes, a salary.

Who is eligible for cooperative education?

1. Students enrolled in a degree program at RVCC
2. Students with 12 completed credits or the permission of the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs/Director of Cooperative Education
3. Students in good academic standing.
4. Students able to be employed at least 10 hours per week in this program.

Students in certain degree programs are required to do a Co-Op. Refer to your curriculum requirements.

How do I arrange to do a Co-Op?

Contact **Maxwell McDew Stevens**, Dean of Academic & Student Services and Director of Cooperative Education at 526-1200 extension 8804, mstevens@raritanval.edu



Internship FAQs for Students

Why should I consider an internship?

An internship provides an opportunity to explore career choices and gain work experience in your current field of interest. You have the opportunity to apply your classroom learning to real work situations and challenges. This work experience will make you a more marketable candidate when you enter the world of work on a full time permanent basis. Students who intern develop valuable job search abilities and excellent transferable skills, such as communication, problem-solving, organizing, prioritizing, etc. Working also develops and enhances your self-esteem. Additionally, you will build valuable contacts who will be able to help you with future employment. In fact, internship opportunities often lead to full time permanent employment.

When is the best time to start an internship experience?

Once you've completed one year or approximately 15 credit hours at RVCC and know [or think you know] what career you will be pursuing, you should consider an internship. It may take some time to match your schedule and other requirements to a company's needs, so the earlier you register, the greater the chance for finding a good match.

What are the college requirements for an internship placement?

- Minimum of 15 academic college credits successfully completed
- Currently registered student in *good academic standing [*GPA requirement varies by academic department]
- Must be registered for minimum of 6-8 academic credits during semester in which student is

- interning
- Able to handle working independently, with limited supervision
 - Able to take direction
 - Able to learn new skills easily and well
 - Solid work ethic [attendance, professional dress and demeanor, confidentiality issues, etc.]
 - Additional criteria varies by department – see Linda Levitt, Internship Coordinator for department requisites

Each academic department has a separate set of requirements and protocols governing internships. See Linda Levitt, Internship and Placement Coordinator, or your academic department's Faculty Internship Program Liaison to discuss what policies you need to follow.

Who are the Faculty Internship Program Liaisons?

Accounting and Finance	Bill Black
Business and Marketing	Elaine Moore
Communications/Event Planning	Bick Treut
Computer Science/Information Technology	Stephen
Brower	
Criminal Justice and Paralegal	Maria DeFilippis
Human Services/Social Work/Psychology/Education	Karen Gutshall
Science and Biotechnology	Sarah
Imbriglio	
Visual and Performing Arts	Bonnie
Thornborough and Loretta Fois	

Additionally, please note...

- Students applying for internships at RVCC must be currently registered and in good academic and social standing with the college.
- Students are expected to act with integrity, professionalism and adhere to the codes of conduct listed in the [RVCC Student Handbook](#).
- Have your resume ready before you contact employers for internship or job opportunities. You may request assistance from [Linda Levitt](#) for resume writing.
- It is your responsibility to verify any information before acting on it.



ADVISING FAQs - Chargeback Policy



- [What is a chargeback?](#)
- [How do I know if I'm eligible for chargeback?](#)
- [Where do I get the information and paperwork for chargebacks?](#)
- [How do I submit the approved Chargeback Request Form?](#)

About Us

LED: Adult Services

Orientation

International Students

Workshops/Events

Self Help Information

FAQ's

Web Links

Staff

How Are We Doing?

What is a **chargeback**?

Chargeback is the distribution of county monies used to help defer the cost of Hunterdon or Somerset county residents obtaining an education at a New Jersey community college other than Raritan Valley Community College. This can be for a course, degree, or certificate that Raritan Valley Community College does not offer within one calendar year. Chargeback is available to Somerset and Hunterdon County residents who meet the criteria.

How do I know if I'm eligible for chargeback?

After students apply, they will be notified of their eligibility. General Guidelines are:

- Applicant must meet Somerset or Hunterdon County residency requirements.
- Applicant must be qualified to enroll at Raritan Valley Community College.
- Applicant must take courses for college credit at another New Jersey county community college. Courses and programs offered outside of New Jersey are not eligible for Chargeback.
- The course(s) or program requested for Chargeback must be substantially different in content and purpose from the course(s) or program offered at Raritan Valley Community College. Minor variations in content and purpose, or minor differences in course or program titles are not grounds for Chargeback.
- Chargeback will not be approved if the course or program is offered at Raritan Valley Community College within one year.
- Chargeback requests for auditing courses are not eligible for Chargeback.
- Retroactive requests for previously completed semesters are not eligible for Chargeback.
- Chargeback for a repeated course will not be approved:
 - if the course was passed the first time.
 - after two (2) failures.

- First time applicants for degree or certificate programs must submit their placement test scores before Chargeback will be considered. Individuals whose scores would require them to take more than two developmental courses will not receive Chargeback until:
 - they complete Basic Skills requirements at RVCC.
 - or present proof (official transcript) that they have done so elsewhere.
 - or present proof of acceptance into Project Connections or Horizons.
- Applicants requesting Chargeback for a nursing program should contact the Student Enrollment Center at (908) 218-8864.

Where do I get the information and paperwork for chargebacks?

- The applicant should obtain a Chargeback Request Form from the Student Enrollment Center at RVCC.
- The completed Chargeback Request Form should be submitted to the Student Enrollment Center at RVCC with the appropriate documentation as indicated below.
 - If you are requesting Chargeback for the first time, and you are in a degree/certificate program at another New Jersey county college, **you must submit a description of the program, your college acceptance letter, and your placement testing information (refer to Section A, item #9)**. If you are a non-degree student taking a course(s) at another New Jersey county college, **you must submit course descriptions**. Chargeback Request Forms submitted without this information will be returned.
 - If you were previously approved for Chargeback, for a degree/certificate, a Chargeback Request Form must be completed and submitted for the upcoming semester with a copy of the approved Chargeback Request Form from the previous semester. If you are taking a course(s) only, please provide course description(s). If you are planning on changing your major, you will need to follow directions as a new Chargeback applicant (see Section B, #2a).
- Chargeback for programs/course(s) must be requested each semester. Chargeback requests for a Summer session program or course(s) must be

- requested for each Summer session.
- Applicants for Chargeback should submit their request as soon as possible.
The deadline for submission is:

FALL – October 1

SPRING – February 15

SUMMER – July 15

- Chargeback documentation may be delivered or mailed to the following address:

Raritan Valley Community College

Office of Enrollment Services

PO Box 3300

Somerville, NJ 08876

- A decision can usually be made within 24 hours of receipt of the Chargeback Request Form. Whether a Chargeback is approved or denied, the paperwork will be mailed back to the applicant. If you would prefer to pick up the Chargeback in person, please include a note with your application containing a phone number where you can be reached, when it is ready.
- Submit the approved Chargeback Request Form to the appropriate county office (see Section C, #1).

Note: If you register for a program or course(s) different from the one for which Chargeback was granted, you will have to refund the money and will no longer be eligible to receive Chargeback for any program/course(s) taken in the future.

How do I submit the approved Chargeback Request Form?

1. Applicants for Chargeback are required to submit the approved Chargeback Request Form* to the appropriate office, as indicated below:
 - Hunterdon County Residents
Finance Office
Administration Building
71 Main Street – Building # 1
Flemington, NJ 08822
(908) 788-1120
 - Somerset County Residents
County Treasurer's Office
County Administration Building
20 Grove Street, 3rd Floor
Somerville, NJ 08876
(908) 231-7631

*The county office determines residency eligibility for Chargeback.

2. Somerset County applicants requesting Chargeback must present the approved Chargeback Request Form in person. A second party may not present the

Chargeback documentation to the County Office. Applicants must present a valid driver's license or voter registration card when submitting their Chargeback Request Form to the county office.

3. Hunterdon County applicants may submit the Chargeback Request Form through the mail or in person. If you are mailing the approved request, it must be notarized. For a list of notary publics in your area, check your local telephone directory. Applicants must present a valid driver's license or voter registration card when submitting their Chargeback Request Form to the county office.

[back to Advising & Counseling FAQs](#)

Raritan Valley Community College
<http://www.raritanval.edu/Counseling/advising/chargeback.html>
Last updated 9/26/2003 by AKT, 11/7/2003 by D.M.

information on website.

Financial Aid FAQs

1. **What types of Financial Aid are available at RVCC?**
 - Federal Pell Grant – Applied for by filling out the FAFSA application
 - NJ Tuition Aid Grant – Applied for by filling out the FAFSA application
 - Federal Stafford Student Loans – After filling out the FAFSA, students should come to the RVCC Financial Aid Office to fill out student loan forms.
 - RVCC Academic Scholarships – Filling out the FAFSA application is not required. These scholarships are awarded based on a student's academic achievement, not their financial need. However, some RVCC scholarships require financial need, so filing a FAFSA application is always advisable.
 - Outside Scholarships – You should search for these on your own. These scholarships are not affiliated with RVCC. www.fastweb.com is a leading internet site for scholarships.
 - Federal Work Study – If, after filling out the FAFSA application, you have unmet financial need, you may apply for Federal Work Study.
2. **Are there deadlines for applying for Financial Aid at RVCC?**
 - No, You can apply for Financial Aid anytime during the semester in which you wish to receive aid.
3. **Are there separate applications for State & Federal Grants?**
 - No, when a you fill out the FAFSA application, you are applying for both Federal and State aid at the same time
4. **What is a SAR?**
 - The Student Aid Report or SAR, is the government's response to your FAFSA application. The SAR will let you know if you're eligible for grant assistance. It will also let you make corrections to your FAFSA application by providing you with the answers you gave when you applied. If you see that you made an error, just correct your SAR and mail it back to the government at the address provided. The changes will be made and a new SAR will be sent to you shortly

there after. If you have your federal pin # www.pin.gov , you can make the corrections to your FAFSA online. Making corrections online will save you valuable time.

5. **What is an EFC # ?**
 - This is your Expected Family Contribution. This number allows the Financial Aid Office to determine a your financial aid eligibility
6. **What is the SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY?**
 - [Click here for details](#)
7. **Can I use my Financial Aid to purchase books?**
 - Yes, if you have excess financial aid funds beyond your tuition and fees, you may use this credit in the bookstore during the first 10 days of the semester. After the 10th day of the semester, the bookstore will no longer accept financial aid book vouchers. If you still have financial aid money left over after book purchases, you will receive a refund check for the excess in late October (Fall Semester) or late March (Spring Semester).
8. **Are non-credit courses covered under Financial Aid?**
 - You **are** eligible to receive aid for ESL & remedial coursework.
 - Courses offered through Corporate & Continuing Education are **not** eligible for financial aid.
9. **How is Dependent/Independent status determined for Financial Aid?**
 - This status is determined by the answers you give in Step 3 of the FAFSA application.
Questions in Step #3:
 - Were you born before January 1, 1981?
 - At the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year, will you be working on a master's or doctorate program?
 - As of today, are you married?
 - Do you have children who receive more than half of their support from you?
 - Do you have dependents (other than children or spouse) who live with and who receive more than half their support from you, now and through June 30, 2005?
 - Are both your parents deceased, or are you or were you (until age 18) a ward/dependent of the court?
 - Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces?

If you answer YES to any question in Step 3, you're Independent, if you answer NO to all the questions, you are Dependent.
10. **Can I take out a Stafford Student Loan without having filled out the FAFSA?**
 - NO, You must fill out the FAFSA application before you can proceed with the Stafford Student Loan
11. **If the information on my FAFSA application doesn't reflect my current financial situation, what can I do?**
 - After getting back the results of the FAFSA, you may submit a letter and supporting documents, showing your current financial situation, to the Financial Aid Office. The Financial Aid Office will review your documentation and make any necessary adjustments.

12. Do I have to be a full-time student to receive Financial Aid?

- NO, You can receive the Pell Grant taking as little as 1 credit. The Tuition Aid Grant requires a minimum of 6 credits. Student Loans require a minimum of 6 credits.

13. What is RVCC's Federal School Code?

- RVCC's Federal School Code is 007731

14. Do I have to pay back Pell Grant or Tuition Aid Grant money?

- NO, you do not have to pay back any Grant money you receive

Email Questions to finaid@raritanval.edu, or call 908-526-1200 ext.8273

[Back to Financial Aid Main Page](#)

Raritan Valley Community College
<http://www.raritanval.edu/FinancialAid/faq.html>

I want to drop or add a course this semester. What do I do?

First, check the academic calendar for important dates regarding last days to add or drop courses.

You should fill out a Drop/Add form, available in the Student Enrollment Center Office.

Other things to keep in mind:

- If you are receiving financial aid, you should check with the Office of Financial Aid to see if a course drop will affect your award.
- Also, if dropping a course affects your status as a full-time student, you will want to make sure that you are in compliance with possible health insurance stipulations.

How much money will I get back from dropping a course?

Students should refer to the [refund schedule](#) to determine amount of refund they will receive based on the drop date.

All students will have a \$55 non-refundable deposit deducted from their refund.

Will the dropped course be on my academic transcript?

It depends on how far into the semester you drop the course. The course schedule booklet will tell you the last day you can withdraw from a course without a "W" or "WF" showing on your record.

If you do not officially withdraw from a course or if you just stop attending the course you are not withdrawn. You will receive a grade of "F" on your transcript.

[back to Advising & Counseling FAQs](#)

EOF program frequently asked questions

What is EOF?

The Educational Opportunity Fund program (EOF) is a state grant which provides eligible students with academic support and additional economic assistance to help them earn their college degree. Eligible students receive year round services including:

- Assistance with the admissions and enrollment process
- Academic advisement including individual one-on-one meetings for registration every semester
- Financial aid assistance
- Personal counseling
- General career counseling
- General transfer counseling
- Academic support services

Who qualifies for EOF?

When students fill out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) they are requesting to be considered for two different types of aid: Federal and state (Pell and Tuitions aid grant) Students who qualify for the tuition aid grant may qualify for the EOF program as well. These are some additional criteria to qualify for the program:

- Students need to be a US citizen or a permanent resident
- Applicants need to have established NJ residency at least a year prior to receiving state aid
- Have a high school diploma or equivalent
- Meet the minimum income eligibility determined by the state (eligibility is based on household size and gross income. Verification of income will be required).
- Needs to enroll full time (12 credits or more)
- Student has to be brand new or never received financial aid before.
- Needs to be willing to participate in the six-week summer program

What do I need to do to be considered for the program?

- Fill out and submit the EOF application to the EOF office
- Fill out the financial aid application (FAFSA)
- Submit tax returns for the previous year for both parents and students (your application will not be reviewed until you submit tax returns)
- Submit proof of citizenship status or permanent residency in the US

How do I apply?

FIRST STEP: Apply

Submit an Application for Admission along with the non-refundable \$25 application fee (\$225 for International Students applying for an *F-1 or M-1* visa) to the Student Enrollment Center, PO Box 3300, Somerville, New Jersey 08876. Applications can be submitted by mail, fax or in person. You can also apply online by going to www.raritanval.edu/admissions, clicking on "Admissions Information" and then clicking on "Apply Online Now" and following these steps:

- Create a Login ID and Password by clicking on "First time user account creation"
- Complete requested information
- Submit application with \$25 non-refundable application fee

After students submit their application, they can log into the Admissions System with their login and password and receive updates on the status of their application and admissions requirements.

Applications will be received on an on-going basis.

NOTE: Students who are not interested in pursuing a degree or certificate at RVCC can register for classes using the Registration Form at the back of the College's course schedules. Non-degree-seeking applicants are not required to submit proof of immunization, official high school or college transcripts or complete placement testing unless required as proof of meeting course prerequisites. Non-degree-seeking students are limited to 9 credits per semester.

First Time Freshman

- Submit Application with \$25 Application Fee
- Submit official final high school transcript
- Complete placement testing
- Comply with the State of New Jersey requirements for immunization for Measles, Mumps & Rubella
- Arrange a "College Advisement 101" appointment by visiting our website www.raritanval.edu and clicking on "Advising" from the dropdown menu on the home page
- Register for course(s)

Transfer Student

- Submit Application with \$25 Application Fee
- Submit previous college(s) official transcript(s)
- If less than 12 college credits earned, also submit final high school transcript
- Complete placement testing, if required
- Arrange an advising appointment with the Student Enrollment Center by calling 908-526-1200 ext. 8336
- Register for course(s)

Returning Students (Students who graduated from RVCC or have not attended in three or more years)

- Submit Application with \$25 Application Fee
- Submit official final high school transcript
- Submit official transcript(s) from all other colleges attended
- Complete placement testing, if required
- Arrange an advising appointment with the Student Enrollment Center
- Register for course(s)

Visiting Student

- Submit Application with \$25 Application Fee
- Provide proof of prerequisite requirement or approval letter from primary college
- Register for course(s)

International Student

Non-citizens who wish to attend Raritan Valley Community College under an *F-1* or *M-1* visa must obtain an *I-20 Form* from the College prior to applying for a visa or

registration. A *TOEFL* test must be taken with a score of 173 (computer version) for admission to RVCC. Information on necessary documentation and procedures can be obtained from International Student Services located in the Student Enrollment Center in the College Center, 908-218-8864, or on its web page. All international (*F-1 or M-1*) students have a non-refundable application fee of \$225.

Do I need to take a placement test?

STEP 2: Take Placement Test

Placement Testing is conducted at our Testing Center on the North Branch Campus. No appointment is needed. Make sure to bring a picture ID. Regular Hours: Monday-Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Hours are subject to change. Phone: 908-526-1200, ext. 8424

Students who are seeking a degree are required to take placement tests for reading, writing, and mathematics prior to enrolling. Students do not need to take the reading and writing placement tests if they provide an SAT score report showing a "Verbal" or "Critical Reading" score of at least 515, or an ACT English score of at least 21, or proof of taking a college level English course, equivalent English placement exam, or at least 24 college credits at a regionally accredited college. Students do not need to take the math placement test if they provide proof of taking a college-level math course or equivalent math placement exam at another regionally accredited college. An SAT math score of 500 (or ACT math score of 20) will place a student into foundation level Algebra Mod 1, but the student has the option to test for placement into college level math. An SAT math score of 550 (or ACT math score of 26) will place a student into college level math, but the student has the option to test for placement in the calculus sequence. Students should consult an academic advisor to determine the appropriate math sequence for their major.

Students whose native language is not English are required to take the Compass ESL Placement Test prior to enrolling. The Testing Center does not require an appointment. All students will be required to show a valid form of identification prior to testing.

How do I register for class?

STEP 3: Register for Classes

New Full-Time Students: You are required to attend a group registration session, College Advisement 101. The session will be held during the day during registration periods. The registration process will take approximately two hours. To register, visit

our website at www.raritanval.edu and click on "Advising" from the dropdown menu on the homepage.

Transfer Students: You should obtain official transcripts from all the colleges you attended and then call the Student Enrollment Center at 908-526-1200 ext. 8336 to schedule an appointment with an academic advisor. The advisor will review your transcripts and assist you in registering for classes.

New Part-time, Non Degree Seeking Students: You are not required to meet with an advisor or take the placement test unless you are enrolling in English as Second Language courses or your native language is not English. Use the registration from found in the College course schedule: You can register for classes in person, by fax or by mail.

Mail: PO Box 3300, Somerville, NJ 08876
Fax: (908) 704-3442
In Person: *Student Enrollment Center:* First floor, College Center, North Branch Campus. Regular Office Hours: Monday-Thursday 8:30 to 6 p.m., Friday 8:30 to 5 p.m.*
Franklin Center: 630 Franklin Blvd. (Bank of America Building), Somerset. Regular Office Hours: Mon - Thurs: 8:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., Fri: 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.*

New students enrolling in English as a Second Language courses or whose native language is not English are required to take the Compass ESL Placement Test prior to enrolling. The test can be taken at the College's Testing Center on the North Branch Campus. No appointment is required.

Visiting Student: Prior to signing up for classes at RVCC, make sure you get prior approval from your home college for the course.

*Hours subject to change

Front Door Committee **FAQ of the Testing Center**

- 1) **What are the Testing Center hours?**
 - a. The Testing Center hours are Monday-Thursday 8:30am-8:00pm, Friday 9:00am-4:30pm, and Saturday 9:00am-1:00pm. The Testing Center is closed Friday and Saturday during the summer.
- 2) **When can I take the placement test?**

- a. Placement tests are administered on a walk-in basis; you do not need an appointment. The Testing Center is open Monday-Thursday 8:30am-8:00pm, Friday 9:00am-4:30pm, and Saturday 9:00am-1:00pm. A student would have to allow enough time to finish the placement test before the Testing Center closes. When a student arrives for their first time testing the Testing Center staff will determine whether the student will need to take the ESL (English as a Second Language) or Compass test.
- 3) How long does the placement test take?**
- a. The placement test is not a timed test. A student should allow themselves at least 2-3 hours to take the test, although they may finish earlier or later than the estimated time.
- 4) How do I go about getting started at RVCC?**
- a. A student must first apply to admissions and pay the \$25 admissions fee. After a student has been admitted to RVCC, they will take their placement tests and then enroll for classes.
- 5) What kind of ID can I use?**
- a. A student must present a photo ID in order to take the placement test. Acceptable forms of photo ID may include a driver's license, student ID, or passport, for example.
- 6) What do I have to bring to take the placement test?**
- a. A student must bring a photo ID in order to take the placement test. If they are retesting, they must bring a check or money order. The cost to retest is \$10 per section.
- 7) How do I prepare for the placement test?**
- a. A student may come to the Testing Center and pick up a Compass Preparation Booklet, which offers instructions about the placement test and sample questions. The Compass Preparation Booklet is also available online at www.raritanval.edu under the "Testing" Quick Link.
- 8) How much does the placement test cost?**
- a. There is no fee the first time a student takes the placement test (ESL or Compass). They are allowed to retest each section (Reading, Writing, and Math for Compass or Grammar, Reading, and Listening for ESL) two times for a fee of \$10 per section, payable by check or money order.
- 9) What do my scores mean?**
- a. When a student completes their placement test on the computer their scores will print out automatically, at which point a Testing Center staff member will explain what the scores mean. Each student will receive a copy of their scores along with a chart that shows each test section, their score, and which class is required based on their score. The placement test can be taken a total of 3 times, with a fee the

2nd and 3rd time of \$10 per section payable by check or money order.

10) How do I request my scores to be sent to another school?

- a. The Testing Center can mail, fax, or give the student their scores in person. If they call requesting the scores to be mailed, we can only mail them to the address shown in Banner.

11) What should I do if I have placement scores from another college?

- a. If a student has placement scores from another college they can be faxed, mailed, or brought in person to the Testing Center for a staff member to convert the scores. This will determine the students' placement and inform them whether they need to retest or make an appointment with an advisor to enroll in classes.

12) How long do I have to make up a faculty exam?

- a. A Professor fills out a cover sheet for each exam they drop off at the Testing Center with specific instructions about the exam. They include a latest date to take the exam, which is when the student needs to come in by to take their exam. If this date has expired when the student comes to take their exam, the Testing Center staff will not be allowed to give the student the exam. The Professor would need to contact the Testing Center if they choose to change the date. Every student coming to take an exam must present a photo ID. There is no fee to take a faculty exam.

13) Do I need to take a Foreign Language Placement test?

- a. The Foreign Language Placement test must be taken by any student who would like to continue a study in a foreign language or by a student who has taken that language within the past five years. Foreign Language Placement tests are offered in French, Spanish, and German (there is no foreign language placement test for Italian). The student must come to the Testing Center to complete the appropriate forms and take the test. There is no fee to take the test and it can only be taken once. The test is graded by the foreign language department and the student will be notified via phone about their placement.

14) How do I register for a CLEP test?

- a. A student has to fill out a registration form, either in person or print the form online (www.collegeboard.com/clep) and mail it back to the Testing Center with a \$40 non-refundable proctor fee, payable by check or money order. Once the registration form and fee are received an appointment will be made during our CLEP testing times, Monday-Thursday 9:00am-4:00pm and Friday 9:00am-2:00pm. The CLEP exam

is \$60, payable by check to CLEP or by credit card. The exams are 1 ½ hours and administered on the computer. An unofficial score report will print out at the end of the exam, unless there's an essay. An official score report will be sent to their school within 2-3 weeks. A student must show a photo ID, as well as an ID with their name and signature.

15) How do I register for a DANTES test?

- a. A student contacts the Testing Center and lets them know which DANTES test they are interested in taking. Testing Center staff orders the test and contacts the student within 7-10 days when the test arrives, at which point the student makes an appointment to take the test within 30 days. There is a \$40 proctor fee payable by check or money order, as well as the DANTES fee of \$70 payable by credit card or money order. DANTES tests are administered by paper and pencil and can be scheduled anytime Monday-Saturday. For more DANTES information please visit www.getcollegecredit.com.

16) What is the process for a Distance Learning exam?

- a. Distance Learning exams are proctored exams that are mailed, faxed, or online from Institutions all over the country. When students are looking for a proctor they would contact the Testing Center. Usually the student will fax or bring in a proctor request form to be filled out by the proctor. The student is responsible for contacting the Testing Center to set up an appointment and to confirm that the test has arrived. For all proctored exams students must present a photo ID and pay a proctor fee of \$40 per test on the day of their exams, payable by check or money order.

17) How do I arrange for a Department Exam to exempt me from a class?

- a. A student would coordinate a department exam through Advising and Counseling prior to coming to the Testing Center. The fee for a department exam is \$40/credit, payable by check or money order.

18) What is the process for GED testing?

- a. A person interested in taking the GED test must contact the Testing Center to make an appointment for the two day test. At that point they will be reminded to bring: 1) Photo ID such as driver's license, passport, or county ID; 2) Non-Photo ID such as social security card, birth certificate, or credit card; 3) \$25 money order. Testing starts at 9:00am, with registration the beginning of day one.

19) When are GED tests offered?

- a. The GED test is offered throughout the year. A current list of GED test dates is updated on www.raritanval.edu under the "Testing" Quick Links.

20) Where can I take a GED preparation course?

- a. RVCC administers the GED test, but does not offer GED preparation courses. GED preparation guides include resources at local bookstores, as well as many helpful websites such as www.gedpractice.com, www.contemporarybooks.com, and www.studyguidezone.com. The Somerset/Hunterdon Education Commission (908-203-5092) is a resource for this county for preparation courses. For other counties with possible GED preparation courses please contact the Testing Center.

What nursing programs are offered by Raritan Valley Community College?

RVCC offers two (2) nursing programs which prepare students to take the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN). Both programs lead toward an Associate of Applied Science Degree and are considered career programs. The college does, however, have articulation agreements with several BSN programs so students completing their Associates Degree at RVCC can transfer a number of their credits into a BSN program at a four year college.



The generic NURSING / RN program consists of four (4) semesters of nursing and non-nursing academic courses and is open to anyone who is 18 years of age or older and has a high school diploma or a GED.

The NURSING / PNAD program is a very competitive program consisting of a six (6) week summer session course followed by two (2) full semesters of nursing and non-nursing academic courses. This program is open to anyone 18 years of age or older who has a high school diploma or a GED, is a currently LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSE (LPN) in the State of New Jersey, and has graduated from his or her LPN program with an 85 overall GPA.

What is the application process?

Packets of information that include detailed information on each of the two (2) Nursing programs are available in the Academic Recruiting Office. Anyone 18 years of age or older with a high school diploma or a GED can apply to the generic NURSING / RN program. Only currently Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) in the state of New Jersey, who are 18 years of age or older, have a high school diploma or a GED, and have an 85 overall GPA from their practical nurse program can apply to the NURSING / PNAD program.

**International students (non-citizens) are not eligible for application to the nursing programs at RVCC.*

Do Nursing students usually follow the prescribed curriculum?

Due to the difficulty of the nursing courses, most nursing students try and take the majority of their non-nursing courses, i.e., Anatomy and Physiology,

English, Psychology, etc., prior to beginning their nursing courses. Non-nursing courses can be taken either during the day or at night, full or part-time. Nursing courses are offered on a full-time basis during both the day and in our Evening/Weekend Program.

What are the requirements for entrance into the first nursing course, FOUNDATIONS OF NURSING (NURS 101) in the generic NURSING / RN program?

As of December 15, 2004, students are considered **qualified** for entrance into the first nursing course when they have completed:

- High school graduation or GED, **and**
- college level Anatomy and Physiology I & II, each course must be four college credits, include a laboratory component, and have at least a "C" grade, (BIOL124 & 1125 at RVCC) **and**
- all remedial courses required, with math completed through elementary algebra, (Math022 & 023 at RVCC) **and**
- have an overall 2.75 GPA at RVCC or at most recent college attended if no courses have been taken at RVCC..

How many students are accepted into the first nursing course, FOUNDATIONS OF NURSING (NURS 101), in the generic NURSING / RN program?

Only 80 students are allowed into the day program and 20 students in the evening/weekend program. This first nursing course for both day and evening/weekend is offered only in a Fall Semester.

What is the process for entrance into the NURSING / RN program?

Students interested must first file a complete application, which includes paying the required fee and having official high school and / or college transcripts sent. Application packets are available in the Academic Recruiting Office. The student's credentials are evaluated as to how qualified he or she is for the first nursing course, FOUNDATIONS OF NURSING (101).

If qualified for the first nursing course, the student is sent a letter stating the date that he or she is qualified. This date is usually the date when all materials, i.e., application, official transcripts, etc., have been received by the college.

If not qualified, the student is sent a letter stating what is need for qualification. When the student completes the requirements for qualification a letter stating that he or she is now qualified, and the date he or she qualified, is sent.

The first 80 students qualified for the day program, and the first 20 students qualified for the evening/weekend program, in date order, are sent letters on how to register for the first nursing course when material becomes available at the end of April. The remaining students are placed on a wait list and are offered seats when they become available throughout the summer.

What are the requirements for entrance into the first nursing course in the NURSING / PNAD (LADDER) program, NURSING TRANSITION (NURS 130)?

As of August 31, 2002, students are considered **qualified** for entrance into the first nursing course when they have completed:

- high school graduation or GED, **and**
- all remedial courses required, with math completed through elementary algebra, (MATH022 & 023 at RVCC) **and**
- college level Anatomy and Physiology I & II, each course must be four college credits, include a laboratory component, and have at least a "C" grade, (BIOL124 & 1125 at RVCC) **and**
- have a overall 2.5 GPA at RVCC or at most recent college, if no courses have been taken at RVCC.
- students must have also worked for the past three (3) out of last five (5) years if they graduated more than 5 years ago from their PN Program.
- students are also required to pass a Pharmacology Calculations Exam before starting Nursing Transitions (NURS 130)

How many students are accepted into the first nursing course, NURSING TRANSITION (NURS 130), in the NURSING / PNAD program?

Between 15 – 20 students are accepted into the first nursing course which is offered full-time during the day for six (6) weeks beginning late May through June. The number of students allowed into the course depends on the number of generic nursing students passing their second nursing course.

What is the process for entrance into the NURSING / PNAD program?

Students qualified for the program must first file a complete application which includes payment of the fee and having official high school, LPN school and college transcripts sent. Application packets specifically for this program are available in the Academic Recruiting Office. The student's credentials are evaluated as to how qualified he or she is for the first nursing course, NURSING TRANSITIONS (NURS 130), which is a six (6) week course beginning in the summer and offered only during the day.

If qualified for the first nursing course, the student is sent a letter stating the date he or she is qualified. This date is usually the date when all materials, i.e., application, official transcripts, etc., have been received by the college.

If not qualified, the student is sent a letter stating what is needed for qualification. When the student completes the requirements for qualification a letter stating the date he or she completed the requirements is sent.

The first 15-20 students qualified, in date order, are sent letters on how to register for the first nursing course when materials become available at the end of March. The remaining students are placed on a waiting list and are offered seats when and if they become available.

For a Nursing Admissions Packet - Please call Academic Recruiting at (908) 526-1200 Extension 6688.

Updated by Alberta Jaeger, November 2002

[back to
Advising &
Counseling
FAQs](#)

Raritan Valley Community College
<http://www.raritanval.edu/Counseling/advising/nursing.html>
Last updated 9/26/2003 by AKT

8. RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Create a more organized and structured Admissions Packet with a checklist included.
2. Improve layout of student services departments, adding more accessibility to them and “movability” between them.
3. Cross-train all departments, academic and administrative, on basic functions of the department by making accessible a comprehensive FAQ list online.
4. Create a Welcome Center that is staffed by day and evening classified staff members, who will serve as a central repository for all RVCC information.
5. Perspective students should be made aware of the payment plan (Sallie Mae) and the terms of the payment plan prior to registering.
6. Perspective student should be made aware that the dropping/adding of classes is their responsibility as well as notifying Sallie Mae of doing so.

Raritan Valley Community College Front Door Project Web Site Survey

From what perspective are you completing this survey? (please circle one)

Potential Student

Parent/Family Member

Community Member

How web savvy are you? (please circle one)

Very Savvy

Pretty Savvy

Savvy

A little Savvy

Not very Savvy

Please use the website www.raritanval.edu to find the answers to these questions. You don't need to write down the info you find; just decide how difficult or easy it was to find the information.

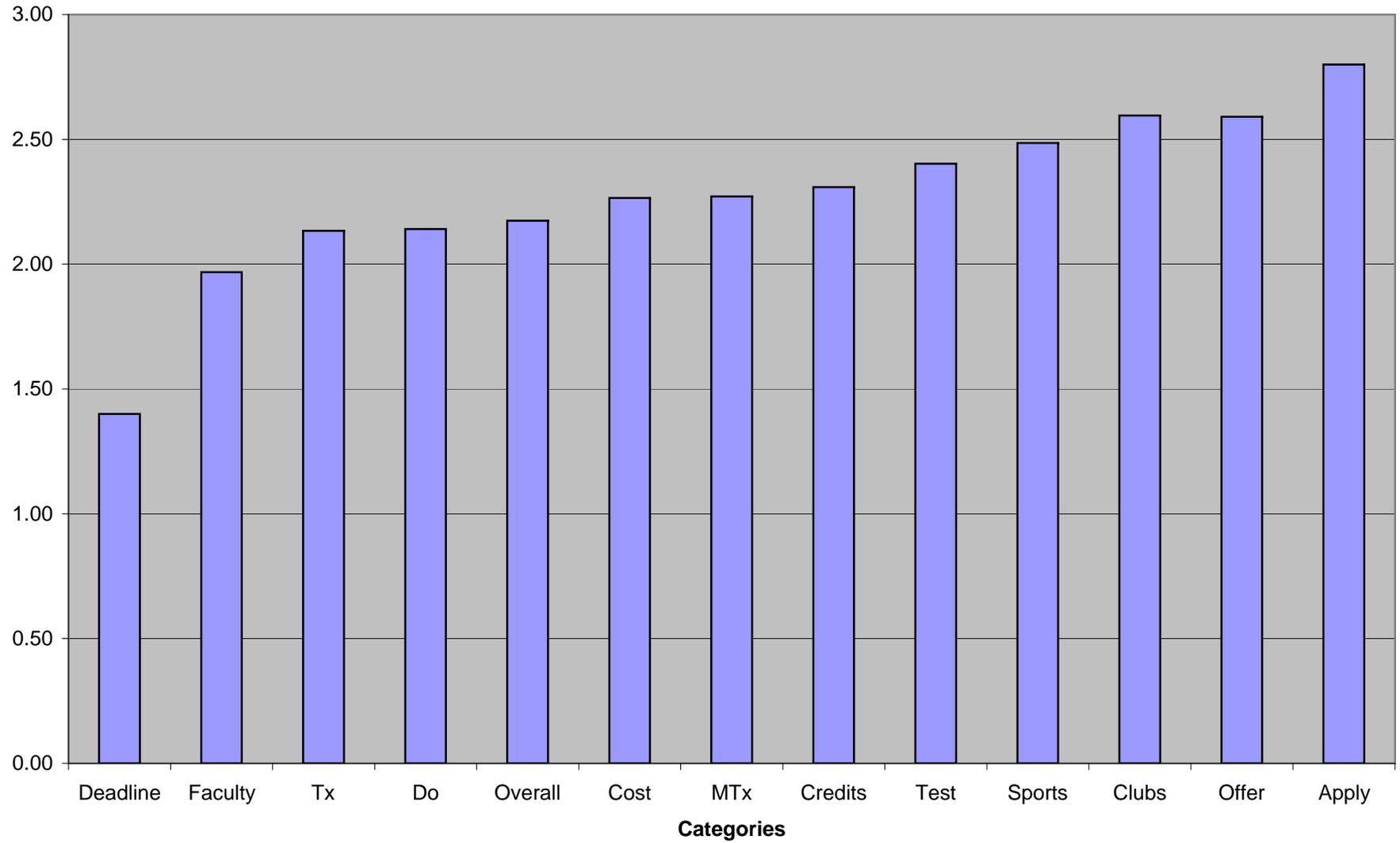
How easy was it to answer this question?
Greatest Difficulty **Greatest Ease**

What must I do to apply?	5	4	3	2	1
What are the deadlines?	5	4	3	2	1
How much does it cost (not just the per credit amount but all the fees)?	5	4	3	2	1
What is placement testing, and what if I already took the SATs?	5	4	3	2	1
Will all my credits transfer to 4-year schools in New Jersey and outside of NJ? Can I transfer without an Associate's Degree?	5	4	3	2	1
What school sports are available? How competitive are they?	5	4	3	2	1
What other social activities and clubs are available?	5	4	3	2	1
Choose one of these five majors and find the following information:	Nursing	Accounting	English		
		Pre-Med	Psychology		
Does RVCC offer this major?	5	4	3	2	1
How many credits in this major?	5	4	3	2	1
Who are some of the faculty members in this major?	5	4	3	2	1
What can I do with this major?	5	4	3	2	1
How well does this major transfer?	5	4	3	2	1
Overall, how easy was it to navigate the website?	5	4	3	2	1

****Feel free to write any comments you have about your experience on our web site.****

Thank you so much for taking the time to fill this out. Your feedback will be very helpful.

FDP Mystery Shopper Results



February 27, 2007

David Livingston, Superintendent
Somerset County School Districts
92 East Main Street
Somerville, New Jersey 08876

Dear David:

Thank you for your interest in the recommendations of three reports of the Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, *The Neglected 'R*, *A Ticket to Work*, and most recently, *School Reform*. Copies of all three are enclosed. Recommendations of the Commission are already part of the Writing Agenda; local control, doubling the amount of time spent in writing, mentoring, integrating technology, measuring writing, researching our practice.

Thank you, too, for suggesting a meeting to get us started, one that can include teachers and administrators, language arts supervisors and curriculum coordinators interested in the impact of writing-centered professional development. Perhaps we can meet at the College. I would like to include the executive leadership of Centenary College as well as the College. One of the recommendations of the National Commission that has not yet been addressed is raising public awareness about the power of writing to learn as well as learning to write, its importance across all grade levels and disciplines, and its impact on the imagination and on innovation.

It is so important that the Commission on Writing, sponsored by the College Board, recommends a "writing revolution," to place the teaching of writing at the center of schooling nationwide. They suggest that:

- A comprehensive writing policy should double the amount of time students spend writing, require a writing plan in every school district, insist that writing be taught in all subject and on all grade levels, and require successful completion of a course in writing theory and practice; and that
- Higher education should address the special roles it has to play in improving writing. All prospective teachers, no matter their discipline, should be provided with courses in how to teach writing. Meanwhile writing instruction in colleges and universities should be improved for all students.

The revolution requires leadership from educational stakeholders at state and local levels, including university-school partnerships. In Fall 2005, Raritan Valley Community College formed a University Center partnership with Centenary College to effect a bottom-up model of reform, one rooted in the culture of community college stakeholders and sending districts. A description of the Writing Agenda program is enclosed, including an option that can lead to a Certificate in the Teaching of Writing. The foundation course, an Introduction to the Writing Agenda, can be offered on site in school districts during the school year as well as at the College in the summer.

We look forward to a conversation to promote the Writing Agenda locally in the short term and then hopefully statewide in the long term. We are a “Nation at Risk” more than ever. More than ever the mission of education is crucial if we are to confront the challenges of our time. The Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges gives us an agenda for a way forward.

I’ll wait to hear from you about a date and place for the meeting.

Sincerely,

Dr. Angela Bodino
Professor of English
RVCC Coordinator, the Writing Agenda of the University Partnership
1998 New Jersey Carnegie Professor of the Year

Cc: Dr. Constance Mierendorf; Senior Academic Vice-President
Dr. Heather Dunham, Dean for Business and Education
Advisory Board of the Writing Agenda

The Writing Agenda:

*A Graduate
Certificate in
the Teaching
of Writing.*

