Faculty from the Learning Assistance Center and Computer Learning Center have designed six short courses for the Summer College Preparation Institute, a new offering by the Office of Community and Professional Education. Each course targets a set of skills that high school students need to transition to college work and students returning to academia want to refresh. A seventh course, created by the Retention Office, will prepare parents to assist their students in succeeding at Hudson Valley Community College.

James LaBate will be teaching courses on college writing and the research process. Judy Zamurs will teach “Math Essentials for the College Bound” while Don Frament will teach “Introduction to College Learning Skills” and “Active Learning for the College Classroom.” Each of the classes is held one weekday evening for three hours.

Maria Cholakis, who will be providing an introduction to using the computer for college coursework, says her goal is for students to gain some proficiency with computers. “Such proficiency will help the students concentrate on their course content without having to worry about the mechanics of the computer and its applications,” she notes.

“My Baby’s Going to College!” is designed for parents who did not attend college or who want to know how to assist their children in meeting the challenges they will face as first year students. Led by Kevin McNeelge, the two-hour class will explain measures of academic progress and success, introduce campus resources, and review the college’s policies and expectations.

The need for courses such as these is borne out by recent studies. Stanford University’s Bridge Project, for example, conducted extensive surveys of high school students in six states. The project’s final report notes, “While the majority of students aspire to attend college after high school, their knowledge of specific college preparation issues was sporadic and vague” (Venezia, p. 32). The survey recorded a common perception that “just getting by” and graduating from high school was sufficient to succeed in college (Venezia, p. 31). Hudson Valley Community College seeks to increase students’ (and their parents’) knowledge of college expectations through Freshman Fundamentals courses.


For students who want more extensive preparation for college-level academic work, Smart Start offers a blend of instruction and activities. This year, Hudson Valley Community College is offering two sessions of this popular summer program, each session running for 10 days over two weeks.

Smart Start includes 850 minutes each of writing and pre-algebra instruction. The program also includes daily workshops on such topics as classroom etiquette, instructor expectations, and time management; an orientation to the campus; and an introduction to the Academic Computing Environment. Participants also have the opportunity for individual and group study with their instructors and peer tutors each afternoon.

Students who have enrolled in Smart Start mention increased confidence in their ability to succeed as the greatest benefit of the program. One Smart Start graduate commented, “I feel like a stronger student and feel capable of attending college.”

Academic advisors are encouraged to recommend Smart Start to students who need to develop their college-level skills. For more information, please call x7230 or write to mcneelge@hvcc.edu.
Meeting the Need for Evening and Weekend Academic Support

If you haven’t noticed yet, Hudson Valley has an active academic nightlife. The campus also is the destination of choice for dedicated weekend scholars.

The Learning Assistance Center and Computer Learning Center are open in the evening until 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays. Professional and student tutors and faculty and staff members provide assistance and instruction. One professional tutor, Frank Padula, has been offering a chemistry study group on Sunday mornings; between 30 and 40 students attend each session. This semester, the Retention Office asked evening instructors to recommend classmate tutors to organize and lead study groups for their classes. The LAC assists in arranging space for study group meetings and pays the classmate tutors. Instructors who want information about support for study groups can contact Don Frament at framedon@hvcc.edu or Kevin McNeelge at mcneelge@hvcc.edu

Don’t forget: Academic support is available at any time through the Online Learning Assistance Center. See page 6 for more information.

We all learn by experience but some of us have to go to summer school.
— Peter De Vries (1910-1993)

WANTED
Strategies to Motivate Students

✦ What activities/projects do you use to actively engage students during class?
✦ How do you respond to students who are apathetic?
✦ Have you seen any recent research on changing the perspectives and behaviors of unmotivated students?
✦ Are you sharing your successful strategies with your colleagues?
✦ Have you considered leading a discussion on student motivation in one of Hudson Valley’s forums for faculty development?

Early Warning System Update

At the start of this semester, Welcome letters were sent to 10,341 students. Students were reminded by Dr. Carolyn Curtis of the many academic support services available at Hudson Valley Community College. In February, faculty members initiated Early Alert letters to 1,063 students, asking their students to meet with them about the students’ performance in class. Then, at the end of Spring Break, 2,417 students who had midterm GPAs below 2.00 received Midterm letters recommending a course of action to close the semester successfully; 249 new students with midterm GPAs of 2.00 and above received congratulatory letters with suggestions for continuing their success. All Midterm letters invited students to take the “Midterm Check” survey (see right).

A new system for generating the second element of Hudson Valley’s Early Warning System, the Early Alert letter, is on schedule for implementation in Fall 2006 semester. The new procedures will allow instructors to request letters be sent to students who are performing poorly in class almost anytime during the semester. Access will be available through WIREd. Bette Frisino, director of student services information technology, and Meta Quell, senior computer programmer analyst, have been working with the SICAS Center and the college’s Retention Office on the functions of this new web application. Further information on this new procedure will be announced through department chairs and the Campus Chronicle.

Midterm Check Survey

The Midterm Check survey is a self-assessment tool students can use to gauge their engagement in the classes they are currently taking. Permanently located on the Online Learning Assistance Center web page, the survey presents students with a series of statements that they agree or disagree with using a five-point scale. The results, which are printed immediately, help students understand their learning styles and what actions they can take now to improve their academic performance.

To access the survey:
✦ Go to http://olac.hvcc.edu
✦ Click “Academic Support”
✦ Log in
✦ Click “Learning Strategies Resources”
✦ Click “Learning Assessment Survey”
Going Behind the Numbers with Weak-in-Three Students

Most Hudson Valley Community College retention efforts are intended to reach every student on campus but some initiatives target defined populations. To a certain extent, the results are captured by retention reports generated through Banner. However, the numbers are only the starting point for measuring the success of our retention efforts. Periodically, we need to look behind the numbers to evaluate the impact of retention initiatives. To accomplish this, the Retention Office calls together individuals from around the college to form a retention work group.

This semester, one such work group has been meeting to analyze our retention of students who score weak in three subjects on the placement test. The members are: Don Frament (LAC), Suzanne Garhart (Individual Studies), Karen Marbot (Accounting), Kevin McNeelege (ISS&R), Kathy Petley (Registrar), Kathy Quirk (ISS&R), Laura Skinner (CASP), Jennifer Thompson (Contracts and Grants), and Kathy Vandenbergh (Individual Studies).

The group first met to review its purpose: to discuss initiatives currently in place to support these students, analyze Banner reports on weak-in-three students, and determine what, if any, additional support should be recommended to assist weak-in-three students to achieve their educational goals.

The members identified various initiatives currently in place that support this population, as well as the entire campus community. These included the Learning Assistance Center, learning communities in some academic programs, and ESL support. In addition, the members noted several programs that weak-in-three students are encouraged to participate in, such as developmental classes, CASP/MOP tutoring and Smart Start. Finally, the team discussed Ms. Garhart’s activities as advisor to weak-in-three students in Individual Studies, who are given an ISP major code.

At its second meeting, the team discussed the retention reports. The members determined that they needed to understand the academic progress of these students beyond the reports. This involves reviewing midterm and final grades and academic status, talking with academic departments, and investigating questions prompted by the reports.

The team members will meet once more to discuss their findings and consider whether other initiatives would benefit weak-in-three students. The group’s work, and report, is planned to be completed in early summer.

Work Group Develops Communications Plan to Engage Fall High School Instant Admits and Their Parents

The college’s Admissions representatives have been, and continue to be, very successful with high school instant admit visits. However, visits to high schools in the fall primarily generate applications from students nine to 11 months before they plan to enroll — almost 1,500 applicants in 2005. How do we keep these prospective students interested in Hudson Valley until they receive their acceptance packet in late winter and start the registration process? In early December 2005, a work group met for the first time to discuss this question.

The group members discussed what they thought high school instant admit students and their parents needed to know about Hudson Valley. They identified three “messages” that would be important to parents: the affordability of education at the college, the transferability of credits, and the employability of graduates with final degrees. For students, the team looked at providing information about their chosen academic major and campus groups and activities.

The next step was to begin thinking of how best to communicate this information to students and parents. One idea turned into a successful pilot program: hold a two-hour information session on campus. An invitation was sent to parents to attend this event, with their students, on either Feb. 11 and March 4. In total, 124 parents and 83 students attended one of these two Saturdays. They heard presentations on the low cost of attending Hudson Valley, the transfer opportunities available, and the employment potential of our graduates, as well as how to make the most of attending college by participating in class and campus activities.

Along with organizing the information sessions, the work group has explored other communications with these audiences, from the materials students receive at their high school during an instant admit visit to the information they receive from the Testing Office. They also have looked at various methods of communication, including electronic forms. The framework for a communications plan has been set, the publications that need to be revised or created have been identified, and the Retention Office is in the process of hiring an enrollment/retention services technician to coordinate the plan’s implementation in the fall.

Representatives from Admissions, the Center for Careers and Employment, the Center for Counseling and Transfer, Communications and Marketing, Financial Aid, Instructional Support Service and Retention, and Student Activities have participated in the work group. The group would like to thank Dr. Jacob Silvestri (Physical Education) for his presentation at the March 4 parent/student information session.
The Learning Assistance Center has two software packages, Inspiration® and ModuMath, that are geared toward helping students develop their skills in preparing writing projects and in mathematics. The software is loaded on computers in the LAC, where instructors are available to assist students using the programs.

Inspiration® takes students through the often-difficult process of getting started with a writing assignment. “If you’re working with a student who is struggling to begin a particular writing assignment, this program may be just what the student needs because it combines brainstorming and mapping techniques on a computer screen,” explains Jim LaBate, assistant professor.

To start, students need a topic, basic computer skills and a readiness to start thinking. The “RapidFire” tool allows the user to type and hit “enter” as ideas come to his or her mind about the paper’s main idea. The program arranges these quick thoughts literally around the main idea in text boxes. The student can add examples or other related thoughts to the text boxes.

Organizing and adding to those ideas once they are on the computer screen is simplified by the “create” mode. The user can add and delete ideas into text boxes as s/he thinks of them, type notes linked to each idea, connect or isolate ideas and add hyperlinks. The program even creates a draft outline from the student’s brainstorming results with just one click.

ModuMath is an interactive video course. It provides students with self-paced, individualized instruction in pre-algebra and algebra topics with immediate feedback. The arithmetic component consists of 51 lessons averaging 23 minutes in length and includes measurements, the metric system, some geometry and elementary statistics, as well as whole numbers, fractions, decimals, and percentages. Word problems are included in each section.

The algebra topics are divided into 32 lessons averaging 27 minutes each. Writing variable expressions and order of operations through quadratic equations and rational expressions are covered.

These programs have been used mainly by students who visit the Learning Assistance Center and are introduced to the software by LAC faculty. However, the programs can be used to support a required component of a course. This is particularly true with regard to ModuMath. Judy Anderson, assistant professor, says, “I would like to see it become a part of the course syllabus [for developmental mathematics] and become an integral part of the course grade.” Regardless, the LAC encourages faculty members to familiarize themselves with these programs and encourage students to use them.

The use of academic support software, as with all computer applications, provides students with the added opportunity to practice their computer skills. While some may see this as a limitation, the computer skills needed are no more demanding than those for using the web or writing e-mail messages. For students who need help using a mouse and navigating a computer screen, the faculty in the adjacent Computer Learning Center can help students with these computer skills.

For more information regarding Inspiration® software, please contact Jim LaBate at x7226 or labatjam@hvcc.edu. For more information regarding ModuMath software, please contact Judy Anderson at x7821 or anderjud@hvcc.edu.
The Student Outreach and Support Call Center has reached out to almost 18,200 students since the academic year began. We will make approximately 6,500 more calls before the end of August.

Since September, our callers have logged more than 469 hours on the phones — that’s almost 39 calls per hour. More important, those calls result in callers speaking to students, parents or other household members fifty percent of the time. When a person answers the phone, the callers not only deliver the information that gives the call its purpose, but also answer questions and listen to concerns. The call team members record positive comments, as well as the reasons students give when they tell us they will no longer pursue their education at Hudson Valley.

SOS Call Center activities would not be possible without the efforts of the enrollment/retention technical assistants. Thank you to the current and former Hudson Valley employees who have made calls this academic year:

Jennifer Acker (Library)
Shawnna Case (Counseling and Transfer)
Beverly Cootware (Computer Services)
John Dyson (Computer Learning Center)
Dawn Germano (Testing)
Debra Gregory (Counseling and Transfer)
Donna Hall (Registrar)
Kit Haynes (Instructional Support Services)
Jeanne Petropol (History/Phil./Social Science)
Ed Quirk (retired)
David Sarnacki (Financial Aid/Admissions)

Special thanks to Jennifer Acker for assisting with the coordination of Call Center activities in summer 2005. Thanks also to Mary-Teresa Heath and Kathy Quirk from the Office of Instructional Support Services and Retention for volunteering their time for call sessions.

**Did You Know?**

The Student Outreach and Support Call Center relies on many departments at Hudson Valley. Enrollment/retention technical assistants hail from more than a half dozen offices. Personnel from Admissions and Financial Aid also stay late during some call sessions to provide immediate service to students. In addition, the Call Center obtains its call lists from the Registrar’s Office, Admissions, and Planning and Research. The Call Center definitely is a campus-wide retention effort!

**Upcoming Call Center Sessions:**

**Encouraging Returning Students to Schedule Classes:** Monday, May 1 through Thursday, May 4.

**Encouraging New Students to Schedule Classes; Encouraging Students with Incomplete Applications to Complete Registration:** Monday July 17 through Thursday, July 20.

**Reminding Students About the Billing Process; Encouraging Conditionally Accepted Students to Complete Paperwork and Schedule Testing:** Monday, Aug. 7 through Thursday, Aug. 10.

**Encouraging Undecided Students to Attend Family Day:** Monday, Aug. 21.

*Call session dates are subject to change.*

**Call Center Employs Current, Retired and Other Former Hudson Valley Employees**

The Student Outreach and Support Call Center is staffed by current and former Hudson Valley employees with substantial knowledge of the college’s scheduling/registration process and student support services. Enrollment/retention technical assistants contact students to welcome them to Hudson Valley, remind them of registration deadlines, and guide them to student services. Call sessions are held weekday evenings periodically throughout the year. If you or someone you know would like more information about this part-time, paid position, please contact Kevin McNeelege, retention specialist, at 629-7638 or mcneelege@hvcc.edu.
### Upcoming Workshops Offered By the LAC

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SPRING SEMESTER WORKSHOPS, PLEASE VISIT THE LEARNING ASSISTANCE CENTER, LOWER LEVEL OF MARVIN LIBRARY OR VISIT OLAC.HVCC.EDU**

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### Online Learning Assistance Center

Have you visited OLAC, the Online Learning Assistance Center at http://olac.hvcc.edu? OLAC provides students with computer, writing, math and learning skills information and support.

Students can practice math exercises or take a brief survey to find their “Procrastination Quotient.” They can learn how to research a paper, develop and format the paper, use e-mail attachments, and then send their work to the Online Writing Lab for review and feedback within 48 hours. Requesting a tutor, math tutorials, and step-by-step instructions to develop a time management strategy are a few more of the many tools available. And if you would like your students to have help on a topic not covered on OLAC, there’s a suggestion box. So take a look at OLAC and spread the word!

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**Online Learning Assistance Center**

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**In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer.**

—— Albert Camus (1913-1960)