Accelerating Developmental English at Atlantic Cape: The Triad Model

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English professors from Atlantic Cape Community College describe the triad model of their Accelerated Learning Program, an adaptation of Community College of Baltimore County's program. In the triad model, ALP students from two different sections of college-level composition meet in a single support class. Through a discussion of the benefits and challenges of this model, an overview of a typical class, and a presentation of effective practices, the authors explore the process of adapting the ALP program and creating an award-winning model that has improved the success rates for upper-level developmental students at their institution.

Accelerated Learning Programs (ALP), modeled after Peter Adams' program at Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC), are transforming developmental English sequences across the country. Atlantic Cape Community College joined the ranks in the spring of 2012 when our colleague, Professor Effie Russell, developed a new ALP model that connected students from two different sections of college-level composition with a single support class. This "triad model" satisfied the need for innovation in reaching developmental English students while mitigating the administration's concerns about maintaining a sustainable class size. In the triad model, nine students from each of two Composition I courses populate a single ALP support course of eighteen students. The class size and the linking of three classes pose challenges, but the success of our students is worth the struggle. In a world of diminishing budgets, our triad model is attractive to administrators because it *is* sustainable—it does not demand more resources than the traditional developmental course. Furthermore, developing this new model at Atlantic Cape has fostered a new method of community building, mentoring, and modeling both within the classroom among students and within the program among faculty members. Herein, we offer what we have discovered by sharing our program's development, our model's success and challenges, a typical class session's overview, and our best practices. Our

hope is that reading about the triad model of accelerated learning might catalyze similar problem-solving approaches at other institutions.

Atlantic Cape's Triad Model History and Overview

For decades Developmental Education (or Basic Skills Education) has come under increasing scrutiny. Taxpayers have wondered why they had to pay for skills that should have been achieved in K-12 while some college-level faculty have wondered why "those students" were in college to begin with. State legislators began to hear from their constituents and parents who also questioned why their students had not learned the material during their elementary and secondary education. Others (often developmental educators themselves) questioned the lack of persistence and graduation rates for incoming students deemed not-ready-for-college. The self-esteem of those students could be diminished when they had to endure several semesters of pre-college level work. Additionally, the financial aid of these students risked being used up before college classes had even begun.

The English Department at Atlantic Cape had long ago integrated both reading and writing in two pre-college levels, but success was still lacking. From Fall 2012 through Fall 2016, 45% of Atlantic Cape's incoming students tested into the upper level of developmental English, and their outcomes have been poor: only 44% of those students who take the upper level developmental course complete Composition I by their second semester. Solutions to the lack of success were mostly more supplemental instruction, more embedded tutoring, and more college skills classes.

Atlantic Cape English Professors Effie Russell and Richard Russell had an opportune encounter with Peter Adams, one of the originators of the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) from CCBC, at the 2011 Two-Year College English Association conference in Portland, ME.

Instead of teaching students to pass the developmental course, CCBC's method placed students directly into the college-level course and supported them in passing it. That concept, coupled with more attention given to the non-cognitive issues, seemed promising. Previously, our college administrators had vetoed any notion of addressing these non-cognitive issues as not being "measurable," and therefore useless. This new model reinforced what we had long known as teachers: that all students respond well to being treated as adult learners and that their experiences outside of class affect their success in the classroom.

When Effie Russell set out to bring ALP to Atlantic Cape, she immediately anticipated the problems in convincing long-time faculty that we should attempt a pilot group. Many who had been teaching for decades themselves felt that the problem was that students had not spent enough time in developmental coursework. They had no hopes for accelerating developmental students. The administration was unlikely to support reducing the class size of the developmental course from eighteen to ten to coincide with CCBC's model. Other problems included what to call this new animal, how to schedule it, how to grade the support class, whether or not to make it for-credit, and the contents of the curriculum.

Effie Russell studied the CCBC model and decided that, since our traditional upper-level developmental course had always been capped at 18, we would develop the support class of 18: 9 taken from each of two Composition I courses. This was the creation of the "triad model": two Composition I classes with 11 traditional students and 9 developmental students; the combined 18 developmental students met at a different time for the support, mirroring the class size of the upper-level developmental course.

There are other building blocks of the triad model: one professor teaches all three sections in the triad, ensuring a seamless experience, and the support class meets in a computer

lab once a week, allowing for students to access online documents and websites and to work on essay drafts and other assignments. Like the traditional ALP model, our triad model benefits students by contextualizing the developmental work within the college-level work; increasing the amount of time for individualized instruction and discussion of non-cognitive issues; and creating attachment between individual students and the professor, the other students in the class, and to the school. Students in the traditional developmental course must also take a college skills course, which requires an additional textbook and awards credits that do not count toward graduation. While the ALP support course costs the same as the traditional developmental course and meets for the same amount of time, two weekly class meetings of an hour and fifteen minutes, Atlantic Cape's ALP program saves students time and money by eliminating this college skills course Finally, ALP students are able to take courses in their major earlier, which also increases their engagement (most of these courses have a prerequisite to have successfully completed Composition I or be taking it concurrently). From this foundation, the ALP program began.

Since then, as we have worked to revise and define our curriculum, our version of ALP has taken shape. We have three main areas of focus in the course: remediating the students' reading and writing skills using active learning strategies selected in response to the specific needs of the class (as opposed to a predetermined schedule of remediation in a traditional developmental course); helping students acclimate to the conventions of college generally and the resources available at Atlantic Cape specifically; and mentoring students to develop successful habits. Like most ALP programs, the remediation takes place within the context of the Composition I coursework, making it meaningful and relevant. Much of the reading and writing work in the ALP course is scaffolded to strengthen weak skills and reach the goals of the

Composition I assignments. For example, the class will use the time in the computer lab to draft individually or to revise and edit with others, in small groups or a class workshop. All of our computer lab assignments are created within the context of the Composition I course by the professor. One lab day may be used to model close reading or deeper reading strategies. Students may work in pairs to return to a Composition I reading assignment and answer additional questions, respond to a short writing prompt, or to conduct additional research on the Composition I text or its author. Another lab day may be spent working on rough drafts in a community: the professor circulates answering questions and providing guidance, and students help one another solve problems such as finding evidence or identifying issues with a particular argument. A lab day may also include a targeted brief lesson on an element of writing, such as point of view or transitions, followed by work in pairs or groups to revise drafts with a focus on this element. Because the coursework is designed within the context of the Composition I course and delivered by the Composition I professor, the relevance and usefulness of the lab work in the support course is clear to the students. For students without access to a computer at home, this meaningful time using the computer for research, collaboration, drafting and revision becomes even more essential.

In our program, both the acclimation and mentoring pieces of the course are formalized elements. While this work may happen circumstantially in traditional developmental English courses or in the college skills course (where the main focus is study skills), they are part of our course outcomes and objectives, and we have developed many standard elements that are employed across the sections. Some standards of acclimation work in the course are scavenger hunts and/or tours to familiarize students with campus resources and services and a class visit from an academic advisor to familiarize students with the college's online systems, policies, and

procedures. Mentoring takes place through conferences and group discussions of student progress, including individual and group advisement to teach students how to advocate for themselves in setting an academic plan, and wellness projects and other assignments that focus on non-cognitive issues. These three elements—remediation, acclimation, and mentoring—are woven together throughout the ALP class.

This formula has developed over the past four years as we have scaled the program at a moderate but steady pace. Demand is much higher during the fall semester: in Fall 2015, our program was halfway to scale for fall demand, but in Spring 2016, our program was fully scaled for spring demand. At this point, for us, we define "fully scaled" as the state at which all students who had an upper-level developmental English placement could have a seat in an ALP class. In addition, we have brought part-time faculty into the program and developed a system of training that includes a full-day workshop over the summer and mentoring during a faculty member's first semester teaching ALP. This past summer, we even introduced full-day training to allow for participants from other colleges to register and attend. We have spread the program to all three campuses and developed a special version of the scheduling of triads to accommodate evening students. We are regularly revising and growing our program, and our goal is a fully-scaled, sustainable program.

Our program to date has shown early and steady signs of success through multiple measures. Most importantly, our ALP students succeed at significantly higher rates than students in the traditional developmental track. Data collected by our Institutional Research Team between Fall 2012 and Fall 2016 compares students who placed into developmental English and took the developmental course (1,663 students) with students who placed into developmental English and took ALP (540 students). In Composition I, 82% (445 students) of

ALP students earn a C or higher compared to only 44% (739 students) of traditional developmental students. For the ALP students, this number is straightforward; they are enrolled in Composition I concurrently with ALP. The traditional developmental students who are **not** successful in Composition I are not necessarily students who passed the developmental course but not Composition I; they include students who did not pass the developmental course and students who did pass the developmental course but did not register for Composition I. For the first group of students, we cannot know if anything could have made a difference—they did not get the opportunity to try college level work as ALP would have allowed them to do. For the second group of students, ALP's concurrent structure eliminates a "stop out" point, which is a facet of its success.

ALP students are also more successful in Composition II (during the subsequent semester): 50% (271 students) of ALP students have earned a C or higher, but only 23% (336 students of 1,444 students) of traditional developmental students have. The Fall 2015 cohort could not be included in the data for Composition II because those students had not yet completed the course at the time of the study; it takes traditional developmental students a semester longer to reach Composition II than ALP students. This increase in student success in Composition II is especially important to us. The concern that ALP gets developmental students through Composition I by "watering down" the content or grading is parried by the students' strong performance in their next English course. Currently, few ALP faculty teach Composition II (full-time faculty are stretched thin in covering our lower-level developmental course and upper-level literature courses, and part-time faculty cannot teach any classes beyond the nine credits of an ALP triad), so our ALP students are moving to the next course and succeeding with non-ALP instructors.

Our Institutional Research Team also compared ALP student (540 students) success with students who placed directly into Composition I (1,712 students) between Fall 2012 and Fall 2016. If ALP is doing its job in remediating student deficiencies, then ALP students should be performing at similar rates to those students who place directly into Composition I. In Composition I, 82% (445 students) of ALP students earn a C or higher compared to 79% (1,347 students) of traditional Composition I students. In Composition II (during the subsequent semester), 50% (271 students) of ALP students earn a C or higher compared to 47% (812 students) of traditional Composition I students. ALP is doing its job, and ALP students are not only succeeding at rates equal to those students deemed college-ready by a Composition I placement but performing at slightly higher rates, which we believe is due to the non-cognitive work in the ALP course such as faculty mentoring, acclimation to the school, etc.

Our data also reveals other kinds of success. Though our program is still too new to examine long-term retention rates, we can already see that ALP students are retained at higher rates than traditional developmental and Composition I students during their first three semesters. Data collected by our Institutional Research team in June 2014 compared student retention rates after passing or failing the developmental course (1,503 students), the ALP course (172 students), and Composition I (2,176 students). This comparison showed that students who passed ALP (139 students) were more likely to return the following semester (94% or 131 students) than students who passed the developmental course (76% or 901 students out of 1,189 students) or Composition I (70% or 1,217 students out of 1,748 students), but even students who failed ALP (33 students) were more likely to return the next semester (52% or 17 students) compared to students who failed the traditional developmental course (39% or 122 students out of 314 students) or Composition I (41% or 176 students out of 428 students). We see this as

evidence of the effectiveness of the non-cognitive portions of the course, the acclimation to college and mentoring: students who don't pass the course the first time are more likely to try again, employing the "grit" we talk about in ALP so much (Duckworth).

Another way that we have thought about success is in considering the triad model and how its results compare to other models of ALP. We were always worried that we were doing less than we could for our students due to the class size of the triad model, but our anxieties were alleviated by the pair of studies by Dawn Coleman at the Center for Applied Research that compared different adaptations and adoptions of the ALP model, including our triad model. The first study, "Replicating the Accelerated Learning Program: Preliminary But Promising Findings," showed that Atlantic Cape's triad model of acceleration demonstrated success rates for Composition I that were higher than four other schools in the study and roughly equal to one other school; only one school studied significantly exceeded Atlantic Cape's results. For Composition II, Atlantic Cape's success rates exceeded all other schools in the study (14). The continuation study "Replicating the Accelerated Learning Program: Updated Findings" compared Atlantic Cape with three other schools and found the success of our triad model equaled or exceeded success rates at the other colleges for Composition I and exceeded success rates at the other colleges for Composition II (13). The continuation study also found that ALP may be narrowing the achievement gap; in particular, researchers found that white and black/Hispanic ALP students at Atlantic Cape succeeded in Composition I at equal rates (14). Our Institutional Research department is just starting to look at additional data to support this finding.

Both internal and external measures of the program agree: the triad model can be a very successful version of ALP.

The Successes and Challenges of ALP and the Triad Model

Even in the first half of our journey to a fully scaled program, we've learned a lot about what truly makes ALP work and what obstacles bar the way to success. The triad model has its own challenges and rewards which reflects those of ALP programs generally.

One way the triad model reflects the challenges and rewards of ALP generally is that it can't be built by the English Department alone. ALP takes buy-in on from other parties on campus, and this took time for us. ALP works counter to the traditional thinking that failing developmental students need more time to remediate their skills, so the prospect of accelerating them sounds absurd to those unfamiliar with ALP. When we reach out to individuals or to a department to work with our program, we are usually asking them to take on more work with no additional compensation or release from other duties. However, once an individual is convinced to get involved by the evidence of increased student success, experience with the program creates loyal supporters. Increasing the number of successful students, that is increasing the number of successfully retained students who feel connected to and knowledgeable about the school, also fosters more positive student and staff interactions. Both faculty and staff find their jobs more rewarding through the relationships ALP allows them to form with students.

Since the beginning we have had an academic advisor dedicated to fostering ALP and supporting its students and a scheduling specialist willing to work with the headache that triad scheduling is. Each semester we've brought on additional faculty members who become part of the circle of ALP within the English Department; these faculty are identified by recommendations and recruited to the program. We've also recruited and cultivated relationships across campus from public relations and institutional research to financial aid. Our colleagues in other departments came to understand the benefit of ALP for their areas (i.e., more

students in their classes because more students were taking and completing Composition I) and supported our efforts. Without this varied assistance, our program would not be where it is now. At the center of this circle are the ALP Coordinator and the English Department Coordinator. The ALP Coordinator facilitates all of the program's needs from scheduling to curriculum to training and acts as liaison between the program and all other departments on campus as well as outside groups. The English Department Coordinator works with her to keep the many parts of the English Department working together in harmony.

We've debated the various shapes the scheduling of the triad sections can take. We have found that our original model, where the three courses run in the order of Composition I, Composition I, and then ALP, is the most effective pedagogically. In this setup, the ALP course is an extension of Composition I since students from both sections arrive at ALP at (relatively) the same point in the composition coursework, and the professor can easily craft and frame the ALP coursework in terms of the Composition I course. We envisioned that students in the first section of Composition I could easily register for another class during the time the second section of Composition I meets, but it turns out that this is only sometimes the case.

Later, we developed the "sandwich" model, which is Composition I, ALP, and Composition I, and it is more effective in getting and keeping students enrolled. This version prevents any gaps in the student schedules, which is especially important at sites like our Atlantic City campus where work and family demands limit our students' availability significantly. However, pedagogically, this version is problematic—nine students have already had Composition I before ALP, and nine students have not. The ALP class in this model must be scheduled in a different classroom from Composition I to prevent awkward transitions between classes that might identify the ALP students in the Composition I class.

Since there are staunch faculty supporters of both the traditional and "sandwich" versions of the triad model, we currently run a mixture each semester, but neither model works with Atlantic Cape's evening matrix and the needs of our evening students. Thus, we've developed a third version of the triad model for the evenings: a twice a week ALP section that meets before two block sections of Composition I. An evening ALP student will attend ALP on Mondays and Wednesdays, for example from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m., and then stay one of the two nights for a block Composition I section from 7-9:45 p.m. Our schedule is a balancing act of these three versions of the triad model and the needs and numbers of different cohorts of ALP students.

The most recent triad model challenge we've encountered centers on faculty. The triads link courses that require different qualifications. Because a master's degree is not required to teach developmental courses, some faculty who have been teaching developmental courses do not have the qualifications or experience teaching college-level courses that is required for ALP. Some faculty teaching Composition I do not have experience working with developmental students. When we go down the list of part-time faculty in our department, we cross out name after name as we eliminate part-time faculty who are not available to teach three courses, do not have the availability to teach three courses in a row, or who do not have the appropriate degree or experience. From those remaining, we recruit only those willing to invest the extra time and effort involved in mentoring the ALP students, despite the poor compensation, time crunch and other challenges part-time faculty face. It takes work to staff our ALP schedule the first time. When we lose an ALP faculty member, there are usually no reserves (because our program is still growing and all trained faculty are teaching ALP already), and since all faculty need be trained before they enter the ALP classroom for the first time, replacing faculty close to the semester's start is difficult.

Despite these challenges, we feel the triad model is worth struggling for. In a world of declining enrollments, our triad model is attractive to administrators and is sustainable: it does not demand more resources than the traditional developmental course did, so we feel secure that our efforts will not be diminished as budgets further constrict. It is an attractive package for adjunct faculty in that it offers them the maximum number of credit hours they can teach at Atlantic Cape every semester and more security than other courses—they are unlikely to be bumped because the courses cannot be broken apart and a faculty member cannot teach ALP without advance training. Because the course involves acclimating students to the college, the adjunct faculty must become more involved with the various resources on campus, and this, along with the close circle of ALP faculty, makes part-time faculty feel less isolated and more connected to the program and the school. When the professor is connected to a campus community, our students also become connected. Part-time faculty have told us that until they started teaching ALP, they didn't feel connected to the college or to the department. They have said that the mentoring and professional development opportunities that are an integral part of our program for ALP faculty have been some of the most rewarding experiences in their lives as educators.

A community connection is just one of the benefits of the triad model for students. Since the support class combines students from two different sections, it is easier for students to see it as a separate course that offers them more than just an extension of the Composition I coursework. This also promotes productive discussions about the college experience—the students come to ALP with slightly different Composition I experiences, which can be fruitful for helping students understand how college classes work and how to succeed within them. This model often incorporates more diversity in the support course. The best example of this is in one

of our “sandwich” models which extends from the afternoon into the evening. The nine students from the Composition I section before ALP tend to be traditional daytime students while the nine students from the Composition I section after ALP tend to be traditional evening students. These two groups don’t often meet in classes, and in many ways, they can help each other navigate the territory of being a successful college student.

An Inside Look at ALP

How ALP and the triad model at Atlantic Cape work for our students is best seen from inside the classroom. At some point we realized that our model had become fundamentally different from the original CCBC program from which it emerged, and this was in keeping with the direction of Adams, who always expected that each college would adapt the concept for what felt right at their institution. While those initial weeks in the semester are spent acclimating students to the college and being a primary support for their critical reading and writing skills, by the end of the semester our ALP course transitions into something else entirely. During the last few weeks of the semester, students will ideally no longer need the *support class as support class*, and so ALP transitions into a final phase of development for students: preparing them for Composition II (one reason, perhaps, why the ALP students are faring better in the second-semester than their traditional colleagues). In the ALP section, we may look at biographical material or additional primary work of authors or issues being discussed in Composition I. This additional time to spend on the material benefits not only students but us as educators. ALP has given us the gift of time: time with our students who need us and the authors and ideas with which we love to engage.

Early in the semester, ALP students are likely to be confused. They’re new college students, so they have no idea how to even read their schedules, decipher that R means

"Thursday," for example. Plus, they're in a new setting with new buildings and parking lots and rules and people, and they're in a class very unclearly marked by the acronym "ALP" with the same teacher as their other class clearly marked Composition I. Too much chaos can be overwhelming, so ALP professors work hard in the first few weeks of the semester to quell some internal noise our students might be experiencing and to clear any roadblocks like problems like logging in to some school sites, finding classrooms, and buying the correct texts.

In the beginning of the semester, the foundation-forming of roles is crucial. The ALP professor needs to establish herself as approachable and organized, respectful and knowledgeable; in addition, she must view the students as independent from each other and acknowledge those boundaries. The ALP students need to believe that they are *where they will be safe, where they will learn, and where they will be helped.*

After introductions on the first day, the elephant in the room needs to be addressed. We ask our students, *All right, so who knows what this class is, what ALP stands for?* Two hands usually. *And why specifically are you in here? Who told you to take this course? What did they tell you?* Here, we widen the lens. There's undoubtedly some bitterness, some embarrassment, and still some confusion in the room by now. They're bitter at the placement test, at the score, at the fact that they're in "slow classes" at a *community college*. They are embarrassed, perhaps, because for a minute they thought that the "A" (Accelerated) in ALP meant that they were in an honors course. It's good to tell them the whole story though, that most of the country's college students, at all colleges and universities, take at least one developmental course when they go to college, that many of their classmates in Composition I did.

Next, we do what we ordinarily wouldn't on day one of a new class: throw statistics at them. We review some of the findings of Complete College America ("Remediation"), and talk

about our colleague, Effie Russell, who initiated ALP a few years ago at Atlantic Cape because she really cares about our students and because she saw the injustice of the poor statistics for the traditional developmental track. When we talk next about our success with the program, about how ALP students are passing and graduating and succeeding at college, out-performing many times, their non-ALP classmates, we ask them if they have ideas about why that is. The answers appear: community, confidence, resources.

Day two of the ALP section begins with students recalling each classmate's name and some important points about him or her. Undoubtedly, we meet some new ALP classmates this day, and ALP professors hand over the reigns for a few minutes. The old timers give them the overview--they tell the newbies what ALP is all about, what we will be doing in the class, why it is good that they are here, why they should be glad and not bitter about it. We're becoming a unified group, a team. And we are an inviting one. We have a common goal: succeed in Composition I.

This first week of ALP class may seem pretty standard, the exact same skeleton used in most courses. The difference is in the relationship-building. In a class of thirty students, it is too easy to lose a few to the window, their phones, or some very thorough hand lotion application. In ALP, though, it is essential that a community form. The professor needs to be a respectful, approachable guide. A kind guide. The place needs to be welcoming. The work needs to be real and purposeful. The effects of that work must be visible. The students need to be recognized as individuals, and they need to interact with each other as equals. All this must happen in those first few days, and when it does, there is success.

As the semester continues, ALP functions as an enrichment course for their Composition I class, as well as a sort of faculty/student mentoring program. The students are reading and

writing and questioning rigorously, but equally important to their college success is their enculturation on the Atlantic Cape campus. ALP professors guide their students in crafting work and school schedules after we consider all angles of their individualized pictures. We talk about the pros and cons to online versus traditional courses, and we compare degree programs to ensure students are on the right track for their desired outcomes. With our ALP students, we meet with advisors at school; we select the next semester's classes; we create midterm evaluation reports that the students write and deliver to their other professors.

During the last week, we continue our depth and breadth immersion into the texts we are reading in Composition I. For example, in Composition I, students read about how Henry Louis Gates Jr. experiences a racist doctor who does not help him heal (Gates), about how his mother pulls him away and takes him to a hospital that will treat him, and about her reading James Baldwin to him, a seemingly insignificant detail. In ALP, we ourselves will read James Baldwin. We will poke around the question here--*why might she have chosen Baldwin specifically, and why did Gates include that detail in his essay? What's significant there?* In Composition I, their classmates will stop the inquiry by reading about Gates' arrest many years later at his home in Cambridge (Goodnough). They'll draw connections between Gates' two experiences of prejudice. However, in ALP, the students go further. They may predict what could have happened had the arresting officer and Gates acted differently, and they may recommend alterations to the ensuing public conversations. This supplemental work aids them in writing a more meaningful and informed final exam essay, but it also continues the semester's focus on asking questions and pursuing issues past an initial skim.

On the last day, we assign the students a self-assessment of their writing. Here is one possible prompt:

> *Spend today's class writing a self-evaluation of your essay-writing this semester. For the self-assessment, please focus on what you do well when you brainstorm, create an idea for a writing assignment, and draft and revise that essay. What are your best writing skills?*
>
> *Also, what have you worked hard on this semester that you will continue to work on with future writings? (These areas might be in time-management, working under pressure, writing on-command, reading comprehension, formatting, using a computer/printer, sharing your writing with others, or other more expected responses related to the mechanics of writing.)*
>
> *The self-assessment should include specific references to each of the three papers you have written and received grades for so far, and it must include explanations of at least five positive attributes of your writing as well as one problem area. When you discuss the problem area, please explain what you will do to target that area so that you improve on it.*
>
> *Write one to two pages double-spaced, and write as if you are selling your writing skills to a future employer who wants to know about your writing ability.*

After typing the self-assessment, the students then share the assessment aloud and the other students chime in, often adding praise on top of praise. They know each other well by now, after all, and might even be friends. They often sign up for classes together next semester.

Some of the Practices That Help Our Students Achieve Success

After seeing above how the ALP section may work in our triad model, in this section we will specifically discuss some practices employed in these classes which help produce our results. These involve a number of active learning strategies in reading, writing, and thinking

support for English 101. Generally, these practices are project-based learning activities that are often designed with non-cognitive strategies and career development activities infused into the curriculum. Since an ALP class is primarily a support course for English 101 as well a replacement for a developmental study skills class, one of the ALP class priorities is to help students with the reading, writing, researching and thinking skills necessary to complete their courses successfully. This begins with a myriad of writing assignments during the class that are no risk (no grade attached to the assignment), low risk (low grade attached), or high risk (a final draft of an essay which carries a high number of points attached to the assignment). Reflective writing is encouraged (non-graded) to help students assess how they approach a reading assignment; how they approach a writing assignment; and how they have progressed over the semester. Small or large group brainstorming, concept mapping and freewriting are used to provoke student idea generation for an assignment (non-graded). Strategies for research note taking, critical reading note taking, and dialogic notetaking are taught to help students prepare for research reading and writing, for low stakes reading quizzes in English 101, or for high stakes lecture and multi-chapter tests in other disciplines.

Classroom Assessment Activities

Classroom assessment techniques (CATS), both no and low risk writing activities, are used in the classroom to encourage students to take an active role in their learning. Examples of CATS used are a one minute written analysis of a reading, an assessment of the muddiest point in a lecture, or a one sentence summary (Angelo and Cross 148;154;183). These activities are designed to help students understand and process what they hear and see. Students also write reaction paragraphs, summary/responses, and synthesis (text-to-text) responses. Additionally, in some classes, students working in groups use their notes to generate critical discussion questions

about reading assignments; the groups swap questions, address those questions in small groups, and report in to large group or to fish bowl set ups. Students experience autonomy in determining what the class discusses: this can be empowering as students create their own learning points.

Electronic Academic Environment

Other no or low risk activities include worksheets and computer lab agendas designed to familiarize students with the academic electronic environment. Students must use the college's email to send a message; use the course management system, *Blackboard (Bb)*, to create a profile; use *WebAdvisor* to access their student academic plans and monitor their progress towards degree completion. Students also practice using the Internet and electronic databases for research.

Computer labs are reserved for our students for one classroom period a week, or 50% of instruction time. This, we believe, is critical to our students' success. Redrafting is easily done in the computer labs. Students are encouraged to store their drafts in *Google Docs* in a live environment for redrafting and for easy access. Mini-writing conferences can happen at this time for students who need or want extra feedback. This is also a good time to examine in class a model of a student paper or two, have students write about what they think makes the paper effective, and share observations and discuss what went into writing an "A" paper. This exercise gives visual learners the ability to conceptualize what a fully developed draft entails. Students seem eager to know what is expected of them in their writing, and this process builds self-esteem as students begin to emerge as well-supported academic writers.

Students are also required to write reflectively and metacognitively about the import of readings, applying that knowledge to themselves. For example, Rich Russell of Atlantic Cape requires students to read "Brainology" to learn that research indicates student success can be

impacted favorably if students maintain a "growth mindset" rather than a "fixed mindset" (Dweck). Professor Russell requires students to assess their mindsets using metacognition and to respond to the information in the important reading.

Project Based Learning

A frequent component of ALP classes at Atlantic Cape is project-based learning for a variety of reasons, many of them non-cognitive. Here students begin to build community while researching solutions to real world problems. For example, one problem in ALP classes comes in week two of the semester. A majority of students report in their writing that they are overwhelmed after the first week of school, during which syllabi heap upon them what seems like a tsunami of assignments for people who often work full time, have children and are the first person in their families to attend college. So to help with these initial stressors we do two things: help students fill out their time management sheet, finding small chunks of time to do their schoolwork, and play a little game called The Scavenger Hunt Group Project. Students walk in small groups all over campus finding, meeting and interviewing personnel in support services who will help them. At the end of the project, students are aware of the support personnel in school and where to find them, and they are no longer feeling like isolated, lost learners. Students self-reported these outcomes in a written project assessment at the end of the project.

Changing the context of the college for the student from feeling like a "stranger in a strange land" to that of an active team member familiar with the campus can help promote student success: "College success rests on a combination of cognitive and noncognitive factors . . . as well as [on] the post-secondary context itself" reports a review of the literature on the effect of non-cognitive learning and student success in *Voices in Urban Education* (Nagaoka et al). Students need to feel an integral part of their campus.

Other real world problems that students can learn to solve are stressors or obstacles that impede student success. To address these problems, Leila Crawford designed a project-based learning assignment called the Wellness Project. Herein students perform a large group brainstorm to explore specific issues that afflict college students and then research those issues. Some obstacles that students propose are breakups, child care, eating disorders, depression, anxiety, stress related problems, insomnia, financial issues, no rides, sickness, and work scheduling. During this activity, students research the following information related to their specific topic:

A. Learn statistics, warning signs, issues with diagnoses and treatment;
B. Locate campus resources and contact people who may help;
C. Locate local/nationwide resources;
D. Locate a professional event, video or source that is educational and supportive;
E. Inform others about these issues.

This project is tied into the ALP goal of helping students succeed, and groups are formed based on interest. Their task on the Project subtitled "Stressors That Make Students Quit (and How to Defeat Them)" is to create a document, slideshow, pamphlet, poster or some multimedia combination of the above that addresses all five goals above and present that information to class. This project is designed to promote non-cognitive learning that provokes students to find ways around obstacles that may impede their success.

Career Infused Curriculum

An element that seems to impact student success favorably is the concept of a road map or guided pathway (Community College Research Center, "A Clearer Path . . . "). Students need to see the results of their degree completion program and how that can lead to a job. To facilitate

this learning, students focus on career development in their ALP classes. Evidence indicates that goal setting produces results (Kamenetz); many professors assign an essay in English 101, requiring students to think long and hard about their short-term and long-term goals and what obstacles might pop up, and about how students might overcome those barriers to success. Further research seems to indicate that that goal setting intervention closes both the gender and ethnic minority gap: "The [goal setting] intervention boosted academic achievement and increased retention rates, particularly for ethnic minority and male students (who had underperformed in previous years)" (Schippers et al.). Other interventions in ALP classes at Atlantic Cape include career counselors as guest speakers using Myers Briggs Personality testing and Holland Career Codes to match personalities with job types. Along with these interventions, students engage in values clarification activities designed by MaryAnn McCall, ALP professor, and Mitch Levy, V.P. of Student Affairs at Atlantic Cape. Students additionally review a reading "Four Steps to Choosing a College Major" (Gephard), and research careers using the Bureau of Labor and Statistics' *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. These activities are followed by a writing assignment asking students to connect goals and values with career choices. Research from Harvard Graduate School of Education illustrates that when students can connect a job with a degree completion program, they are more likely to be retained (Symonds, "Pathways to Prosperity").

Job skills are also infused into the ALP curriculum. One project is role playing for a job interview, a project created by Melissa Palmer, an adjunct ALP instructor at Atlantic Cape. First, students research in *Forbes* and T*he New York Times* interview questions that CEOs would ask an interviewee. The class is divided into four groups. Two groups will create skits demonstrating successful job interviews, and the other two groups will present skits

demonstrating poor job interviews. Students must use costumes, props and a script with at least 12 questions and answers written up with works cited citations from their research. Then on the due date the class members create a fishbowl scenario bringing in props for the CEO's desk, which will be in the center of the classroom. After each skit, the audience will be required to name one positive element about the good interview or one negative element in the bad interview. This discussion is led inductively asking students to arrive at general principles of interviewing based on their observations from the skits.

More in-class writing assignments are connected to career development in the curriculum. Career counselors are invited into the ALP classroom to help the students with resume writing; teaching resume size, resume forms, resume cover letters and resume verbs. Career counselors make themselves available to help students one-on-one. Other career-oriented writing involves students writing up a midterm self-assessment of their progress on short-term goals and how that impacts their progress on long-term goals. At the end of the semester, students are asked to write about their first semester successes, what they have learned about reaching their goals and how their writing has improved.

Conclusion

While in traditional developmental education the goal for the student is to pass the developmental classes in sequence before attempting college-level English, in the Accelerated Learning Program the goal becomes to pass the college-level (Composition I) course. In the ALP, the stigma for students for needing support is reduced: students are engaging in college-level, credit-bearing coursework in Composition from the first day of the semester. The 'A' of accelerated serves as a reversal of the scarlet shame they feel in traditional developmental courses. While not an honors course, this course often becomes a badge of honor for them. This

also allows them to take courses in their major that may require Composition I as a prerequisite. Because in our model there are nine students from two separate classes interacting with one another in ALP, even the support class feels like something new, and not like students are being kept after class for additional tutoring (or, worse, as a punishment). Students call their ALP class "second English" or "the other class," as in "Will we be working on this in 'the other class,' Professor?"

Because the curriculum of the ALP course remains flexible so that it can adapt to suit the daily needs of students, the curriculum also becomes a space where we as educators can experiment with new assignments. The emphasis of ALP is on not only reading and writing skills but also on the entire affective domain—that messy firmament previously deemed "unmeasurable" and thus unimportant. ALP requires that we return to a holistic approach to the student and to student success. Here, students and their instructors not only grow as compassionate intellects but also reflect on that development through continual self-assessment and metacognition.

The past few years, as the data to prove the success of our program has continued to come in, we have started presenting our work at conferences, including the Two Year College English Association (TYCA) conference in Lancaster, PA (October 2015). This was a significant moment for us: we were reminded of that initial meeting with Adams at the TYCA conference a few years earlier, when Effie Russell had attended a presentation he was giving. She relates the interaction quite clearly: Adams, without a PowerPoint that day, just a yellow legal pad, explaining his program. And Effie saying to him, in front of the captive audience, "I think I need to have lunch with you today."

In 2016, not long after our trip to Lancaster, we learned that our model of ALP had received the prestigious Diana Hacker Award for Outstanding Program of Developmental English. At the Conference on College Composition and Communication, again we met Adams, who had watched our program take root and grow into something fruit-bearing. During our early struggles and successes, he would often smile, with a twinkle in his eye, and tell us that he was looking out for us. As we have gained recognition, this is what we would like to do for our colleagues at other colleges: to help cultivate their programs and their work. We do not know if our program is the best for everyone; it is the best for us. As Adams told us, we each must find our own path. But we must not be afraid to take those initial steps.

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More information about Atlantic Cape's ALP Program is available at our website: www.atlantic.edu/alp