

Summer 2016

ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE

Magazine



**Finding Common Ground:
Academic and Career
Advising for the 21st
Century**

Model United Nations

**Career and Academic
Pathways**

SPC St. Petersburg
College



A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear SPC Family,

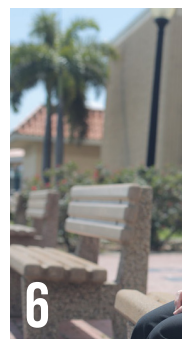
You'll notice a trend in this edition of *St. Petersburg College Magazine*: our goal of helping students "Start Smart and Finish Strong."

We know that students who begin their college journeys with the end goal in mind are more likely to be successful. That's why, this year, we revised our advising model to focus on career conversations from day one. Our Career and Academic Advisors have undergone intensive training and gained certification this spring to ensure that they are well prepared to guide students to their intended outcomes: employability and access to a better life for them and their families. You'll see this mission reflected in our new Career and Academic Advising Center on the Tarpon Springs Campus, where students are highly engaged to focus on career decisions as they progress throughout their academic journeys.

This advancement directly connects to our work on guided Career and Academic Pathways. This spring, SPC was honored to be chosen as one of only 30 community colleges in the nation to take part in a prestigious, three-year intensive Pathways Project, led by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). Our selection is a testament to the data-informed work college staff has done over the last four years to create and implement clear-cut roadmaps with logical course sequencing for students, because we know that this will help get them to the finish line sooner.



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We want to ensure that all of our students benefit from these initiatives. That's why our Accessibility Services department (previously known as Disability Resources) was revitalized this spring. This new name reflects a much larger change within the department to clarify our goal of promoting the widespread commitment of St. Petersburg College to equal educational access for all students and eliminating barriers to increase student success, retention, completion and job placement.

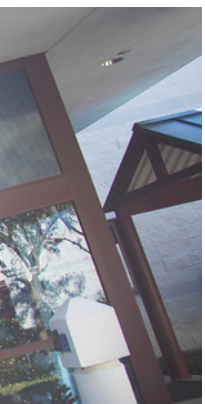
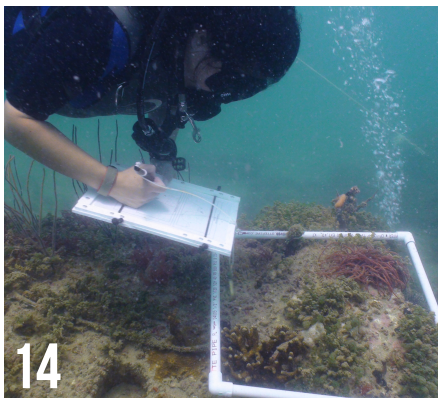
In addition to these exciting changes, earlier this year the college gained two new members to our Board of Trustees: Bill Foster, former Mayor of St. Petersburg, and Nathan Stonecipher, co-owner of Green Bench Brewing Co. and member of the Board of Directors of the EDGE Business District Association. I hope you will join me in welcoming them to our SPC community.

In this issue of *SPC Magazine*, you'll also read about some of the opportunities for hands-on learning that have life-changing impacts for our students, including a long-term partnership with the City of Seminole that has resulted in full-time employment for one of our graduates, and the work of our internationally recognized Model United Nations team.

Best,

William D Law Jr

Bill Law,
President, St. Petersburg College



SPRING 2016 NOTABLE AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

January

- Six St. Petersburg College faculty members received the 2015 League for Innovation Awards.

February

- SPC placed in Top Three for Student Voter Registrations.
- Ride to Recovery opened a cycling training center on the Clearwater Campus.
- The Helen Gordon Davis Centre for Women teamed up with St. Petersburg College's Women on the Way.

March

- SPC Students Mahir Abdella and Courtney Kent were selected as 2016 Coca Cola Community College Academic Team Silver Scholars.

April

- SPC leaders Dr. Tonjua Williams and Dr. Jesse Coraggio were selected as two of only 40 nationwide for the inaugural class of the Aspen Presidential Scholarship.
- Achieving the Dream selected St. Petersburg College to participate in its Student Financial Empowerment Project.

May

- Special Projects Coordinator Djuan Fox and Student Support Advisor Nikki Hall were selected to participate in the Chancellor's Leadership Seminar.
- 2016 graduates Courtney Kent and Amy Bhatt received, respectively, the 2015-16 Apollo Award and the Alumni Achievement Award.
- Governor Rick Scott awarded St. Petersburg College the Governor's Higher Education Leadership Award for having graduates with the highest entry-level wages of Florida's state colleges.

June

- SPC student newspaper The Sandbox News won 11 out of 24 student awards in the Florida Society of News Editors journalism contest.

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Meet business student and professional musician Melissa Petrescue.

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Pathways Project gains momentum, as St. Petersburg College continues to work on implementing high-quality, structured career and academic pathways for all students.



THE BUSINESS OF MAKING MUSIC

Melissa Petrescue, currently pursuing her bachelor's degree in Management and Organizational Leadership, credits St. Petersburg College with opening doors for her educationally, musically and professionally.

An award-winning concert pianist, Melissa Petrescue has performed with the Florida Orchestra and at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay through connections she's made at SPC. Petrescue is using lessons learned in her business classes to further her natural musical talent.

"I'm self-employed, so these skills and these tools that I'm acquiring - marketing, entrepreneurship, even project management - can come in handy with planning and organizing the music projects that I do," she said.

MUSICAL INCLINATION

Petrescue's love for music started at an early age. Her mother was a piano teacher, and her first lessons began at age 5.

She started taking dual enrollment classes at St. Petersburg College as a high school student in 2010 and earned her Associate in Arts degree in 2013. During that time, she studied classical piano with SPC professor Dr. Xu Hui.

"I don't think I would be here today if it wasn't for getting linked up with Dr. Hui," she said. "She is a professional instructor and brilliant pianist, and I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to study and prepare for competitions with her."

Hui said Petrescue is insatiably curious and has many creative interests.

"She has a lot of potential and is very talented," Hui said.

TOP PRIZE: PLAYING WITH THE FLORIDA ORCHESTRA

In 2015, Petrescue won first place in the senior piano division of the Justine LeBaron Young Artists Competition. Held annually at the St. Petersburg College Music Center, the competition is sponsored by the Florida Orchestra Musicians Association.

The award led to an invitation from the Florida Orchestra to perform with them at Clearwater's Ruth Eckerd Hall and the Mahaffey Theater in downtown St. Petersburg in February.

"Performing with the Florida Orchestra was surreal," said Petrescue. "It was like a childhood fantasy that I was living out. It was absolutely thrilling."



"I'M A BUSINESS MAJOR IN COLLEGE
AND A MUSIC MAJOR IN LIFE."

- MELISSA PETRESCUE

MAKING CONNECTIONS

While working as a peer advisor during one of SPC's Working Wednesday events aimed at getting students into jobs, Petrescue met a recruiter from Busch Gardens Tampa Bay. She was hired for a seasonal gig that later turned into a part-time job.

"If it wasn't for attending the Working Wednesday event, I wouldn't have known the opportunity even existed," she said. "SPC does an excellent job of connecting students with the community through internships, job fairs, conferences, community service projects, as well as other extracurricular and career service programs."

SPC SCHOLARSHIPS MADE COLLEGE AFFORDABLE

Scholarships from St. Petersburg College made Petrescue's education affordable.

Petrescue was awarded the Rotary Club of Seminole Scholarship. She was also awarded the Robert and Mildred Baynard Ethics in Business Scholarship and the Vivian T. Greve Scholarship through the St. Petersburg College Foundation.

"I am so thankful for the financial support that has greatly helped fund my education," she said. "Through the Foundation, I have been selected to receive generous contributions through the private gifts of individuals, community groups and businesses."

THE BUSINESS SIDE OF THINGS

As an entrepreneur, Petrescue was looking for a broad, practical degree that she could apply to her career pursuits. She found it in the Bachelor of Applied Science in Management and Organizational Leadership.

"I have had several leadership opportunities cross my path, and I figured this degree would be the best tool to help me continue to grow in that area," she said.

Petrescue said she highly recommends St. Petersburg College as a place to grow, find your passion and make connections.

"The classroom experience is only half the story," she said. "The faculty are incredibly knowledgeable and experienced. The college offers degree programs that are relevant and continuously expands on them. They want students to succeed. That means everything."

Visit SPC's Arts & Entertainment blog to learn more at blog.spcollege.edu/arts.

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DREAM CATCHER

Public Policy Grad Mecca Bellmore Serfustini wrapped up the first year of SPC's partnership with the City of Seminole by scoring her dream job.

When Seminole City Manager Frank Edmunds was getting ready to retire last year, Public Policy and Administration's Professor in Charge Jeff Kronschnabl wanted to know how St. Petersburg College could honor him for his many years of service and dedication to the college.

Edmunds said he would love to set up a one-year, full-time position with benefits for a graduate or recent graduate of the Public Policy program. So for 10 years, the recipient of the Frank Edmunds Public Service Associate in Training program will rotate through four departments in the City of Seminole: administration, public safety, community development and public works.

"This is not an internship - it's a real job," Kronschnabl said. "The students are put through the entire application process with the city, with no recommendations from our department."

A STRONG CANDIDATE

Mecca Bellmore Serfustini was one of nine Public Policy graduates to interview for the position in July 2015, and she was thrilled to be selected.

"It has been a wonderful, meaningful experience," she said. "Good work is recognized from the top down, and this experience really built up my confidence."

After growing up in St. Pete Beach, Serfustini waitressed full time until she decided it was time to get back in school.

"My parents had always encouraged education, but I was having fun and making good money, so I never considered it until I had my daughter," she said.

“THIS PROGRAM WAS SO WELL ROUNDED THAT I COULD CHOOSE FROM ANY DEPARTMENT I WANTED TO WORK IN.”

- MECCA BELLMORE SERFUSTINI

Serfustini checked out the programs at St. Petersburg College and enrolled in the Honors Program. After earning her Associate in Arts degree with honors, she was accepted to Florida State University, where she planned to pursue a degree in Political Science. But her plans completely changed while on a trip to Tallahassee to tour the state's capital building with a group from SPC.

“I'd never heard of the Public Policy degree,” she said, “but one of the staff members on the trip with us told me about it. I looked into it and changed my plans to move to Tallahassee and enrolled in SPC's program.”

Serfustini enrolled full time - including summers - and though it was never easy being a parent and a full-time student, she said she had a lot of support from her professors.

“All of my professors were very nurturing and patient, not only in Public Policy, but in the general education classes, too. I could call them for help any time, night or day.”

Once in the Public Policy and Administration program, Bellmore was taken under the wing of Jeff Kronschnabl, affectionately known at SPC as “Professor K.”

“He was the best mentor,” she said. “He was always there for me, and he was like a proud parent at graduation.”

Kronschnabl said city officials told him they hoped the next student would be as good as Serfustini.

“She was an overachiever. She is one of those people who gets the job done,” he said.

MAKING IMPRESSIONS

While in her position with the city, Serfustini completed several projects, including a big initiative for Seminole Fire Rescue, where she organized all of the documents needed to complete their evaluation from the Insurance Services Office. Her work improved the city's score to one of the best in the nation.

“I organized all the information in a binder based on my experience at SPC, where my Capstone project was to create a binder based on a public policy,” she said.

Fire Chief Heather Burford said she greatly appreciated the impact Serfustini made on her department during her time with the City of Seminole.

“She is a self-starter who requires very little supervision or guidance and her ability to follow through is commendable,” Burford said.

Serfustini also earned her first Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) certificate at SPC, and went on to earn several more. She put that knowledge to use writing FEMA plans for the city's Recreation Division and the library.

“I was completely prepared by SPC to do this job. I rarely had to ask questions because we had studied city government so thoroughly. This program was so well rounded that I could choose from any department I wanted to work in,” she said.

GOAL: ACHIEVED

Serfustini did so well at the City of Seminole that she landed a dream job with her hometown, the City of St. Pete Beach. She started April 1 as their new Administrative Assistant for Public Services, which includes the oversight of beach maintenance, streets and beautification.

“There's a lot of redevelopment in St. Pete Beach right now,” she said. “It's a great time to start and be at the front end of those projects.”

Though this opportunity is a good one, Serfustini sees it as a continuation of her education because she is on what she calls her “30-year plan.”

“I'd like to be a City Manager, then a County Administrator, then Governor and Congressperson,” she said. “I want to gain as much experience as I can on the way so I can be knowledgeable about all aspects of government.”

Serfustini attributes her success to her experiences at St. Petersburg College and what she learned while working at the City of Seminole.

“This is such a great program,” she said. “I'm still amazed myself that everything came together like it did.”

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ALL ACCESS PASS

A Name Change and Departmental Overhaul Mark the Revitalization of Accessibility Services.

When Aimee Stubbs started working at SPC's Disability Resources at the Clearwater Campus in 2006, there were 110 students actively working with the department. Now there are 450 on that campus alone, and around 2,000 college-wide. In January 2015, when Stubbs began her current position as director, she saw an opportunity to expand the existing program to provide all different types of learners with technology, support and accommodations. That meant not only a name change, but also a complete revitalization of the department.

Students say the tools and resources provided by the department are helping them be successful in their classes.

"Everyone from the department has been very nice and helpful. They set me up with captioning for my classes, extra time for exams, a formula sheet for my math tests and many apps to use for organization," said student Joey Weatherford. "They are the people to go to if you ever need help with anything."

NEW NAME - NEW GAME

The change from Disability Resources to Accessibility Services was made in hopes of encouraging students who may not consider themselves as having a disability to investigate how they might use services such as assistive technology and accommodations.

"We want to make everyone aware that our department's mission is to provide access," Stubbs said. "Not just physical, but also educational access for all learners. So we revisited our mission to make sure everything we did had the purpose of access."

A SEAMLESS EXPERIENCE

The program's success has been bolstered by getting all faculty and staff on board. Stubbs said that there is truly no aspect of St. Petersburg College that Accessibility Services doesn't deal with.

"Whether it be facilities, furniture, instructional design, faculty and staff, security, online services, web compliance, testing - this is an institutional approach. We're all working together to support our students," she said.

The department believes the use of Accessible Information Management (AIM) Software will make it easier for faculty and staff by automating accommodations, paperwork, notes and providing them access to student records all in one place.

"This will reduce barriers to case management for students," Stubbs said.



ACCESS TO RESOURCES

There are several applications available to address the differing needs of students, including those with dyslexia, auditory processing issues or time management challenges. Stubbs hopes that students will feel empowered by technology and that the use of it will help them become as autonomous as possible in their learning.

Assistive Technology Specialist Regina Miller recommends apps that would be helpful for students' differing needs and offers instruction on how to use them.

"Before the explosion of technology in general, students usually depended on others for support with writing, reading, or typing," Miller said. "Today, assistive technology supports all of those things. It's a communication gateway between peers and faculty and other areas of support that a student may seek."

Mallory Michael recently earned her bachelor's degree in Paralegal Studies. She said she was blown away by the number of helpful apps available.

"Accessibility Services was great about telling me what I needed. They offered me Dragon Dictate, which I'd never heard of before," Michael said. "You speak into it, and it types for you. I eventually started using my keyboard, but I know a lot of less-functioning people who rely on it."

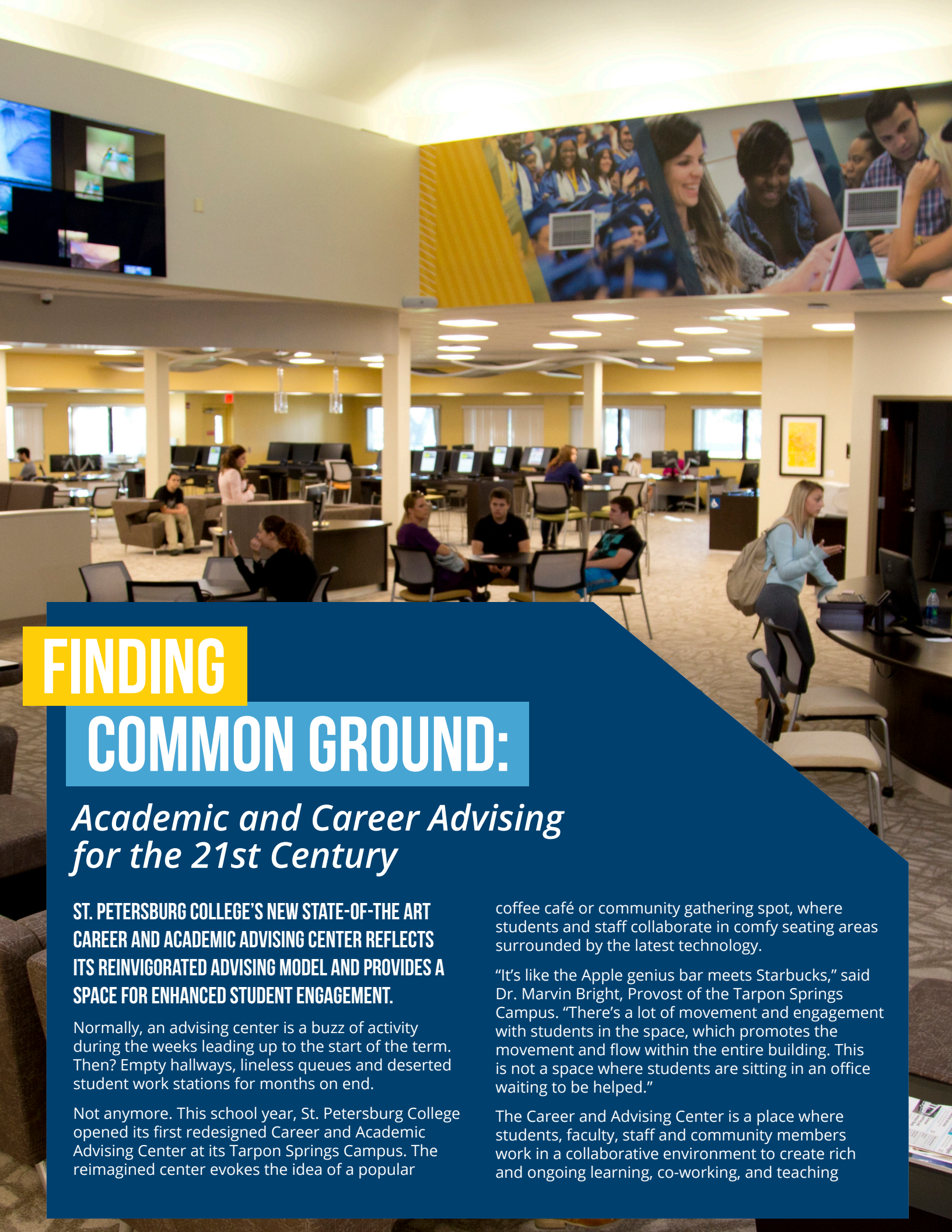
A NETWORK OF SUPPORT

Community partnerships are important to learning institutions, and Accessibility Services is currently partnered with more than 30 local agencies that can provide the resources students may need to succeed in class. Workshops are offered that address topics like time management, study skills, test anxiety and helpful apps.

Students attest that Accessibility Services' multi-angle approach is truly helpful. Betsie Hughes earned her degree in Interdisciplinary Studies in Education this spring, and she credits the department for helping her with seating, testing and other accommodations that she needed to navigate a college campus.

"I always feel like they're a support team for me. It's hard enough being a college student and studying, and if you don't get a level playing field that other students have, that makes it more stressful," Hughes said. "But it really helped to know someone had my back."

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FINDING

COMMON GROUND:

Academic and Career Advising for the 21st Century

ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE'S NEW STATE-OF-THE ART CAREER AND ACADEMIC ADVISING CENTER REFLECTS ITS REINVIGORATED ADVISING MODEL AND PROVIDES A SPACE FOR ENHANCED STUDENT ENGAGEMENT.

Normally, an advising center is a buzz of activity during the weeks leading up to the start of the term. Then? Empty hallways, lineless queues and deserted student work stations for months on end.

Not anymore. This school year, St. Petersburg College opened its first redesigned Career and Academic Advising Center at its Tarpon Springs Campus. The reimagined center evokes the idea of a popular

coffee café or community gathering spot, where students and staff collaborate in comfy seating areas surrounded by the latest technology.

"It's like the Apple genius bar meets Starbucks," said Dr. Marvin Bright, Provost of the Tarpon Springs Campus. "There's a lot of movement and engagement with students in the space, which promotes the movement and flow within the entire building. This is not a space where students are sitting in an office waiting to be helped."

The Career and Advising Center is a place where students, faculty, staff and community members work in a collaborative environment to create rich and ongoing learning, co-working, and teaching



experiences. The center fosters student success, vital campus partnerships, and encourages individuals to become members of an intellectually diverse, active learning community. It is a reflection of the college's new career and academic advising model, which places an emphasis on the alignment between a student's academic area of study and their career aspirations.

REACHING MILLENNIALS — AND THEIR PARENTS — WHERE THEY LIVE

SPC has as many students in the traditional college age bracket (approximately 30%) as those over the age of 35. Clearly, the generational experiences with technology are very different. Yet, at least two-thirds of Americans — crossing generational spans — own smart phones and other digital devices.

Millennial social environments, including academic ones, are in close synergy with an abundant use of technology. Traditionally, earlier generations have criticized Millennials, or “Net-Gens”, for their connection to new-age communication, and perceive them as withdrawn from in-person interaction. On the contrary, research shows that Net-Gens prefer to engage in multitasking, socially diverse environments that allow for in-person connections along with the use of technology.

St. Petersburg College has embraced the challenge to bridge the generational gap and connect to its diverse population at the critical advising level.

“Our students are constantly adapting to the ever-changing nature of our digital world, and we have every intention of advancing our services and philosophies along with them. It would be a disservice otherwise,” said SPC President Bill Law.

“Our new advising model and our advising centers are bringing the college-to-career conversation to a higher level,” Law said.

THE STUDENT-CENTERED EXPERIENCE

Traditionally in higher education, the Prescriptive Theory of Advising has been used, focusing on students' needs related to academics with minimal emphasis on the total individual development. This approach is authority-based guidance, which hinders authentic relationships. Often, students aren't engaged during this critical process, which hinders growth in and beyond the classroom.

St. Petersburg College has abandoned the Prescriptive Theory of Advising and now offers an engaging and collaborative approach known as Developmental Advising. This approach focuses on working with students in defining where they want to go with their lives and careers and then giving them the information and the tools to get there. In essence, the Tarpon Springs Campus Career and Academic Advising Center embodies this method.

“We've turned advising upside down, in the sense that we've literally knocked down walls and barriers,” said Rod Davis, Tarpon Springs Campus Associate Provost. “Now we have a collaborative environment where students can build relationships.”

The previous center's layout mimicked the design and environment of a doctor's office or motor vehicle department — an outdated model to the growing millennial generation.

“Previously, services only met prescribed student needs. The environment didn't foster a continual collaboration and engagement among students, faculty, and staff,” Provost Bright said. (Continued on Page 12)



Now, advisors are no longer tethered to their desks. With technology at their fingertips, they can meet students where they are. Each advisor has multifunctional two-in-one laptops that allow them to host group or one-on-one advising sessions. In addition, more than 35 computers are available to students for independent class registration and for faculty to host classroom lectures. As technology continues to evolve, the center has the ability to expand to offer additional features.

The state-of-the-art technology embedded throughout the center welcomes students. Immediately front and center, the Jumbo-Tron flashes high-resolution images and video that captivates students and invites them to make connections. The concierge center overlooks a comfortable, open floor plan that is socially inviting and empowers confidence for key stakeholders to make an impactful change to their educational future.

MAKING CAREER CONNECTIONS

The Career and Transfer Hub is an extension of services offered by the Tarpon Springs Career and Advising Center. There, advisors and support staff offer career counseling to students, starting with the end goal in mind.

For example, students prepare for the workforce by making resumes with the center's software, learning the technology needed to conduct a Skype interview and attending network fairs that are offered weekly.

"Every conversation we have with students includes a career conversation," said Student Services Manager Terri Kontodiakos. "It is vital to student success and keeps students motivated, knowing they are working towards a larger goal."

ADVISING: A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF SPC'S AWARD-WINNING COLLEGE EXPERIENCE INITIATIVE

The Tarpon Springs Campus Career and Advising Center supports SPC's College Experience initiative, which is designed to help students "start smart and finish strong." In 2014, the college was named a winner of the Chancellor's Best Practice Award for these efforts.

This initiative ignites students' drive and motivation through five areas deemed critical to advancing student success:

- Expanded out-of-class support
- A personalized tool called "My Learning Plan"
- New student "Smart Start" orientation
- Early alerts and student coaching
- Integrated career and academic advising

Through the new developmental advising approach, students identify, clarify and realize their personal, academic, career and life goals. The purpose is to give students the tools, resources and support they need to be successful.

"There is no doubt these proactive support systems and resources are making a difference in the lives of our students," SPC President Law said. "The successes we are seeing inspire us to retain our collective, laser-like focus on student achievement."

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

#SPCINSPIRES



RICHARD QUARTARARO

After earning his Veterinary Technology Associate in Science degree and a general Associate in Arts degree in Fall 2015, Richard Quartararo is looking forward to the options his bachelor's degree in Veterinary Technology will give him.

"My passion is the clinical side, but I would love to open my own clinic," Quartararo said. "With this degree, I can also give back in the way of teaching."

RAYFORD DENNIS

Rayford Dennis earned his Associate in Arts degree and an Associate in Science in Human Services with a concentration in substance abuse in 2013. He transferred to the University of South Florida's Social Work program, where he will graduate this summer. He currently works at the Veteran's Administration assisting homeless veterans.

"SPC will always be special to me because it was a turning point in my life," Dennis said. "It was the foundation upon which I built my career, and it gave me all the necessary tools to succeed with the transformation of my life."



DENIANN GRANT

2012 SPC Graduate Deniann Grant was chosen this year as a finalist for Teach for America's Sue Lehmann Teaching and Learning Fellowship. This summer, Grant begins a new phase of her career as a manager in Teach for America's Teacher Leadership Development program in Miami-Dade. She will move from the classroom into a mentor/coach role, where she will advise teachers and collect data on the effectiveness of their efforts.

"Because I had people believe in me at SPC, I was always involved in leadership training," she said. "When I think about my identity and how I interact with people and other professionals, I realize that I learned the gist of that at St. Petersburg College."

SARAH RAWDON

As a project manager for Merge Healthcare, Sarah Rawdon works with people all over the world. She earned her Health Services Administration Bachelor of Applied Science degree and Healthcare Informatics Certificate from St. Petersburg College completely online, and she now manages the process of computer upgrades for radiology departments.

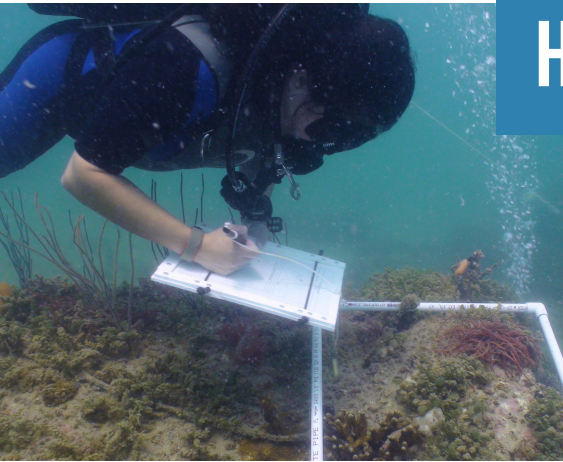
"The informatics certificate program I took was really awesome," she said. "SPC really helped me with time management, and the curriculum was always relevant to industry needs."



ROLLING IN THE DEEP

St. Petersburg College Marine Biology students get hands-on experience in the full spectrum of research with several opportunities for active learning both in and out of the water.

HANDS-ON RESEARCH



A reef study conducted by Dr. Monica Lara and Dr. Heyward Mathews gave students the opportunity to collect data in the field, write abstracts, proposals and research reports, and then share their research at a student-led symposium.

COMMUNITY CLEANUP



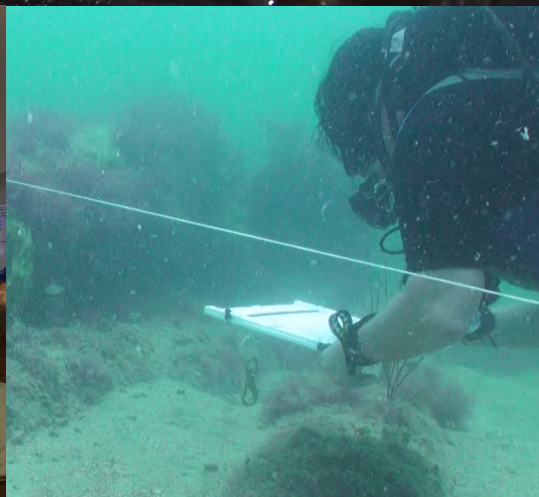
At the annual Pier 60 cleanup, student volunteers and divers pitched in to clean up debris from old fishing line and crab traps under the Clearwater pier.

ACTIVE LEARNING



St. Petersburg College's Underwater Research Society spent a weekend in Key Largo diving the reefs and learning about coral restoration efforts in the Florida Keys.







A DIVERSE DELEGATION

St. Petersburg College's Model United Nations team was honored as an Outstanding Delegation at the National Model United Nations (NMUN) conference in New York.

Outstanding Delegation is the highest award given at the New York conference, which hosted more than 3,000 delegates this year, and puts SPC's Model UN team in the top 10 percent of teams in the world.

A total of 16 St. Petersburg College students, including Early College and international students, participated in the week-long conference. Two students, Dragana Mitric and Kayla Li, also received awards for Outstanding Position Papers.

The NMUN extends across the world. Fifty-seven percent of students who participate are not U.S. residents, which ensures an opportunity for students to gain cultural perspective within a

delegation process that helps shape students' career aspirations and, potentially, global policy.

"The diversity in our team helped us succeed," said Li, an Early College student in her senior year. "Part of the conference includes being able to come up with strategies that all countries can compromise and agree upon, so being aware of different viewpoints is crucial to being able to come up with the best plan."

St. Petersburg College's Model United Nations team included students representing many different ethnicities and academic programs.

"Diversity helped, as our team at SPC was able to connect with students from other countries to develop our ideas," said Christopher Duggan, who is working towards his Associate in Arts degree at St. Petersburg College and plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in Philosophy.

SPC's Model UN represented the small country of Luxembourg, and each student was assigned to specific committees to discuss problems and resolutions. The delegates research their assigned country's history, politics and finances. They are also required to remain in character during the entire delegation process and are graded on how well they perform.

"We are expected to represent the ideals and policies of our country in all of our actions," Li said. "If we agree with a paper or an idea, it is because

our country would agree with the paper or idea.”

The SPC committees tackled difficult subjects, from cyber security to efforts to control weapons of mass destruction. Students said the hands-on activities and lessons in teamwork were especially valuable.

“I learned that if you take the time to walk around, listen to everyone in your committee and contribute to their work, it will be to your benefit,” Duggan said. “Often, the other delegations will feed off of your energy and will yearn to work with your country’s delegation.”

In addition to experiences provided by the conference, students were able to explore New York City – a first for many of them.

“I had never ridden a subway before, and it was interesting to see so many talented artists playing their music,” Li said.

They visited the Empire State Building and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and sat in the same chairs that world leaders do at the United Nations headquarters.

The Model UN initiative at St. Petersburg College places strong emphasis on research and experiential learning. Students gain critical thinking skills and knowledge about international organizations, processes for conflict resolution and insight into how countries diplomatically engage one another. Over the last several years, St. Petersburg College has gained worldwide recognition for its Model UN program, which competes against large four-year universities, including Ivy League schools.

Model UN students gain invaluable leadership experience that helps them in their careers and other future endeavors, said Roy Slater, Professor of Social Science and mentor to the Model UN at SPC.

“We certainly have seen the Model UN impact in shaping student perspectives of the world as well as the work that they would like to engage in after St. Petersburg College,” Slater said. “Many students share how much this experience has changed their lives.”

Fred Arnold is a Social Media Intern in SPC’s Marketing and Strategic Communications Department. He can be reached at arnold.fred@spcollege.edu.





A PATH TO THE FUTURE

St. Petersburg College continues to bolster its national reputation and leadership in designing and implementing high-quality, structured Career and Academic Pathways for all students.

St. Petersburg College was chosen this school year as one of only 30 community colleges in the nation, and only one of four in the state, to participate in the American Association of Community Colleges' (AACC) Pathways Project. During the project - funded by a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation - college officials attend collaborative institutes, where participants share best practices that can be replicated at other schools.

SPC was chosen based on its work over the last several years to merge academic and student support services into a holistic, meaningful approach to help students successfully earn degrees and certifications more quickly. The result is the convergence of a five-pronged approach to student support called The College Experience and the college's new Career and Academic Pathways into a seamless experience of support and direction for students.

"We are particularly excited to share what we've learned, because we know it works," said St. Petersburg College President Bill Law. "Through the AACC project, we have the opportunity to collaborate with colleges and partnering institutions to help develop a sustainable model for educational institutions across the nation."

Known as the AACC Guided Pathways, concerted efforts aim to create a unified student experience, take the guesswork out of course selection, offer personalized support, deliver relevant and clear communication and provide students with a concise roadmap to graduation and economic opportunity.

Career and Academic Pathways at SPC became available for student use in the Fall of 2015. Jack A. Crooks, who is pursuing his bachelor's degree in Public Policy, said his customized pathway took the guesswork out of the timing and sequencing of his courses.

"I work full time, so to have the ability to schedule out my classes in a way that progresses logically was extremely helpful," Crooks said.

A NEW MODEL FOR SUCCESS

The Guided Pathways model is based on research conducted by the Community College Research Center that determined that the decades-old "cafeteria model" offered by community colleges was no longer effective for today's students.

The "cafeteria model" allowed broader access to higher education, but end goals were unclear, available choices were too numerous, and student progress wasn't appropriately monitored. Completion rates suffered as a result. Today's learners have evolved into a group who seek faster, more efficient paths to degrees and certifications that lead to employment and economic opportunity.

According to the American Association of Community Colleges, research shows that in order to improve completion rates, colleges need to completely overhaul their programs. St. Petersburg College began doing so in 2012 and has built a foundation and reputation for helping students succeed and finish what they start.

"We have seen our approaches work very well at St. Petersburg College over the past several years and are proud to share what we have learned," said Dr. Anne Cooper, SPC's Senior Vice President for Instruction and Academic Programs.



PLAN YOUR FUTURE HERE

In 2012, St. Petersburg College developed a robust, award-winning business intelligence system that allows users college-wide to access student performance data in real time. Analytics show that College Experience support services and interventions have resulted in successfully increasing student achievement across the board, and particularly for First-Time-In-College (FTIC) students and African American and Hispanic males.

"Our data clearly show us that our efforts through The College Experience have increased student success," said Sabrina Crawford, SPC Executive Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. "The new Guided Pathways initiative simply allows us to fully integrate our academic and student support services into a model that further boosts achievement and completion levels."

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

At the onset of the 2015-16 school year, SPC successfully launched more than 180 academic program pathways, giving students a clear, specific sequence of courses in the recommended order that they should be taken. The College Experience supports are carefully woven into these paths, creating a "Start Smart, Finish Strong" model of progression.

Students begin their journey by attending a new student orientation where they explore their career interests, identify the best recommended academic pathway and create their learning plan. As students progress through their plan, "early alert" systems identify struggling students quickly, allowing for immediate out-of-class support. In addition, "on and off ramps" are embedded along the path that provide opportunities for students to earn industry certifications and credentials. Finally, as students approach the end of their path, multiple opportunities are created to gain work experience and job preparation.

Most recently, the Career and Academic Pathways are being aligned under the college's 10 newly established Career and Academic Communities. Grouping programs into learning communities helps keep students on track and gives them a sense of engagement and investment in their educational outcome, according to the AACC.

"These learning communities are very important because they will provide students an opportunity to explore possible careers within their community, build peer support amongst the students, and allow the college to customize engagement strategies that support the specific communities," Cooper noted.

STARTING SMART, FINISHING STRONG

Career conversations begin immediately with students, so they are able to identify their goals early on. Students will be exposed to the context of their pathway at the onset of the academic journey so they can be confident in their program selection. Through the new, contextualized orientation, students are able to envision a roadmap to completion and begin planning their course selection and sequence based on their chosen pathway.

This summer, deans, faculty and administrators will continue to provide integral insight into appropriate sequencing of learning outcomes and course selection, and they have been attending "Faculty Dinner Conversations" to collaborate with peers on the implementation of the first contextualized communities this fall.

Crooks, the Public Policy student, said he believes the Pathways tool is already helping him progress through his bachelor's program more quickly and more efficiently.

"I'm taking two courses this summer where I might have only taken one," Crooks said. "But because I was able to see the full scope of the degree requirements in one easy-to-use tool, I was able to see how I could fit two courses into the summer semester. It's really given me the foundation to complete my program and earn my next degree. It's also given me more time to talk to my advisor about my long-term goals, as opposed to course scheduling."

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