

ACHIEVEMENT

Provide Adult Students
the Guidance Needed to
Succeed

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BY KIM JEFFRIES

Central New Mexico Community College (CNM), formerly Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute, began as a small trade school in 1965. It has now become the largest institution of higher education in New Mexico in terms of enrollment, offering 78 certificate and 45 associate degree programs in applied technologies; business and information technology; communication, humanities and social sciences; health, wellness and public safety; and mathematics, science and engineering. While most educational institutions offer student support in the form of academic advisers and counselors, Kathie W. Winograd, CNM's president, stated, "In regard to support services for our students, CNM is

a trailblazer. Beyond academic advisers, we have a unique collection of special student advocates—achievement coaches—who are here to encourage and help students overcome obstacles and personal life challenges."

Role of the Achievement Coach

In 1997, the first achievement coach was hired through funding from the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act and placed in the School of Applied Technologies. Today there are 14 achievement coaches providing academic and personal coaching to CNM students in all of the college's six schools. Each achievement coach has a master's degree and comes from various backgrounds, such as counseling, academic advising

and teaching. A frequently asked question from students, faculty and staff at CNM is: "What is the difference between what an academic adviser does and what an achievement coach does?" Academic advisers assist students prior to starting their classes. They provide program information and may recommend classes for the upcoming semester. They are also knowledgeable about transferring credits and graduation requirements. An achievement coach assists students once they are in their classes. Students who find they are struggling with test taking, study skills and time management can meet with an achievement coach to create a success plan.

To achieve student success, achievement coaches use coaching tools and

ACHIEVEMENT COACHES

Students with
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An achievement coach assists students once they are in their classes. Students who find they are struggling with test taking, study skills and time management can meet with an achievement coach to create a success plan.

strategies to acknowledge and build on the strengths of students. Through the use of coaching strategies, achievement coaches partner with students to foster critical thinking, decision making, goal setting and action planning that empower the student as the expert and the one responsible for implementing these tools. These skills enhance the student's ability to balance academic and home life, accept personal responsibility, and to in-

crease the probability of completion of his or her intended college goals. These skills also become valuable for the students' transition to the workplace.

Why the Model Works

One of the advantages of the achievement coach model is that an achievement coach is located within each school of the college. This allows each school to better serve its population of students. Accord-

ing to Nicholas Spezza, dean of health wellness and public safety, the role of the achievement coach in the career and technical education (CTE) school is "to support student success via a focus on student's strengths, academic and life planning, and connecting students to needed resources in order to be successful in the rigorous programs within health wellness and public safety. Achievement coaches also work with faculty and administration

in a team approach to support learning as an overarching concept.”

In addition to assisting with academic issues, achievement coaches provide campus and community resources and referrals to students facing personal challeng-


es that are making it difficult for them to be successful in college. This may include transportation, child care, food and shelter. Students with mental health issues are also provided referrals to low-cost or free counseling services. Students who

are not eligible for financial aid through sources such as the Pell Grant often find themselves without funds to purchase their costly textbooks. Through Perkins funding, the CTE achievement coaches in the Schools of Applied Technologies; Business and Information Technology; and Health, Wellness and Public Safety have developed an emergency textbook loan program. Through this program, students completing CTE majors are lent textbooks needed for the term. The textbooks are returned at the end of the term so that they can be used by other students in need.

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Joseph Dye, a geographic information technology major states, “When I decided to come back to school after a long break, the Perkins Emergency Textbook Loan was very helpful. I had a student loan that was in default and I was not eligible for financial aid, so I paid my school expenses out of my own pocket. I spoke to Kim Jeffries, School of Business and Information Technology achievement coach, and she told me about the program. I was able to borrow the textbook for my computer class and successfully completed the course.”

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12 p.m. Friday, Dec. 3,
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◀ Top: Kim Jeffries, achievement coach at Central New Mexico Community College, counsels Joseph Dye, a geographic information technology major.

Below: A sign in one of the main hallways of the institution informs students about the availability of achievement coaches to help them be successful.



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Chester Brown was recently hired to fill the achievement coach position in the School of Applied Technologies. Brown said, "What intrigued me about the position was the action words used in the job

description (*i.e.*, develops intervention activities to improve retention; plans, coordinates and implements programs that are designed to improve retention; identifying academic and support service needs

of a special population). I felt this fit me well since I have worked with TRiO programs most of my career, which works with low income, first generation students and students with disabilities."

Brown said that as an achievement coach, he provides the link between the students' needs and student support services so students have the tools to accomplish their goals. In addition, he works one-on-one with each student to develop success plans, identify what they need in terms of services and who in what organization will provide them the service.

"It comes down to listening to ascertain the strengths and drive of each student and determine what they need from you as the achievement coach to succeed," he said. **■**

Kim Jeffries and Barbara Burrows will be presenting the achievement coach model at a workshop titled "The Role of Achievement Coaches at Central New Mexico Community College" during the 2010 ACTE Annual Convention, December 2-4, in Las Vegas.

Kim Jeffries

is achievement coach in the School of Business and Information Technology at Central New Mexico Community College. She can be contacted at kjffries@cnm.edu.

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