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A final project presented to the faculty of the
Instructional Design Master's Degree Program
University of Massachusetts at Boston

Reimagining First-Year Experience:
Strategies for Supporting the Success of the 21st Century Community College Student

Submitted by
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in partial fulfillment for the requirement of the degree
MASTER OF EDUCATION

May 5, 2019

Dr. Carol Sharicz
Approved by Dr. Carol Ann Sharicz, Faculty

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Abstract

Across the nation, higher education institutions are assessing and redesigning their first-year experience as efforts to retain students. Community colleges, especially, are piloting and implementing evidence-based practices that have proven to be successful at four-year institutions. Bristol Community College, located in southeastern Massachusetts, is among one of these community colleges. While the research presented in this Capstone does not address non-cognitive issues, as critical as they are to understanding student attrition, this Capstone, backed by primary research and empirical data, focuses on curricular and co-curricular pedagogy imperative to the success of first-year community college students. Using Bristol as a subject, this Capstone suggests and delivers a prototype for a self-paced, first-year experience eLearning course intentionally and inclusively designed for today's community college student.

Keywords: first-year experience, community colleges, qualitative data, student services, technology.

Reimagining First-Year Experience: Strategies for Supporting the Success of the 21st Century
Community College Student

Project Overview

Institution: Mission and Vision

Located in southeastern Massachusetts, Bristol Community College (Bristol), the primary subject of this Capstone study, enrolls more than seven thousand undergraduate students each year, most of whom are declared in General Studies. Bristol's vision, "Bristol Community College changes the world by changing lives, learner by learner," encapsulates its mission and core values to promote lifelong learning, embrace diversity and inclusion, and contribute to the region's economy and growing workforce.

Organizational Problem

While Bristol has countless attributes that contribute to the success and growth of its mission, there are numerous issues that negatively impact the success of students, most of which are tied to first-year experience. Slightly greater than the national average as well as the state, Bristol retains approximately sixty percent of their first-time, full-time students. Many students who do not persist are students of underprepared and underrepresented populations. At Bristol, more than half of incoming students require at least one developmental course, setting students behind schedule and draining their financial resources.

While these statistics are not unique to Bristol, they present realities to its students that carry the potential to impact their success while enrolled at the college. In addition to these realities, Bristol's own policies and practices, or lack thereof, affect students, especially the first-year student. While Bristol does offer an orientation program during the intersessions, it is not required of students. Similarly, students are not required to enroll in a first-year experience

course during their first semester, and with enough credits earned, most students do not have to enroll in the course at all.

Aligning with the literature, enrollment into a FYE seminar in a student's first semester is not a requirement. In fact, with enough credits earned at Bristol, some students can bypass the FYE requirement. In 2016, a policy was enacted at Bristol, which grants students who meet at least one of the following criteria a first-year experience waiver:

- the student already holds an associate's degree of higher;
- the student has earned 30 or more transfer credits;
- the student has earned 30 or more Bristol credits with a GPA of 2.5 or better, or
- the student has a combination of 30 or more transfer or Bristol credits with a GPA of 2.5 or better.

The third and fourth bullets have created, perhaps inadvertently, a disservice to students by creating a loophole in the system. Students and advisors know that if they just wait to earn enough credits at Bristol, students will be exempt from having to fulfill this requirement. The perk of waiting to reach exemption status means that students will not have to pay for a one-credit course and they will avoid the nuisance of trying to fit a one-credit course into their schedule; however, the message that this policy sends is that the learning outcomes of this course are not imperative to a first-year student. Furthermore, the policy alludes to the idea that students achieve these learning outcomes somewhere in the course of accumulating thirty college credits, which is difficult, if not impossible, to measure.

Weeks prior to beginning the fall 2018 semester, the campus community at Bristol discovered that the Division for Access and Transition, which had housed first-year experience seminars, was dismantled thus displacing the program. With uncertainties of its future at Bristol,

this Capstone provides a framework as well as a prototype to rethink the delivery of first-year experience outcomes to its students.

Key Stakeholders

In order to revamp and redesign Bristol's First-Year Experience program so that it is inclusive and a shared belief and vision from the campus community at large, there needs to be far reaching campus buy-in and support. To attract this endorsement, there must be as many constituents who move the process forward as there are those in senior-level positions who have the ability to advocate for change and institute policy. In late 2018, a First-Year Experience team, co-chaired by the Chief of Staff for Academic Affairs and the Chief of Staff for Student Services and Enrollment Management, was formed and is also comprised of the Director for Title III and an academic advisor. The purpose of this team is to assess current FYE initiatives and engage as well as solicit the ideas of the campus community on reshaping the program. The end user, both the incoming and second-semester returning student, are also key stakeholders in the process since not only will they be impacted by changes, their perspectives will offer significant insights into the process and, arguably, the most credible feedback for redesign. Faculty, both full-time and adjunct, play an imperative role in the redesign process because the success of the program weighs heavily on not only their support, but their active engagement in course redesign and high-impact practices.

Drivers for Change

Institutional goals as well as state and federal legislation and mandates serve as drivers and catalysts for change.

Presidential goals. In 2018, Bristol Community College inaugurated its fourth president, Dr. Laura Douglas. With significant modifications to Bristol's infrastructure, President Douglas'

vision and leadership has sparked momentum for change and shifts towards new direction. At Bristol, there are several 2018-2019 presidential goals tied to first-year experience, specifically focused on the increase of High-Impact Practices in the first year as efforts to foster the success and retention of underrepresented students. Broken into six strategies, the goals set in Strategy 1 - College Participation: Developing and Sustaining Enrollment, are in accord with First-Year Experience:

Identify and reach out to underrepresented groups and new markets with strategic focus.

A.1 Increase High Impact Practices (HIPs) and promising practices to foster underrepresented student retention.

- Develop and pilot a comprehensive First Year Experience (FYE) Program for Fall 2019, engaging experiential learning, OneBook, revised First Year Seminars and co-curricular strategies for new students to increase retention. (President's Approved Goals – 2018-2019)

To achieve presidential goals, college committees, task forces, advisory boards, and any other working teams should align their own efforts with presidential goals.

State-level reform. In December 2018, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) amended the 1998 Common Assessment Policy to include the use of high school GPA as a measure for determining college readiness. Originally a pilot initiative proven to be successful, the following newly adopted standards allow Massachusetts institutions of higher education to place students directly into college-level, credit-bearing English and math courses:

- 2.7 cumulative high school GPA for students who have graduated from high school within the past ten years to place directly into a college-level, credit-bearing English course.
- 2.7 cumulative high school GPA for students who have graduated from high school within the past three years to place directly into a college-level, credit-bearing mathematics course. (Massachusetts Department of Higher Education)

As a result of these promising practices, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) is putting pressure on community colleges to not only adopt these new measures of assessment, but to also scale efforts to address developmental education and set enrollment and completion goals. By 2021, the DHE expects seventy-five percent of first-time, degree seeking community college students to complete a college-level math course within one year of matriculation or before earning twenty-four credits.

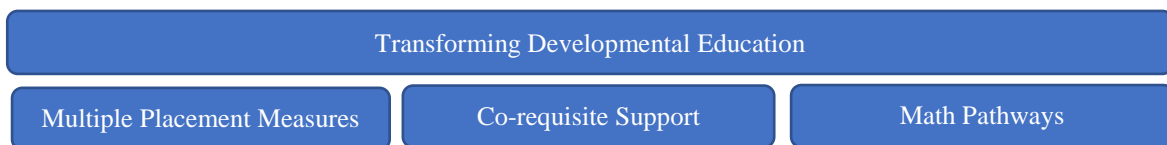


Figure 1: *Three-Pronged Approaching for Transforming Developmental Education in Massachusetts, Amendment to 1998 Common Assessment Policy to Include the use of High School GPA, 2018.*

Multiple measures. As a result of these external pressures from the BHE, Bristol is on the cusp of fully adopting multiple measures as efforts to determine student readiness. Less than a few years ago, Bristol students could only demonstrate their readiness for college-level work by placement test scores or, less likely, through transfer credit on college-level math or English courses and SAT/ACT scores. Now, students who fall under the new standards set by the BHE, bypass placement testing and may enroll directly into college-level math and English. While

these new measures of assessment are sure to, albeit by default, reduce the number of students who enroll in developmental courses, it excludes an important population from the formula, the non-traditional adult learner. At Bristol, the average student age is twenty-seven years old and when this statistic is aligned with the new standards set by the BHE, there will be a significant number of adult learners who will not be assessed by this measurement.

Leveraging grants. In October 2018, Bristol was notified that it received federal funding through a 2.25 million-dollar federal Title III Strengthening Institutions grant. The project, titled *Pathways to the Future*, focuses on three major components: Engaged Pathways, Inescapable Supports, and Learning Commons. In the grant proposal, programming for first-year experience is noted in all five years of the grant. As grant initiatives, Bristol has been charged with the following objectives, all of which are in alignment with first-year experience: creating a FYE Redesign Team, designing learning communities to promote student cohorts and block schedules, increasing High-Impact Practices in a student's first year, and infusing FYE student learning outcomes into gateway courses.

Analysis Plan

Literature Review

While the literature and scholarly inquiry on first-year experience at four-year institutions is prolific, research on first-year experience at community colleges is scarce in comparison but has been growing in prevalence in the last few decades. When redesigning and piloting first-year experience initiatives, community college practitioners will rely heavily on research from other community colleges as opposed to universities who initiate the same practices because the assumption is that what occurs at a four-year institution has little relevance to a community college setting (Bers & Younger, 2014). In this section, the literature surveyed is grounded in

research and practices at the community college level and summarizes components to first-year experience programming proven to be critical to the success of the Capstone's intended audience, the first-year student.

Learning communities. In its simplest definition, learning communities, according to Tinto (2012), “constitute a kind of co-registration or block scheduling. The same group of students register for two or more courses, forming a sort of study team” (p. 71). While scheduling and batch registering students is foundational to forming learning communities, it is critical to incorporate common threads across the linked courses and, to do so, this effort requires significant faculty buy-in and training (Mangan, 2019). Through intentional design, learning communities cohort like-minded students while providing them with a sense of belonging. When designed intentionally, they have the capacity to offer students academic support, coaching, and career guidance (Managan, 2019). Managan (2019) succinctly describes the benefits and challenges of learning communities:

When done well, [learning communities] offer a valuable tool for community colleges that face high dropout rates and pressure from lawmakers to eliminate remedial courses.

When they fall flat, it's often because they've been folded into a flurry of reforms without enough faculty training and curricular integration. (p. 2)

Less than 90 miles north of Bristol, Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) in Massachusetts is seeing significant increases in persistence and retention among part-time students through learning communities. What's unique about BHCC's delivery of the model is that it accommodates and targets part-time students as opposed to structuring programming to appeal to something they may never intend to be, a full-time student (Smith, 2018).

Developmental education. Across the nation, community colleges are responding to pressures from state legislation to address the exorbitant number of students who place into developmental coursework. Development education is defined as non-credit coursework that falls below college-level math or English (Cafarella, 2015). Research shows that students who place into developmental coursework are less likely to complete a college-level math or English course than students who place directly into college-level courses (Ariovich & Walker, 2014). Moreover, placement into developmental coursework thwart students' aspirations of ever earning a credential. Hodara and Jaggar (2015) argue that the lower students place in developmental coursework the higher their chances are of not persisting to the next semester: "Developmental education, with its long sequence lengths and multiple exit points, provides too many opportunities for students to leave college prior to completing their developmental requirements" (p. 249). Acceleration, modularization, and contextualization are a few common, low-cost approaches that administration and faculty are adopting at their institutions and implementing in their classrooms, respectively.

Methodology

Through a mixed methods approach, this Capstone incorporates a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection and assessment. In February 2018, twenty-one Bristol faculty and staff convened for a three-hour brainstorming session to identify the knowledge and skills students should gain in their first-year at Bristol. Significant qualitative data was collected, and themes emerged. *Appendix A* represents the emergent themes along with respective student learning objectives and outputs. To solicit further input and promote transparency and inclusion with the campus community, the emergent themes were presented at an All College meeting, and using Poll Everywhere, participants were asked to rank the categories in priority. It was

explained to participants that itemizing a category at the top would mean that this FYE topic should be introduced to students as early as possible. In order to gain further campus buy-in, a link to the survey was provided in Bristol Weekly, the College's weekly newsletter. In total, sixty-nine individuals responded. Figure 2 shows the survey results.

To garner student opinion, a survey instrument was designed via SurveyGizmo to assess both the student value of faculty and staff identified FYE components and to what degree students felt like the learning outcomes of these components were addressed in their first year. With feedback from the campus community, the FYE Redesign Team submitted a sixteen-question survey instrument (*Appendix B*) for Institutional Review Board approval and, upon approval, 6,536 students, all of whom were registered for the spring 2019 semester, received a survey link to their Bristol email address.

To continue the conversation around FYE redesign, the FYE team reconvened in late April for another brainstorming session. Through a modified concept mapping activity, twenty-four diverse faculty and staff representing various areas of the college unpacked lofty and cumbersome qualitative data generated from the two open-ended questions at the end of the FYE student survey. A method of data assessment, concept mapping is a "technique that can demonstrate how people visualize relationships between various concepts" (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009, p. 69). Wheeldon and Faubert (2009) continue: "Based on the front-end visual construction of a participant's experience provided in a map, researchers can specifically design subsequent stages of data collection and use participant-generated themes to help guide more in-depth analysis (p. 72). Furthermore, data assessed through multiple lenses and perspectives increases inter-rater reliability, thus creating an enriched data analysis. Through this activity,

participants categorized the raw data under emergent themes, allowing for the construction and creation of meaning.

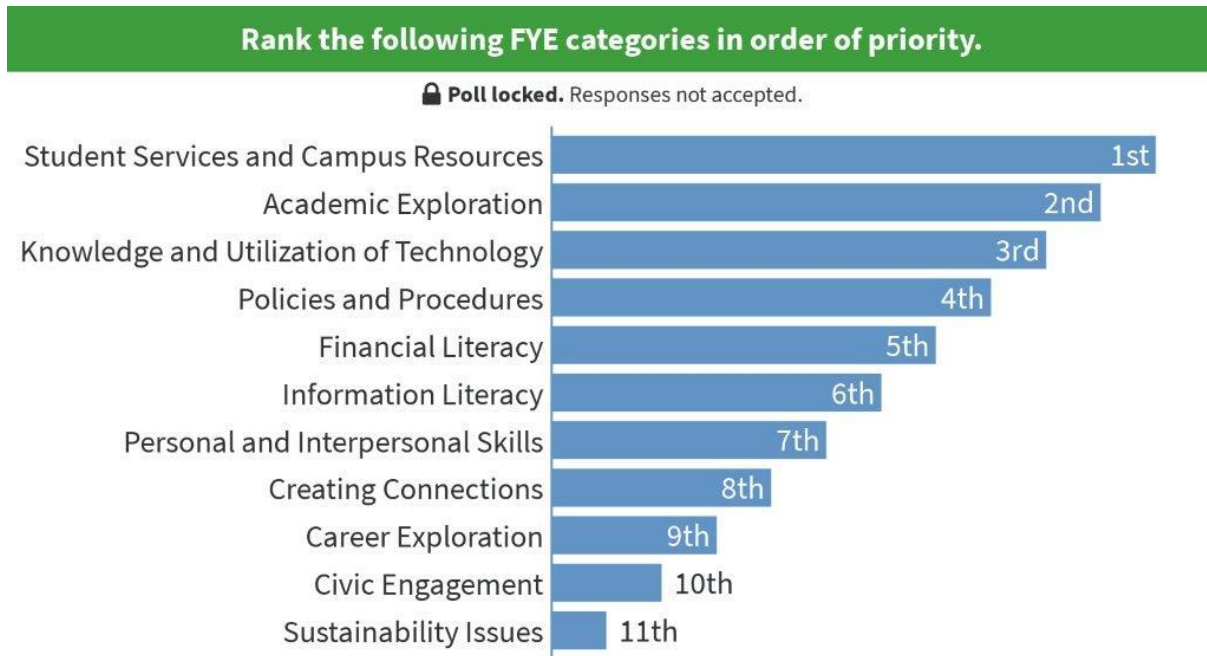


Figure 2: *First-Year Experience Redesign, Poll Everywhere, 2019.*

Analysis Report

First-Year Experience Student Survey Results

The First-Year Experience Student Survey was open for twenty-five days, yielding a completion rate of 5% (N = 340). While 340 students took the survey, 339 students completed all questions. Data shows that 44% (N = 148) of respondents were first-time students in the fall 2018 semester and 8% (N = 29) were first-time students in the spring 2019 semester. The remaining 48% (N = 163) of respondents reported to being enrolled for at least one academic year. For analysis purposes, it is significant to note that 52% (N = 177) of surveyed students are still in their first-year. The youngest student to complete the survey reported being fifteen years

old while sixty-five years was the oldest age reported. While the data represents random selection, data points are not entirely representative to the total Bristol population. Apart from the average age of surveyed students being twenty-six years old, one year younger than the average age of all Bristol students, most survey participants are female of traditional age to college entry.

Total Bristol Headcount by Gender vs. Total FYE Survey Headcount by Gender				
	Fall 2018 Bristol Headcount		Spring 2019 FYE Survey Results	
	#	%	#	%
Female	4,546	63%	248	73%
Male	2,577	36%	83	24%
Not Reported	91	1%	9	3%
Total Bristol Headcount by Age vs. Total FYE Survey Headcount by Gender				
	Fall 2018 Bristol Headcount		Spring 2019 FYE Survey Results	
	#	%	#	%
21 and Under	3,109	43%	175	53%
Over 21	4,105	57%	154	47%

Figure 3: *Total Bristol vs. FYE Survey Headcount by Gender and Age.*

It is important to highlight that fifteen students between the ages of fifteen and seventeen years old completed the survey, and these students are likely to be Dual Enrollment students who are taking college coursework while in high school. While their feedback is of value and included in the results, these are non-matriculated students and are not the target population of this study. If these are truly high school students, they only compromise 4% of surveyed students and their surveys do not tamper with the results and findings.

After soliciting selective demographic data, participants were asked to assess their attitudes towards the top identified FYE categories to (a) see if they would see the FYE elements as of much significance as Bristol's faculty and staff and (b) to determine if they received knowledge and/or information about these elements within the first couple of months of their first semester. Results shows that more than sixty percent of students strongly agreed and less

than three percent of students either disagreed or strongly disagreed to statements that asked them to acknowledge the importance of the top identified FYE elements: Student Services and Campus Resources, Academic Exploration, Knowledge and Utilization of Technology, and Policies and Procedures. As individual follow-up questions to these FYE elements, students were asked to rate their acquisition of knowledge of these FYE elements within their first couple of months of their first semester. In general, agreeing to these statements prevailed over strongly agreeing. Of all the statements, sentiments towards academic exploration yielded the largest discrepancy in the data. Seventy percent of students strongly agreed to the importance of recognizing how coursework aligns with future academic and career goals yet only forty percent of students strongly agreed that the courses they took or are taking in their first semester align with their degree path. To continue to review the survey results, refer to Appendix C.

Modified Concept Mapping

At the end of the survey, students were asked the following two open-ended questions: “Knowing what you know now, what do you wish you would have learned *prior* to the beginning of your first semester?” and “Knowing what you know now, what do you wish you would have learned *during* your first year?” The purpose of posing these questions was to determine at what point in a student’s first year should these learning outcomes take place. At the modified concept mapping sessions, participants plotted the data under the identified FYE categories and found numerous emergent themes. The following paragraphs summarize identified themes purposefully selected to be included in this analysis as they directly support the learning modules.

Policies and procedures. Students reported that during their first year at Bristol they wished they had received clear instruction on how to navigate common college policies and procedures like ordering textbooks, waiving health insurance, college placement test/retest

policies, withdrawing from courses, and course expectations. One student wrote, “I wish the withdrawal policy was more clearly stated with specific dates when the refund schedule was for each semester.” Another student wrote, “I wish I learned classes may drop/cancel a week prior to classes beginning.” An underlying theme in their responses show that it’s less about whether the information exists and is accessible and more about students’ lack of knowledge on how to access the information and where and whom to turn to for direction and advice.

Student services and campus resources. Students expressed a strong desire to have opportunities to connect to other students via clubs. One student wrote, “I wish clubs associated with my major were introduced so I had a better support system.” A significant number of students reported feeling like they missed out on opportunities because they took courses in the evening. One student wrote, “I wish I would’ve looked into what was offered more for night classes. It seems the individuals who take night courses are left out of events that happen on campus during the day. We are not offered the access to visits from different colleges or events.” Of all the themes represented within student services and campus resources, advising was mentioned the most. In general, students felt like they had been misadvised when it came to course selection. One student wrote, “I took two classes I didn’t need to take because I thought I had to enroll in general studies instead of just taking prerequisites for the program that I really wanted to get into.” Another emergent theme from advising was unawareness of recommended course sequencing. One student wrote, “I wish I would’ve had a chronological order of classes. I just picked whatever I wanted.” Another student wrote, “Taking the [FYE] class in my first semester would have helped me so much more than taking it in my second semester.”

Utilization of technology. Students indicated the value of Degree Works (Bristol’s web-based academic advising and degree audit tool), Blackboard (Bristol’s Learning Management

System), and the value of their campus card, especially as it relates to printing. In general, students did not recognize, nor did they agree to receiving knowledge about accessing these tools within the context of what they wished they had known within their first year. One student wrote, “I wish I had learned how to access Degree Works more. Being almost done with classes now, I am able to register for classes, myself, accordingly.” Another student reported, “I wish I would have learned how to look through Degree Works because it is an amazing tool. I also wish I knew who to contact about advising because at the time I had no clue what advising was. I only found an advisor when I failed my math placement test.” When it comes to Degree Works, students specifically wished that they knew how to access the tool in their first year and indicated wanting to use the tool primarily to access their advisor and register for courses on their own.

First-Year Experience Seminars

Of all first-year experience (FYE) strategies, the first-year seminar course is arguably the most frequently noted FYE strategy in the literature (Bers and Younger, 2014). Polyonymous, the FYE seminar might also be the most promising practice for supporting and assimilating new students to the college environment in terms of success and retention (Young and Keup, 2016). Although research validates its significance to first-year experience, requiring the first-year seminar is not a widespread belief among community colleges. On average, less than thirty percent of two-year institutions identify FYE as a graduation requirement and approximately seventy-five percent of first-year seminars run as a one-credit extended orientation (Bers and Younger, 2014). According to Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins (2014), “Success courses have become popular in the last few decades; they are now offered by an estimated 83 percent of community colleges, with almost one in four community college students participating at some point in their college careers” (p. 64).

At Bristol, FYE is a General Education requirement, and while there are several academic seminars and extended orientations that meet the requirement, College Success Seminar (CSS) 101, a one-credit course, is the FYE option with the most enrollments. In fall 2018, 785 students enrolled in CSS 101, while 274 students enrolled in one of the other FYE seminars, all of which, except for CSS 101, are three-credit courses required for specific academic programs.

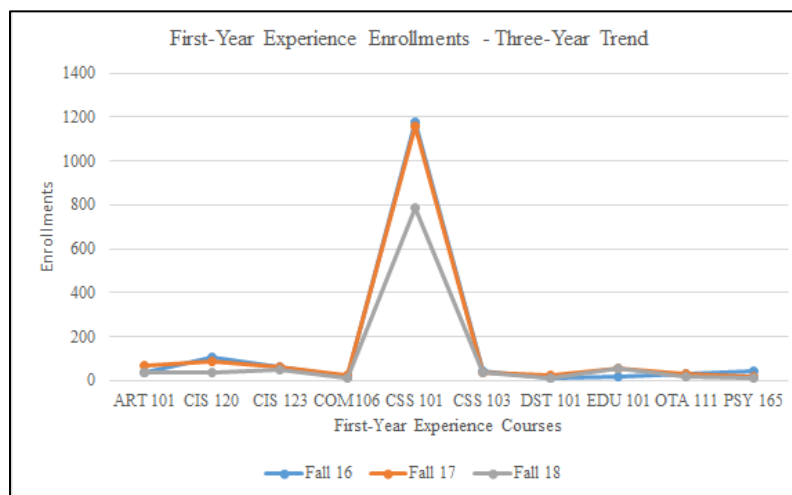


Figure 4: *First-Year Experience Enrollments at Bristol*

Identified as a “gateway course,” CSS 101 is instructed by a mere two percent of full-time faculty members who instruct while the majority of other FYE seminars, if not all, are taught by full-time instructors.

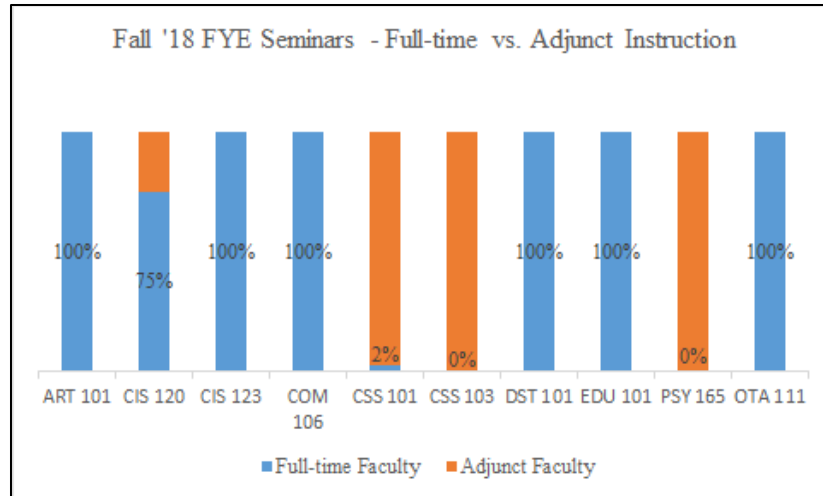


Figure 5: Percentage of FYE Courses Taught by Full-time Instructors in Fall 2018

Recently, the student learning outcomes for CSS 101 were revised (See Figure 4). The revision reflects the inclusion of the financial literacy outcomes, which is in accord with the recommendations put forth by the FYE Redesign Team.

Students will identify, locate, and utilize college resources	Students will identify and apply personalized learning and study skills that will enhance their college success	Students will formulate academic and career goals	Students will develop financial literacy
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Figure 6: Bristol’s College Success Seminar (CSS 101) Student Learning Outcomes

Gateway Courses

Circa 2008, Bristol identified 24 gateway courses (See Figure 6). These courses have high enrollment, are prerequisites for higher-level programmatic courses, and, most importantly, to the purpose of inquiry, have lower success rates compared to other first-year courses.

Regarding the latter component, redesigning and rethinking the way gateway courses are offered to community college students is critical to persistence and retention.

Courses	Credits	Courses	Credits
AST 111: Introduction to Astronomy	4	ESL 124: Advanced English Written Expression*	3
BIO 121: General Biology I	4	HST 111: The West and the World I*	3
BIO 233: Fundamentals of Biological Science I*	4	HST 112: The West and the World II*	3
BUS 111: Business and Financial Mathematics*	3	HST 113: United States History to 1877*	3
CHM 090: Introduction to Chemistry*	4	HST 114: United States History from 1877*	3
CIS 120: Programming, Logic, Design, etc.	3	MAN 101: Principles of Management	3
COM 101: Fundamentals of Public Speaking*	3	MTH 011: Arithmetic	3
CSS 101: College Success Seminar	1	MTH 119: Fundamental Statistics*	3
ECN 111: Principles of Economics – Macro*	3	PHL 101: Introduction to Philosophy	3
ENG 090: Basic Writing Skills*	3	PSY 101: General Psychology*	3
ENG 101: Composition I: College Writing*	3	RDG 090: College Reading & Learning Strategies*	3
ENG 102: Composition II: Writing about Literature*	3	SOC 101: Principles of Sociology*	3

Figure 7: Bristol Community College's identified gateway courses. Courses highlighted in yellow denote developmental, non-credit bearing courses and courses followed by an asterisk signify courses that require a prerequisite, predominantly a student's demonstrated proficiency in developmental reading (see Multiple Measures).

Fall 2018 Gateway Courses	Full-time Faculty (Unique)	Adjunct Faculty (Unique)	Total # of Enrolled Sections	Total # of Enrolled Students	% of Sections Taught by F/T Faculty	% of Students Taught by F/T Faculty
CIS 120	1	1	4	77	75%	75%
HST 112	3	4	14	293	71%	69%
PHL 101	1	1	3	67	67%	66%
BIO 121	4	2	7	143	57%	57%
ENG 102	10	16	35	610	51%	55%
BIO 233	4	6	14	290	50%	53%
MAN 101	6	5	12	246	50%	52%
ENG 101	14	25	75	1318	53%	49%
SOC 101	5	12	26	584	42%	45%
AST 111	1	2	6	119	50%	45%
PSY 101	5	14	38	870	42%	45%
ECN 111	1	5	8	181	38%	36%
HST 111	2	12	21	448	29%	31%
ESL 124	1	3	4	49	25%	29%
MTH 119	5	13	26	608	27%	28%
HST 114	2	10	14	314	29%	28%
HST 113	2	12	17	332	24%	27%
COM 101	3	15	31	571	23%	25%
BUS 111	1	5	6	85	17%	13%
CSS 101	1	28	53	990	2%	2%

Figure 8: In this chart, data on Fall 2018 gateway courses are disaggregated to compare sections taught by full-time faculty versus adjunct (part-time) faculty. The chart is filtered to reveal the number of sections taught by full-time faculty at the top and the least amount of sections taught by full-time faculty at the bottom.

Learner Analysis

Learners are diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic backgrounds. While they may have similar or opposing career aspirations and academic goals, most students have little to no previous higher education experience. Therefore, the educational content may be unfamiliar to many learners.

Table 1: *Learner Analysis*

Prior Knowledge of Topic	The course is designed for a heterogenous set of learners, all of whom are first-year community college students. Approximately 75% of learners will have little to no prior knowledge of the topic areas. Although terms and concepts will be familiar to most learners, their applicability to Bristol will be new information to learners.
Attitude Towards Content	The modules developed in this Capstone are one-third of a semester-long FYE course. Student participation or lack thereof will be evaluated and will result in a letter grade. Therefore, it is anticipated that most learners will be accepting of the content
Educational & Ability Levels	All learners have achieved a high school diploma or high school equivalency. Most learners are traditional in that they are recent high school graduates while other learners are adults (21 years and older) with little to no prior college coursework.
Learning Preferences	Research shows that learners prefer face-to-face courses. This eLearning course can be attached to a face-to-face, hybrid, online course, and, regardless of modality, can be linked in a learning community. Learners will be allowed to select their preference based on their learning style and course section availability. The course will also be self-paced, promoting self-directed learning theory.
Attitudes Towards Training Organization	The target audience is first-year students who are new to the institution. Therefore, their level of interest and participation should be high. The organization provides them with education, which will result in potential further education and employment so it is anticipated that their attitudes, overall, should be positive.

Instructional Design

Instructional Strategy

The multimedia content developed from this Capstone project, including the learning objectives, have been designed to either be delivered in a stand-alone, first-year experience course in any modality or integrated into a three or four-credit gateway course. Regardless of the chosen course format, the content reflects inclusive design and should be relevant to all first-year students. The estimated length of this course is fifteen hours, which equates to one hour a week over a fifteen-week semester. For a description of the learning objectives for Modules 1 through 3 along with their respective inputs, outputs, and assessments, refer to Table 2.

Learning Theories

The course design reflects a de-centered paradigm, which Wright, Lohe, and Little (2018) define as “an expanded vision of ways to develop, design, and deliver learning to allow for a more democratic or reciprocal relationship between instruction, learner, and material” (p. 39). Wright et. al (2018) continue, “Rather than a ‘sage on the stage’ (Instruction-centered) or even a ‘guide on the side’ (Learner-centered), de-centralized pedagogical approaches encourage ‘a teacher who is less of a feature’” (p. 39). This de-centered instruction model lends itself to adult learning theories, specifically constructivism, because it places the learner in the forefront of the learning experience thus creating space for making connections and a sense of prior experiences.

Instructional Materials

Highlighting three modules, the Capstone explores only a third of the suggested learning content for a redesigned FYE experience. These modules have been designed using Camtasia, Articulate Storyline, and Microsoft PowerPoint. The eLearning course is designed to be

uploaded to Blackboard, Bristol's preferred Learning Management System. In this course, students will absorb, connect, and be assessed on the learning content. To understand how learners will engage with the learning content, refer to Table 2. To view screenshot of the course, refer to appendices D through G.

Evaluation

Assessing learners' current attitudes and reactions towards the content via student surveys helped inform the recommended redesign of the first-year experience course. As highlighted in Table 1, learners are first-year college students and their reactions to the course content will be favorable if they deem the material to be relevant to their chosen degree path and relatable to their own unique student needs. It is recommended that this course be a supplement to a first-semester course within a student's academic discipline, thus creating space for learning to take place inside and outside of the classroom. The self-paced course allows students to complete the modules at their own pace within the course timeframe, while allowing them opportunities to demonstrate their learning to their instructors through formative and summative assessments. The First Year Experience Course Evaluation (Appendix H) provides an example for garnering student feedback on the course structure and design.

Through pre- and post-survey analyses, learners can decide if their behaviors have changed as a result of completing the course. If at the beginning of the course, learners identified their level of knowledge of a subject and then compared their results to what they now know or can do through reflection, they will be able to determine if the learning material influenced any changes in behavior. A survey, comparable to the First-Year Experience Survey (Appendix B), could be administered to returning, third semester students as an approach to assess and measure their acquisition of first-year experience elements. If results were to show that these surveyed

students reported less concerns with accessibility of information and resources, and indicated having higher levels of engagement with the recommend FYE content in their first year than identified by the previous surveyed cohort, it could be argued that the redesigned course recommended in this Capstone is on the right path to creating informative, relevant, and inclusive material for first-year community college students.

Table 2: *Table of Contents for Instruction and Assessment*

Module I: Bristol Community College Policies and Procedures				
Learning Objective	Absorb	Do	Connect	Assess
Learners will be able to locate college policies and procedures from the website and articulate the consequences of not abiding to policy.	Students will view narrated slides equipped with printed text as well as videos of faculty and staff explaining important policies and procedures.	Using Articulate Engage, learners will interact with the learning material by selecting specific policies and procedures to learn more information.	Learners will be able to download a job aid, embedded with hyperlinks, to keep as a reference.	Throughout this module, students will demonstrate their knowledge on the policies and procedures through formative assessments.
Module II: Campus Resources and Student Services				
Learning Objective	Absorb	Do	Connect	Assess
From Bristol's homepage, learners will be able to locate information of campus resources and student services.	Learners will watch a screen recording showing them how to access campus resources and student services from Bristol's homepage.	Using Articulate Engage, learners will interact with the learning material by selecting campus resources and student services that are relevant to their life and learning goals.	Learners will select three campus resources and/or student services relevant to them, and, for each, will summarize their key attributes and contributions to Bristol	At the end of the module, students will complete an assessment on the campus resource and/or student service they selected.
Module III: Degree Works				
Learning Objective	Absorb	Do	Connect	Assess
In Degree Works, learners will locate their assigned academic advisor	Learners will watch a narrated demonstration for locating their academic advisor in Degree Works.	Students will craft three questions to ask their academic advisor.	Students will introduce themselves to their academic advisor via email and cc their instructor on the email.	Students will write a reflection of their experience meeting with their academic advisor.

<p>In Degree Works, learners will be able to utilize the Planner function to map out their subsequent semesters at Bristol.</p>	<p>Learners will watch a narrated demonstration for locating the Planner in Degree Works.</p>	<p>In Degree Works, learners will explore the functionality of the Planner by moving the remainder of their coursework into future semesters.</p>	<p>Learners will map out courses for the remainder of their time at Bristol, considering their enrollment status and course availability.</p>	<p>Students will submit a list of courses for which they will enroll the following semester.</p>
<p>In Degree Works, learners will be able to process a “What If” scenario</p>	<p>Learners will watch a narrated demonstration for locating the “What If” scenario in Degree Works. This tool helps students see how their completed coursework translates into another discipline.</p>	<p>By selecting a major and concentration, learners will process a “What If” scenario to determine how many courses they would need to complete should they change their major.</p>	<p>Based on their decision and the results of the “What If” tool, students will develop an academic plan.</p>	<p>Students will submit a “road map” for their educational plan at Bristol to their instructor.</p>

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*Appendix A***Emerging First-Year Experience Themes**

Themes	Learning Objectives
Student services & campus resources	Identify, navigate, and utilize college resources both curricular and non-curricular (i.e. financial aid, library, tutoring, academic advising, Mobile Market, student life, experiential learning, transfer services)
Technology	Demonstrate ability to use technology Utilize Degree Works Add/drop process Contact your academic advisor Access college email, AccessBCC, Blackboard, Office 365 Calculate GPA
Policies & procedures	Understand policies & procedures and how to apply them Locate academic catalog and student handbook
Academic exploration	Discover & develop academic goals Develop a working plan for education path towards academic vision
Career exploration	Discover & develop career goals Build a resume
Personal & interpersonal skills	Develop best practices for college student success (i.e. study habits, etiquette: classroom and email, group learning, team building, note taking, listening and speaking skills,) Exhibit effective time management skills by balancing academic work

with other activities
 Demonstrate respect, diversity, empathy, self-advocacy, resiliency and self-awareness

Financial Literacy

Learn how to file FAFSA, accept aid, and view bill
 Construct budget
 Understand a credit report
 Locate scholarship opportunities
 Understand cost of higher education (debt versus investment)

Civic Engagement

Apply increased appreciation for diversity and inclusion

 Engage in civil discourse with others with whom you disagree
 Demonstrate a commitment to serving others by engaging in at least one Designated Service-Learning course

Creating connections

Establish relationships with staff, faculty, and community partners

Appendix B

First-Year Experience Survey

1. When did you first start taking classes at Bristol? (If you started taking courses either in the summer or winter intersession, please choose the semester that would have followed) *

-- Please Select -- ▾

2. At the time you started Bristol, what age were you? *

3. Gender: *

-- Please Select -- ▾

4. On average, how many classes do you enroll in each semester? *

-- Please Select -- ▾

5. What major/concentration are you studying at Bristol? *

6. Please identify the campus where you primarily take courses. *

-- Please Select -- ▾

The following section is a list of statements. Please read each statement carefully and indicate your level of agreement.

7. As a Bristol student, it is important for me to know what resources and services are available to me. *

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

8. Within a couple of months of attending Bristol, I knew all of the resources and services that I need to be successful at Bristol and where to go or ask for help. *

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

9. As a Bristol student, it is important that I know how to access the technology and software available to me. *

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

10. Within a couple of months of attending Bristol, I learned how to access Degree Works. *

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

11. As a Bristol student, it is important to me that I know and understand my rights and responsibilities. *

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

12. It is important that I recognize how the courses I am taking while at Bristol align with my future academic and career goals. *

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

13. Within a couple of months of attending Bristol, I knew my rights and responsibilities as a Bristol student and I knew how to access the student handbook. *

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

14. The courses I took/am taking in my first semester supported/support my chosen degree path at Bristol.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

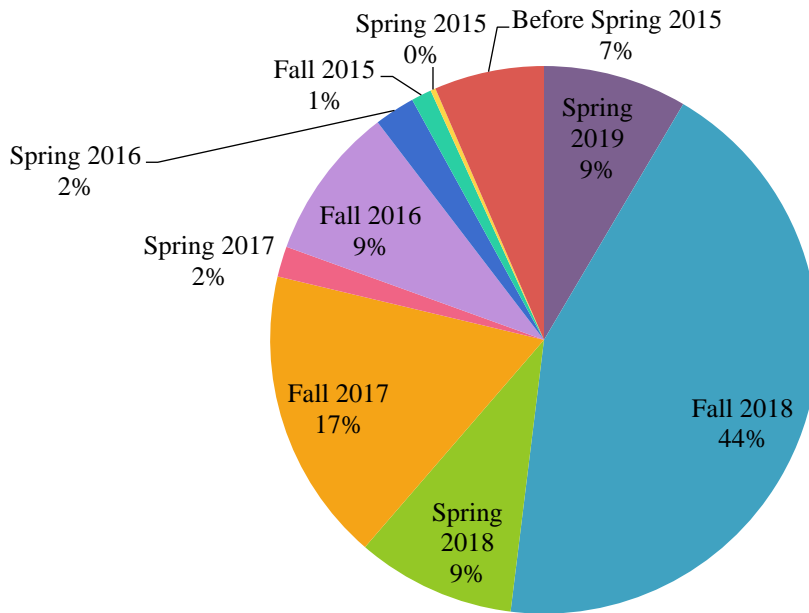
15. Knowing what you know now, what do you wish you would have learned **prior** to beginning your first semester?

16. Knowing what you know now, what do you wish you would have learned **during** your first year?

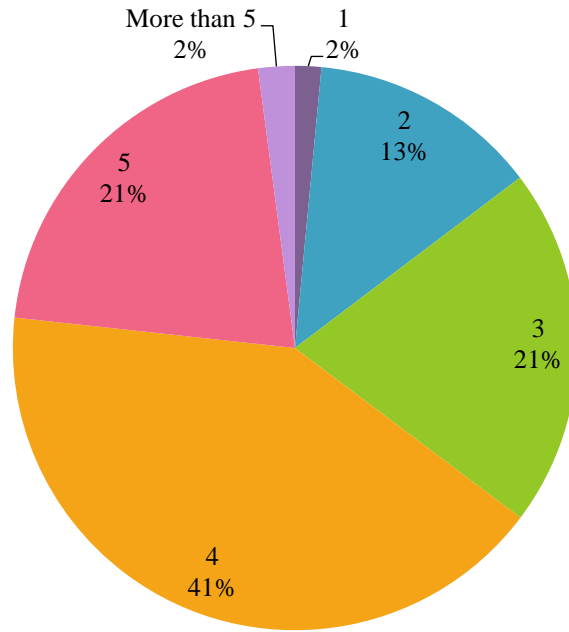
Appendix C

Student Survey Results (selected results)

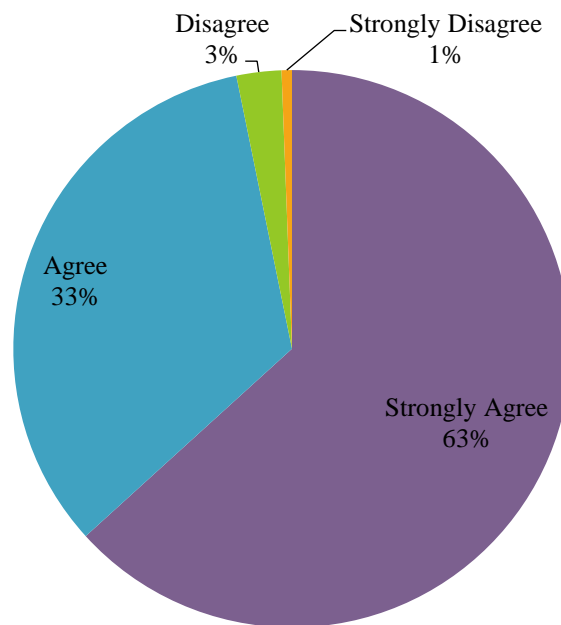
1. When did you first start taking classes at Bristol? (If you started taking courses either in the summer or winter intersession, please choose the semester that would have followed) (N = 340)



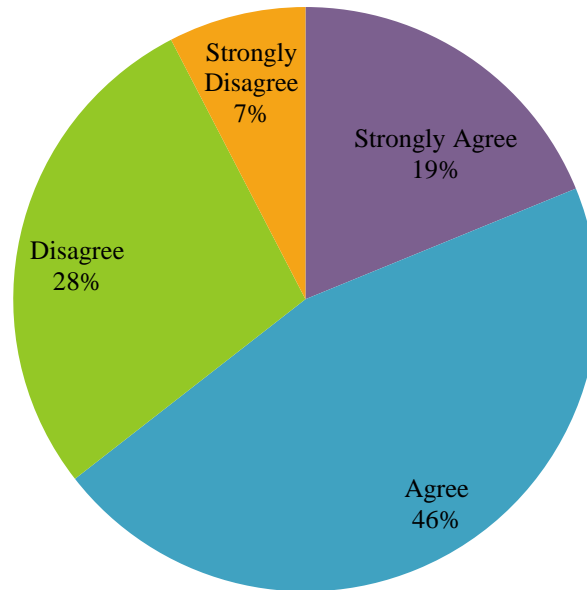
4. On average, how many classes do you enroll in each semester? (N = 340)



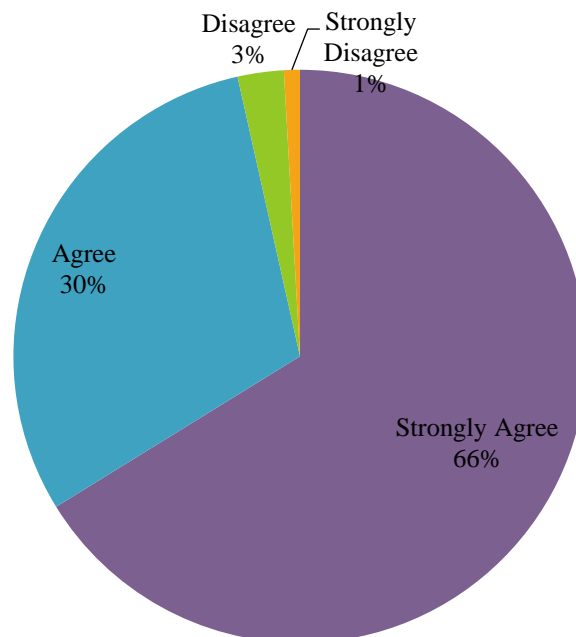
7. As a Bristol student, it is important for me to know what resources and services are available to me. (N = 340)



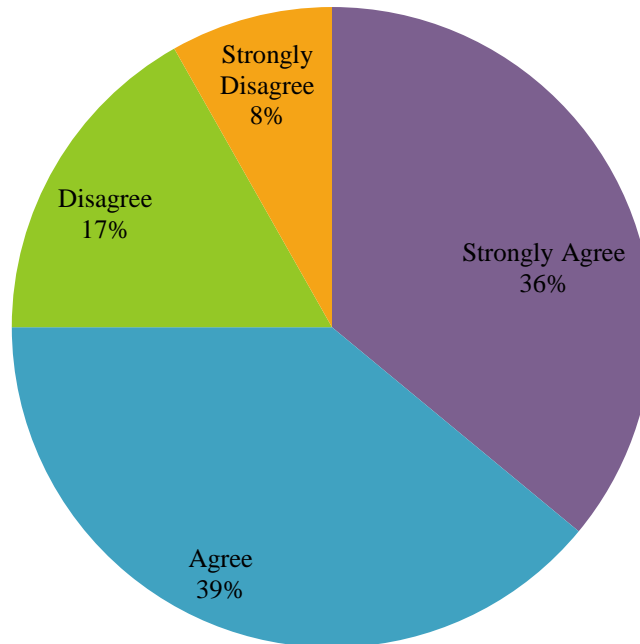
8. Within a couple of months of attending Bristol, I knew all of the resources and services that I need to be successful at Bristol and where to go or ask for help. (N = 340)



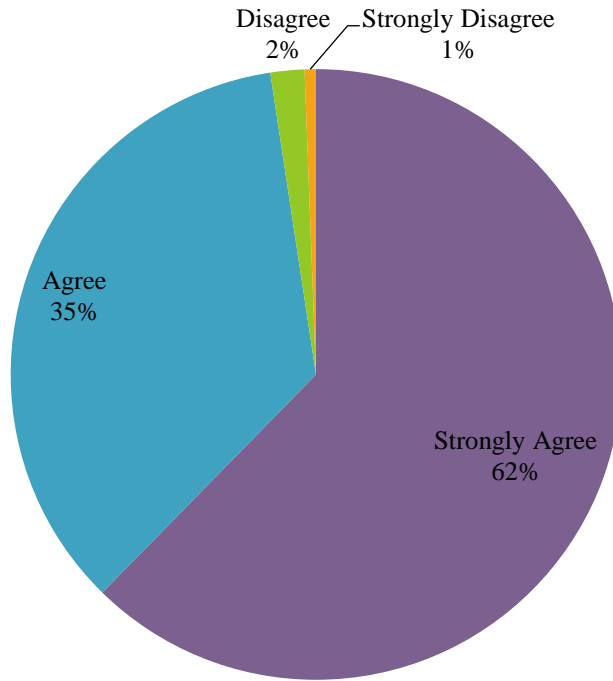
9. As a Bristol student, it is important that I know how to access the technology and software available to me. (N = 340)



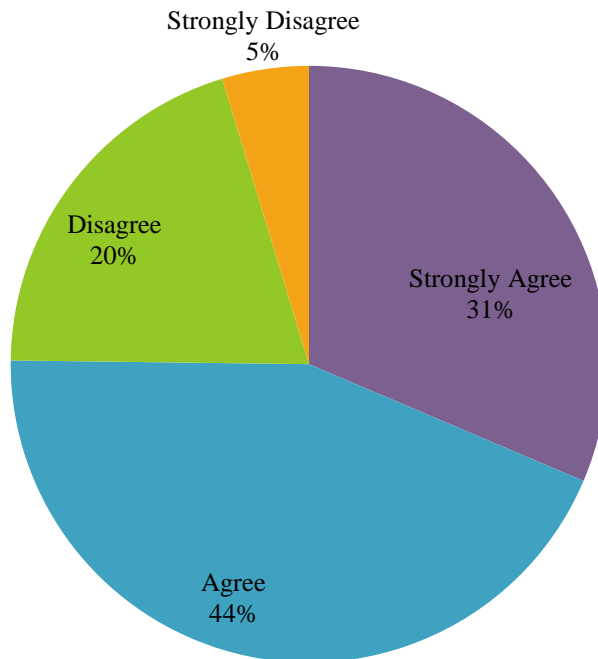
10. Within a couple of months of attending Bristol, I learned how to access Degree Works.
(N = 328)



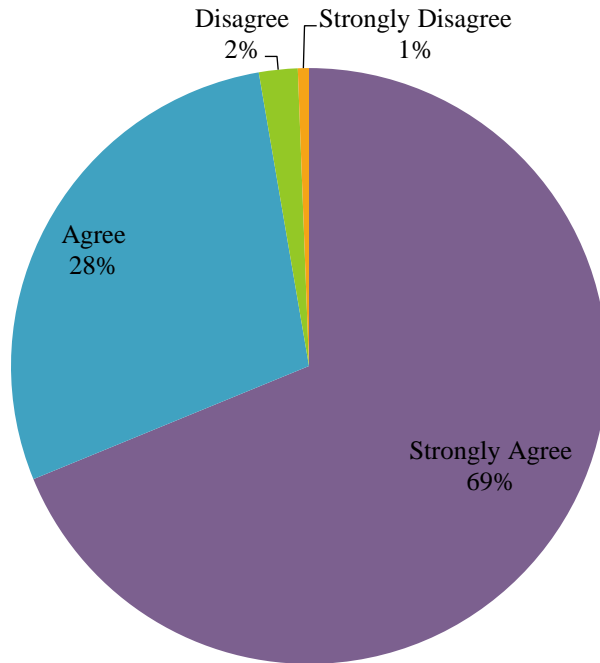
11. As a Bristol student, it is important to me that I know and understand my rights and responsibilities. (N = 340)



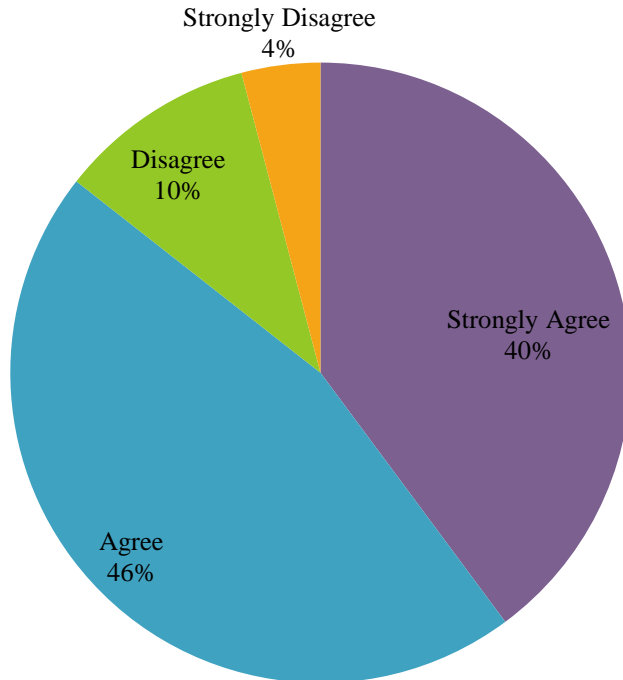
12. Within a couple of months of attending Bristol, I knew my rights and responsibilities as a Bristol student and I knew how to access the student handbook. (N = 338)



13. It is important that I recognize how the courses I am taking while at Bristol align with my future academic and career goals. (N = 340)

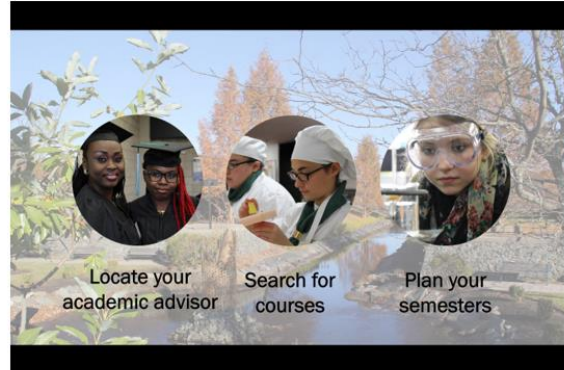
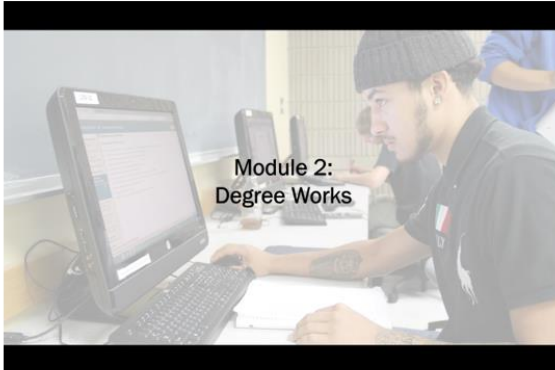
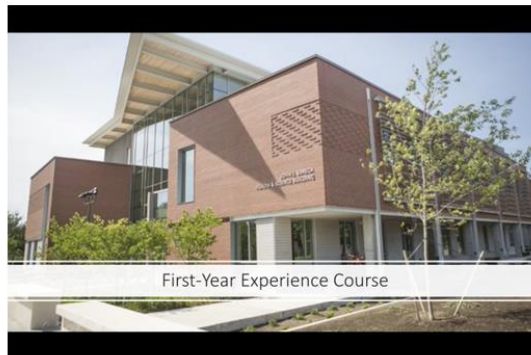


14. The courses I took/am taking in my first semester supported/support my chosen degree path at Bristol. (N = 339)



Appendix D

Course Overview (Video Asset)



Appendix E

Module 1: Policies and Procedures

Objective: Learners will be able to locate college policies and procedures from the website and articulate the consequences of not abiding to policy.



Title of Asset: Policies

Policies

Hazing

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as well as Bristol Community College, prohibits the act of hazing. Any student or group found to be in violation of this prohibition will be subject to disciplinary action and criminal prosecution.

Hazing is any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization,

Policies

CORI & SORI

In order for a student to be eligible to participate in an academic, community or clinical program that involves potential unsupervised contact with children, the disabled, or the elderly, the student may be required to undergo a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check and/or a Sex Offender Registry Information (SORI)

Policies

Gambling

Bristol Community College follows Commonwealth guidelines which prohibit illegal gambling, including games that result in the exchange of money.

Violators will be subject to disciplinary action.

Policies

Drug & Alcohol Policy

Bristol Community College is committed to maintaining a drug free work and learning environment for employees and students. This Drug and Alcohol policy is established to provide required information and guidance for all college employees and students.

Scope of Policy

On December 12,

Policies

Marijuana Policy

Although Massachusetts law permits the use of medical marijuana and the possession, use, distribution and cultivation of marijuana in limited amounts, federal law, including the Federal Controlled Substances Act of 1970, the Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988 and the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of

Policies

Tobacco and Vaping-Free Campuses

Bristol Community College is Tobacco and Vaping-Free

Bristol Community College is a tobacco and vaping-free college. The use of tobacco is prohibited within college buildings, walkways, in college or state fleet vehicles, and on college-owned property, not otherwise leased to another organization.

Title of Asset: Academic Dishonesty

Academic Dishonesty

Academic Dishonesty

Bristol has an obligation to promote high standards of academic honesty, and to address academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty is the result of cheating and plagiarism.

The facilitation of academic dishonesty is the result of cheating and plagiarizing for the benefit of another.

◀ PREV NEXT ▶

Academic Dishonesty

Cheating

Includes, but is not limited to:

- The use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations;
- Dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
- The acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material

◀ PREV NEXT ▶

Academic Dishonesty

Facilitating Academic Dishonesty

Students who allow their work to be used by other students or who otherwise aid others in academic dishonesty are violating academic integrity.

◀ PREV NEXT ▶

Academic Dishonesty

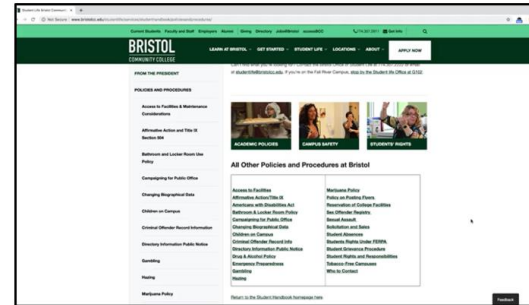
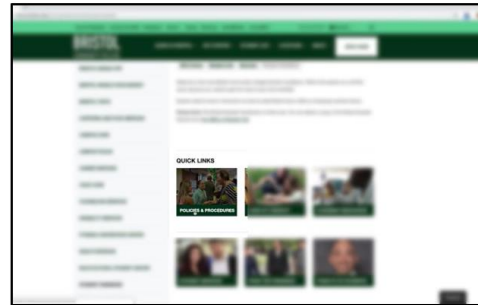
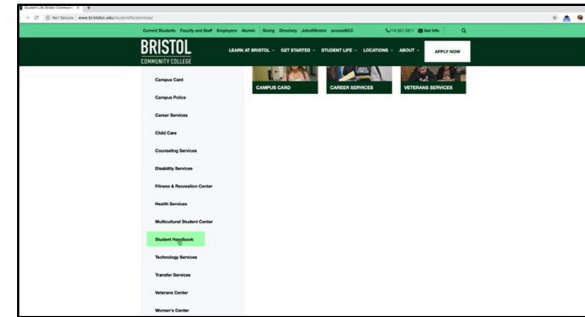
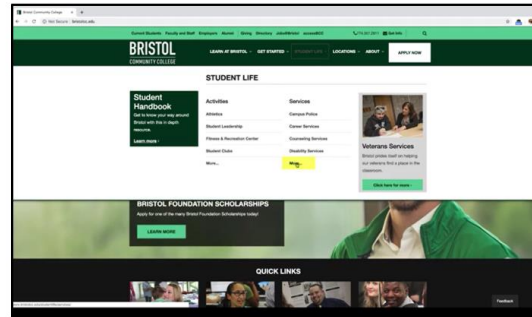
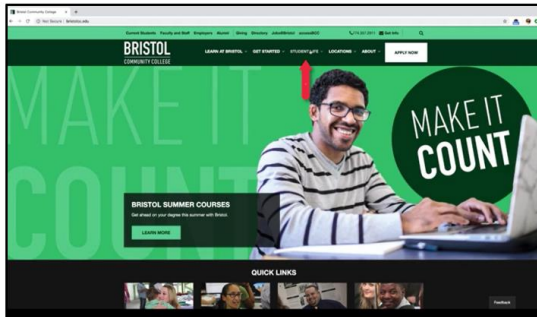
Plagiarism

Includes, but is not limited to:

- The use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment.
- The unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

◀ PREV NEXT ▶

Title of Asset: Student Handbook

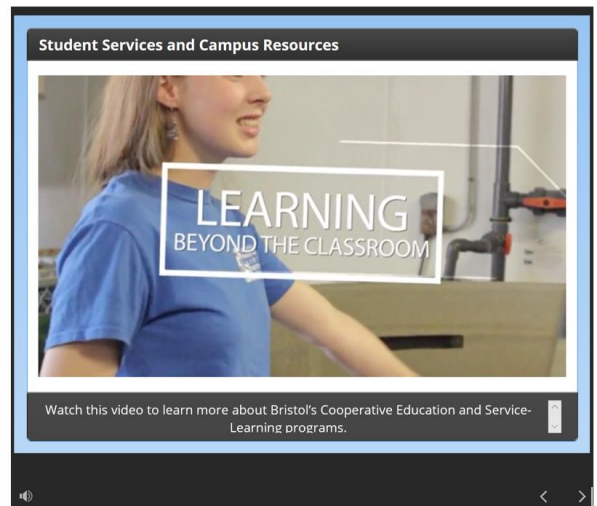
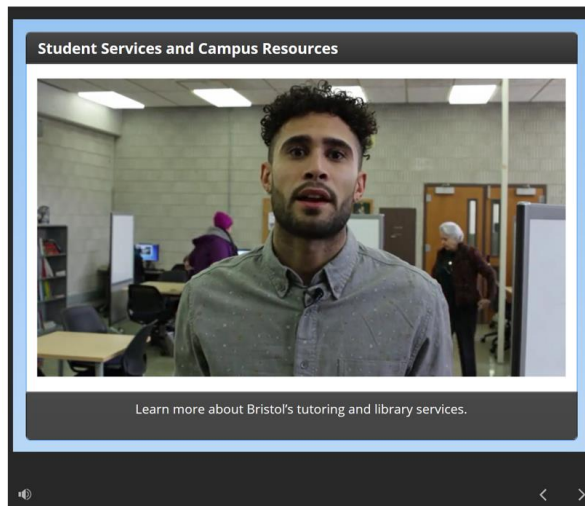
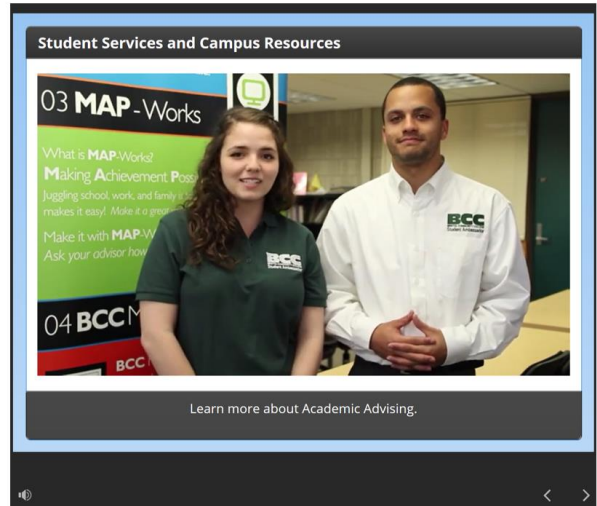
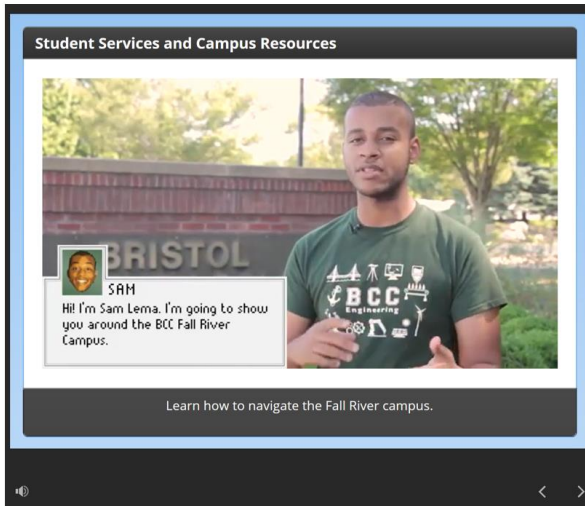


Appendix F

Module 2: Student Services and Campus Resources

Objective: From Bristol's homepage, learners will be able to locate information of campus resources and student services.

Title of Asset: Explore Bristol



Title of Asset: Campus Card

Campus Card

Campus Card Account

Get Your Campus Card

Pick up Locations

Bristol Buck\$

Campus Card Account

A Campus Card account is a general purpose, prepaid, declining balance purchase plan. Upon the initial deposit, an electronic balance is established in the cardholder's name. All sale transactions are debited from the Campus Card account electronically. The cardholder shall be responsible for observing the debit transaction at the time of the sale and for monitoring the current account balance. You are responsible for managing your own account.

A Campus Card account is like cash – it must be protected.

There are no transaction charges. No interest is earned. This card is not a credit card. Purchase returns will be credited to Campus Card accounts.

Title of Asset: Bookstore FAQs

Bookstore

Campus Bookstore

Questions? See if you can find some answers within our Frequently Asked Questions.

Are bookstores located at all Bristol locations?

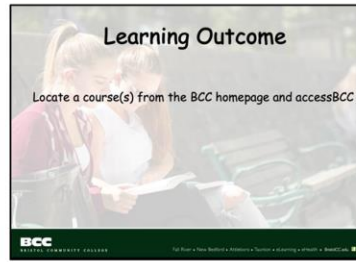
What can I expect to find at the bookstore?

Can I request a book advance?

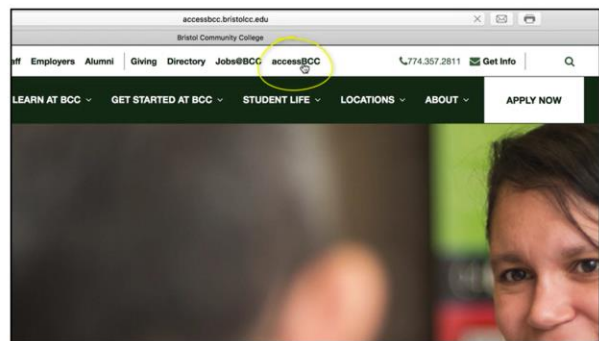
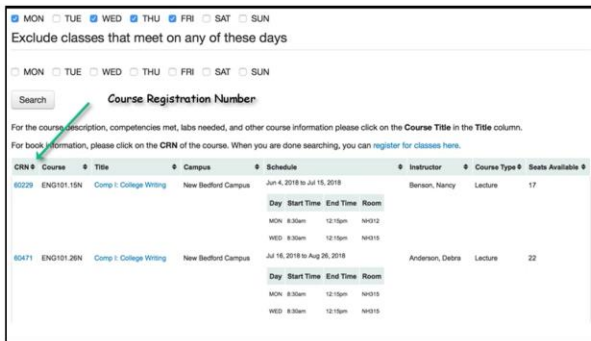
If I drop my course, can I return my books?

Do you price match?

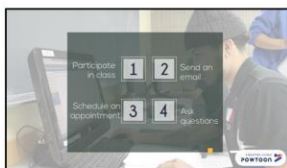
Title of Asset: Registering for courses (selected screenshots)



Annotations and animations, as highlighted in the screenshots below, promote accessibility and learning.



Title of Asset: 5 Tips for Success




Title of Asset: Test Your Knowledge

Test Your Knowledge
Module 1: Campus Resources & Student Services

At the Learning Commons, tutoring services are offered free of charge.

-
-

MULTIPLE CHOICE
Cooperative Education



In order to be eligible for an internship, you must have a minimum GPA of...

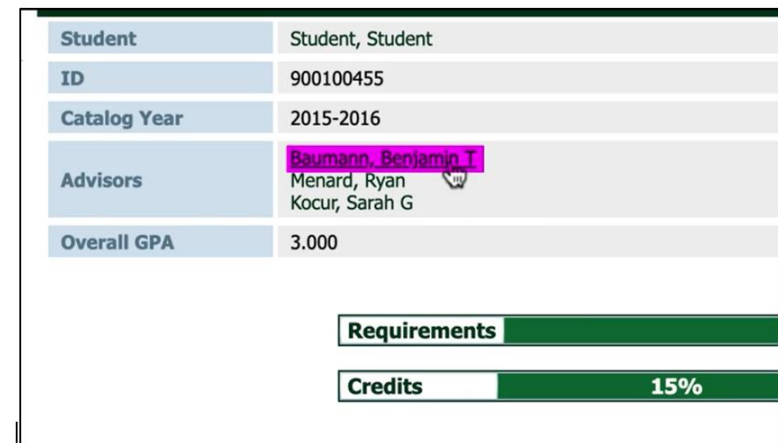
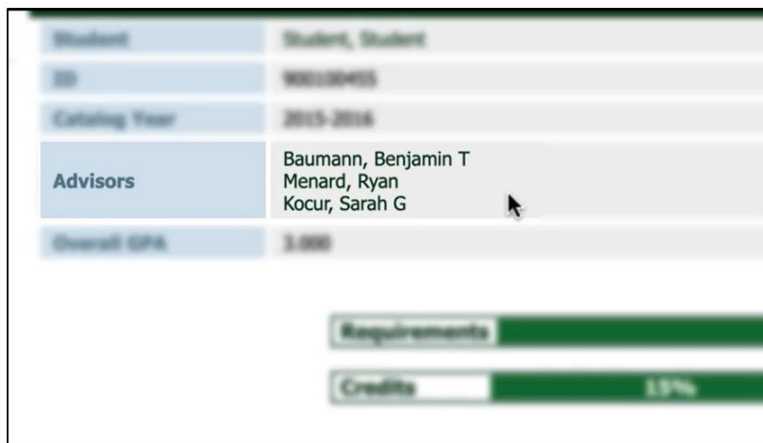
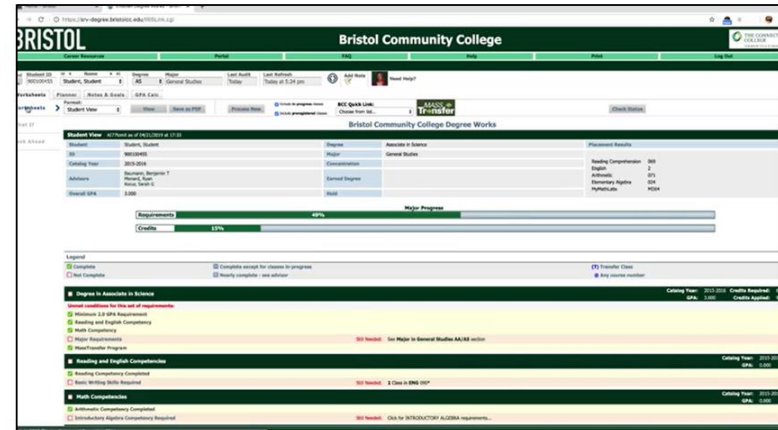
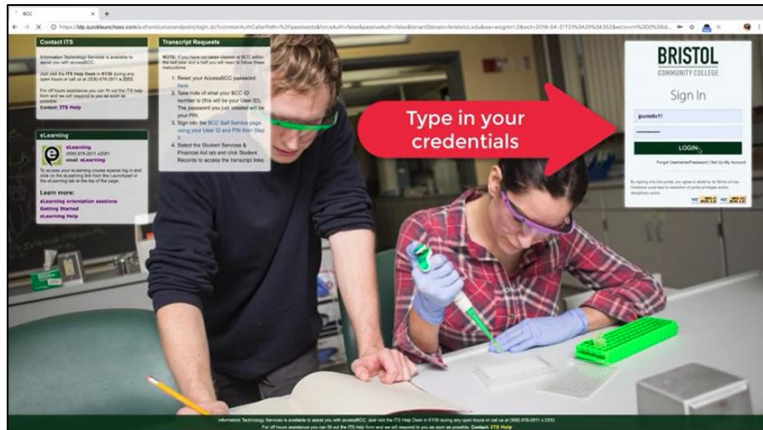
- 2.5
- 3.2
- 3.7
- 4.0

How many credits towards your degree are you eligible to receive if you complete an internship at Bristol? Type in number below)

Appendix G

Module 3: Degree Works

Objective 1: In Degree Works, learners will locate their assigned academic advisor.



Objective 2: In Degree Works, learners will be able to utilize the Planner function to map out their subsequent semesters at Bristol.

Arithmetic Competency Completed
 Introductory Algebra Competency Required Still Need

Major in General Studies AA/AS

Unmet conditions for this set of requirements: 60-61 credits are required. You currently have 9, you still need 51 more credits. A maximum of 45 credits may be transferred in. A minimum of 15 credits must be taken residence.

Requirement	Status
<input type="checkbox"/> GENERAL COURSES	
<input type="checkbox"/> Fundamentals of Public Speaking	Still Need
<input type="checkbox"/> Composition I: College Writing	Still Need
<input type="checkbox"/> Composition II: Writing about Literature	Still Need
<input type="checkbox"/> History Course	Still Need
<input type="checkbox"/> Sociology Course	Still Need
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> College Success Seminar	CSS 101
<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE ELECTIVE	Still Need
<input type="checkbox"/> MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ELECTIVE	Still Need
<input type="checkbox"/> QUANTITATIVE/SYMBOLIC REASONING ELECTIVE	Still Need
<input type="checkbox"/> PROGRAM ELECTIVES	
Consult with your advisor to select Program Electives to achieve a total of at least 60 credits. [Tech Lit Requirement Waived for students who have]	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Technical Literacy Waived - 2 Online Classes	
<input type="checkbox"/> Electives	ACC 102 ACC 202 CIS 105 Still Need

BRISTOL
 9001100455 Student, Student
 Planner Notes & Goals
 Format: Student View
 Math Competency

BRISTOL
 Bristol Community College
 Student ID: 9001100455 Student, Student
 Major: General Studies
 Last Audit: 1/24/2014
 Last Audit: 1/24/2014

Planner Worksheet (2/17/2014 at 11:41 AM)
 Student: Student, Student
 Major: General Studies
 Advising Year: 2013-2014
 Advisors: Marlene August T, Mark Smith
 General GPA: 3.000
 Placement Tests: Elementary Algebra: 624, English: 2, Mathematics: 101, Reading Comprehension: 88

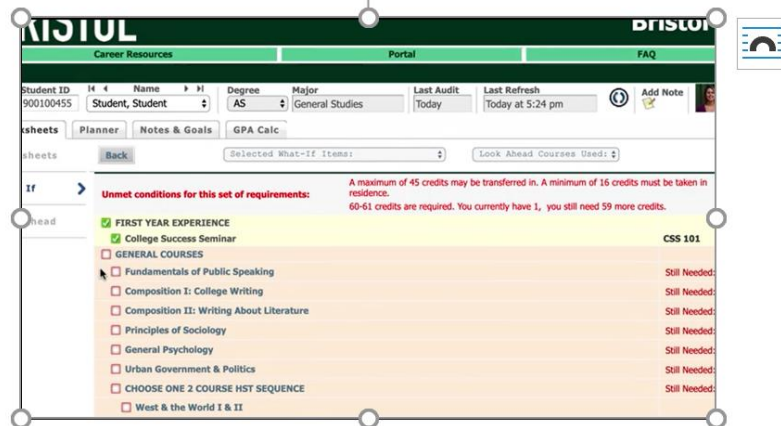
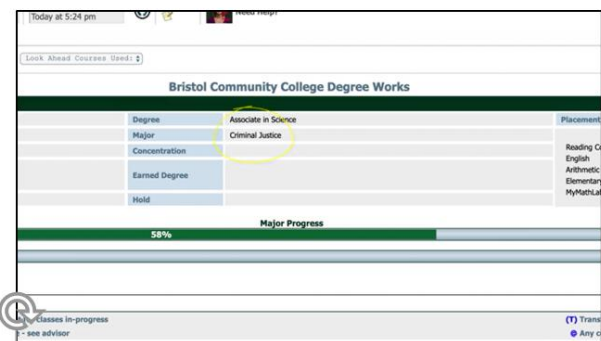
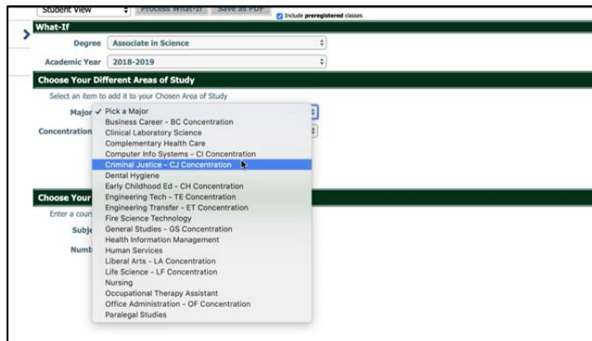
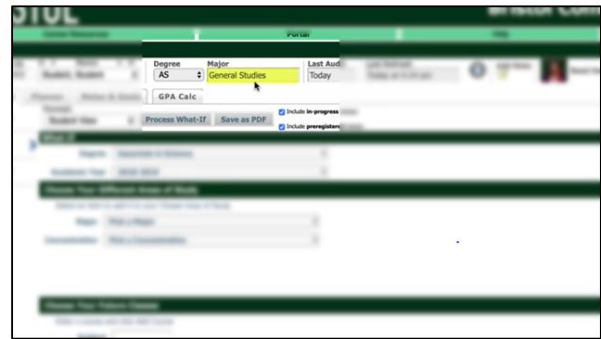
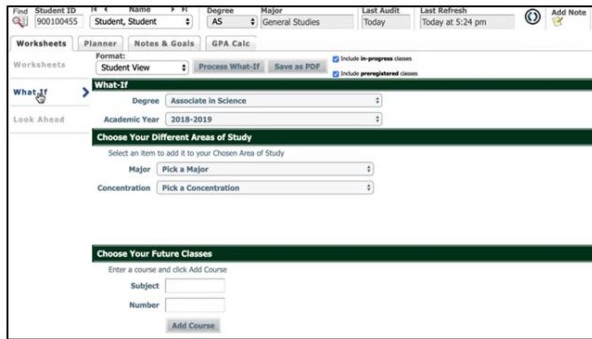
Student Educational Planner
 Student: Student, Student
 Elective Term: Spring 2014
 Institution: Bristol Community College
 Academic Year: 2013-2014
 Load Modified: []
 Action Plan: []
 Locked: []
 Load in a new method plan: []

Degree in Associate in Science
 Unmet conditions:
 Minimum L2 GPA Requirement
 Reading and English Competency
 Math Competency
 Major Requirements
 Needs: See Major in General Studies AA/AS section
 Plan Transfer Program
 Needs: See Major in General Studies AA/AS section
Reading and English Competency
 Reading and English Competency
 Math Competency
 Major in General Studies AA/AS
 Multi-Course Program: THIS REQUIRE IS OPTIONAL

Reading and English Competency
 Reading and English Competency
 Basic Writing Skills Required
 Needs: See Major in General Studies AA/AS section
 E Class ID: 0000-100

Math Competency
 Arithmetic Competency Completed
 Introductory Algebra Competency Required
 Needs: See Major in General Studies AA/AS section

Objective 3: In Degree Works, learners will be able to process a “What If” scenario.



Appendix H

First-Year Experience Course Evaluation

First-Year Experience Course Evaluation

The goal of this course is to educate incoming, degree-seeking community college students on the information and resources they should know to be successful in their first year.

* Required

Course Title *

Your answer

Course Author *

Your answer

Approximately how many minutes did you spend reviewing this course? *

Choose



Did you get stuck at any point in the course, and not know what you should do next? If yes, please identify the points where you were stuck. *

Your answer

Please indicate your level of either agreement or disagreement with the following statements. *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The eLearning course is dynamic, and employs several multimedia elements.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The assets under each module align with the learning objectives of the course.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The eLearning course is organized and the chapter titles clearly describe the educational material.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning objectives are clearly defined and measurable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The course maintained a balance of multimedia elements, and did not rely heavily on just one or two media principles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For each module, I learned something that I did not know prior to reviewing the course.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Which asset(s) (video, animation, interactions, etc.) did you find to be most engaging? *

Your answer

Of all the assets, which one fostered the most amount of learning for you? *

Your answer

Knowing what you know now, what suggestions would you make to improve the course in terms of navigation and delivery? *

Your answer

Would you recommend this course to a friend who would need to take this course to fulfill a degree requirement?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

SUBMIT

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.