

ROBESON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

RCC 4 R.E.A.L.
Reading Engages Active Learning

Robeson Community College (RCC) in Lumberton, North Carolina, began in 1965 and has been growing ever since. It now serves a population of over 120,000 people in the state's geographically largest county. The local economy has been based on agriculture and textile manufacturing, all of which have drastically declined in recent decades. Now serving over 2,000 curriculum students each semester, the College is committed to offering the people of this area a wide variety of educational opportunities that can prepare them for the modern workforce and improve their overall well-being.

Surveying students, faculty, staff, and area employers resulted in the college selecting reading as the topic for its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). A review of the literature on reading theory, coupled with analysis of RCC's institutional data, showed the relevance of Louise Rosenblatt's Reader Response Theory to the needs of the College's student population and produced two key findings:

- Analysis of ACT's COMPASS Test scores indicated that a significant number of first-time students at RCC read below a 5th grade comprehension level, yet the lowest reading course offered, RED 080, assumes students can read at least at the 5th grade level.
- Evaluation of course success rates across the curricula, along with faculty perceptions about students' reading abilities and habits, showed that students in all programs and majors need to improve their reading comprehension. This finding reflects national statistics that reading rates are in decline across the United States.

RCC proposes to address these needs by tracking two student cohorts: (1) students enrolled in the RED 080 course and (2) first-year students admitted to the Nursing and Respiratory Therapy programs. For the first cohort, the Continuing Education /Basic Skills Division will offer a literacy improvement course that will prepare students for RED 080. This new course will incorporate MyReadingLab software and will provide students with individualized learning tailored to their specific needs. Faculty for the second cohort will incorporate reading and metacognitive strategies in their classrooms: concept maps, question-answer generation, and summarization.

Expanding the QEP's reach across campus, the College will also establish The Learning Center (TLC) where students may receive assistance from faculty and staff in all academic areas. To encourage reading as a pastime, reading centers will be located in certain campus buildings and a variety of reading materials are to be provided. A student book club with student-chosen material will meet, and a guest speaker series will bring writers to campus to read their selections.

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