

# College hopes to wrangle 'lost sheep'

By Joshua Dillen  
News Editor

Change is coming to Clackamas Community College and new students are the reason.

First year students on campus are often lost in the confusion and hectic dynamic of attending a community college for the first time. Staff and faculty sometimes may not make the connections that are necessary to assure a student's best possible chance to succeed in their first year of college.

A non-profit organization that is committed to educational research, the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence (www.jngi.org) has worked with four year colleges and universities across the country to improve the experience of first year students and enhance their educational experience since 1999. The institute began working with two year schools in 2010. CCC is one of only 30 two year colleges accepted into their Foundations of Excellence (FoE at www.fyfoundations.org) First Year Focus process for the 2011-2012 school year.

The FoE project is designed to give colleges the tools and methods to significantly change the way first year students succeed in school. Eighty staff, faculty and students have been working hard at the college to understand how the first year experience can be better for students at CCC. These members of nine different committees have been looking at dimensions of freshman experience that affect the overall improvements that will be implemented in the future. Last year's survey of 779 students and more than 340 staff provided data along with college documents and reports along with real experiences of students and staff that are being used to make recommendations that will lead to changes in the current CCC practices for first year students, according to a CCC public affairs press release.

The survey that students and staff participated in last fall is owned and administered by Educational Benchmarking Inc. (EBI) at www.webebi.com. They are an 18-year-old company that specializes in benchmarking assessments for higher education and has worked with hundreds of colleges and universities to enhance student success and satisfaction. The survey gathered information that reflected the opinions of the college community here on policies, programs and services related to a student's first

year of secondary education. Through CCC's partnership with FoE, the survey is just one step towards definite changes that will come to the college, according to Rochelle Dawn, CCC call center coordinator.

"This is huge for the college. Students and staff actually get to be a part of what we are doing to make this a better school," she said. "The way we deal with and help the students succeed is going to really change and get much better here."

The campus and community are invited to attend an open house tomorrow, April 19 from 11 to 1 p.m., in the Fireside Room in the Community Center to learn about the work of the nine dimensional committees. Light refreshments will be served. The pillars have been there since Monday and will be up throughout the week.

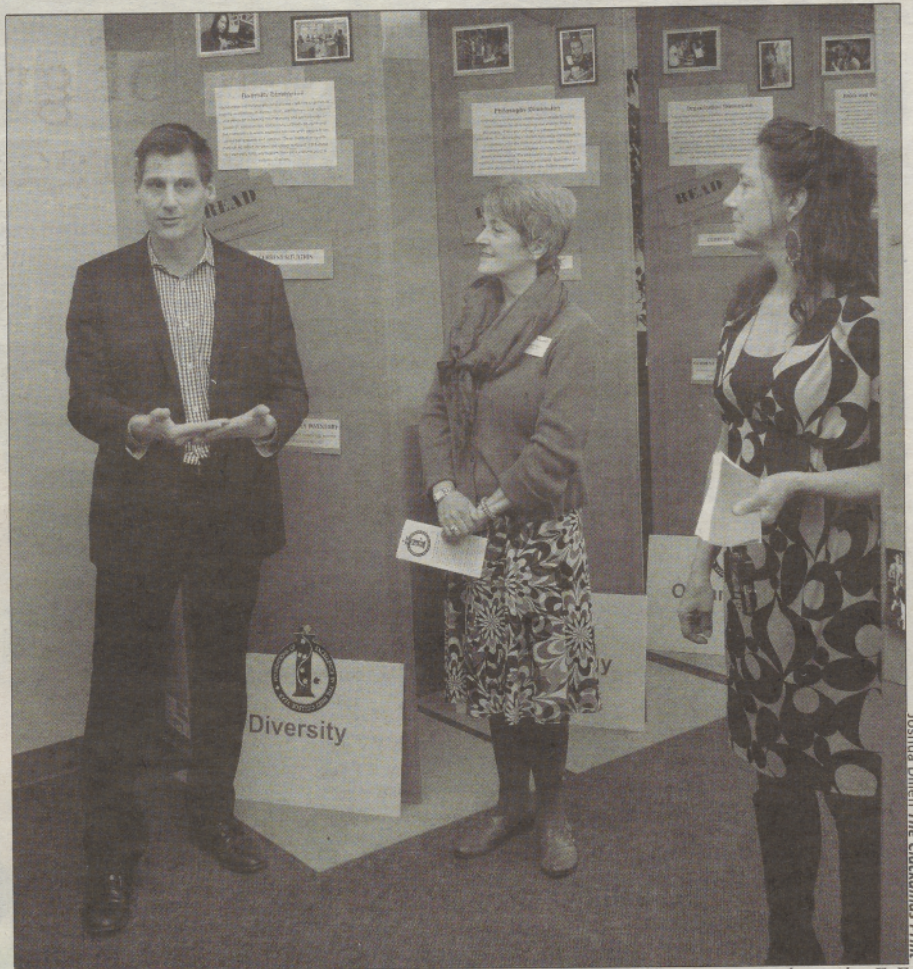
Phillip King is the dean of the Academic Foundation and Connections division at the college, which covers the basic core classes that are required to obtain any type of degree as well as student and enrollment services. He and Dawn have worked closely with the nine committees to evaluate processes at the college and put their top five recommendations to a campus vote through an exhibit that includes informative pillars in the Community Center this week. He explained part of the purpose of the exhibit was to make the whole process as clear as possible to everybody who sees it as well as show what the committees have found and recommended through their study of all processes at the college that first year students will benefit from.

"Everybody gets to see our survey results, draft reports, including expected high impact recommendations for change," said King. "We want to convert higher-ed lingo into terms everybody can understand."

The information from voting will be used to produce a report with "recommended actions and steps to take so that new students have the best foundation possible to succeed" that will be come from evaluating this week's voting results and comparing them to what the committees have learned, according to King.

Norina Watkins is a student and peer assistant at the college. She thinks FoE is great for CCC. She voted for her favorite recommendations at the voting station in the Fireside Lounge on Monday.

"The survey was easy to fol-



Phillip King (left) and Rochelle Dawn (right) speak to Carlotta Collette (center) about the FoE project in Roger Rook last Thursday during a presentation to the CCC Board of Education directors.

low and quick to complete," said Watkins. "I think the recommendations for mandatory application, advising, testing and orientation is the best because that would help students to know how to be successful here in their first year."

As a peer assistant who helps students in these areas, Watkins is passionate about her top vote.

The CCC Board of Education members had a chance to privately view the striking pillars and vote stations of the exhibit. The pillars were set up in the 'Staff only' section of registration in Roger Rook, last Wednesday before their monthly meeting that evening. Dawn and King explained the process and purpose of the exhibit and the work they have been doing with FoE to an intrigued and obviously exited the crowd.

Dawn encourages all students and staff to examine the pillars placed all over campus this week that summarize the nine dimensions of a new student's experience and recommendations to vote for and also express their own views. The exhibit includes a looping movie that shows candid interviews with students and staff expressing true and unedited opinions.



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