

FKCC Gears Up for Math Overhaul



FKCC's Island TIME logo, created by FKCC Graphic Design student Sergio Islas, captures the spirit of both the program and the college's island location.

KEY WEST, FL, October 18, 2011—Florida Keys Community College's will hold a day-long "Grand Preview" on Thursday to celebrate its new program, Island TIME: Transition into Math Excellence, an initiative to overhaul developmental math courses to improve student learning, confidence, and success. The Grand Preview will also serve to unveil the new Student Success Center, the high-tech annex where students will take Island TIME courses beginning next semester. The center, located behind the Tennessee Williams Theater, above the Ceramics Lab on the Key West Campus, will be open to community visitors from 9:00a.m. to 5:00p.m. There will be a presentation and ribbon-cutting ceremony at 1:00p.m.

Island TIME is the product of the college's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a requirement for the college's reaffirmation of reaccreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The QEP is a five-year program designed to address and improve a specific aspect of student learning at FKCC. The focus on developmental math, also known as remedial or pre-college-level math, was a result of data analysis and broad-based input from the college community.

The college discovered that more than half of its first-year students tested below college-level and were placed into developmental math courses to prepare for the more rigorous college-level courses. Furthermore, the college found that the majority of such students do not complete past the developmental-level and often give up their pursuit of a college degree all together. These statistics do not only exist in the Florida Keys, but permeate throughout the United States—contributing to the lacking number of college graduates needed to strengthen the nation domestically and compete globally. Math has indeed earned the nickname of "the dream killer."

“Most people don’t realize how much of a critical concern math is in higher education. Not only are incoming students not prepared for college-level curriculum, but they are fearful of math and frustrated and discouraged that they have to take developmental coursework,” explained Gavin McKeirnan, QEP Coordinator.

“However, Island TIME is going to make a tremendously positive impact at FKCC. We are completely re-designing our approach to teaching, advising, and supporting our developmental math students.”

FKCC has adopted the emporium model, a format proven effective at other institutions. Island TIME curriculum will include computer-assisted, individualized lesson plans using MyMathLab, a software that connects virtually to the textbook, and provides interactive exercises and multimedia learning aids. Students will be able to progress at their own pace—which includes the option of advancing through two developmental courses in one term or, if necessary, taking time beyond one semester.

In addition to regularly-scheduled classes, students will complete a given amount of coursework at their own convenience in the computer lab adjacent to the classroom in the Student Success Center (SSC). By design, the SSC is a student-friendly atmosphere and includes a lounge area and coffee kiosk. More importantly, the SSC will be staffed by tutors and lab assistants during extended hours spanning evenings and weekends to further support and accommodate students’ learning needs.

“Our goals for Island TIME are to improve student performance, as well as improve retention rates in math,” said Dr. Larry Tyree, FKCC President. “We want nothing more than to see these students overcome their challenges and develop the knowledge and confidence they need to be successful at FKCC and beyond.”

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