

Academic Clusters – Student Focus Group

Participants

The focus group was convened by Allison Douglas-Chicoye, Dean, Student Success and Support; and led by Hayley Ashby, Professor, Library/Learning Resources.

The following student groups were present and participated in the meeting:

Peer Mentors (24)

Tutorial Services Tutors (1)

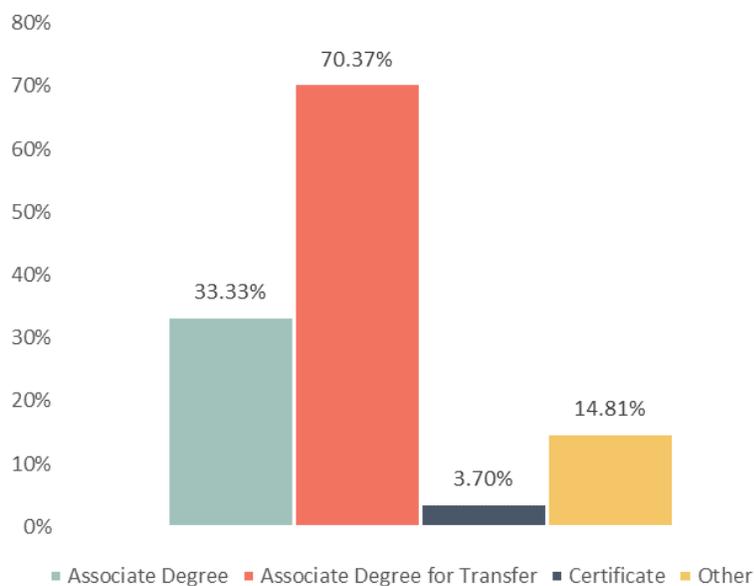
ASRCC Government Representatives (3)

Many of the peer mentors were recruited from the College Promise Program. Of the 28 total student participants, 27 completed the online survey used to collect demographic information including name, student ID, educational goal, degree/certificate, career goal, and duration of attendance.

Demographic Information

The following student information was self-reported by participants through the online survey they completed at the beginning of the meeting.

Educational Goal



Students selected multiple educational goals. Other responses included Bachelor of Science degree, RN-BSN, transfer, and transfer without an associate degree.

Type of Degree/Certificate

The names of the degrees and/or certificates that students are pursuing are illustrated in the word cloud below. The size of the font correlates with the popularity of the degree/certificate. The top degrees were in Math and Science, and Psychology.



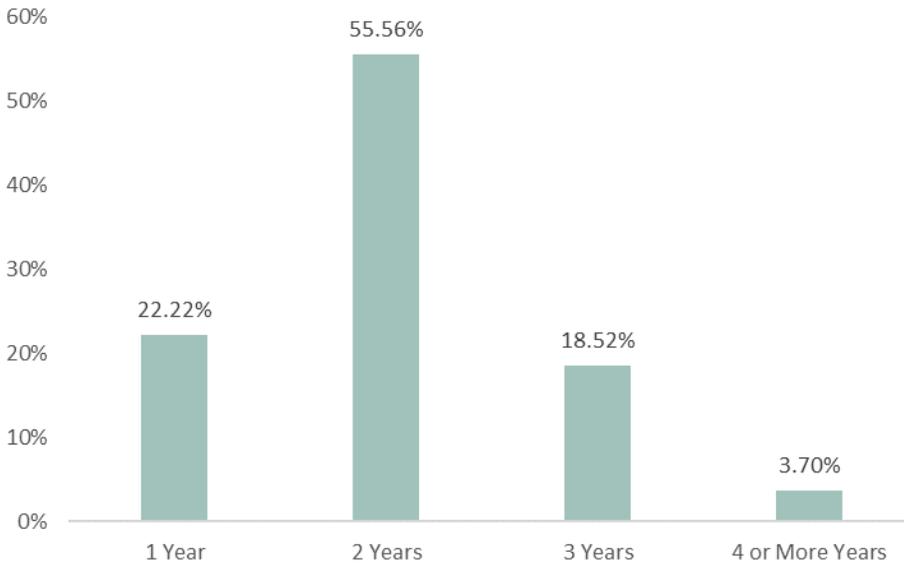
Career Goals

Students indicated that they were interested in the following careers:

- Project/Lead Construction Manager
- Translator
- Social Media Marketing - Fashion Blogger
- World Health Organization Member
- Homicide Detective
- Professor of Psychology
- Physician's Assistant
- Environmental Engineer
- Counselor
- Attorney
- Clinical Psychologist for Geriatric Clients
- Artist
- Lawyer
- Editor at a News Organization
- Teacher
- Registered Nurse
- Public Relations
- Not sure, possibly an Environmental Biologist
- MD
- Electrical Engineering
- Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychologist
- Art Historian/Curator
- Animal Behaviorist
- Animal Behaviorist
- Counselor
- Strategic Planning, Financial Management in USAF, Defense Contractor
- Certified Nurse Midwife/Women's Health Nurse Practitioner

Attendance

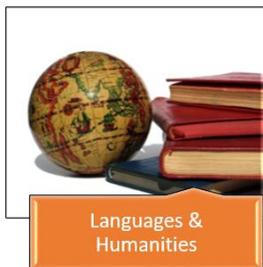
Approximately 56% of students who participated in the activity have been attending RCC for two years. One student has been attending classes on and off for seven years.



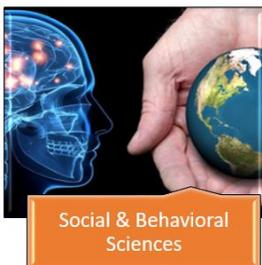
Question 1 Results

What degree or certificate would you expect to find in each category?

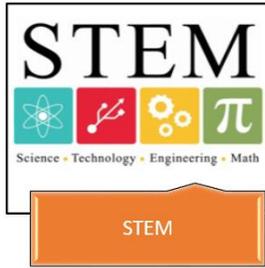
Students associated the following degrees and certificates with each academic cluster:



- Cultural/Ethnic Studies
- English Composition
- Foreign Studies
- World Languages
- Creative Writing
- Public Speaking
- Communications
- History
- Linguistics
- Public Relations
- Speech Pathology
- Sign Language



- Political Science
- Sociology
- Psychology
- Anthropology
- Philosophy
- Animal Behavior
- Child Development
- Economics



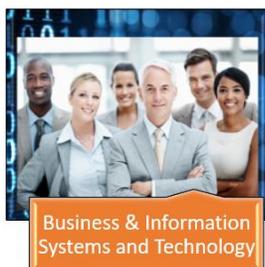
- Math
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Microbiology
- Engineering
- Environmental Science
- Physics
- Botany
- Computer Science
- Renewable Energy



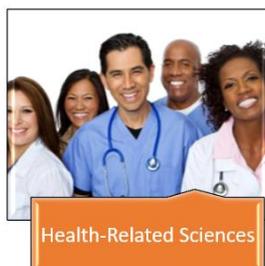
- Theater
- Drama
- Art
- Graphic Design
- Jazz
- Wind Ensemble
- Ceramics
- Photography
- Film and Television
- Fashion
- Chorus/Choir
- Music
- Interior Design
- Landscaping
- Creative Writing
- Sculpture



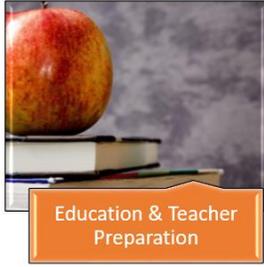
- Air Conditioning
- Automotive
- Welding
- Computer Science
- Plumbing
- Refrigeration
- Film and Television
- HVAC
- Architecture
- Dentistry
- Construction
- Construction Manager
- Carpentry
- Cosmetology
- Machining
- Renewable Energy



- Business
- Finance
- Accounting
- Management
- Communications
- Computer Information Systems
- Computer Coding
- Stock Studies
- Banking
- Paralegal
- Economics



- Nursing
- Kinesiology
- Psychology
- Physical Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Physician's Assistant
- Nutritionist
- Dental Hygiene
- Health Science



- Liberal Studies
- Early Childhood
- Psychology
- Conflict Management
- Counseling
- Education/Teacher Preparation

Question 2 Results

If you wanted to be a lawyer, where would you look?

Students indicated that they would look in multiple clusters based on the type of law practiced. They referred to the following academic clusters: (a) Languages and Humanities, (b) Social and Behavioral Sciences, (c) Business & Information Systems and Technology, and (d) STEM (for environmental law).

Students noted the absence of a separate category for Administration of Justice.

Question 3 Results

Academic Clusters Sorting Activity

Students formed five groups of four to six people. They were given labels with names of degrees and certificates on them. Students were asked to discuss where the labels should go. They were then asked to stick the labels on the appropriate academic cluster posters on the wall. They were provided with blank labels to fill in if they felt that a degree or certificate should go in an additional category. A blank poster was provided for students to write down categories that might be missing. See attached results.

Question 4 Results

What would you name the categories if you could call them something else?

Students indicated that they would not change the name of the following clusters: (a) Languages & Humanities, (b) Business & Information Systems and Technology, (c) Education & Teacher Preparation. The following suggestions were provided for renaming the remaining clusters:

FROM	TO
Social & Behavioral Sciences	→ Social Sciences
STEM	→ Science, Engineering, & Math (remove Technology)
Visual, Performing, & Creative Arts	→ Creative Arts or Fine and Performing Arts
Advanced Technical Trades	→ Technical Trades or Innovative Technical Trades or Career Technical Education (though students noted that some CTE disciplines should go in other areas)
Health-Related Sciences	→ Health and Physical Sciences

Question 5 Results

Is there a category missing that you would like to see? If so, what is it?

The students suggested adding a cluster named “Administration of Justice” or “Legal Studies.” Under that category four groups included the Administration of Justice Certificate and two groups included the Victim Services Aide Certificate.

There was also discussion of adding a separate cluster for “Athletics” to include the Athletic Training Degree; however, upon further conversation the students did not feel that it made sense to have a separate category for athletics. They cited that Athletics was not an academic area, and that degrees and certificates were related to Kinesiology.

Two additional categories were recommended based on the students’ desire to be able to easily identify which certificates lead to degree/transfer and which ones do not. A few students shared that they had to change their educational plan, because they did not initially realize that the certificate they were pursuing would not allow them to continue their education (obtain a degree or transfer) at a later date.

Conclusions

What surprised you about doing this activity? Is there anything you would like to share about your journey towards your goal(s) at RCC?

Several students indicated that they were surprised that it was so difficult to categorize some of the degrees and certificates they were given. They noted that some items required extensive group discussion.

Also, since the majority of students were in their second year at RCC and had educational plans due to their participation in the College Promise, they had a tendency to fall back to the existing structure when uncertain as to where to place a degree or certificate. The reference to CTE in Question 4 was one example, as the student who suggested CTE noted that this was an existing category. Other students noted that CTE may not be needed as a cluster, as the degrees and certificates could be redistributed into other areas that made more sense. One student noted that her background in theater led her to believe that Film and Television belonged in Visual, Performing, & Creative Arts rather than CTE.

A couple of students shared their experience with balancing the demands of school, work, and family and the value of certificate programs that lead to associate degrees and transfer. They explained that this option allowed them to obtain a certificate that provided employment opportunities, so that they could take a break from school to work and then return to their education at a later date to obtain a degree or transfer.

A student government representative that participated in the activity indicated that it would be helpful to have career information associated with each academic cluster. In addition, he inquired as to whether a full survey that included all of the questions could be made available to the student body at large for feedback.

Question 3 Results

Academic Clusters Sorting Activity

TITLE	ACADEMIC CLUSTERS							
	Languages & Humanities	Social & Behavioral Sciences	STEM	Visual, Performing, & Creative Arts	Advanced Technical Trades	Business & Information Systems and Technology	Health-Related Sciences	Education & Teacher Preparation
Early Childhood Education								■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Journalism	■ ■ ■ ■				■			
CIS - Computer Programming			■ ■			■		
Exercise, Sport & Wellness - Athletic Training						■ ■ ■ ■	■	
Sign Language Interpreting	■ ■ ■ ■ ■							
Administration of Justice	■							
CIS - Web Master					■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■		
Culinary Arts				■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■			
Telecommunications - Basic Television Production				■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■			
Victim Services Aide		■ ■ ■ ■					■	