

## CASE STUDY

# College & Career Success helps South Mountain Community College with First Year Experience



**SOUTH MOUNTAIN**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



South Mountain Community College provides quality higher education for a diverse community. Serving an estimated 4,700 students, South Mountain focuses on general education courses, transfer programs, occupational education and career development, continuing education, developmental studies and English as a second language, academic support and student services.

Drawing students from the south Phoenix, AZ community, South Mountain students represent a diverse population from lower income households, where English is a second language. An estimated 70% of South Mountain students test into one or more of the institution's developmental education courses.



Student success has long been a priority for South Mountain. Early efforts were comprised of a series of printed hand-outs and YouTube videos.

The next phase of their FYE (first year experience) program integrated vocational exploration and major selection with a “360 degree” assignment that merged student results from Human eSources’ *Do What You Are*® (now called *AchieveWORKS*® *Personality*), and *The PEPS Learning Styles Inventory*™ (now called *AchieveWORKS*® *Learning & Productivity*) with *Gallup’s StrengthsFinder*™. This enabled the student to create a profile of professions that met their interests, personality and Signature Themes.

In 2017, South Mountain implemented *College and Career Success*, a comprehensive FYE course focused on a broad range of factors that increase student success, including personal development assessments, time management skills, personal health and wellness, and career development. Today *College and Career Success* forms the basic curriculum™ for South Mountain’s CPD 150 course – a required, 3-credit paid course for an estimated 1,000 first-year students – focused on Student Success Initiative (SSI) cohorts at the institution. It is fully integrated into South Mountain’s Canvas learning management system, or LMS.

This comprehensive approach was selected to address the whole student, regardless of their academic history, and to address the

broad range of skills needed for success in school, their career, and life. According to Dr. Troy Melendez, Counseling Division Chair and adjunct faculty at South Mountain, “I often hear students ask why they need to take this course because they are already a good student and I tell them that this will help them become an even better student”.

The results of implementing *College and Career Success* have satisfied South Mountain’s expectations, with 90% of students who passed the course returning the following semester, and 75% returning the following year.

When asked to provide advice for institutions considering implementing their own version of an FYE program, Dr. Melendez offered the following advice: “Make sure you are using endorsed resources for your personal assessments. And even more important, make sure you have adequate support resources on staff. We recognized early on that we didn’t have those extra resources and have found the support resources available to us through *College and Career Success*, like training and integrating *College and Career Success* with our Canvas system to be invaluable”.

Dr. Melendez added, “It’s also critical for FYE program administrators to reach out to their student development partners in order to wrap their success services around the student and engage the staff in SSI efforts.”