



# **THE ALP START-UP MANUAL**

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## Introduction

In this manual we have attempted to assemble as much as we can of what we have learned over the five years that we have been offering the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) at the Community College of Baltimore County. We hope that those attempting to start up a version of ALP on their campuses will find it useful.

Of course, no two campuses are exactly alike. Different schools have different students, different faculties, different politics, different budgets, different structures, different goals, and different dreams, so we don't expect anyone to replicate ALP exactly the way we have at CCBC. Nevertheless, as you work to develop a version of ALP that works in your context, we hope you find some of the ideas here to be helpful.

As you develop ALP in your context, we hope you'll stay in touch and let us know what variations on our model you introduce; we might want to adopt them too. We have developed a location on our web site where you can post a description of ALP at your school. We hope you'll do that and then update your posting each summer.

And we hope you'll send us suggestions about this manual, which is very much a work in progress.

## Why We're Doing This

Why are we doing this? Why are colleges and universities all over the country re-thinking the ways they offer developmental education? Why are foundations like Gates, Hewlett, Lumina, and Kresge, as well as the federal government allocating millions of dollars for the redesign of developmental education?

The answer is fairly simple. After thirty or forty years of colleges, and in many cases universities, offering developmental courses for students who arrive unprepared to do college-level work in writing, reading, or math, we have come to understand that those courses, conceived of and taught by hard-working faculty with the best of intentions, are not nearly as successful as we had hoped.

Numerous studies, most convincingly those conducted by the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Columbia University, have demonstrated that only about a third of students placed in the upper-level of developmental courses ever pass the credit-level course for which they are being prepared. For almost two thirds of our developmental students, the courses we have worked so hard on have served to “cool them out” of college.

And now there is a second reason for some urgency. In a time of extremely tight budgets in most states, politicians, looking for ways to reduce spending, are beginning to eye developmental education as a place where great savings can be realized. Using arguments about “paying for the same education twice” and asking why we think “if they didn’t get it the first time, they’ll get it this time,” proposals are being made across the country to eliminate developmental education.

This would be tragic. Developmental education is the most democratic aspect of higher education. It is developmental education that supports the American Dream, that provides the possibility of a “second chance.”

Why are we doing this? Why are we proposing major changes in the way we provide developmental education? We’re doing it because we have learned that what we’ve been doing is not as successful as we had hoped, and we’re doing it with some urgency because we know that there are threats to eliminate developmental education if we can’t make it more successful.

That’s why.

## Our History at CCBC

As a general strategy, we recommend that you start small, but plan large, that is, start with a handful of sections, but plan from the beginning to scale up to the point that ALP is your primary means of delivering basic writing.

We are a college of about 35,000 students on three main campuses. Our English department comprises close to fifty full-timers and perhaps twice that number of adjuncts. Each fall we offer around ninety sections of our upper-level developmental writing course, ENGL 052; in the spring, we offer about two thirds as many.

ALP has been incubating at CCBC since 1992. In that year, Peter Adams did a longitudinal study of the success rates for students placed in ENG 052 and found that only about 26% of them succeeded within four years, if success is defined as passing ENGL 052 and passing ENGL 101, the credit-level writing course. (This study was reported in detail in "Basic Writing Reconsidered," which appeared in the *Journal of Basic Writing* in 1993.) Shortly after that discovery, CCBC began a tumultuous decade during which three independent colleges were merged into one with a predictable amount of strain and tension. Little progress on developmental education at CCBC occurred until fall of 2006.

At this point the Dean of the School of Liberal Arts, the Dean of Developmental Education, and the Department Chair of the English Department decided that it was time to look for ways to improve our developmental writing program. Their initial step was to create two coordinator positions, one for the east side campuses and one for the west. At a meeting in a Pizza Hut in fall 2006, these two coordinators, the department head, and the Dean for Developmental Education had a fairly carb-heavy lunch, but made a very promising decision: we would develop and pilot a model of developmental writing in which developmental students would be mainstreamed into ENGL 101.

During that fall, the coordinators and the English Department chair studied various models of mainstreaming around the country. We also took notice of the learning communities program which was achieving considerable success on our campuses and elsewhere around the country. We developed a proposal for a small pilot program of just five sections, which was presented to the entire English Department at its meeting in January 2007. Surprisingly, without much rancor, the department approved the project, and ALP was launched.

During that spring semester, a small committee worked on the development of several models for ALP and finally settled on the one we are currently using.

Under this model, students whose placement is in the upper-level developmental writing course are given the option of enrolling in ALP. Those who volunteer, register for one of the designated sections where they are joined by seven other developmental students and twelve students whose placement is ENGL 101. In addition, the ALP students register for a section of the developmental course that meets in the class period immediately following the 101. There, the same instructor and the same eight students meet for a second hour. This class is conducted as a workshop designed to improve each student's chances of passing 101.

A few weeks later Peter Adams, the coordinator who had taken the lead on the ALP project, met with the Dean for Developmental Education and the Vice President for Instruction to discuss the project. When the VP heard that the class size in the ALP sections was going to be just eight, he abruptly said "No. There is no way the college can afford to run sections with a class size of eight."

Peter had, for many years, taught a mythology course. Sometimes, a week or so before a semester was to begin, he would receive a phone call from his department chair. "Your section of mythology," she would say, "has only eight students. Would you be willing to teach it for just two credits of load instead of three?" Having questioned this policy in the past, Peter was aware that the college had determined that with eight students, the college breaks even when the instructor receives only two credits of compensation. Drawing on his knowledge of this policy, which had often irked him in the past, he offered a compromise to the VP. "What if the faculty teaching the ALP sections with just eight students received only two credits of compensation?"

After a few moments reflection, and perhaps calculation, the VP replied. "Okay. We'll pilot a few sections. But this is a *Cadillac* of a program; you'd better produce *Cadillac* results." The coordinator inquired, what would the VP consider to be "Cadillac results." "Oh, improving the success rate by twelve or fifteen percentage points, at the least." And the deal was struck.

The only problem was that now Peter would have to convince his colleagues in the English Department to accept this reduced compensation. At the May 2007 department meeting, the VP made an appearance, expressed his support for the proposed pilot, and added one surprise: he'd like to see the first pilots offered in just a few months, in September of 2007. After the VP left, Peter cleared up a few details, argued that because the class size of eight would mean a considerable reduction in the number of papers to grade that the two credit compensation was reasonable, and then held his breath. The department voted to approve the pilot.

Now the problem would be to find five faculty willing to take on ALP at the compromise compensation. Exactly five volunteered, including Peter himself. One of the volunteers, Sandra Grady, had expressed

considerable skepticism about the approach but agreed reluctantly to participate. We met a number of times over the summer and agreed to meet once a month during the fall and to do lots of emailing in between meetings. So, in September of 2007, the first five sections of ALP were offered, and forty students signed up.

After grades were turned in the following December, the five faculty met one last time. Peter opened the meeting by asking each instructor to give a one or two sentence summary of how ALP had worked. When it was Sandra's turn to respond, he held his breath. "Peter," she said, "You know I had reservations about the program. However, I have been teaching for more than thirty years, and this was the best teaching experience I have ever had. This is what I went into teaching for in the first place." Almost every faculty member who has taught ALP has had a similarly satisfying experience. In retrospect, we think this kind of extremely rewarding experience is the primary reason faculty want to teach ALP, even if the compensation is only two credit hours.

In spring of 2008, we had our first misstep: one section of ALP did not have enough enrollment, so we ran only four sections. In fall of 2008, we doubled the number of sections we offered to ten each semester. After a vigorous PR campaign in May and June, all the sections had filled by the first of July. We also attracted a new group of faculty who joined the veterans. We offered another ten sections in spring of 2009. At the end of our second year, we began to relax a bit about results as we had achieved a success rate of over 60% (defined as passing both the developmental course and ENGL 101) for four consecutive semesters.

In academic year, 2009-2010, we again doubled the size of the program, offering a total of forty sections enrolling approximately 320 students, with results that were slightly higher than previous years. At this point, we had twenty-nine faculty members who have taught ALP. In this 2009-2010, the Math Department also began piloting several different models of accelerated developmental math courses, and we also offered our first sections of ALP ESOL and of an on-line version of ALP.

In academic year 2010-2011, we offered forty sections of ALP each semester which accommodated 640 students during the year. In academic year 2011-2012, we are offering 80 sections each semester, which will accommodate 1280 students, which will comprise more than a third of the students placed in our upper level basic writing course. In 2012-2013, we will offer 120 sections each semester, accommodating, for the first time, more than half our developmental students. We have increased the number of students in the ALP class from eight to ten. This change will begin for all sections in the spring semester 2013 and will eliminate the two-teaching-credit issue because ALP faculty will now receive three credits.

So that's how we did it. The rest of this manual is full of suggestions about how *you* might do it.

## **Adapt, Don't Adopt**

More than ninety schools around the country have now implemented ALP; none of them are doing it exactly the way we do. In each case, they have adapted our model to local circumstances. Many aspects of those circumstances will affect how you adapt ALP to fit your context: budgetary constraints, territorial politics, faculty preferences, organizational structures, accreditation policies, and many more.

In Appendix A (p. 18), we outline what we have identified as the six features of ALP that account for most of its success. If possible, include all six in your model, but it may not be possible. If you can't include all six features, it's still worth doing what you can.

If you omit one or two of the features we've identified as essential, we predict that the improvement in your success rates may not be as great as ours has been. But they will improve. And if your improvement is not as dramatic as ours, you will be able to use your data to argue for improving your program by including the features that you had to leave out in the first year.

Of course, it's also possible that you will develop a version of ALP that differs significantly from ours and produces even greater improvement. If that happens, please let us know so we can modify our program with the features you developed.

## **Getting Started**

Start small; plan large. That may be the most important advice we can give you. Start with a handful of sections and a group of enthusiastic faculty, but not too small a handful. Remember that the point of a pilot is to demonstrate that ALP will dramatically improve the percentage of your students who successful. So you want enough sections to produce significant data—depending on the size of your school you might start with as few as four or as many as ten. At the lower end of this range you will probably need two semesters worth of data before you have enough students for the results to be significant. In any case, from the beginning, if ALP is successful at your school, plan to scale it up fully, as quickly as possible.

In some states and under some foundations' grants, there is considerable pressure not to conduct a pilot of a few sections, but instead to start your program at, or nearly at, full scale. This pressure is understandable. Every year we continue traditional approaches to developmental writing, significant numbers of students will experience failure. It is sometimes argued that we should implement at full scale because we can't "make things any worse."

We disagree with this strategy. We think starting small but planning to scale up quickly will produce better results faster for four reasons:

1. To insure that faculty at your school are supportive of ALP, it is important that they have a chance to evaluate and become convinced that ALP is the best model for their students. Starting out with a full-scale implementation will create resistance because it will feel like there is not opportunity for your faculty to evaluate the model.
2. We have produced lots of data showing that ALP is dramatically successful with our students at CCBC, but we haven't proved that it will be successful with your students in your context. Demonstrating that this is the case will go a long way toward winning over the skeptics among your colleagues.
3. Starting small will give you a chance to "work the bugs out" before they cause problems for large numbers of students.
4. Starting small will give you a cadre of faculty who have experienced ALP and can help tremendously in scaling up the program in future years and in taking the lead in future faculty development efforts.

The idea of implementing ALP usually starts with a few people, maybe just one. The idea could originate with a couple of teachers of developmental writing, with a department chair, with a director of developmental education, or with several of these. Sometimes a mandate comes down from above . . . from a dean, provost, vice president, or from even higher . . . from the Board of Trustees, from the department of higher education, even from the state legislature. Wherever the idea starts, it is going to be executed at the faculty level. No legislators, senior administrators, or trustees are going to be teaching developmental writing.

Let' consider top-down mandates for a minute. They are not pleasant. No teacher likes to be told how to teach by people far removed from the site of teaching, people who usually have little professional knowledge about the process of teaching. Too often, mandates from above are wrong-headed and based on misunderstanding. In such cases, of course, faculty should resist these mandates, should use whatever forms of shared governance are available to resist or, at least, modify such mandates.

But what if a mandate from above is actually not wrong-headed, not based on misunderstanding? We would argue that it is still advisable to resist or attempt to modify *the process*, but we would also argue that it would be wrong to resist the proposed change.

And we would argue that this is the case with ALP. In states where ALP is being mandated or simply encouraged by some statewide body, I hope the faculty will take a good look at ALP, at the successes we have achieved, and at the features of ALP that seem to be accounting for most of that success. Even if the process by which ALP is being imposed in some states is far from ideal, we, nevertheless, urge faculty to judge the program by its results and not by the less-than-ideal way it may be mandated.

In many places, however, ALP is being adopted by faculty who have evaluated their traditional approach and found the results unsatisfactory. Because of the reasonableness that underlies ALP and the strikingly successful results it is producing, many faculty are making the decision to, at least, pilot a few sections to determine how well it will work in their context.

No matter where the impetus for ALP originates, there are some important steps that we recommend for the process of implementing a few sections of ALP and then, if the results justify it, scaling up.

## **Building Support**

Implementing and, later, scaling up ALP will be a lot easier if you put some effort from the beginning into building support. The most critical support will come from the writing faculty themselves. Some of them will be suspicious that ALP is merely an attempt to pressure the faculty to push students through without regard for what they learn. Other faculty may have sincere doubts about whether developmental students can really succeed in credit English. The patient presentation of the data on ALP at CCBC will convince some, the rigorous studies of ALP done by CCRC should also help, and the fact that ALP has been adopted by more than ninety institutions and by the states of Arkansas this year, with Indiana planning to implement next year, will be additional evidence. In addition, you may need to make clear that under ALP, students have exactly the same amount of time in a developmental writing class; the difference is that they are taking the developmental class concurrently with the first-year composition class, rather than sequentially. If there is a school in your area that has had success with ALP, perhaps a visit from some faculty from that school can be arranged.

However, at this early stage, all the support you really need is a few faculty willing to try teaching in ALP and the agreement of your department to allow a pilot program.

Support among the English faculty is important, but building support from the administration can also be critical. In addition, support from counselors, from institutional research, from records and registration and your college's media relations/PR department is also extremely helpful.

## Research and Data Collection

Without doubt, our most important tool in winning support for ALP among faculty, administration, and students has been the data we have produced. Often, collecting data doesn't come easily to English teachers. We deal in words and ideas, concepts not easily reduced to data. Often our only connection with data is when administrators use it to bring pressure us English teachers to "do better!" It's not surprising that English teachers sometimes ask, isn't data our enemy?

Too often it is. Too often data are used in a way that is not informed by pedagogy to evaluate our work, using measurements that do not detect the important results we produce. But that possible misuse of data is the very reason, we would argue, that it is important for us English teachers to become interested in data, to decide what kinds of data really tell us something useful about our programs, to figure out the uses to which we can put that data for the betterment of our programs, and to figure out how to get our schools' bureaucracies to respond to our requests for data.

In order to build on whatever initial support you develop, in subsequent years, you will need to be able to present data that shows that ALP is working. Data from CCBC helps, but more important is data from your own school. It is, therefore essential that early on, you meet with your Institutional Research (IR) office to develop a data plan. Here are some suggestions, based primarily on mistakes we made.

Don't just send an email to IR outlining the data you want. We did that, and IR sent us just what we asked for . . . but what we asked for was not what we really wanted. We had made errors in defining the data we were seeking. Meet face-to-face with IR, so they can help you formulate your request in such a way that you get the data you really need.

In the year before you even offer any ALP sections, you can request data on students who are taking the traditional developmental writing course. This will give you a chance to see how your data request works and to collect baseline data that will later be compared with the success rates of ALP students.

Even before the first ALP class had met in fall of 2007, we had met with a representative of our IR office to discuss what kinds of support were reasonable for us to expect. IR on most campuses has many more requests for data than they are able to fulfill. Ours is no exception, and yet we knew that doing a pilot was a waste of time if we didn't have data to evaluate the success of that pilot.

We suggest the following principles when working with your IR office:

- establish personal contact as early as possible so they know who you are and understand what you are trying to do
- make it clear to IR that the data they produce will actually be put to use; invite them to presentations at which you use their data; perhaps even ask them to present with you
- ask for data as far in advance as you can
- try to regularize your data requests; it's much easier on IR if you are asking for the same reports year after year (this is one we weren't very good at)

So what kinds of data are essential?

First it is important to establish a group of students taking your traditional developmental course that your ALP students will be compared with. We used all students who registered in our upper-level developmental writing course in the fall of 2006, the year before we began ALP. This cohort comprised 1023 students.

Second, even though the number of students in ALP will be fairly small in the early years, it is a good idea to begin collecting data, nevertheless. Even the first year's data, none of which was significant because our numbers were so small, was extremely helpful in beginning to demonstrate that the pilot was working and to justify doubling it for the second year.

A second benefit to collecting data even when you are running only a few sections is that you can perfect the system for gathering data and get your IR office used to planning to run your reports at the end of each semester or each year. We discovered several tweaks that were needed in what we asked IR for during that first year.

For specifics about what data you might collect, see Appendix B (p. 20).

## **Marketing to Students**

Several institutions have worked really hard to plan an ALP implementation and then have had to cancel the classes because few students registered for them. Our experience is that students will want to register for ALP when they hear about it, but it is sometimes difficult to get the word out to them.

At most schools the key to this marketing is the counseling staff. If you can, meet with them, give them a document describing ALP, and a second document that explains ALP to students. After a couple of semesters, in most cases, word of mouth sells ALP for you, but in the first few semesters, you'll need to put some energy into marketing the program.

## Identifying ALP Faculty and Providing Faculty Development

In the year before the program begins, you'll need to identify the faculty who will teach the first few sections. In selecting these faculty, remember that, not only will they be teaching the early sections, but also, in most cases, they will be helping to develop the pedagogy for your school, they will be helping to convince the rest of the department to support ALP, and they will be helping to train future instructors.

Faculty development may involve bringing in an outside consultant to help you and your colleagues to think through how teaching is different in an ALP context, or it may simply involve the original group of faculty meeting and exchanging ideas about what works and what doesn't. However, during this early period, you will want to begin planning for how you will conduct faculty development as you scale up the program.

In the area of faculty development, in the early years of ALP, we didn't do nearly enough. We tried to meet three times during each semester, but finding times that worked for faculty located on three different campuses wasn't easy. We conducted two-hour orientation sessions for new ALP faculty before the semester started, but they told us that two hours wasn't nearly enough.

In academic year 2011-2012, we began to develop a vigorous faculty development program. We have come to the realization that, at community colleges where faculty typically teach five courses per semester, serve on multiple committees, and frequently are located on different campuses, no single vehicle for faculty development is going to be enough; a multi-faceted approach is needed. We are now trying to provide as many opportunities as possible for faculty to exchange ideas, discuss issues, and share materials. Here's what we have planned for faculty development in academic year 2012-2013:

1. A 20-hour faculty institute for new faculty. We conducted one institute for a week in mid-July, the other began with a one-day session in late August followed by three Saturday morning sessions. An description of these institutes is available as Appendix C (p. 25).
2. Orientation sessions (3-4 hours) for new faculty. Because we don't have sufficient funds to accommodate all the approximately sixty faculty members who will be new to ALP this year in the institutes, we also offer a series of orientations spread throughout the summer. New ALP faculty who do not attend an institute will attend one of these.
3. ALPIN, the on-line ALP Faculty Inquiry Network. Ten ALP faculty receive small stipends to form the heart of this on-line discussion group. Each of them posts an extended "event" three times during the semester, which then forms the focus for two weeks' of on-line discussion, which all ALP faculty and anyone else interested are invited to join. To take a look at ALPIN, go to:  
[www.alpincbc.org](http://www.alpincbc.org)

4. A half-day workshop focusing on a particular topic for all ALP faculty at the beginning of each semester. This year, in August, the workshop will look at efforts to promote financial literacy in our students. In January, it will focus on integrating reading and writing.
5. Informal monthly meetings on each campus where ALP faculty can come to exchange ideas about the course.
6. A mentoring system under which each new faculty member will be assigned an experienced ALP faculty member who will be available to advise and answer questions throughout the semester.

## Funding/Costs

If you haven't seen our PowerPoint demonstrating that ALP actually costs less per successful student than traditional developmental writing, you can view it on the ALP website: <http://alp-deved.org/>  
 If you wanted to use it to argue with your administration for the cost effectiveness of ALP, just download it. The results are also confirmed in a CCRC study available at this web site:  
<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=1151>

Here we want to talk about start-up costs for ALP. Although this will vary widely from campus to campus, we think it might be helpful to know what the start-up of ALP at CCBC cost the institution and what we might have done if additional funds had been available.

From the start, the college recognized the need for a director, someone to make the program run, to plan ahead, and to put out fires. As director, Peter Adams took on the additional role of publicizing the program widely in an attempt to encourage its adoption at other schools, but that should not be a necessary function for most programs.

Let's start by explaining that at CCBC, we are on the semester system, and each full-time faculty member teaches fifteen credit hours (five three-credit courses) each semester, unless he or she is on some reassigned time (often called released time) to perform other duties, usually administrative. In 2006-7, the year when we proposed and prepared for the first semester's courses the following fall, Peter was on three credits of reassigned time to coordinate the developmental program on the east side of town. As we moved toward the decision to implement ALP in the spring, Peter started using a good deal of his time as east side coordinator simply to organize the start-up of ALP.

In our first year of offering courses, 2007-8, Peter was awarded an additional three hours of reassigned time to direct ALP and retained the three hours for east side developmental coordinator. He continued to use much of the time when he was supposed to be observing new developmental faculty and organizing norming sessions for developmental courses for administrative duties connected with ALP.

In retrospect, we think the director needed at least six hours of reassigned time for nothing but ALP. Stealing time from another job was not a good solution, and some things simply didn't get done. In addition to reassigned time for the director of ALP, in the *first* semester, the college gave each ALP instructor, five of us, one credit of reassigned time because we were teaching a course none of us had ever taught before and we were spending a great deal of time meeting and emailing each other to try to figure out how to do it.

Aside from minor printing costs for some flyers and posters, that was it. Starting up the program was not expensive, but there are two areas that would have benefitted greatly from additional support: research and faculty development.

We have discussed earlier how we had to request that the IR office generate the data we needed on top of all the other requests they were handling. If the college could have afforded it, the hiring of a part-time researcher to work in the IR office on our data would have been of great assistance. In addition, that person, could have helped us design and conduct student surveys more effectively to study the effects of ALP on our students.

In the section on faculty development, we discussed how we neglected faculty development for at least the first three years of ALP. Had we recognized the need earlier, we would have requested additional funding to conduct much more faculty development.

## Logistics

Here we will discuss a number of very practical matters, most of which we discovered by trial and error.

1. **Registration.** Getting students to register in the right numbers, especially in the first-year comp class where we wanted twelve 101-level students and eight ALP students proved extremely difficult the first year. Then our registrar came up with a brilliant solution that has eliminated 99% of the problems. The eight ALP seats in the class and the twelve 101-level seats in the class are listed in the course schedule and in the Banner Student Information System as two separate sections with entirely different identification numbers, which the Banner system calls CRNs. These two different class simply meet at the same time, in the same room, and have the same instructor, but they have different prerequisites and different class size limits. Starting in spring 2013, the 101 class size is ten, and the ALP class is also ten. So Records and Registration knows when the ALP seats are full when the 101 seats are not and vice versa.

2. **ALP Student Privacy.** We gave a lot of thought to whether we should identify the ALP students in the 101 class or not. We decided that we should not, which then meant we had to schedule the developmental class that follows each 101 in a different room. Otherwise, when the 101 class ended and eight students stayed in their seats as everyone else left, it would be obvious who the ALP students were. As it turns out, the students find this to be much less of an issue than we did. Most of them self-identify after a couple of weeks of classes.
3. **Non-Cognitive Issues.** We know that many of the reasons that our developmental students don't succeed has nothing to do with thesis statement or comma splices. Many of our students give up because of financial problems or medical problems or marital problems or legal problems or any one of many others. To help keep these "life problems" from decimating our ALP classes, we have assembled a roster of consultants with expertise in a wide range of "life problems" and who are available to meet with our students or even to visit our classes.
4. **Student Eligibility for ALP.** We've given this a lot of thought and concluded that any student whose placement is our upper-level developmental course should be allowed to take ALP. This includes students whose placement score is at the very bottom of the range for placement into the upper-level developmental writing course as well as those who were initially placed in the lower-level developmental writing course and who passed it. In fact, recent data from our IR office indicates that success rates for students at the lower end of the placement range increase more than the rates for those at the top of the range. The only exceptions and co-requisites involve students who place in development reading. A student who places in our lowest level reading course (051) is not eligible to take ALP. Students who place into our upper level reading course (052) are required to take Reading 052 concurrently with the ALP/Eng. 101 classes.
5. **Faculty.** From the beginning we decided that if ALP was going to work, it would have to work regardless of who was teaching it. So there are no restrictions. Full-timers and adjuncts, senior faculty and our newest hires. All have taught ALP, and so far we have had only one faculty member who had an unsuccessful experience. We do not think that only our strongest or most experienced teachers should teach ALP.
6. **Classrooms.** CCBC, like many other schools, has experienced tremendous enrollment growth in the last two years. This has placed considerable strain on classroom space. Because, in the beginning, our ALP sections had just eight students, in most cases, meet in classrooms that can hold twenty-five or thirty, we are under some pressure to find a way to use classroom space more efficiently. In fact, it was primarily this issue that caused one of our partner schools that had planned to start ALP this year to postpone it for a year or two. We have come up with two solutions to this problem:

- We have scoured the campuses for underused small rooms—conference rooms or small group study rooms. We are moving a number of ALP classes into these rooms, which turn out to be better spaces for our small groups.
  - We have a number of classrooms that have two doors, one in the front and one in the back. We are proposing, now that ALP is clearly here to stay at CCBC, that these be permanently divided in half and used for two ALP sections. And, no, we will not settle for those accordion folding doors.
7. **Computers.** Most of our ALP classes meet in computer classrooms. However, most computer classrooms are equipped with twenty or more computers. As with large classrooms, having eight students occupy a room with twenty computers is not an efficient use of technology. Our solution has been to equip the small rooms we are beginning to use with ten laptops. These computers are locked in a cabinet to which the instructor has the combination. In between classes they are placed back in the cabinets where their batteries are re-charged. Some of the instructors have also tried to climb into these cabinets for recharging, but so far that hasn't worked.
  8. **Advising.** Whether your school has a separate advising office or the faculty serves as advisors, it crucial that whoever is advising students understands what ALP is and how it works with respect to registration. We have meetings once a year with the CCBC advisors to bring the new people up to speed and to provide updates about the program. We are also suggesting that our advisors tell students when they place into developmental English and are eligible for ALP: "You have placed into our accelerated learning program, and here is how it works." This makes ALP the first option, not one of several, and puts a positive spin on the placement.

## Scaling Up

We said at the beginning of this manual that we recommend starting small, but we also recommended planning, from the beginning, to scale up. It is important not to allow your accelerated program to become the province of just one or two instructors and to simply stagnate . . . doing a good job with a few dozen students each year, but that's all. If ALP works on your campus, in anything close to the percentages it has on ours, then your goal should be grow it into becoming the primary mode of developmental writing instruction.

To insure that your version of ALP is scalable, from the beginning, as you design ALP for your school, you need to ask yourself, "If we do it this way, will we be able to scale the program up in the future?"

## Appendix A: The Six Features of ALP That Appear to Produce Our High Success Rates

Almost twice as many students who take their developmental writing through the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) rather than through our traditional developmental course pass the credit English course.

A CCRC study in 2010 (<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Collection.asp?cid=67>) confirmed these results and also found that, despite our small class size, the cost per successful student was lower for the ALP course than for the traditional one.

Over the past five years, CCBC has conducted a number of pre- and post-semester surveys, to try to determine what it is about ALP that has this dramatic impact on success rates. We were hoping to be able to identify a couple of features of ALP that account for most of the increase. We were naïve. The data from these studies suggest only one or two features of ALP are responsible for its success; in fact, each of the features we identify below seems to contribute a little. It is the *combined* effect of all these features that seems to result in doubling the success rate.

It seems to us that the more of these features you can include in your program, the more likely you will achieve dramatically improved success rates. However, if one or two of them are not possible because of local conditions at your school, that should not be a reason not to do ALP with as many of these features as are possible.

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|----|---|---|
| 1. | Students take their developmental writing course concurrently with the credit-level writing course, rather than as a pre-requisite. | <p>The biggest benefit of this feature is psychological. Students no longer think of their developmental course as a hurdle standing between them and the credit course; instead, they view it as something that is immediately helpful to them in the credit English course.</p> <p>It also improves their sense that they are really “in college” and not in some isolated pre-college holding area, thus reducing the stigmatization many developmental students feel.</p> |
| 2. | At least half the students in the credit English course are students who placed into credit-level writing.                          | It is important that the credit-level course have the same level of requirements and performance as any section of the course. Having at least half of the class be credit-level students reduces the temptation for the instructor to ease up on expectations.   |

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|----|---|---|
| 3. | The ALP cohort is no more than 12 students.   | <p>Small class size allows instructors to really get to know their students, allowing them to individualize instruction to match their needs.</p> <p>In addition, instructors are able to become aware of their students' non-cognitive issues.</p>   |
| 4. | ALP instructors recognize the importance of paying attention to non-cognitive issues of their students.   | <p>The major reason developmental student fail to complete their developmental work and pass the gatekeeper course is not difficulty with writing, but more often difficulty with their lives or with their confidence and levels of stress. ALP instructors, aided by the small class size, are able to address some of these problems before they derail students.</p>  |
| 5. | The same instructor teaches the ALP course and the credit course.   | <p>Having the same instructor teach both courses insures that the two courses are coordinated. Knowing what the ALP students have just worked on or discussed in the credit course makes it easy for the instructor to reinforce or to answer questions about the material just covered. Knowing what is coming up in future classes in the credit course makes it easy for the instructor to provide scaffolding activities to prepare students for the next task in the credit course.</p> <p>In addition, spending six hours a week with the same instructor increases the bonding and engagement of the ALP students.</p> |
| 6. | The pedagogy in ALP is based on "backward design" from the credit-level course and emphasizes active learning, improved reasoning skills, engaged reading, and more effective editing skills. | <p>Teaching in the unique context of ALP for five years has encouraged us to develop a pedagogy that takes advantage of the linked courses, the small class size, and the safe atmosphere.</p>  |

## Appendix B: Guidelines for Collecting Data

The guidelines below suggest a plan for collecting data that will allow you to measure how much your ALP program actually improves the success rates of students in developmental writing classes. We recommend you ask your IR office to produce the data outlined below each summer at some point after grades are recorded for the spring semester and before grades are recorded for the following fall semester.

### Year 0:

Start with the collection of baseline data on all students who took the traditional developmental writing course. This cohort will be your comparison group, the group with whom you compare your ALP students in subsequent years. Use information from the year before you offer any sections of ALP or in the fall semester of the year you begin offering ALP courses. The data you want is the following:

- number of students who registered for the developmental course
- number of students who passed the developmental course
- number of students who enrolled in the first-semester comp course
- number of students who passed the first-semester comp course

### Year 1:

In the summer at the end of the first year you offer ALP sections, you should collect the following data on the students who took your ALP classes in fall and spring. Again ask that this data be calculated during the summer after spring grades have been recorded. You will be asking for a little more data than you did the “zero” year:

- number of students who registered for the ALP developmental course
- number of students who passed the ALP developmental course
- number of ALP students who enrolled in the first-semester comp course
- number of ALP students who passed the first-semester comp course
- number of ALP students who enrolled in the second-semester comp course if your school requires one
- number of ALP students who passed the second-semester comp course (if your school requires one)

In the summer at the end of Year 1, you will also want to collect a new round of data on the comparison group, the same students you requested data for during Year 0. This time you will want to know how they have done after two years. In addition to the data on developmental writing and first-semester comp, you will want data on how they are doing in second-semester comp.

- number of students who originally registered for the developmental course
- number of students who have passed the developmental course after two years
- number of students who have enrolled in the first-semester comp course after two years
- number of students who passed the first-semester comp course after two years
- number of students who enrolled in the second-semester comp course (if your school requires one) after two years
- number of students who passed the second-semester comp course (if your school requires one after two years)

At this point, the original comparison group will have had two years to make progress. You will compare their success rates at this point with the success rates of the first ALP cohort at the end of Year 2, when the ALP students will have had two years.

## Year 2:

At the end of this year, you will collect data on three cohorts of students: the original cohort who took the traditional developmental course in Year 0, the first year of ALP students, and the second year of ALP students. From this point on, you will be collecting the same seven items of data each year:

- number of students who originally registered for the developmental course
- number of students who have passed the developmental course after two years
- number of students who have enrolled in the first-semester comp course after two years
- number of students who passed the first-semester comp course after two years
- number of students who enrolled in the second-semester comp course (if your school requires one) after two years
- number of students who passed the second-semester comp course (if your school requires one) after two years

In defining these cohorts, we use the term “census day.” Most schools establish a date that is used to quantify enrollments in courses. This might be the first day of classes. At CCBC we use the end of the third week of classes. Whatever date your school uses for these purposes is the date we are referring to as the “census day.”

Collecting these data will provide excellent evidence that the redesign is improving success rates in developmental courses.

In the first two years, the number of students in your ALP cohort will probably be fairly small, so our suggestion is that you aggregate all the ALP students for the first two years, to give you a large enough number to be significant.

By the third year, you will probably have scaled your ALP program up enough to have a significant number of students, so aggregating will probably not be necessary. In addition, if we aggregated the first three years of students, the students from the first year would have had five or six semesters to progress while those from the third year would have had only one or two semesters.

So our guidelines are different for the third year on.

The original cohort who took the traditional developmental course in Year 0 will continue to serve as the comparison group. You follow them for three years, that is to the end of Year 2. By then, almost all of them who are going to pass any of the writing courses will have done so.

You can now follow the ALP cohort from Year 1 for three years, that is to the end of Year 3. Each year thereafter, you can follow each cohort for three years. For example, you would follow the ALP cohort from Year 2 until the end of Year 4. This way you will be comparing apples and apples; that is, you will be comparing the success of each cohort for three years.

In later years, as you scale up ALP and your number of students become greater, we recommend you begin some additional analyses.

First, it is advantageous to evaluate whether improvements in success that are accomplished while the students are in developmental courses are continued after the students move on into their credit courses. For these purposes, the most obvious data to collect is success rates for the baseline cohort and the ALP cohorts in terms of retention, credits earned, and/or GPA after one year and after two years, and, eventually, after three years.

A second analysis to explore as the number of students who have completed ALP grows is to study subgroups of your cohorts. The most obvious data to look at is the difference between success rates for

white students and students of color. Evidence that your ALP courses are “closing the gap” will be very important.

You may also want to disaggregate your data by gender, by age, by full- and part-time status, and, if possible, by such variables as numbers of hours students work each week.

The charts on the following pages may make this process clearer.

**YEAR 0:**

Cohort of students in traditional developmental course in Year 0						
Data as of summer of Year 0						
	Number of students who were registered on census day of the two semesters	Number of students who have passed the developmental course after spring grades have been recorded	Number of students who have registered for first-semester comp	Number of students who have passed first-semester comp		
<p>Compare these</p>  <p>data with data on Year 1 ALP cohort at <u>end of Year 1</u></p>						

**YEAR 1:**

Cohort of students in traditional developmental course in Year 0						
Data as of summer of Year 1						
	Number of students who were registered on census day of the two semesters	Number of students who have passed the developmental course after spring grades have been recorded	Number of students who have registered for first-semester comp	Number of students who have passed first-semester comp	Number of students who have registered for second-semester comp	Number of students who have passed second-semester comp
<p>Compare these data</p>  <p>with data on Year 1 ALP cohort at <u>end of Year 2</u></p>						

Cohort of students in ALP COURSES in Year 1						
Data as of summer of Year 1						
	Number of students who were registered on census day of the two semesters	Number of students who have passed the developmental course after spring grades have been recorded	Number of students who have registered for first-semester comp	Number of students who have passed first-semester comp	Number of students who have registered for second-semester comp	Number of students who have passed second-semester comp
Compare these data  with data on Year 0 traditional cohort at <u>end of Year 0</u>						

## YEAR 2:

Cohort of students in traditional developmental course in Year 0						
Data as of summer of Year 2						
	Number of students who were registered on census day of the two semesters	Number of students who have passed the developmental course after spring grades have been recorded	Number of students who have registered for first-semester comp	Number of students who have passed first-semester comp	Number of students who have registered for second-semester comp	Number of students who have passed second-semester comp
Compare these data  with data on Year 1 ALP cohort at <u>end of Year 2</u>						

Cohort of students in ALP COURSES in Year 1						
Data as of summer of Year 2						
	Number of students who were registered on census day of the two semesters	Number of students who have passed the developmental course after spring grades have been recorded	Number of students who have registered for first-semester comp	Number of students who have passed first-semester comp	Number of students who have registered for second-semester comp	Number of students who have passed second-semester comp
<p>Compare these data</p>  <p>with data on Year 0 traditional cohort at end of <u>Year 1</u></p>						

Cohort of students in ALP COURSES in Year 2						
Data as of summer of Year 2						
	Number of students who were registered on census day of the two semesters	Number of students who have passed the developmental course after spring grades have been recorded	Number of students who have registered for first-semester comp	Number of students who have passed first-semester comp	Number of students who have registered for second-semester comp	number of students who have passed second-semester comp
<p>Compare these data</p>  <p>with data on Year 0 traditional cohort at end of <u>Year 0</u></p>						

## Appendix C: Topics for Faculty Institutes

The ALP faculty institutes at CCBC are open to twenty ALP faculty on a first come, first served basis. Faculty who complete the institute receive a stipend. Institutes are designed, not so much to instruct participants in how they should teach, but to raise questions that will lead participants to think about issues involved in teaching in an accelerated environment. In addition, participants will be provided with a multitude of materials they can select from and adapt to their own teaching style.

Below is a sample of some of the topics discussed at the ALP faculty institutes.

- **Backward Design Curriculum Development**

We think it's important that developmental writing courses not be structured by taking a complicated process like writing or reading, breaking it into discrete isolated skills, and teaching those skills one at a time.

Instead, we take the "target" course, which the developmental course aims to prepare students for, and ask what are students expected to do in this course?. For ALP courses, the target course is first-year composition, and what students do in that course is read challenging texts and write mature essays in response to them. We then design the curriculum for the ALP courses "backwards" from that course. We do not break the tasks down into decontextualized skills like grammar exercises, paragraph writing, or reading short passages and identifying main ideas. Rather, in ALP we ask students to read challenging texts and write mature essays in response to them. The major difference between this and what they do in first-year composition is that they do it more slowly, with more support, and more scaffolding.

- **Active Learning in a Writing Classroom**

There is widespread recognition, with which we agree, that effective teaching usually involves a combination of lecture and more active forms of learning. Most of us, and we suspect most teachers of developmental writing have relied too heavily on lecture or lecture/discussion (which usually involves only a few students and the teacher doing the bulk of the discussing). The focus of this session will be on exploring types of active learning and exploring applications for the ALP classroom.

- **Integrating Reading with Writing**

We believe it makes great sense to continue integrating support for students *as readers* in the ALP course and in the first-year composition course. This doesn't have to mean a major revision of the syllabi for these courses. Rather, it can simply mean that the instructors do not assume that all their students are proficient and engaged readers and that faculty are prepared to provide assistance with reading as it seems appropriate. We think of it as building on the reading skills students have learned earlier, in the same way writing in the disciplines asks faculty across the disciplines to build on what we teach about writing in our composition courses.

- **Thinking Skills in the Writing Classroom**

While writing is the key focus of ALP and first-year composition classes, we believe that the most important component of strong writing is strong thinking. We build into ALP courses discussion, activities, and writing requirements that encourage students to think more deeply as they read and write.

- **Dealing with Non-Cognitive Issues**

We recognize that the most common factor for students who do not succeed in their developmental writing courses is not difficulty with writing, but difficulty in other parts of the students' lives. Students frequently drop out of school because they become discouraged, stressed, or filled with insecurities. Other students give up because problems in their lives become overwhelming: they experience extreme financial difficulties, they are evicted, they lose their jobs, they or their children get sick, they find themselves in an abusive home situation, or some combination of factors like these.

While very few English teachers have any professional preparation in responding to these life issues, we have discovered that we can, nevertheless, effectively make our classrooms places where students can discuss these problems, where they can receive advice (often from other students), and where instructors can, when the situation requires it, find outside help for students. In addition, we can structure our classes in ways that will improve our students chances of successfully responding to the problems their lives present.

- **Financial Literacy**

Why is learning about financial literacy worth our students' time? Student surveys we have conducted over the years reveal that the most frequent reason students drop out of developmental writing classes is financial problems. Helping our students become more capable of managing their finances will help more of them remain in school. In addition, student debt is reaching astronomical figures, and many students need years to pay off debt incurred while going to school—if they ever do. Further, new governmental regulations are making it even more difficult for students to maintain eligibility for financial aid.

Moreover, financial literacy provides fertile ground for writing and research for both the first-year composition class and the ALP section as well. This presentation will provide an overview of financial literacy and then demonstrate how it can be integrated that ALP curriculum.

- **Improving Students' Ability to Edit Their Own Writing**

As we suggest in the backward design session described above, we think it's important that the ALP developmental course not feel like a grammar class to the students. We suspect that one reason some students drop out of traditional developmental writing courses is that they as if they are back in fourth grade. We do not recommend that students arriving in these ALP courses face weeks of exercises in identifying parts of speech and choosing the correct forms of verbs.

This does not, however, mean that we do not recognize an obligation to help students become more effective at editing their writing to reduce the frequency and severity of sentence-level error. While we are far from having solved the challenge of helping students with this, we have begun to develop some ideas that inform the way we attempt to help our students address sentence-level error.

First, we have generally agreed that the goal of any form of “grammar” instruction is to help our students become, not grammarians, but more effective editors of their writing. In most cases, this means a de-emphasis on learning grammatical terms and concepts and increased emphasis on editing their own writing. Most of us agree that whatever grammar we teach will only be effective if it is applied to the students’ own writing and that practice editing what they have written is much more useful than spending time doing grammar drills.

- **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

This session examines the concept of Stereotype Threat and the role it can play in academic achievement. We will discuss concepts related to identity, stereotypes, and beliefs about academic achievement. In a classroom setting, instructors can encourage students to examine their own relationships to stereotypes and stereotype threat. Media examples of stereotypes and discussions of personal experiences with both stereotypes and Stereotype Threat are particularly useful. We will also discuss ways to lessen the potentially negative impact of Stereotype Threat on student achievement. Awareness of these issues is a crucial step in addressing and disarming the powerful impact of stereotypes and Stereotype Threat.

- **Coordinating the Credit-Level and the ALP Classes**

One of the big advantages of the ALP model is that the same instructor teaches both the credit composition course and the non-credit developmental course. This means that much of the time in the ALP class is devoted to scaffolding for later assignments in the comp class. In some cases this means discussion of issues that will later be written about. In other cases it means actually writing short papers that are preparation for longer assignments upcoming in the comp class. Sometimes the coordination is focused more on an assigned reading—the ALP developmental class might do some preliminary work preparing the students for the style and complexity of a text to be read in the comp class.

The basic idea is to use the ALP class either as a place to help students prepare for upcoming work in the comp class or a place to review and clear up misunderstandings that arise in the comp class.