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# \$2 Million Strengthening Institutions Grant Being Utilized

JANUARY 17TH 2013 BY DEE LOFLIN

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*Submitted by  
Dee Loflin, SMT Writer*

**Poplar Bluff, Missouri** - Three Rivers College is transitioning the way it serves students who need to strengthen the skills necessary to be successful in college-level courses.

“Three Rivers has been using a \$2 million Strengthening Institutions grant to redesign the traditional classroom model of developmental classes. We have developed a Transitional model that uses computer modules and individualized instruction to help students master higher level skills more quickly and effectively,” said Three Rivers Math Instructor Kevin Wheeler. Wheeler is helping lead the team of college instructors and staff members using the federal Department of Education grant to develop innovative approaches to better prepare students for success.

Using ACT scores or computerized placement assessments, Three Rivers evaluates the math, reading, and writing skills of all new students. The Transitional courses will replace developmental courses for students whose scores indicate they need to boost their math, reading, and/or writing skills in order to be successful in college level courses, Wheeler said.

The Transitional courses provide a more individualized way of learning than the traditional classroom developmental model in which an instructor lectures and all students do the same homework problems, he said.

“The most important advantage is that the Transitional model helps students progress through developmental classes more quickly and can save students money,” Wheeler said.

He gave the example of a pre-nursing student who completed all three math classes in one semester. Because of the Transitional program, she was able to apply for the nursing program a year earlier than would have been possible with the traditional model.

The writing and reading Transitional classes are set up in a similar way to take advantage of computer modules. With writing, students work through grammar skills modules with writing skills taught using the traditional classroom model.

“Studies show that the more quickly students can progress through developmental courses, the more likely they are to persist to get a degree. This is part of our effort to help students reach their education goals,” Wheeler said.

The Transitional courses were offered in a pilot program at the Poplar Bluff campus during the Fall 2012 semester, with more being offered during Spring 2013, he said. The program will expand to Three Rivers centers and other off-campus locations in Fall 2013.

Three Rivers College offers quality, affordable college and career courses on campus, off-campus and online. For more information about the wide variety of programs offered, about enrolling and about financial aid, call (573) 840-9665 or visit [trcc.edu](http://trcc.edu).

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