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Winner, American River College

Faculty members participating in the Beacon Peer-Assisted Learning program at American River College select students who have successfully completed the target class. After receiving training in group-tutoring techniques, these learning assistants work with students for two hours per week outside of the classroom. Data gathered over seven semesters demonstrates a significant improvement in achievement as Beacon students boast an 85 percent success rate compared to a 57 percent success rate for their non-Beacon counterparts enrolled in the same class, and the withdrawal rate for students in the program is seven percent compared to 29 percent for other students. Anecdotal comments from focus groups indicate that the program's effect extends beyond the classroom, as students report that participation builds self-confidence, teaches them to work more cooperatively, improves problem-solving skills, and promotes the formation of friendships and a sense of community.

Winner, Foothill College

Foothill College's Pass the Torch program was designed to help at-risk students earn a grade of C or better in specific classes to ensure advancement to the next level of academia. Students struggling in core curriculum classes are identified and paired with peer mentors for study sessions. Throughout the academic quarter paired students meet to review class assignments and to improve study habits and time-management skills. Nearly 80 two-member teams participated in the Pass the Torch program in a wide array of courses. Pass the Torch students score higher on class tests and assignments than students who do not participate in the program.

Honorable mentions:

College of San Mateo's Accelerated Training program provides students with skills needed to begin careers as accounting assistants or office assistants in just eight weeks.

Santa Barbara City College's Study Abroad program frequently serves as a model for the development of Study Abroad programs systemwide by offering at least two programs per academic year plus additional summer programs.

Cuyamaca College's College Success program was designed to enhance the success, retention and persistence of students by improving career exploration and learning skills that have resulted in increased student persistence rates.

Crafton Hills College's EMT-Paramedic program is based on a student-centered philosophy and has been the primary trainer of paramedics for San Bernardino and Riverside counties for more than 20 years.