

RCC event supports area teacher education efforts

“We see Rappahannock Community College as a regional center for education,” said RCC faculty member Dr. Karen Newtzie at the semi-annual meeting of the Teacher Education Learning Community on November 7. “Our goal is to get information out to all stakeholders—the [post-secondary] teacher education providers, RCC faculty and staff, regional school divisions, ‘Teachers for Tomorrow’ faculty, and the RCC service area’s high school principals and superintendents.” (“Teachers for Tomorrow” is Virginia’s statewide program for recruiting high school students into the teaching profession via dual enrollment opportunities.)

In addition to circulating current news about teacher education, the purposes of the Teacher Education Learning Community are to encourage the efforts of its members by sharing their success stories; to establish a network for the exchange of information and advice; and to identify and investigate additional changes that would enhance the success of teacher education in the region. Each meeting also features a special presentation highlighting a topic of interest.

On this occasion, RCC technology professor Ruth Greene discussed the creation and use of Digital Teaching Portfolios (DTPs). This career tool lets teachers build a history of their work experience, recording where and under what circumstances they have “made their mark,” and giving them an easy and effective way to share what they have learned with their peers or with future employers. Techniques for creating a DTP are taught in the RCC course “Technology Standards for Teachers” (EDU 280).



Other speakers at the meeting included Sharon Basey, Laurel Byrd, Kristen Haynes, and Lori Lenz. Basey is a Class of 2005 RCC graduate. She was a member of the Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society for two-year colleges while at RCC, as well as qualifying for the All-Virginia Academic team, and expects to graduate from Old Dominion University in December. She considers her work as a certified para-professional for Northumberland County Elementary School to be a valuable preliminary step leading to her goal of becoming a full-fledged teacher, and offers other prospective teachers tips on how to “make it happen,” recommending perseverance, a positive attitude, and a strong support group as the most effective ways of reaching that goal.

From Mathews County, Laurel Byrd spoke about the “Teachers for Tomorrow” program. Faced by widespread and critical shortages of teacher candidates for coming years, a rapidly growing number of Virginia high schools have chosen to offer this program—an opportunity to gain both high school and college credit for the same courses—to juniors and seniors who show an interest in pursuing a career in education. This “grow your own” recruitment program captures student interest with a curriculum designed to foster understanding and appreciation of the teaching profession, and, it is hoped, will attract students to the idea of teaching in critical shortage and high-needs areas of the state.

RCC student Kristen Haynes described her experience as a teacher intern in King and Queen County. She was supported by comments from Sally Parr, another student who participates in the same program in the Northumberland County school system. In addition, Lori Lenz, Essex County’s gifted education coordinator, gave her views on the best ways of holding the interest of gifted

students. Also in attendance were Dr. Elaine Fogliani, superintendent of the Westmoreland County public school system; Karin Rohmann from the Northumberland County schools; and representatives of ODU and Mary Baldwin College.

Several high school administrators who attended commented that the meeting sparked their interest in bringing the “Teachers for Tomorrow” program to their own counties, and another said that it was an inspiration to “continue to recruit and retain teachers in the Northern Neck.” One RCC student described Basey’s comments about focusing on long-term goals as “very meaningful to me,” and an aspiring teacher said, “I loved seeing how others do it!”

Photo:

RCC professor Dr. Karen Newtzie chairs a meeting of the Teacher Education Learning Community, held simultaneously in the interactive video rooms at RCC’s Warsaw and Glens Campuses and its King George off-campus site on November 7.