



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1– MAY 2010

# THE RIPPLE EFFECT DISPATCH

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF JSRCC'S QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN,  
*THE RIPPLE EFFECT: TRANSFORMING DISTANCE LEARNING, ONE  
STUDENT & ONE INSTRUCTOR AT A TIME*

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## A SMARTER WAY TO MEASURE STUDENT READINESS

SmarterMeasure, formerly known as the READI, is the tool the College has chosen to measure how prepared students are for online learning. SmarterMeasure evaluates learning styles, technical skills, on-screen reading rate and recall, typing speed and accuracy, and individual attributes such as motivation and willingness to ask for help. New students registering for fall classes, regardless of whether or not they are registering for distance learning or traditional classes, will now be required to take the SmarterMeasure assessment in addition to other required admission assessments.



SmarterMeasure will be available for students beginning May 17. Students can take the assessment from any computer—either on campus or from home via a link on the College website—and can receive directions and log in information for taking the test from Testing Centers or through SOAR information. Results will be available for academic advisers for fall semester registration.

SmarterMeasure is an assessment of students' knowledge base for online learning – it is not a pass or fail test and the results are not meant to determine admission into distance learning courses or programs. SmarterMeasure supports the “student readiness” goal of *The Ripple Effect*. The estimated roll out of all *Ripple Effect* goals is three to five years. Eventually, the College will also offer remediation modules for students determined at-risk for distance education.

*...Read about SmarterMeasure pilot results on page 2*

## WHAT'S NEXT

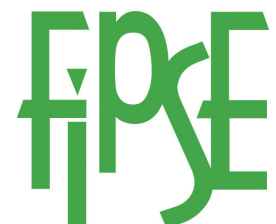
- Incoming students will be asked to complete SmarterMeasure as part of their general placement assessments.
- JSRCC's Office of Institutional Effectiveness will evaluate data from various surveys, the SmarterMeasure spring pilot, and student success rates in online learning.
- Assessments of student learning outcomes will be ready for implementation by fall.

## FIPSE AND THE RIPPLE EFFECT

Last fall, the College received a three-year grant totaling \$400,602 from the United States Department of Education's Fund for Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE). In addition to supporting *The Ripple Effect* goals of student readiness,

student orientation and faculty training for distance learning, efforts funded through the grant will specifically target displaced workers and adult learners seeking educational opportunities and retraining for career goals. The FIPSE grant also helps to fund the

research and dissemination of the efforts of *The Ripple Effect*.





## SMARTERMEASURE PILOT A SUCCESS

During this Spring semester, more than 550 students enrolled in 27 sections of distance learning courses and participated in the College's pilot of SmarterMeasure. For the students in the pilot, SmarterMeasure was delivered as a "first-week" assignment by various faculty members who volunteered to participate in the project and who repre-

sented a spectrum of different disciplines. SmarterMeasure assesses learners' levels of preparation for the online environment and provides students with feedback about their particular learning styles, learning attributes, technical competency and technical knowledge; it also assesses their skills in typing and reading recall. This summer, the

Office of Institutional Effectiveness will evaluate the data gathered from the SmarterMeasure pilot to assess the levels of preparation Reynolds students generally bring with them to online learning. This information will be used to design the College's anticipated Student Orientation to Distance Learning and faculty training tools.

### What students are saying about SmarterMeasure

"It is just a simple, clear way to assess whether or not a student is prepared for this type of learning..."

"I believe that being able to assess your own skills and abilities helps your academic growth."

"It helps you recognize your strengths and weaknesses...it is important to have a good understanding of Blackboard as well as the Internet."

## JOHN SENER HIRED AS EXTERNAL EVALUATOR

The FIPSE grant requires the hiring of an external evaluator for *The Ripple Effect* implementation and the College has named John Sener, a well-respected expert and researcher in online education and student learning assessment. John will both advise the College on its evaluation projects for *The Ripple Effect* and report on the institution's assessment efforts to FIPSE. Read John's full bio online at [Reynolds.edu/therippleeffect](http://Reynolds.edu/therippleeffect).



*Evaluator John Sener visited the College in March and met with The Ripple Effect Team to provide his feedback on assessment plans.*

## INTERESTED IN TEACHING ONLINE?

Talk with your program head or academic dean about online teaching opportunities. For distance education faculty training resources, contact Marian Macbeth, Coordinator, Center for Distance Learning at [mmacbeth@reynolds.edu](mailto:mmacbeth@reynolds.edu).

## HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT THE RIPPLE EFFECT?

This e-newsletter was created in an effort to communicate the latest news regarding the implementation of JSRCC's Quality Enhancement Plan, *The Ripple Effect*: Transforming Distance Learning, One student & One instructor at a time. Your comments and suggestions for content are welcome, as are your questions about *The Ripple Effect* or distance learning at the College. For more information, contact QEP Coordinator Ghazala Hashmi at (804) 523-5515 or [gashmi@reynolds.edu](mailto:gashmi@reynolds.edu) or [therippleeffect@reynolds.edu](mailto:therippleeffect@reynolds.edu).

Learn more at [www.Reynolds.edu/therippleeffect](http://www.Reynolds.edu/therippleeffect).

