Retirement and Graduation Council  
February 23, 2011  

MEETING MINUTES


Announcements – C. Lovitt

C. Lovitt announced that on March 1st he will give another presentation on improving student success at CCSU. The presentation will include information regarding CCSU’s record in promoting student success, strategies that other institutions have implemented, and suggestions for steps that can be taken to improve our student success rate. C. Lovitt noted that the previous presentation was not well attended due to inclement weather; he stated that he hopes the Council, as well as members of the campus community, will attend the presentation on March 1st. He then stressed the importance of looking at student success as an institutional responsibility.

C. Lovitt briefly mentioned that the government plan to institute performance-based funding is likely to become a reality. As a result, the work that the Council is doing to improve student success rates and change the university culture will soon become an even more vital component in promoting the overall success of the institution.

A2S Subcommittee Reports

C. Lovitt asked A2S Subcommittee leaders to report on the progress of their respective groups. The following updates were given:

- Commuter Student Subcommittee – K. Poppe

  The Commuter Student Subcommittee held a focus group with five commuter students on February 3rd. The focus group was an open forum meeting in which students discussed various aspects of commuter life at CCSU. K. Poppe provided the following summarization of the students’ comments and suggestions:

  Registration is difficult and confusing. There aren’t enough seats available in required classes. Professors should be able to override students into classes.

  The new block schedules only offer classes two days a week, which leads to class overlap. Course offerings conflict with work schedules.

  It is a hassle to meet with an advisor to obtain a pin number for registration, and advisors are often unavailable to meet. New faculty members may not be knowledgeable enough to advise students.

  Books are too expensive, and the rental option is not available for all courses.

  Designate a space for a commuter student dining room and keep the Devil’s Den open later on the weekends.

  Email is the best way for the university to communicate with students. Text messages are also ideal, but students agreed that they do not want to give out their phone numbers. Students were not receptive to Facebook communication with the university.

  K. Poppe also stated that students were receptive to the idea of having a designated commuter student resource webpage. Students suggested that this page include a daily list of cancelled
classes, as well as a direct link to the online course catalog and course descriptions. Subcommittee members will meet to discuss the development of a resource page for commuters.

The Council had a brief discussion regarding some of the student comments. C. Lovitt suggested that the Subcommittee sample a larger group of commuter students, in order to determine what some of the common issues are among the group. M. McLaughlin suggested promoting RSS feeds as another way to improve communication between the university and commuter students. The feeds include notifications for campus events as well as important dates on the academic calendar, and students must subscribe to the feeds in order to receive the email alerts.

- **Transfer Student Subcommittee – M. Horan**
  The Transfer Student Subcommittee met last week, and members briefly discussed various possible roles of the school-based centers in the transfer student experience. Members suggested that the school-based centers become an initial point of contact for incoming transfer students, as well as a place for students to ask questions and gain direction. Additionally, the school-based centers could also run on-going orientations for incoming transfer students. A discussion occurred and several informal comments were made. C. Lovitt noted that we need to be careful not to interfere with the work that the Academic Advising Committee is currently doing to clarify the roles of the school-based centers.

  The Subcommittee also continued their discussion regarding the development of a bi-annual newsletter for transfer students. This newsletter will be a resource for new transfer students, as well as a marketing tool for the community colleges. M. Horan stated that the Subcommittee is currently working on developing a template for the newsletter that includes such recurring features as: a calendar of events, important contact and orientation information, and an article featuring a transfer student success story. She added that she will ask the community colleges to provide links to the newsletter on their respective websites.

- **Residential Student Subcommittee – M. McLaughlin**
  M. McLaughlin reported that the Subcommittee is currently working on assessing the efficacy of the three current Living-Learning Communities (LLC’s), in order to determine the possibility for program expansion. M. McLaughlin stated that we need to have a better sense of the success of this program in order to expand upon and improve the model. J. Alicandro stated that 53 students participated in the LLC’s this year, and that the program seemed to be well-received by the students, faculty and staff involved. She noted that a website is being developed for the LLC’s; it will include links to each departmental webpage, as well as information regarding advising services. The Subcommittee is also working to develop partnerships with EOP and ConnCAS, and to promote the LLC’s within these groups.

  The Subcommittee also discussed implementing an advising program within the residence halls. Subcommittee members expressed concern that this could interfere with the work of academic advisors. K. Poppe stated that there is concern that introducing residence hall advisors could interfere with the current advising model. For example, students who have declared majors should receive advising within the academic departments, rather than from a residence hall advisor.

  A brief discussion then occurred regarding the career development services provided to students. K. Poppe stated that the four schools have already begun to engage in more collaborative efforts to assist students in connecting with employers. He added that the implementation of the school-based centers will help to foster a sense of university-wide responsibility in helping students make connections with the employment community. K.
Poppe will meet with representatives from the four schools to discuss the roles that the school-based centers will play in career exploration.

- **Minority Student Subcommittee – J. Paige**
  The Minority Student Subcommittee met on February 11th to continue their discussion regarding providing a mentoring system for incoming minority students. The Subcommittee considered developing partnerships with cultural based clubs and school-based centers, as well as creating a summer training program for mentors. Members also suggested adding a question to the summer student survey in order to identify students who are interested in receiving mentoring. J. Paige then noted that as the program develops, the Subcommittee will need to be sure that it neither interferes with other already established mentoring programs, nor targets/labels certain student groups.

**Other Items**

A discussion occurred regarding the ways in which students currently utilize the various technological services offered on campus (i.e.: campus email accounts, Blackboard Vista, CCSU website). The Council first discussed the efficacy of email communication on campus. Several members agreed that CCSU email should serve as the official form of communication between the university and its students. This will make it easier to communicate information regarding cancelled classes, homework assignments, important registration dates, and on-campus events. Students should be required to activate their CCSU email accounts and use them as the primary source of contact. A. Frazier suggested adding a link to the homepage for CCSU email account activation.

O. Petkova stated that Blackboard Vista is an efficient way to communicate with students. She suggested that the university do more to promote the faculty use of Blackboard Vista and other instructional technologies. O. Petkova also stated that Blackboard Vista pages expire, and she suggested saving these pages so that students and faculty can access previously completed projects and assignments.

D. Sanders stated that many students seem to be unaware of how to activate their email accounts or navigate Blackboard Vista. She then asked if incoming students receive any formal training to prepare them to navigate these networks. O. Petkova stated that FYE goes over email account and Blackboard Vista access with incoming freshman. M. Garcia-Bowen stated that access information is given to students at the transfer student advising sessions. She added that this information can also be found on the Transfer and Academic Articulations webpage.

The Council also had a brief discussion regarding ways in which to make information on the CCSU website more accessible to students. Several members agreed that the website should be organized in a way that is more intuitive for student use. C. Barrington suggested adding a dropdown box on the homepage that includes a separate link for commuter, residential and transfer students. She added that the information might be redundant; however, providing multiple ways to obtain the same information will make it much easier for students to utilize the website. M. McLaughlin asked Council members to email him with any suggestions regarding website navigation.

N. Hoffman stated that NSSE participation is currently very low, and she asked Council members to encourage students to participate in the survey. The survey is open until the end of spring break, and only the students who were drawn in the sample can participate. Students who participate have a chance to win an iPad. N. Hoffman stated that she will post advertisements around campus to promote the survey. M. Leake suggested putting posters in
the Math lab. C. Barrington suggested placing posters in computer labs and leaving the survey open until after registration.

**A2S Update – N. Hoffman**

N. Hoffman reported that we are currently working to finalize the formal A2S goals for next year, and we are looking to increase the percentage of low income/underrepresented minority students who complete their freshman year with a full course load and an adequate GPA. She stated that we are looking at the following drivers that constitute potential barriers to student success:

1) Registering for less than a full credit load of relevant courses  
2) Earning grades of D, F, or W in gateway or general education courses  
3) Credits “spent” in remedial or developmental coursework

N. Hoffman stated that one important issue that impedes student success is the inability to get timely feedback from professors. The A2S Steering Committee will work to encourage faculty to provide timely feedback before mid-term. The Committee is also looking at ways to emphasize the critical role of class attendance and encourage faculty to take attendance.

**Action Items:**

E. Chasse asked the Council to provide feedback and suggestions regarding the Library’s webpage and online tutorials.  
C. Lovitt asked Council members to email M. McLaughlin with issues and/or suggestions regarding website navigation.

**Work in Progress:**

- Develop a designated commuter student resource webpage; include separate links on homepage for commuter, residential and transfer students  
- Promote RSS feeds as another way to improve communication between the university and commuter students  
- Sample a larger group of commuter students  
- Explore feasibility of saving Vista course pages for longer period  
- Explore the role of school-based centers in career exploration  
- Develop a mentoring system for incoming minority students; institute a summer training program for mentors  
- Develop a bi-annual newsletter for transfer students  
- Assess the efficacy of living-learning communities  
- Add a link to the homepage for CCSU email account activation  
- Encourage student participation in NSSE survey  
- Encourage faculty to provide timely feedback before mid-term  
- Encourage faculty to take attendance

The next Retention and Graduation Council meeting will be held on **Wednesday, April 6, 2011**, at **11:00 a.m. in Bellin A/B, Student Center.**