Retention and Graduation Council  
April 6, 2011  

MEETING MINUTES  


Approve February 23, 2011 Minutes  
The February 23, 2011 minutes were approved.  

Introduce Yvonne Kirby – C. Lovitt  
C. Lovitt introduced Yvonne Kirby, the newly appointed Director of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, and he emphasized the importance of her new role in the work of the Council. Y. Kirby introduced herself and stated that she came from the University of Arkansas, where retention and graduation rates were major strategic initiatives. The University of Arkansas placed emphasis on fostering a campus-wide, team approach to increasing retention and graduation rates, and in doing so, increased their rates from 43% to 59% in about eight years. Y. Kirby stated that she is eager to begin working to provide data for the Council’s various initiatives. C. Lovitt added that Y. Kirby will be working to generate data regarding Pell Grant and Stafford Loan recipients.  

Subcommittee Updates  
C. Lovitt stated that some of the subcommittees have not had the opportunity to meet since the last Retention and Graduation Council meeting, and he asked those who had updates to share them with the Council. The following updates were given:  

Transfer Student Subcommittee – M. Horan  
M. Horan reported that the Transfer Student Subcommittee met to discuss the implementation of the transfer student newsletter. Tasks were assigned to members, and decisions were made regarding the content and organization of the newsletter. M. Horan added that M. McLaughlin has been working with the Subcommittee to organize the newsletter and publish an online version. The Subcommittee will regroup after today’s meeting to discuss next steps.  

Minority Student Subcommittee – J. Paige  
J. Paige reported that the Minority Student Subcommittee has not met since February 11; however, progress has been made regarding the institution of a minority student mentoring program. The Subcommittee previously expressed concern that a new mentoring program may interfere with other already established programs on campus. In order to prevent overlap, the Subcommittee sent a survey to the campus community that asked for information regarding current mentoring programs. J. Paige stated that the Subcommittee hopes to develop inventory of current mentoring programs, and he added that this will help the group to determine the best approach for meeting the needs of our minority students. J. Paige noted that, so far, the survey has resulted in a lot of helpful feedback.  

J. Paige also reported that he recently attended a presentation regarding the GEAR UP discretionary grant program. The GEAR UP program was created to increase the percentage of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in the postsecondary environment. It is a partnership program, in which a college works with a school district in order to provide college preparation and increase college readiness through mentoring and counseling. The program promotes rigorous coursework, and grantees are expected to follow a cohort of students from seventh grade through high school. J. Paige stated that the New
Britain Public School district has expressed interest in working with CCSU on this initiative. He added that many of the program’s goals are comparable to those of the Access2Success initiative, and he is currently working with R. Waterman to pursue this grant opportunity.

**FIPSE Grant Opportunity – R. Waterman**

*Note that following his participation in a conference call concerning this grant, Rod Waterman discovered that there were previously unannounced criteria for the FIPSE and that we had essentially no chance of developing a successful proposal by the end of May. The decision was made not to pursue this opportunity at this time.*

C. Lovitt asked R. Waterman to provide the Council with brief overview of a new FIPSE grant opportunity. R. Waterman provided the following information:

The FIPSE Comprehensive Program is designed to support innovative grants to improve student success and increase enrollment, persistence and completion at the postsecondary level. This is a highly competitive grant program that includes a possible award of up to $750,000 for up to 36 months. Grant proposals must include one or more of the following priorities:

- Increasing postsecondary success in areas of high need
- Enabling more data-based decision making
- Improving productivity

A successful grant proposal will also include projects that: 1) are innovative in goal, scope, method, target population, cost or efficiency; 2) have clear and specific goals that relate to student learning, faculty development or institutional change; and 3) carry implications for implementation on a national level. FIPSE is also looking for programs that will promote career success and improve civic engagement.

R. Waterman stated that developing a proposal for this grant opportunity will be challenging. However, he believes that the grant description suits us very well, and he strongly suggested that the Council consider applying. The Council had a brief discussion, and members agreed to pursue this opportunity. R. Waterman stated that the application deadline is May 23, 2011, and he suggested that the Council pull a team together to begin working on the proposal. He stated that he will help lead the team, and he asked for another point person to assist him. The following members volunteered to serve on the team:

- N. Hoffman
- A. Reasco
- D. Sanders
- T. Corbitt
- J. Alicandro
- L. Glaser

Council members then discussed possible approaches to pursuing the FIPSE grant opportunity. Several members asked if it would be possible to target programs toward specific groups of students (i.e.: targeting majors with a high concentration of minority students). R. Waterman stated that the proposal can exclusively target high-need student groups; however, it cannot target these groups based on their minority status. In other words, the programs can be targeted toward certain majors with a large percentage of high-need students, but it cannot exclusively target those students based on race or ethnicity. C. Lovitt then stated that the grant description defines “high-need students” by the following terms:
Children and students at risk of educational failure, such as children and students who are living in poverty, who are English learners, who are far below grade level or who are not on track to becoming college- or career-ready by graduation, who have left school or college before receiving, respectively, a regular high school diploma or a college degree or certificate, who are at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, who are in foster care, who are pregnant or parenting teenagers, who have been incarcerated, who are new immigrants, who are migrant, or who have disabilities.

Council members then discussed several program options and made the following comments and suggestions:

N. Hoffman suggested looking into creating a program for foster care students. She stated that this is a national dilemma, and this grant could be an opportunity to positively impact a group of horribly underserved children. S. Hazan asked if there is any data available regarding how many CCSU students come from foster homes. A. Reasco replied that she believes Financial Aid has this information on file.

J. Alicandro stated that many high-need students have family issues, and she suggested including some programs that specifically target the families of these students.

Several Council members suggested looking into developing programs that target majors with a large concentration of high-need students. C. Lovitt suggested targeting majors that have strong professional programs and that are largely career-oriented.

D. Sanders suggested looking into developing a program for the Department of Social Work. She stated that the Department of Social Work has a large population of students who have been in foster care or who have gone through the DCF system. As a result, these students become social workers because they can identify with children who have similar backgrounds. D. Sanders added that she is on the DCF Advisory Board, and that they are currently discussing developing a partnership with CCSU.

R. Waterman reminded the Council that FIPSE is looking for innovative programs that have the potential for creating a national impact, and he suggested thinking of programs that can be implemented on a large scale and applied on a national level. L. Zidani-Eroglu asked if FIPSE provides examples of successful proposals from previous years. R. Waterman stated that sample proposals can be found on the FIPSE website.

**Internal Grant Opportunities – C. Lovitt**

C. Lovitt announced that he will be sending out a call for proposals to develop department-based retention and graduation programs. Departments will be paid up to $4,000 to develop a plan for improving retention and graduation among full-time, undergraduate majors. Proposals will need to: 1) describe a specific barrier to retention and timely graduation; 2) provide data to document the problem; 3) provide a solution to the problem; and 4) explain how data will be gathered to document the impact of the initiative. Grant recipients will also be asked to deliver a presentation and submit a progress report at the end of the semester.

C. Lovitt also announced that he will be attending a Provost’s conference in June regarding course redesign, and he stated that he would like to invite a few faculty members to join him. He added that there are certain courses with multiple sections that have high failure/drop rates, and he would like to begin to rethink the way that these courses are being taught.

**Mentoring/Coaching**

C. Lovitt recently read a report that showed that mentoring/academic coaching has improved retention and graduation by 15-20%. He stated that it is clear that mentoring and coaching have a positive impact on our students; however, these terms have never been clearly defined. C. Lovitt then asked Council members to share their experiences with mentoring/coaching students on campus. Several Council members shared their mentoring experiences, and the following topics were discussed:
1. **Formal vs. Informal Mentoring:**
   Council members agreed that on-campus mentoring is conducted both on a formal and an informal level:

   **Formal Mentoring:**
   A discussion occurred and Council members agreed that formal mentoring usually includes involvement with an established mentoring program, in which students are assigned to mentors. For example, students can receive formal mentoring services from the Learning Center's Academic Coaching program. M. Leake explained that the Academic Coaching program provides students with an assigned academic coach who assists them in improving time management and note taking skills, and provides them with reading, memory and test preparation strategies. There is currently a waiting list to receive academic coaching, and preference is given to students in poor academic standing.

   L. Zidani-Eroglu stated that academic advising provides another important opportunity for formal mentoring. In addition, a few Council members shared their experiences with the ConnCAS Mentoring Program, in which students were assigned to them as mentees.

   **Informal Mentoring:**
   Several Council members also agreed that they have mentored many students on an informal level. This usually involves taking the initiative to provide guidance to a student outside of the formal mentoring program structure. Members provided the following examples of informal mentoring:
   - Forming a personal relationship and conveying an invested interest in the student’s future.
   - Having one-on-one discussions about career goals, scholarship opportunities, or career conferences.
   - Having an “open door policy,” in which a mentee can visit anytime to have a discussion or get advice.
   - Identifying a student in need and asking him/her to schedule a time to sit down and talk.
   - Taking the time to make suggestions, follow up and encourage progress.

2. **Mentoring Student Workers:**
   Several Council members agreed that anyone who employs a student worker is given an important opportunity to mentor that student. M. Horan stated that this can include: introducing the student to people on campus and teaching networking skills, making the student aware of on-campus programs or events, or asking the student how his/her day is going. M. McLaughlin agreed and added that mentoring a student worker is done on an informal basis. It begins with creating a mutual trust with the student and maintaining an ongoing conversation about anything from academic issues to personal issues.

3. **Peer Mentoring:**
   N. Hoffman stated that it cannot be ignored that peers play a very important role in the mentoring process. Students are a repository of expertise, and older, more successful students can provide support and advice to younger, less experienced students. N. Hoffman then stated that it is important to encourage students to make these kinds of connections with one another.
She also suggested working to identify students who could possibly become successful peer mentors.

C. Lovitt concluded the meeting and stated that he hopes to increase the visibility of mentoring and encourage more individuals to take on this kind of role. C. Lovitt added that he would like to schedule an open forum in the fall that will be devoted to the discussion mentoring practices.

**Work in Progress:**
Y. Kirby will be working to generate data regarding Pell Grant and Stafford Loan recipients.

The Transfer Student Subcommittee will regroup after today’s meeting to discuss next steps for the transfer student newsletter.

The Minority Student Subcommittee will continue to collect information and develop an inventory of current mentoring programs on campus. *NOTE: Anyone interested in seeing the survey results can contact J. Paige via email.*

J. Paige is currently working with R. Waterman to pursue the GEAR UP grant opportunity. R. Waterman stated that the FIPSE application deadline is May 23, 2011, and he suggested that the Council pull a team together to begin working on the proposal. He stated that he will help lead the team, and he asked for another point person to assist him. *NOTE: Anyone interested in working on the FIPSE grant team should contact R. Waterman via email.*

C. Lovitt will send out a call for proposals to develop department-based retention and graduation programs.

C. Lovitt will be inviting faculty members to attend a Provost’s conference regarding course redesign.

N. Hoffman suggested working to identify students who could possibly become successful peer mentors.

C. Lovitt added that he hopes to increase the visibility of mentoring and schedule an open forum in the fall that will be devoted to the discussion mentoring practices.

The next Retention and Graduation Council meeting will be held on **Tuesday, May 3, 2011, at 11:00 a.m. in Bellin A/B, Student Center.**