Retention and Graduation Council  
May 2, 2007

MEETING MINUTES


Reports from Subcommittees
Dr. Lovitt thanked everyone for attending the meeting and reviewed the meeting agenda. He then asked a member from each of the subcommittees to report back to the committee regarding their work thus far.

Students who Successfully Graduate within Six Years - Ms. Leake reported for this subcommittee and noted that Ms. Petrosino has been unanimously elected as chair of this group. A request has been made to Ms. Bunce for various types of information. This group generated a list of factors that they would like to examine for those students who have successfully graduated, broken down by four years, five years, and six years. Ms. Leake noted that the bulk of our students actually graduate in five years, not six years. Some of the factors this group wants to look at are:

- 1999, 2000, and 2001 cohorts
- entering GPA, SAT score, and satisfaction of language requirement
- initial course placement in English and Math
- number of repeat courses
- were they on the Dean’s list, probation, warning or dismissed at any time
- graduating GPA
- number of times they submitted a change of major
- did they attend summer/winter session classes
- male or female
- did they take any FYE courses
- did the student take any time off
- did they transfer in any credits
- distance between CCSU and their home
- did they live on campus; if yes, how long
- did the student have some sort of priority registration throughout their time at CCSU
- are they a first generation student
- student leader status

There are a lot of other questions that this committee would like to ask, but realize that they can not get the answers out of data. Therefore, they would like to create some sort of paper, electronic, or telephone survey for students.

Ms. Schuberth stated that the part-time subcommittee is also looking at a number of these same issues, and asked Ms. Leake to request that Ms. Bunce add another piece in regards to part-time student data. Ms. Petrosino stated that when they put in the request for information to Paula, that Ms. Bunce wrote back to say that she need IT assistance to come up with these figures. If we can “piggy back” requests for information, that will be very helpful to Paula. Dr. Craine asked a question regarding the use of the data once it is received. Ms. Leake replied by stating that the committee will study the data and look for trends. If any trends are found they will be looked at closely to see if it is truly a phenomenon or something that is a
Ms. Hicks asked a question regarding looking at the economic status of our students. Ms. Leake and Ms. Petrosino stated that this is an item this group will look at. Ms. Deloy stated that it would be important to ask if the students are employed on campus. Dr. Petkova suggested that they also ask if students were employed off campus.

**Commuter Students** – Mr. Hernandez reported for this subcommittee. This group has drafted a set of questions that they would like to answer and have started to answer some of those questions. One of the first questions they had was to define “commuter students” – anyone who is not residential would be considered a commuter. Mr. Hernandez suggested that a definition of commuter be drafted and be made available to students, so they know what their status is. One of the other items this group looked at was the number of commuter students. In an effort to see exactly what the commuter population looks like, this group looked at the group of students that started in fall 2006 semester, which was a total of 9,644 undergraduate students, of which 7,490 were commuters (2,112 were part-time, 5,370 were full-time). Some other items that this group would like to look at are:

- what services are provided to commuter students
- how many hours do commuters spend on campus
- how often do commuter students see their advisors
- number of credits that commuter students carry
- role of catalog for commuter students

Ms. Garcia-Bowen asked if the 7,490 students were identified by first time or transfer. Mr. Hernandez stated that this was not done, but that is was a good suggestion and they would do this. Ms. Hicks stated that she would be interested in seeing both the age and the family complexity (are they married, do they have dependents) of the commuter students.

In regards to retention – Mr. Hernandez reported that the group looked at the retention of the class of 2001 - 55% off-campus and 58% on-campus were retained by their junior year and 31.3% off-campus and 35.6% on-campus graduated in six years.

Ms. Chasse asked if there should be a specific place for commuter students to gather. Mr. Hernandez stated that we often make the assumption that commuter students know of the places on campus that are available to them. Dr. Lovitt suggested that we make a list of those services and also communicate that information to the students. In addition, Dr. Lovitt suggested that there be a place on our web site that commuter students can go for information. Dr. Toston stated that the two previous institutions where she worked had surveyed the commuter students to find out if they were using the student center, if so why/why not. The survey results from both universities concluded that the commuter students wanted a place to be together, but that they wanted it in their major department, near the faculty. They requested a lounge with lockers, etc. Irena Pevac suggested that at some point we join forces with the Assessment Committee – she stated that at the Assessment Conference that was held at WCSU, it was very clear that campuses that have a very good assessment process and provide excellent academic work for the students, also have very good retention rates.

**Transfer Students** – Ms. Garcia-Bowen reported for this subcommittee. Ms. Bunce provided this committee with the 2006 Retention and Graduation Analysis. After reviewing these data, several follow up questions were raised – one being, what happened to the students that start FT and then changed status to PT or withdraw from the University? This committee is also interested in looking at how many math courses the students came in with and when they last took a math class. Due to all the data requests that Ms. Bunce has received, there will be a wait for the information that this group has requested. The group decided to do a survey of a class that is currently taking the ID102. The students in this class are...
predominately transfer students who fell into a warning or probation status. The survey will be given to try to find out what occurred to cause their warning/probation status, for example:

- what services were not available
- what service didn’t they take advantage of
- how did they find the process worked for them, from the point of application through admission
- did they attend orientation
- did they meet with an advisor

Dr. Lovitt stated that it may be useful to consider what are some of the obstacles that transfer students experience. He has been dealing with a number of miscommunications about how courses are transferring in. Ms. Hicks would like to know about students transferring to selected programs, particularly are they frustrated when they get to CCSU to learn that they have not met selective admission criteria. Dr. Hensley shared some data regarding transfer students – in 1999 57% of FT transfer students from Connecticut Community Colleges graduated within six years (from the time they transferred in). Dr. Lovitt stated that when we are looking at graduation rates for transfer students, we need to be sure that we are actually comparing “apples to apples”. If a student transfers in with 60 credits, we cannot compare them with a student who is just starting here. We need to compare those students with students who also have 60 credits here. Ms. Petrosino suggested that we work with the Community Colleges to see when the students started to identify what cohort they came in with. If we did this, we could compare those students with the appropriate group of students who started at CCSU. Dr. Toston stated that a critical retention question, for all the subcommittees is, is CCSU a first choice institution for students. In addition, Dr. Toston stated that we need to know what our peer institutions’ numbers are. Ms. Chasse raised a question regarding advisors for transfer students, as she has had many student tell her that their advisors are part-time and are not available on the days that the students are on campus. It was confirmed that all advisors are full-time faculty and have designated advising hours. Dr. Craine stated that in the Math Department some faculty have as many as 60 students that they advise and others that have only 10-12 students. If these students can not find their advisor, they often go to see Dr. Craine, as Department Chair. He suggested that we consider the possibility of “team advisors” rather than an individual advisor for all students, so that someone is always available. Ms. Petrosino shared some concerns regarding advising, specifically some situations that are occurring on campus. Ms. Hicks suggested that we track students who come here with the intention of transferring out. Dr. Toston stated that at one of her previous institutions, any time a student went in to the Registrar’s Office to request a transcript they would send an e-mail to school that the student majored in to notify them. This gave them an opportunity to interact with the students before they left the University.

Residence Life Students – Ms. Alicandro reported for this subcommittee. Ms. Alicandro distributed and reviewed the results of the Electronic Benchmarking Indicator (EBI), which this subcommittee used to look for things that have to do with retention and graduation. The EBI is a national survey, primarily used in student centers and residence life programs, to survey students for services, facilities, internal/external resources, and satisfaction. (Ms. Alicandro noted that Otis Maned has an EBI in the Student Center with a lot of commuter data that may be helpful to the commuter student subcommittee) 978 students, approximately 50% of the residence life population, took the survey, which was offered electronically to all residence life students – 40% were male and 60% were female. Residence Life housed between 700-800 freshmen, 42% of the students who took the survey were freshmen - 51% of the 978 students who took the survey lived in the residence halls for 2-3 semesters. Ms. Alicandro stated that Residence Life primarily wants to house freshmen. What they have found through their focus groups is that juniors and seniors want to move off campus for many different reasons, primarily because it is more cost effective for them to get an apartment. As this happens, we will need to look at our costs getting more than that of apartments and look at the services we offer and make appropriate modifications. Safety and security were rated very good, however food service was not rated very well. This committed looked at the data and asked how they can
use it to look at retention, possibly linking GPA's of the students that took the survey to see if they graduate in 4-5 years. Overall student level of satisfaction was very high. Ms. Alicandro expressed the importance of looking at incoming students, as we only have these students for a few years. One item that needs to be improved is the dates for housing deposits. Ms. Alicandro has looked into this and would like to get a committee together to review the current process and make some improvements. Ms. Lake-Piano stated that Office of Admissions sent a survey last year to all confirmed students asking them a series of questions. Kristen will share the results of that survey with the committee, as several of the subcommittees may be able to use the survey results. Dr. Lovitt suggested that all surveys should be coordinated through Academic Affairs and/or Student Affairs. Dr. Toston encouraged the committee to look at professional surveys as opposed to “home grown surveys” – as we must consider the validity and reliability of the survey results.

**Part-time Students** – Ms. Schuberth reported for this subcommittee. Ms. Schuberth provided this subcommittee with a number reports and statistical analyses that already exist on our Planning and Institutional Research website. Ms. Schuberth noted that in the last five years CCSU has increased the number of students who have graduated with bachelors degrees, and she believes a lot of these students may be part-time students. However, we do not have any information available to confirm this. Ms. Schuberth referenced a survey that was done in 1999 by the Office of Planning and Institutional Research, which had a 24% response rate – 27% of the respondents were part-time students (of which 41% were under 24 years of age and 49% were between 25-60 years of age). Ms. Schuberth has asked Ms. Bunce if they can look further into this survey for additional part-time student information. Currently there is very limited information to look at for part-time students. Some of the things that this group would like to look at are:

- what are the barriers for a part-time student to complete their degree
- cost of attending CCSU as a part-time student
- are part-time students part of our mission as a public university
- what degree programs can be completed on a part-time basis
- how many students change their status from part-time to full-time or full-time to part-time
- what role do employer incentives play
- are we maximizing our presence in the employer community
- what data do we have on graduation rates of part-time students

Dr. Toston stated that the SSI survey has a wealth of information about all students and encouraged all the subcommittees to review the result, as the information will be very useful. Ms. Schuberth stated that we have not made enough use of online advising, which allows students to contact their advisors at any time. Dr. Toston stated that we need to make a distinction between online scheduling and online advising, defining what each one means. Mr. Hazen emphasized the importance of the one-on-one connection between faculty and students. This is a critical part of student retention. Dr. Craine suggested that faculty first meet with their students, before communicating on-line. Dr. Petkova stated that she only advises online if she sees those students on a regular basis.

Dr. Lovitt thanked the subcommittees for their work thus far and encouraged them to continue on the paths that they are on.

**Identify Concerns and Opportunities**

Dr. Lovitt stated that there is one area that we need to work on more than any other, which is advising. Dr. Toston and Dr. Lovitt will be meeting to discuss the formation of an advising taskforce. That group will be constituted within the next few weeks and will then begin working immediately.
Set Priorities and Plan Actions
Dr. Lovitt asked each committee member to identify three items that need to be fixed and three suggestions on what we can do to improve services to students. This information can be e-mailed directly to Dr. Lovitt at lovittcar@ccsu.edu.

Dr. Toston suggested that someone on the committee collect all the survey questions that the subcommittees want to ask and compile a list. Once we have that information, then we can find a survey that would cover those items in a way in which it has already been tested for validity and reliability. Dr. Toston will send a list of the items that are on the Noel-Levitz SSI and also send sorted SSI data to each of the subcommittees.

Dr. Lovitt asked that each subcommittee plan to have a different individual present at the next meeting and to only plan to present for ten minutes.

The next Retention and Graduation Council meeting will be held on Monday, June 18th at 1:00 p.m. in the Bellin Gallery
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