Retention and Graduation Council
May 6, 2008

MEETING MINUTES

Approve 4/14/08 Minutes
The April 14, 2008 minutes were tentatively approved. C. Lovitt asked everyone to please review the minutes and send any corrections/additions to him via e-mail.

Follow-up Questions
C. Lovitt welcomed T. Corbitt to the meeting. T. Corbitt was unable to attend the April 14th meeting and wanted to take questions and provide follow-up regarding the CCSU Counseling Center. M. Garcia-Bowen asked about newly hired members of his staff. T. Corbitt stated that, as of April 25th, one new full-time counselor has been hired, Mr. William Fothergill. In addition, Ms. Meagen Wentz was hired as a full-time Wellness Program Administrator under a grant, and she works very closely with V. Ginter. M. Wentz will be heading up many of the Natural Helper initiatives. T. Corbitt announced that CCSU is currently in the process of negotiating a psychiatric service for students. This is being negotiated with a local hospital, and is awaiting approval from the Attorney General’s Office. This service will compliment the already existing services at CCSU. M. Durant shared an issue, which she experienced with a student who was battling depression, and asked T. Corbitt if there are any clues on how to spot a depressed student. T. Corbitt recommended the QPR training, which is a program for faculty/staff. QPR is a 90 minute program, which is specifically to assist in identifying a distressed student. T. Corbitt stated that he has recently been certified to provide this training, and offered to do so for anyone who is interested. T. Corbitt noted that any behavior that is different from a person’s normal behavior is an indication that something may be wrong. S. Hazan asked if Mental Health EDU will be offered. T. Corbitt stated that Mental Health EDU will be offered. T. Corbitt is waiting for the updated link to the program to be sent to him. Once he receives it, the link will be sent out to faculty/staff/administrators via e-mail. Mental Health EDU is a 35 minute online mental health training program, which specifically teaches the warning signs of distressed students. A. Reasco asked about outreach for college males, specifically increasing the amount of support groups on campus. T. Corbitt stated that support groups were not being utilized until a few years ago. T. Corbitt noted the following support groups, which are currently active on campus:

- You Are Not Alone
- Eating Disorder Group
- Adult Children of Substance Abusers
- GLTB Group

T. Corbitt stated that it is virtually impossible to stay connected to all students, all of the time. T. Corbitt stated that he and his staff have discussed how to become more available to students on campus, and that male students are one area that they would like to work on.
Review Minority Student Graduation Report
C. Lovitt discussed an article that was recently published in *The Chronicle for Higher Education* called, “Improving Black Graduation Rates is Mainly a Matter of Will, Report Says.” He noted several items within the article, including a report that was referenced, called, “Graduation Rate Watch: Making Minority Student Success a Priority.” C. Lovitt asked for volunteers to serve on a committee, which will review the report and then provide the Retention and Graduation Council members with a summary of their findings. The following individuals volunteered:

Leah Glaser
Awilda Reasco
Elaine Wilson
Zakri Bello
Jim Mulrooney
Joe Paige
Mark McLaughlin

C. Lovitt asked J. Paige to chair this group. C. McDavid will forward an electronic copy of the report to the volunteers.

Review NEASC Appraisal Findings
C. Lovitt reviewed the following findings from the NEASC appraisal, which apply to retention and graduation.

- CCSU graduation rates have dropped to lowest quartile among benchmark institutions
- Call to increase diversity of student body
- Concern that minority students graduate at lower rates
- Concern that many first-time students struggle academically (approximately 30% do not earn 2.0 in first semester; 43% required remediation in 2007)
- Positive student satisfaction with
  - Library resources and services
  - Computer labs
  - Tutoring services
  - Online access to services
  - Availability of counseling services
  - CCSU commitment to diversity
  - Welcoming campus
  - Feeling free to express themselves
  - Safety and security of campus
- Low student satisfaction with
○ Inconsistent advising
○ Registering for courses with few conflicts
○ Insufficient course offerings for timely graduation
○ Courses not scheduled to fit students’ schedules
○ Convenient registration processes and procedures
○ Not getting help to set goals
○ “Run-around” while seeking information

- Students not well informed about available services
- Few students actively involved on campus
- Student services staff need professional development to better serve today’s students and families
- Concern about inadequate facilities for student services (e.g., counseling, advising, learning center)

C. Lovitt stated that he would like to remind M. Leake to ask all FYE instructors to consider requiring all students to spend one hour a week in some activity on campus, and to make them accountable for it. C. Lovitt stated that this would dramatically impact student involvement.

**Future Plans for R&G Council**

C. Lovitt noted the NEASC appraisal findings and the minority report on student success, and suggested that the Council spend the remainder of the meeting having a discussion on where this Council should be going next.

E. Chase asked about childcare, as she did not hear it mentioned in the NEASC appraisal findings. C. Lovitt noted that he only highlighted one area of the report, and that childcare is discussed in another section of the NEASC appraisal findings report. L. Glaser asked about support groups for students who are caregivers. T. Corbitt welcomed the idea for additional support groups. L. Glaser noted that the issue is primarily with older children and babies. P. Hensley noted that several large grants have been recently received by the Early Learning Center. L. Hicks, who served as president of the Early Learning Center Board for several years, stated that they had considered infant care several times. However, the requirements for babies are extraordinary. S. Hazan asked what percent of students on campus have children. L. Glaser stated that CCW recently did a survey, and that she would be happy to share it with anyone who would like to see it. P. Hensley stated that in the School of Education and Professional Studies, alumni students mentor their current students. She has found this to be very helpful to students, especially for mothers who are returning to school.
L. Zidani-Eroglu asked what the percentage of minority students is at CCSU, compared to the number of overall students. B. Hosch stated that minority students currently make up 16% of the students at CCSU.

S. Hazan noted that 30% of CCSU’s first year students earn a 2.0 or less in their first semester. He stated that we should really focus on this issue and put our efforts towards things that would assist these students. S. Hazan suggested looking at other colleges/universities, to see what they are doing for their first year students. M. Leake stated that they have been looking at other institutions, and also what works at CCSU.

O. Petkova emphasized the importance of all the work that is done by various campus committees. She would like to see a mechanism put in place to keep faculty informed. However, it should be in a format that faculty will be encouraged to read. M. Leake stated that one of the goals of the FYE Steering Committee is to create better communication to the faculty through Faculty Senate.

M. McLaughlin asked if there is any research on why so many students are earning a 2.0 or less during their first semester. B. Hosch stated that this is significantly related to preparation, especially in terms of high school ranking, which sometime coincides with race/ethnicity. B. Hosch stated that a main reason is because students do not study enough outside of class. M. McLaughlin asked if there is something that can be done for students, to encourage outside studying. S. Petrosino noted the proposed common reading program, which will reach out to everyone on campus. This program is scheduled to begin in fall 2009.

L. Zidani-Eroglu asked if FYE students are getting information about what types of resources are available to them. She suggested teaming freshmen up with seniors, in an effort to show them where they will be in 4 years. C. Lovitt noted the finding, which states that students are not getting the information they need. L. Zidani-Erogulu suggested bringing the information into the classroom.

L. Hicks stated that students are required to complete a Probation Hearing Form as part of their probation process. These forms will tell us, word for word, why students did poorly. L. Hicks suggested that this information be looked at to see if there are any patterns. C. Lovitt asked for volunteers to serve on a group, which would review the reports for any patterns, and report back to the committee with their findings. The following individuals volunteered:

Liz Hicks  
Monique Durant  
Myrna Garcia -Bowen  
Mike Davis  
Henry Greene  
Braden Hosch  
Mark McLaughlin
C. Lovitt asked L. Hicks to organize this group.

A. Frazier noted that a large number of students who come to CCSU are first generation college students, who may not understand college culture or what is required to be successful. The Connecticut State University System does not address this issue collectively. A. Frazier stated that information needs to be given to students much more clearly and directly. Students need to know that they will need to take 15 credits per semester, if they want to graduate within four years. C. Lovitt stated that a more systematic mechanism needs to be put in place, which relays to students the kind of behaviors that will be required of them to get through this institution successfully.

M. Garcia-Bowen stated that FYE courses cannot be made into cookie cutter type courses. She would like to see that transfer students be kept in mind when FYE courses are being developed. Transfer students require different tools to navigate the system.

**Action Items**
- C. McDavid will send an electronic copy of the minority student success report to the group, which J. Paige will organize to review the report and summarize the findings.
- C. Lovitt will remind M. Leake about getting FYE students to spend one hour a week in some activity on campus.
- L. Hicks will convene the meeting of the group that will review the probation forms. The group will review the probation forms and report their findings back to the committee.

The next Retention and Graduation Council meeting will be held on **July 15, 2008, at 10:30 a.m. in Vance 105.**