Dr. Toston called the meeting to order and welcomed all those who were away for the summer. Dr. Lovitt introduced two new members who were asked to join the Retention and Graduation Council: Dr. Joseph Paige, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dr. Braden Hosch, Director of Institutional Research and Assessment.

Approve 6/18/07 Minutes
The June 18, 2007 minutes were approved.

Subcommittee Reports

Part-time Students – Ms. Schuberth reported for this subcommittee. At the June 18 meeting, Ms. Schuberth reported that Dr. Petkova was going to do an analysis of the SSI results, by comparing the groups to determine which groups the part-time students are most similar to. The groups were divided into transfer students, residential students, part-time student, and commuter students. Dr. Petkova reviewed the results of her analysis with the committee. The “runaround” is the thing that students are most dissatisfied with. The second thing that students are most dissatisfied with is the amount of courses within their program. Amount of student parking spaces is the third thing that students are most dissatisfied with. Ms. Schuberth will forward the report to Courtney and she will then forward it to the entire committee via e-mail.

Transfer Students – Ms. Bigley reported for this subcommittee. As reported at the June 18 meeting, the first pilot program for incoming transfer students was not very well attended. Since then, a second program was held, and it was very successful. Overall, they were very pleased with the pilot program and would like it to continue. Ms. Bigley stated that they will follow up with the students who attended to see if they actually came to CCSU. Dr. Toston asked if they had an opportunity to survey the individuals who attended. Ms. Bigley stated that they did not survey the attendees, but that it would have been a good idea.

Residence Life Students – Ms. Lake-Piano reported for this subcommittee. Due to everyone’s vacation schedules, the majority of this committee’s discussion over the summer was done via e-mail. It was decided that we really need to track residential students from the time they arrive at CCSU until they graduate. Ms. Lake-Piano reviewed some of the suggestions that were discussed by this committee. This committee will be meeting again soon.

Students who Successfully Graduate within Six Years - Ms. Leake reported for this subcommittee. At this point, this committee has an incredible amount of data. The committee will review the data and try to identify trends. If some trends are identified, the committee will then decide what will be done next.

Commuter Students – This subcommittee did not meet during the summer.
Dr. Lovitt stated that the information prepared by Dr. Petkova is very useful. Dr. Lovitt requested that each of the subcommittees plan to present data at one of the future meetings. Subcommittees should let Dr. Lovitt or Dr. Toston know when they have data to present. Dr. Lovitt stated that this kind of data is instrumental in addressing the necessary problems. Based on the information from Dr. Petkova, we need to address the issues and interpret exactly what the problems are. Dr. Toston announced that Lauren Paine, in her office, will be meeting with students in an effort to help define the term, “runaround.” Ms. Schuberth stated that she would be happy to work with Ms. Paine to get some part-time students involved.

**Report from IR Director on NSSE**

Dr. Lovitt stated that we just received CCSU’s National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) results and asked Dr. Hosch to review the results with the committee. Dr. Hosch provided a brief overview of his background and then distributed the following three items:

1. NSEE Results
2. Preliminary Examination of Retention Rates of Full-time Freshmen Entering in Fall 2004 and 2005 by First Semester GPA
3. Entering Profile of First-time Freshmen Students (Fall 2003 through 2007)

CCSU administered NSSE in 2001, 2002, and then again in 2007. NSSE collects information about what students do rather than what students think. The results that we received were from surveys administered to freshmen and seniors. CCSU had a 14% participation rate. Dr. Hosch noted that the national average participation rate is about 30%. Previous administrations were about 30%. NSSE constructs five benchmarks. Dr. Hosch stated that he would be sure to provide a more detailed report about what goes in to each of the five benchmarks. Dr. Hosch stated that seniors tend to evidence higher level of performance than our freshmen. The results for the freshmen were not very impressive, which may be due, in part, to the low response rate. Dr. Hosch reported that the 2001 and 2002 results were in about the same range as the most recent results. NSSE will be administered again in 2008. Dr. Hosch suggested that we encourage participation with administration of the next survey.

Dr. Hosch discussed the preliminary profile of the freshmen class. There was an increase in the total number of incoming students, as well as the number of incoming minority students. The item that may cause some concern is the sharp decline in SAT scores.

Lastly, Dr. Hosch discussed the preliminary examination of retention rates of full-time freshmen entering in fall 2004 and 2005 by first semester grade point average. Initial findings suggest that if a student earns below a C average in their first semester, their chance of making it to their junior year is less than 1 in 3. Conversely, students who do very well in their first semester have a very high chances of coming back. Dr. Hosch stated that GPA’s do not just represent a student’s academic ability, and there are also many other factors which contribute to a student’s GPA: environment, health, adjustment, motivation, and emotions are all contributing factors, not just academics. Dr. Hosch stated that the intent of looking at student success is not to change our standards, but to have students perform better in their classes.

Dr. Hosch invited questions from the committee. Ms. Garcia-Bowen asked Dr. Hosch if he has done anything with the transfer students yet. At this point he has not, but he will be looking at transfer students in the near future.
Dr. Lovitt raised some specific concerns regarding CCSU’s retention and graduation rates. Dr. Hosch stated that retention rates have been tracking upward over the past ten years, by almost one point per year. However, ten years ago CCSU’s retention rates were in the low 70’s. At this point the retention rates are in the high 70’s /low 80’s. Graduation rates trail by six years, so what we are seeing are graduation rates from students who first enrolled in 2000. Dr. Lovitt stated that CCSU is 10 points below similar institutions. Dr. Lovitt stated that CCSU’s retention rates are good, but the graduation rates are not.

Ms. Lake-Piano asked if there has been any discussion about raising the minimum SAT score for incoming freshmen, and possibly decreasing the size of the incoming class. Dr. Lovitt stated that this is something that has to be approached very delicately. Last year we did not make the projected class, which hurt us financially. Therefore, this year there was a slight relaxation with the admissions requirements. This will not be done again next year. Dr. Lovitt asked everyone to recognize that the numbers distributed are preliminary. In addition, he stated that we need to make sure that CCSU is perceived as an institution that is supportive of academically talented students. Some financial aid will be made available as merit based – in addition to the honors program.

Ms. Alicandro asked if it is possible to isolate this freshmen class to watch for specified items. We may have to wait six years to get the data, but maybe the present is the best time to start. Dr. Lovitt supported Ms. Alicandro’s suggestion.

A discussion occurred regarding various issues that may contribute to student retention/graduation rates. Dr. Lovitt stated that he would be interested in seeing data on the number of students who complete over 120 credits.

Dr. Toston stated that the SSI results show that students are not being adequately advised. She also mentioned that Ms. Deloy interviewed over 600 students when they picked up their cap and gown for commencement regarding their plans after graduation. Ms. Deloy will e-mail the survey information to Courtney and she will distribute to the committee.

**Advising Taskforce Update**
Dr. Paige provided a brief update regarding the Advising Taskforce. Dr. Paige is co-chairing the taskforce with Dr. Higgins. At this point the taskforce has met twice. Dr. Paige stated that they will try to find the proper model to address all the needs of our students. With a good model in place some issues will decrease or dissolve completely. Dr. Paige noted that students who take advantage of advising are successful – those who do not, usually struggle.

**Subcommittees Develop Action Plans**
Dr. Lovitt pledged his commitment that this will be the last time that we just study something. He really wants to make a change. Dr. Lovitt stated that the committee needs to be focused on specific things that need to be done.

Dr. Lovitt asked each of the subcommittees to identify a specific action item which they want to focus and work on. This item should be action oriented.

Several suggestions were informally discussed.
**Action Items**

- Each of the subcommittees was asked to identify a specific action item which they want to focus and work on. This item should be action oriented.
- Courtney will distribute the information from Dr. Petkova and Ms. Deloy to the committee via e-mail.

The next Retention and Graduation Council meeting will be held on **Tuesday, October 9 at 9:00 a.m.** in the **Bellin Gallery, Student Center.**