Dr. Lovitt welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the fall semester. Dr. Laura Tordenti, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs, was introduced. Dr. Lovitt announced that he and Dr. Tordenti will be co-chairing the Council.

Dr. Lovitt announced that President Miller will attend the October 17 meeting.

**Research Updates - B. Hosch:**
Dr. Hosch presented updated graduation and retention data to the Council. The presentation can be viewed in its entirety at http://www.ccsu.edu/oira/research/StudentSuccess/ResearchUpdatesGradRates(2008).pdf

**Graduation Rate Watch: Making Minority Student Success a Priority - J. Paige:**
Dr. Paige provided the following summary of the Minority Student Retention Report, which a subcommittee recently reviewed:

Early this summer, Dr. Lovitt charged a subgroup of the Retention and Graduation Committee to read an article on graduation rates of minority, primarily black, students and then get together as a group to discuss the article to see if any of the findings or initiatives discussed, have or could have relevance to our aim here at CCSU. The members of the group were Joseph Paige, Mark McLaughlin, James Mulrooney, Awilda Reasco, Zachary Bello, and Elaine Wilson.

The article, Graduation Rate Watch: Making Minority Student Success a Priority; was written by Kevin Carey, who is the Research and Policy Manager at Education Sector. Education Sector is an independent think tank that challenges conventional thinking in educational policy. Their aim is to improve existing reform initiatives and create new initiatives to address our nation’s most pressing education problems.

The article gave a glaring picture of the disparity of the six-year graduation rates of black students as compared to white students at various types of four-year institutions. These national statistics were not fully released to the public until 2004 thus creating this new paradigm. At a typical institution less than 40 percent of all students earn their four-year degree in four years. Extending the time frame to six-years increases the average to about 57%. Adding student who transfer and graduate elsewhere may bring the total up to 63%,
less than two-thirds of all students. Black students typically graduate at a lower rate than their white peers at the same institution. In looking at the data presented, a few institutions had very high rates in the 80 – 90% range but many, many more were in the 40% and lower range. In 2000, about 120,000 black students enrolled as first-time freshmen at one of 1,050 four-year colleges & universities that reported their graduation rates. About 10% or 11,200 of these students would enroll in an institution that would grant degrees to at least 70% of those freshmen in six years. Half of those students went to institutions that graduated less than 40%, one in four students went to institutions that graduated black students below 30%, and 10% of students went to intuitions that graduated students of this population at a rate below 20%.

Some of the institutions that graduated very high were at Ivy League and other highly selective schools, as these institutions are able to admit students, no matter the race, who are most likely to succeed. They have always been in that position. Other schools have changed the type of student that they admit. Towson University (MD) went from a minus 20 percentage points (white grad rate 65% and black 45%) in 2001 to a +1 percentage point in 2006 by weighing more on student success in the classroom rather than SAT score. Their new philosophy is that students who did well in their high school courses were more likely to be ready for college-level work. To contrast, Northeastern University went from minus 18 percentage points in 2002 to a plus 1 percentage point in 2006 by raising the median freshman SAT score by over 100 points.

The article went on to discuss several schools and their efforts to improve the success of minority students. The University of Alabama improved from minus 9 percentage point gap in 2001 to a plus 2 percent in 2006 where nearly two-thirds of black students graduate on time. Their program is called the Tide Early Alert Program and is very similar to our newly established Early Alert Program. The program identifies freshman who show signs of academic struggle during the first 6 weeks, flagging student for counseling and intervention if they earn D’s and F’s or miss excessive number of classes.

The program highlighted for its success in this article was the Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement or CARE Program at Florida State University. This program recruits students from low-income backgrounds and schools as early as the sixth grade. They meet with the student and their parents, providing them with information about getting their children ready to go to and succeed in college. Beginning in the ninth grade, they provide a series of summer and after school programs that help students complete the financial aid and application process, and prepare for the SAT or ACT. As students near high school graduation they can apply to Florida State through the CARE program, which relaxes admissions standards for low-income, first generation students if they agree to participate in an academic support program that begins the summer before matriculation and extends through the first two years of college. The CARE program receives strong support from the university leadership and reports directly to the Vice President of Student
Affairs and Undergraduate Studies. CARE students enter FSU with an average SAT of 940 as compared to 1204 for typical students. CARE students are more likely to return to FSU for their sophomore year and they graduate at almost the exact same rate as the white students.

At the subcommittee meeting, it was agreed that CCSU has many, if not all, of the resources mentioned in the programs that had marked success. The challenge for CCSU would be to have a centralized office and a coordinator who could bring all of these resources together. Another question that came up was if CCSU could use the resources that we already have for low-income minority students, and make them available to all students. CCSU has the capability to assist all students in succeeding, but we will need to rethink and refocus our structure.

Dr. Lovitt thanked Dr. Paige, as well as the other members of the subcommittee, for reviewing this report.

**Next Steps - C. Lovitt**

Dr. Lovitt asked each of the Council members to think about some things that each of their respective units is doing to promote student retention and graduation. This information will be shared with the entire Council at a future meeting.

Dr. Lovitt requested that each Council member answer the following questions:

1. What do you consider the main causes or reasons why fewer than 50% of the full-time students who start their college study at CCSU graduate in six years (e.g., “runaround,” poor advising, scheduling, etc.)?

2. What specific steps has your unit taken in the last two years to improve student satisfaction and increase student retention and graduation?

3. If we want to increase student graduation rates at CCSU, where should we focus our resources and efforts?

Dr. Lovitt stated that the Council needs to be more action oriented. He would like the Council to work on identifying two or three big initiatives. Dr. Lovitt asked that everyone be prepared to discuss these issues at October 17 meeting, as President Miller is going to want to hear from the Council.

Dr. Lovitt will work with Mark McLaughlin to collect the requested information electronically.
**Action Items**

- Dr. Lovitt requested that each Council member answer the following questions:
  
  - What factors from your perspective are inhibiting student’s retention and graduation? This information can be in regards to an individual unit or in general. Dr. Lovitt emphasized the need for honesty in regards to this issue.
  
  - Where should we be focusing our efforts on?
  
  - Identify some strategies that we focus on 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year students. Dr. Lovitt stated that the President is concerned that we are focusing a lot of our attention on the first year students. President Miller wants to make sure that we are also doing things beyond the first year.

- Dr. Lovitt will work with Mark McLaughlin to collect the requested information electronically.

The next Retention and Graduation Council meeting is **Friday, October 17, 2008 at 1:30 p.m.** in **Bellin A/B, Student Center**.