Retention and Graduation Council  
September 23, 2010  
MEETING MINUTES

Access to Success (A2S)  
C. Lovitt introduced guests from the System Office, Dr. German Bermudez, Dr. William Gammell and Dr. Teresa Boyd-Cowles, who delivered a PowerPoint presentation on the Access to Success initiative (A2S). The presentation included: 1) a basic overview of the A2S initiative, explaining what the program is and why it is important; 2) a look at CCSU’s retention and graduation data using A2S metrics; 3) an explanation of the System Office’s role in the implementation of A2S; and 4) information about next steps.

Overview of Access to Success – Dr. William Gammell  
Dr. Gammell provided an overview of the A2S initiative. A2S is a collaborative project of the National Association of System Heads (NASH) and The Education Trust (EdTrust) that began in January 2007. The project currently involves 24 higher education systems that have pledged to cut the college-going and graduation gaps for low-income and minority students in half by the 2015-16 academic year. About a year ago, NASH and EdTrust formed a relationship with the U.S. Education Delivery Institute, founded by Sir Michael Barber, which provided a template for ways to create meaningful change in graduation and retention rates. Each participating system sets its own achievement goals and uses a common set of metrics to measure progress. Each system also drafts its own plans to cut achievement gaps and increase degree production and develops progress reports every two years.

Dr. Gammell explained the three over-arching questions that A2S asks:

1) **Access**: Does the system’s entering class reflect the economic and racial diversity of its state’s high school graduates?
2) **Success**: How do the success rates of low-income and underrepresented minority students compare with those of other students in the system?
3) **Access+Success**: Do the system’s graduates reflect the diversity if its state’s high school graduates?

Dr. Gammell stressed the importance of improving the retention and graduation rates of low-income/minority students. He stated that a lot of progress has been made regarding access over the last 25 years. College attendance is rising for low-income and minority students, but it still hasn’t reached the rate that high-income students achieved in the 1970’s. Within the CSU System, the population of minority students has grown by 50 percent since 1996. Dr. Gammell noted that Connecticut’s demographics are changing and if the CSUS is going to compete in a global market, it has to do a better job of tracking, retaining and graduating minority students. In addition, tomorrow’s job requirements are also changing, and graduation rates need to improve in order to stay competitive.
Overview of A2S Data - Dr. Teresa Boyd-Cowles

Dr. Boyd-Cowles briefly explained the methods used to gather and report A2S data. She then provided an overview of the baseline retention and graduation data previously gathered using A2S data metrics. The data looked at CCSU’s low-income, Pell Grant recipients and underrepresented minorities, as well as freshman and transfer students, and it included:

- A comparison of CCSU’s entering Bachelor’s students with Connecticut’s high school graduates to determine if CCSU’s population reflects the socio-economic/racial diversity of the state’s high school graduating class.
- A comparison of CCSU’s low-income and underrepresented minority six-year graduation rates with other students (Fall 1999 Bachelor’s Cohort).
- A comparison of the profile of CCSU 2005 graduates with Connecticut’s high school graduates.

Role of the System Office - Dr. German Bermudez

Dr. Bermudez discussed the System Office’s role in the A2S initiative. He stated that as each university looks at its distinct needs and goals, the System Office will consider the collective needs of all institutions in an effort to:

- Help shape a coherent System response for A2S
- Raise awareness and encourage coordination of efforts at the universities
- Ensure that a common set of measures is being used
- Monitor trajectories toward goals
- Define the A2S system wide approach, as it emerges from individual university initiatives
- Facilitate the sharing of best practices
- Explore and help secure financial support
- Communicate with A2S stakeholders and contacts

Dr. Bermudez also briefly discussed a few system-wide projects related to A2S. These included the Dual Admission Program with Community Colleges, the Common Course Numbering Project, the CT Roadmap to Graduation Project, as well as various federal grants and workforce related projects.

How Will Access to Success Work? - Dr. William Gammell

Dr. Gammell reported that a “high level” System Plan was developed over the summer based on discussions with the Council of Presidents. The System Plan was designed to:
1) ensure clarity about system and university priorities and expectations;
2) recognize and acknowledge progress;
3) unite the diverse set of access and success activities and the four universities into an integrated system;
4) ensure that the CSUS A2S System
Plan guides the plans and priorities of the universities while each retains its own identity, mission and governance; and 5) introduce more accountability into the system.

Dr. Gammell explained that each university should use the System Plan as a guide for the development of its own individual action plan. He stressed that rather than reporting on what has been successfully achieved in the past, this plan should focus on what will be done on a year to year basis to improve retention and graduation rates, as well as how the university will achieve these goals. Once the plan has been submitted, the System Office’s A2S “Delivery” Team (Dr. German Bermudez, Dr. William Gammell, Dr. Teresa Boyd-Cowles, Dr. Louise Fereoe, and Dr. Bernard Kavaler) will work with the universities to refine the action plans if necessary. Each university should also assemble its own A2S “Delivery” Team that will monitor initiative progress and implement necessary changes to the action plan.

Dr. Gammell announced that the university is asked to develop an action plan by October 30, 2010. Dr. Gammell will send C. Lovitt the System Plan as well as further details to share with the Council regarding what the action plan should entail. Dr. Gammell explained that the October 30 deadline was chosen in order to promote a sense of urgency in the development and implementation of this action plan.

Questions/Comments
C. Lovitt expressed concern regarding developing an action plan by the October 30 deadline. He stated that admitting a higher number of minority students when it is still unclear why these students aren’t graduating at the same rate as other students would compound the existing problem as well as have a negative impact on the graduation rate. Dr. Gammell agreed and responded by suggesting a few long-term solutions, including becoming actively involved in Connecticut’s P-20 Council and creating additional admission requirements. Dr. Gammell also asked the Council to think of short-term indicators that would allow the university to intervene and affect change earlier, and he provided the following examples: 1) looking at class attendance; 2) analyzing midterm grades to find at-risk students; and 3) looking at retention rates from the first to the second semester. Dr. Gammell also suggested that Project Compass, a program that ECSU is currently involved with, might also be useful (www.nerche.org/compass/compass.html).

J. Mulrooney expressed concern regarding the fact that the A2S data only includes minorities who graduate within the six year average. He stated that his minority transfer students often have a lot of remedial coursework that delays graduation another year, and he asked how these students could possibly be considered within the A2S data. Dr. Gammell replied that although the A2S data does not account for these students, there is data on the Institutional Research website that tracks the percentage of students who are still enrolled after six years, as well as those who transfer to other schools.

Following the presentation, a discussion occurred regarding the implementation of A2S and the development of an action plan. Several council members agreed that the October 30 deadline presented difficulties, and L. Tordenti suggested trying to negotiate the deadline. C. Lovitt
stated that this initiative calls for a massive reallocation of resources and that the Council must develop a plan that will be successful. Council members made the following suggestions:

- Provide more access to resources like financial aid, scholarships and information technology.
- Look at the success rate of minority student athletes. The resources and support given to student athletes could possibly provide a model for the support of non-athlete minority students.
- Use financial resources to create more student employment on campus. When a student is employed on campus, co-workers become mentors and the income earned helps them pay their debt, which helps to keep them on campus.
- Provide assistance for managing any extra financial aid money left over after tuition and books are paid.
- Look to student groups that are already actively involved to provide some leadership and mentorship.

C. Lovitt stressed that more attention needs to be paid to what can be done in the second, third and fourth years to improve retention/graduation. He stated that we provide a lot of assistance to first-year students, but after the first year our interventions have no impact. Similar assistance needs to be provided in those last three years.

C. Lovitt also suggested creating a more stringent withdrawal policy by limiting student withdrawals to a finite number. He stated that when students are allowed to withdraw from as many classes as they want, they do not accumulate the credits required to graduate. C. Lovitt noted that other universities have revised their withdrawal policies and it has had a positive impact on retention/graduation rates. A discussion occurred and several comments were informally made. C. Lovitt asked J. Paige and the Associate/Assistant Deans to develop a proposal that identifies problems with the current withdrawal policy and provides recommendations for improvement. The proposal will then be presented to the Faculty Senate.

C. Lovitt concluded the meeting by asking that a team be assembled to develop the A2S action plan. He offered his assistance and asked for volunteers. C. Lovitt will share the System Plan with the Council as soon as he receives it. Discussion of other agenda items was postponed until further notice.

**Action Items**

- C. Lovitt asked J. Paige and the Associate/Assistant Deans to develop a proposal that identifies problems with the current withdrawal policy and provides recommendations for improvement.
- C. Lovitt will share the A2S System Plan with council members.
- C. Lovitt asked for volunteers to assist in developing the A2S action plan.

The next Retention and Graduation Council meeting will be held on **Thursday, October 28, 2010 at 1:00 p.m. in Philbrick/Camp, Student Center.**