MEETING MINUTES


Approve September 6, 2011 minutes
Per L. Hall’s suggestion at the September meeting, C. Lovitt sent out a letter to faculty requesting that they take attendance during the third week of class and report students in the Early Academic Warning System. The letter had a positive impact on the number of faculty who reported students, and C. Lovitt will continue to send this notification to faculty in the future. The September 6, 2011 minutes were approved.

Early Academic Warning System – M. Leake
M. Leake provided the Council with an overview of the current status of the Early Academic Warning System. She stated that the entire process is done manually, which is extremely time consuming. As such, we are working to find ways of capturing more information in Banner in order to provide better follow-up, as well as to streamline the process. M. Leake stated that we are all pulling together to find a better way of collecting and storing information so that advisors, faculty, and other student service offices can easily access and utilize this student information.

M. Leake then provided some detail regarding the impact of C. Lovitt’s letter to the faculty. In the past, the Registrar has received about 150 Early Warning notifications per semester. After the letter was sent out, the Registrar received 232 notifications in the first three weeks alone. There were also about 25 students that were reported by multiple faculty members.

M. Leake noted that once the students are notified that they have been reported to Early Academic Warning, they usually seek immediate assistance from their professors. She noted that students seem to be very grateful for the outreach that we provide. R. Hernandez added that parents are also very involved in this process.

M. Bielawa stated that through September 28, the Registrar received 255 notifications from faculty regarding students who have never attended class. The Registrar usually sends an email and a letter to these students, encouraging them to contact the Registrar’s Office. However, this time the Registrar’s Office made phone calls to 106 of the full-time students. Four of these students had never attended class, and the others had either been ill or had dropped the course. C. Lovitt asked M. Bielawa how many multiple notifications were received from various faculty regarding the same student. M. Bielawa replied that there were some repeated notifications, but not many.

Summary of lecture on Latino student success – M. Garcia-Bowen
M. Garcia-Bowen provided the Council with a summary of the recent Access2Success (A2S) lecture on Latino student success. Bill Gammell and Carmen Cid (ECSU) were recently invited to speak to a Sociology class regarding A2S and Latinos in higher education. B. Gammell spoke about A2S and its importance, and he shared some local and national data with the group. He noted that by 2020, nearly half of 25-29 year-olds will be minorities, which will in turn make up roughly 28% of our workforce. In addition, Latinos are the fastest growing population in the nation as well as in Connecticut, and B. Gammell stressed the importance of taking care of educating this population now. (For more information, please see B. Gammell’s PowerPoint presentation.)
In addition to B. Gammell’s lecture, C. Cid spoke about the Project Compass grant, which was currently awarded to ECSU to assist at-risk student populations. ECSU received the grant from the Nellie Mae Foundation to help more students from underrepresented populations graduate with a college degree.

A brief discussion occurred regarding Latino student success. C. Lovitt stated that The Hartford Courant reported that Connecticut has the third highest Latino unemployment rate in the country (see article). M. Garcia-Bowen added that there has recently been discussion regarding the coordination of a reception for Latino students on campus, in order to reach out to these students and make them aware of the services that are available to them. C. Lovitt also noted that CCSU will hold a conference on Latino student success on November 17 at 8:30 a.m. in the Constitution Room (see the Student Affairs webpage for more information).

**Character as a Variable in Retention – N. Hoffman**

N. Hoffman reported that Sally Lesik’s study is currently underway, and she stated that she recently ran across a study identifying “character” as an indicator of student success. The study indicated that students who show “real grit” can be more successful. In other words, if a student is willing to work hard enough, he or she will succeed. N. Hoffman then provided the Council with an article and a survey related to this study.

**Analysis of first-to-second year retention rate – Y. Kirby**

C. Lovitt prefaced the discussion by stating that our first-to-second year retention rate has dropped to an alarming 76.4%, which is the largest single year drop in history. He stated that we are stunned and baffled by this information, and something must be done so that this never happens again. C. Lovitt added that this is a call to action. It is within our power to influence this variable, and appropriate steps must be taken.

Y. Kirby then provided the Council with a handout and overview of the first-to-second year retention data (see handout). The following discussions then occurred:

Y. Kirby noted that in Spring 2011, 128 students received no GPA. She then asked M. Bielawa to explain what it means to have a “zero” GPA, versus “no” GPA. M. Bielawa stated that students who receive a zero GPA are those who have either all W’s, or all F’s on their transcripts. Students with no GPA have most likely been retroactively dropped, and therefore have no grades on their transcripts.

Council members briefly discussed reasons why such a large number of students would receive no GPA. M. Leake suggested that the new GPA requirements implemented in Spring 2010 may have affected this data. The new requirements state that any student with a GPA below 2.0 will be dismissed (or placed on probation if they have been grandfathered in). As a result of the higher academic standards, more students may have been dismissed or placed on probation than in previous years. C. Lovitt then suggested that we test this hypothesis by looking at the number of students who were placed on probation and opted to never return in Spring 2011.

C. Lovitt noted that there were 116 students with no GPA in Spring 2011, and that 12 of these students were still enrolled in Fall 2011. He then asked why these students would still be enrolled if they received no GPA. M. Bielawa stated that these 12 students likely took leaves of absence. C. Lovitt asked Y. Kirby to look at these 12 students and determine why they were still enrolled after receiving no GPA in Spring 2011. Y. Kirby agreed that she would take another look at and further analyze all of the no GPA data.
A brief discussion occurred regarding the data on remedial course completion. Y. Kirby reported that students who do not complete remedial/developmental Math or English courses with a C- or better tend to have a lower retention rate. C. Lovitt stated that, based on this data, we may need to think about ways in which to get more students to successfully complete remedial courses before their first semester. This would have implications for programs such as CONCAS, EOP and Bridges.

Y. Kirby reported that the students who begin the fall semester with 12 credit hours do not do as well as those who take on a heavier credit load. A discussion occurred. C. Lovitt noted that in 2007, there was a change in practice regarding how many credits first-year students were enrolled in. Although 12 credits is still technically considered full-time, first-year students are now enrolled in 15 credits. C. Lovitt then asked the Council if this could have had an adverse impact on retention. J. Mulrooney stated that there are certain majors in which 12 credits is more than enough (i.e.: science majors with lab requirements). C. Lovitt agreed and added that the students are not required to carry all 15 credits, and that they do have the option to drop a course and still remain full-time. C. Lovitt then asked Y. Kirby to compare the retention rates of those students who took 12 credits with those who took 15 credits.

M. Fallon stated that Kevin Kean, an adjunct instructor in the Psychology Department, brought a recent article from Inside Higher Ed. to her attention. The article suggests that students who take first-year courses taught by less experienced faculty do not do as well as those who take the same courses taught by experienced faculty. The study goes on to suggest that “freshmen who have many of their courses taught by adjuncts are less likely than other students to return as sophomores” (see article). C. Lovitt suggested that we compare the number of first-year courses taught by adjunct faculty over the past few years, in order to see if there is a correlation.

J. Mulrooney stated that when freshman have issues, they want to be able to contact their professors for immediate assistance. However, the new time-blocks have resulted in a large number of our classes being scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays. As a consequence, a large percentage of faculty are only on campus two days a week, which means they are only available to meet with students and discuss issues two days a week. N. Hoffman agreed that freshman are accustomed to having a five-day schedule, in which teachers are available to help them all day, every day. A brief discussion occurred. C. Lovitt suggested that we look at how many fewer classes are being scheduled on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, in order to see how the time-blocks could possibly be affecting our retention.

O. Petkova briefly noted that we cannot rule out the role that the economy has played in impacting our retention rate. Classes keep getting more expensive and less affordable for students who are also trying to help out at home. Many students may have decided not to return because they simply could not afford to.

C. Lovitt stated that he has provided funding for Y. Kirby to hire graduate assistants, who will reach out to the 321 students who did not return to campus this year. He concluded the discussion by stating that one out of every four freshman did not return this year, and that this alarming data cannot be ignored. He stressed that all departments across campus should be made aware of the fragility of our first-year student retention. He added that we need to get this information out to all FYE faculty, CACE advisors, as well as members of the Faculty Senate, so they can help to identify struggling students and provide intervention.

Soliciting Proposals to Improve Retention and Graduation – C. Lovitt
As a result of the latest retention data findings, C. Lovitt announced that he will send out a campus-wide request for proposals to improve retention. C. Lovitt stated that he is prepared to shift resources within his budget in order to fund proposals that will provide immediate support for improving the retention rate.

**Work in Progress:**

**Data:**

C. Lovitt suggested looking at the number of students who were placed on probation and opted to never return in Spring 2011.

C. Lovitt asked Y. Kirby to look at the 12 students who remained enrolled after receiving no GPA in Spring 2011. Y. Kirby agreed that she would take another look at and further analyze all of the no GPA data.

C. Lovitt then asked Y. Kirby to compare the retention rates of those students who took 12 credits with those who took 15 credits.

C. Lovitt suggested that we compare the number of first-year courses taught by adjunct faculty over the past few years, in order to see if there is a correlation.

C. Lovitt suggested that we look at how many fewer classes are being scheduled on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, in order to see how the time-blocks could possibly be affecting our retention.

**Other:**

C. Lovitt noted that CCSU will hold a conference on Latino student success on November 17 at 8:30 a.m. in the Constitution Room.

C. Lovitt stated that, based on this data, we may need to think about ways in which to get more students to successfully complete remedial courses before their first semester. This would have implications for programs such as CONCAS, EOP and Bridges.

C. Lovitt stressed that all departments across campus should be made aware of the fragility of our first-year student retention. He added that we need to get this information out to all FYE faculty, CACE advisors, as well as members of the Faculty Senate, so they can help to identify struggling students and provide intervention.

The next Retention and Graduation Council meeting will be held on **Tuesday, December 13, 2011**, at **9:30 a.m.** in **Sprague/Carlton, Student Center**.