CCSU Attendance Awareness Initiative
December 2012

“Eighty percent of success is showing up.” – Woody Allen

As most faculty members well know, Mr. Allen’s statement is especially true in the classroom. The CCSU Retention and Graduation Council aims to improve student success at CCSU. The Attendance Subcommittee of the Retention and Graduation Council aims to raise awareness about the role of class attendance in student success.

Not surprisingly, local and national studies indicate that class attendance plays a critical role in academic success, and thus as an institution, subcommittee aims to raise awareness about the role of class attendance in student success. Nationally, Crede, Roch, and Kiesczynka (2010) found that class attendance is a better predictor of college grades than any other known predictor, including the SAT, high school GPA, study habits and study skills (p.272). They also reported that when a professor emphasized the importance of attendance a class’s overall average grade increased a little (9%) but the failure rate decreased from 23% to 7%. In a CCSU pilot of a compulsory attendance policy in some sections of a Management Information Systems (MIS) courses, Associate Professor Jason Snyder found that the compulsory attendance policy reduced student absenteeism by more than half and students who attended more classes earned much higher grades.

We examined the existing university-wide attendance policies and determined that, not surprisingly, they do not seem adequate for what we hope to achieve here. These policies emphasize extended absences due to a medical issue or other serious problems. None stress the importance of daily attendance to academic success. Hence this somewhat coordinated awareness effort to promote that idea. This is not an effort impose any new campus-wide policy.

Last Spring 2012, we asked faculty to share their individual policies and we received over 70 enthusiastic responses. We analyzed some of the results and shared different sorts of policies with faculty in August, as they were preparing syllabi. We promised a more formal report and we mean this product is to serve that purpose.

Forty three of the attendance policies stated that missed classes would result in a lowered grade, but the number of missed classes as well as the amount of credit deducted varied greatly. Fifteen specifically stated that missing class could or would result in failure, but here again the number varied from four to nine. Twenty-three stated attendance is taken each class and/or attendance is mandatory. Twenty-nine stated the importance of being on time for class.

Thirty-one linked participation with attendance or noted the importance of participation. Another ten stated that attendance or attendance and participation accounted for 5, 10 or 15 percent of one’s final grade. Seven stated the importance of asking questions.

Twenty-one addressed student responsibility. Eleven stated that success or successful students was linked to attendance and participation. Two gave contingency plans for missed classes i.e. write a report on material covered in missed class. Another two suggest students have a “Note buddy” or the name, phone # and e-mail address of two classmates. Five attendance policies offered bonus/reward/incentive points for perfect attendance or an extra credit point for each class attended is
added to students’ final grade. Three faculty members stated positive consequences for participation. Four referred to their class as a Learning or Scholarly community. Twenty-one embedded the word “please” within their policy. Two have students sign a contract.

From this sampling of policies, we offer the following “Best Practices” as suggestions for encouraging better attendance from our students across campus, but only suggestions:

**Rationale for Requiring or Emphasizing Attendance as Part of Classroom**
- Classrooms are active learning environments so while physical attendance is necessary it is also necessary to be mentally and intellectually present.
- Absence hinders your own learning and that of your classmates.
- Attendance and participation are essential; missing a writing class is similar to missing an important rehearsal or studio session—there’s no way to “make it up” by reading a book or getting another student’s notes.
- Each class member is essential to the development of our learning community and as such, regular active attendance and participation is expected.
- Lectures and discussions will supplement, not duplicate, assigned readings, so you will miss important information if you do not attend class.
- If you don’t show up you won’t do well.
- Each class you miss just cost you $100

**Encourage students to regard the class as a learning/scholarly community**
- Suggest students have at least two classmates email addresses and/or cell phone numbers in case a class is missed.
- Suggest students form small study groups.

**Encouraging and monitor attendance by**
- Discussing attendance issues in Department meetings and/or developing a consistent policy throughout your Academic Department.
- Including a clear attendance policy in your syllabus.
- Rewarding or penalizing students for their attendance in their final grade.
- Equating tardiness with attendance.
- Regular quizzes or teaching with clickers.
- Basing all or part of examinations and other assessments on a combination of material from class lectures, films, discussions, and reading assignments.
- Require students to sign in.

*Three Sample Policies from CCSU Colleagues (these illustrate only a range of style and tone, and you are encouraged to view them only as models and not suggestions):

- Regular class attendance is expected. Learning, especially in a problem-based learning environment, is an active process, and it is simply impossible to participate if you are not here. In the event that
you must miss a class, please notify me in advance. Due to the nature of this class, continuous or excessive absences may result in poor performance in the course.

• Attendance and participation in class discussions are required and constitute a significant portion of your final grade. Lectures and discussions will supplement, not duplicate, assigned readings, so you will miss important information if you do not attend class. Examinations will be based on a combination of material from lectures, films, and reading assignments. Students are permitted to have three unexcused absences. I will subtract 5 points from your class participation grade for every unexcused absence beyond three.

• Attendance is taken each day and all students are allowed 3 absences, including those due to minor emergencies and illnesses, without penalty to your grade. These penalties can accrue up to 200 points. I do not make exceptions for work-related absences, regular family demands, etc. The only excused absences beyond that will be for verifiable flu or illness, a death in the immediate family, sport or university related absences (if student’s attendance is otherwise satisfactory), a serious illness or a accident. If you find you do have an ongoing situation (family crisis, work conflict, chronic medical condition, etc.), you should consult with me during my office hours to determine whether and how you should continue in the class.

Please keep an eye out for 11 X 17 posters that we hope to hang in every classroom and across campus. Inspired by a similar design used by MIS last year, the image will be one of CCSU graduation and say something to the effect of: “We have a name for people who go to class: Graduates.”

Thank you for your attention and support on this initiative. We hope that it is a modest step in developing a culture of regular attendance and academic success on campus.

Sincerely,

Attendance Sub-Committee of the Retention and Graduation Council

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