

LACCD Student Success Initiative Steering Committee

May 19, 2006

Minutes

Attendees: David Beaulieu (ELAC), Gary Colombo (DO), Deborah Harrington (LAVC), Daryl Kinney (LACC), Stanislav Levin (DO), Leon Marzillier (DAS—LAVC), Joy McCaslin (LAPC), Susan McMurray (LAHC), Hector Plotquin (LACC), George Prather (DO), La Vergne Rosow (DAS—LAVC), Rebecca Tillberg (LACC), Carlie Tronto (LAVC), Maria Elena Yepes (ELAC)

Absent: John Clerx (District), Chini Johnson-Taylor (LATTTC), David Jordan (LAMC), Audre Levy (LASC), Abbie Patterson (LAHC), Ed Pai (WLAC), Pat Siever (WLAC)

Guests: David Acosta (Al Punto), Richard Block (WLAC), Nancy Carson (LAHC), Winny Chi (USC), David Ching (LAHC), Linda Cole (LATTTC), Daphne Congdon (DO), Edward Escobedo (LATTTC), David Esparza (ELAC), Lisa Fitch (DO), Judith Freeman (WLAC), LaVonne Hamilton (LASC), Lan Hao (LATTTC), Phyllis Hirsch (ELAC), Pat Hollingsworth (LATTTC), Ashraf Hosseini (LATTTC), Carol Koaeracki (LAPC), Emeral Price (ELAC), Gary Prostack (LAMC), Aria Rzfah (ELAC), Letia Royal-Burnett (LATTTC), Luis Rosas (LAHC), Patricia Sshmolze (LACC), Sylvia Scott-Hayes (Board of Trustees), Linda Spink (LAHC), Shawn Trammel (LATTTC), Dan Walden (LASC), Lynn Winter-Gross (DO), Adrian Youhanna (LAPC), Rocky Young (DO)

Minutes of 3/29/06

Review of the minutes of the April 19th SSI meeting was postponed until the June.

TRUCCS Debriefing with Dr. Linda Hagedorn

Dr. Linda Hagedorn, Chair of the Department of Educational Policy and Administration at the University of Florida, debriefed the committee on the findings of USC's "Transfer and Retention of Urban Community College Students" (TRUCCS) project. During an extensive power point presentation summarizing TRUCCS findings between 2000 and 2006, Dr. Hagedorn led the group in a thought-provoking discussion that touched on the following ideas:

Difficulties Tracking Transfers: Establishing transfer rates is a challenge because there are many "holes" in the transfer pipeline. For example, a significant number of students "transfer out" to other colleges before completing required transfer sequences. Similarly, it's difficult to determine how many students "dropout" of college because so many community college students tend to "stayout" so frequently and then return to their studies at a later date.

"Backtracking?": Students often fail to proceed towards their established educational goals because they opt to move backward through course sequences—often as the result of insufficient understanding of the curriculum or due to poor pre-requisite enforcement.

The "Developmental Climb": Colleges typically use course completion figures or "participation" ratios (the number of students enrolled in transfer courses, etc.) to measure "success." But a better picture of institutional effectiveness can be obtained by tracking the "developmental climb" of individual students—the progress they make through key English and math course sequences. Colleges should track this by age, ethnicity, and gender.

The “C” Problem: In hierarchical course sequences, student who get “C”s early on tend to drop out at significantly higher rates than those who get “A”s or “B”s. This suggests that faculty who give students “mercy ‘C’s” are actually doing them a serious disservice.

Obstacles to Transfer Success: Over 80% of the students enrolling in our colleges indicate an initial desire to transfer, but only a small percentage achieve that goal. Out of the original 5,000 students involved in the TRUCCS study, only about 400 or 8% ever transferred. The reasons why students fail to transfer include:

- Insufficient understanding of courses required for transfer
- Lack of awareness of college support services and resources
- Lack of self-monitoring
- Lack of clear “milestones” or understanding of where they are on the path to their goal
- Lack of recognition or awards along the way

Aspiration vs. Ability: We often limit our assessment of institutional success to those students who “prove” they have the ability to succeed by completing various “gateway” courses or by accumulating significant numbers of transfer units, etc. But shouldn’t we measure our success in terms of how effectively we help all students achieve their “aspirations”?

Gatekeeper Courses: Students who pass critical “gatekeeper” courses like Biology, Chemistry, and Economics have a much higher chance of transfer success.

The Pitfalls of Persistence: We often use persistence as a measure of student success. But from the perspective of overall institutional outcomes, persistence may actually be bad. Having students “persist” for 6, 8, 10, or more semesters may boost institutional “success rates,” but prolonged persistence also signals institutional failure. Our goal should be to get students “out the door” and to their goals as soon as possible.

Recommendations

- Get transfer-bound students through remedial work quickly
- Be sure students get detailed advising on transfer requirements
- Set milestones and reinforce them
- Keep students engaged (continuously enrolled)
- Integrate advising in the classroom via periodic counselor visits and faculty development
- Stress academics!

Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold the next meeting of the SSI Steering Committee on Friday, June 9th from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. at the District Office.