

ACHIEVING THE DREAM OVERVIEW

Achieving the Dream (AtD) is a multiyear national initiative to help more community college students succeed. OCCC, along with Rose State College, Tulsa Community College and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, joined Round 4 of the initiative last year to help identify at-risk student groups in the student populations and then design and implement intervention strategies that will increase the success of these at-risk groups. OCCC's formal AtD commitment will end in 2012, though the commitment to student success will continue indefinitely. The initiative has also been included in the college's strategic plan, *The Way Forward and Why it Matters*. From time to time, we will be publishing this newsletter to keep you informed of the initiative's progress.

Achieving the Dream emphasizes the use of research to drive change. With help from the college's assigned Achieving the Dream coaches, an OCCC data team collected and analyzed data to identify gaps in student achievement. A leadership team, composed of staff and faculty from throughout the college, met twice a month reviewing data, identifying key issues and developing strategies that can be implemented to close those gaps.

KEY ISSUES

In assigning priorities to issues, the leadership team used three criteria for deciding whether one issue was more important than another:

- 1) the data made a compelling case
- 2) the issue fell within the college's area of responsibility or influence
- 3) potential interventions would be scalable, or reach a relatively large group of students

Using these criteria, the following teams were developed to determine strategies to address the identified priorities:

- **Developmental Math Education Team**
Improve student success in developmental math courses
- **Gateway Courses Team**
Improve student success in gateway courses
- **Online Learning Team**
Improve student success in online courses
- **Advisement Policy Team**
Improve advisement processes and outcomes
- **Financial Aid Team**
Expand the availability and effectiveness of financial aid

DEVELOPMENTAL MATH EDUCATION TEAM

KEY FACT: *More than 19 percent of OCCC students enrolled in at least one developmental math course during the 2008 fall semester. Less than 50 percent of these students complete the course with a grade of A, B, C or S.*

GOAL: *To improve developmental math pass rates.*

The Developmental Math Education Team was formed to address the challenges students encounter with developmental math and to determine ways to help students be successful in completing the courses.

The team is in the process of realigning developmental mathematics objectives, investigating new models for course structure and sequence and creating additional supplementary materials to support the courses.

Team co-chairs are Tamara Carter, Director of Mathematics, and Pat Stowe, Director of Student Support Services.

Team members are Janet Mitchell, Professor of Mathematics; Linda Knox, Professor of Mathematics; Chris Oehrlein, Professor of Mathematics; Marsha Austin, Professor of Mathematics; Ken Harrelson, Professor of Mathematics; Dale Duke, Professor of Mathematics; Jay Malmstrom, Professor of Mathematics; Zach Austin, Developmental Mathematics Lab Instructor; Devon Gunter, Developmental Mathematics Lab Instructor; Carrie Beck, Adjunct Professor of Mathematics; Carolyn Broomfield, Adjunct Professor of Mathematics; Sue Oates, Adjunct Professor of Mathematics; Brenda Harrison, Adjunct Professor of Mathematics; Mark Schneberger, Professor of English; and every member of the faculty teaching developmental math courses with assistance from the math department.

GATEWAY COURSE TEAM

KEY FACT: *Gateway courses are required freshman courses taken by most OCCC students.*

GOAL: *To increase the number of students who successfully complete targeted gateway courses.*

The Gateway Courses Team was formed to increase student success in gateway courses, specifically ENGL 1113, POLSC 1113, HIST 1483, MATH 1513 and PSY 1113.

Team members will conduct focus groups during February and March to help determine from the students themselves what specific teaching techniques they see as valuable. Students will be asked what best practices instructors use in the classroom that are well suited for the class as a whole and for the individual. What works and what doesn't? What stays and what goes? Faculty will also be asked which practices best enhance success in those important entry level courses. Consistent results of student success will confirm what instructional processes can be modified, and likewise, if practices do not produce winning results, changes in the classroom will occur—all with the student in mind.

Team co-chairs are Steve Shore, Professor of Chemistry and Mary McCoy, Director of Child Development Center and Lab School.

Team members are Paul Buckelew, Professor of Mathematics; Dr. Jeff Carlisle, Professor of History; Kim Jameson, Professor of English; Haifeng Ji, Professor of Computer Science; Jenean Jones, Professor of Administrative Office Technology; Susan VanSchuyver, Dean of Arts and Humanities; and Cynthia Williams, Professor of Nursing.

ONLINE LEARNING TEAM

KEY FACT: *A significant number of OCCC students enrolled in online courses during the 2007 academic year; however, success rates in these classes are lower when compared to classes in the traditional classroom setting. This is a concern because enrollment in online courses is growing much faster than traditional courses.*

GOAL: *To explore why more students are withdrawing from online courses than from classes offered in a traditional college classroom.*

Convenient, available at any time and favorable for working adults—are just a few benefits of online courses at OCCC. On the other hand, new research has shown that more and more students are withdrawing from online courses. To combat this issue, the Online Learning Team at OCCC is ready to investigate the advantages and the setbacks of this innovative and novel way of learning. Instructor to student interaction and the accountability that comes from peers in the classroom may simply outweigh online learning advantages for some students. Additional stumbling blocks are being explored with online courses, and the online team is researching the percentage of students who earn a “C” or higher in these “from the computer” courses. Data from student and faculty focus groups will soon provide answers alongside a recently completed faculty survey. A student survey is scheduled for the end of February, and online team members also plan to determine best practices by online instructors for future online courses.

Team co-chairs are Anita Philipp, Professor of Computer Science; Kathy Wullstein, Director of Distributed Learning and Instructional Services.

Team members are Jon Inglett, Professor of English; Anita Williams, Professor of Business; Monica Holland, Professor of Nursing; Mary Williams, Professor of Computer Science; Ken Harrelson, Professor of Math; Peggy Jordan, Director of Center for Learning and Teaching and Professor of Psychology; Sonya Williams, Director of Science; and Susan VanSchuyver, Dean of Arts and Humanities.

ADVISEMENT POLICY TEAM

KEY FACT: *A considerable number of students withdraw from courses throughout the academic semester.*

GOAL: *To improve the early alert system for students who withdraw from courses throughout the semester by analyzing general institutional data and visiting with administrators at surrounding colleges of like size and purpose to OCCC.*

Where do I go from here? What options are available to me in my desired career field? What prerequisites do I have to complete first?

These are all questions students have as they enroll and begin college courses. Advisement from college professors and counselors is key to lessen the number of students who withdraw throughout each academic semester. The Advisement Policy Team is developing a strategy to improve student access to advisement, advisement for at-risk populations and the use of technology as an advisement tool. Also this spring, the team will finalize advisement implementation plans, create a five-year advisement plan including recommended purchases and additional staffing needs, and continue the assessment of student advisement.

Team co-chairs are Liz Largent, Dean of Student Development, and Sonya Williams, Director of Science.

Team members are E.J. Warren, Director of E-Student Services; Susan VanSchuyver, Dean of Arts and Humanities; Pat Stowe, Director of Student Support Services; Doug Gregory, Professor of Computer-aided Technology; Stephanie Hayes, Professor of Psychology; and Marion Paden, Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services.

FINANCIAL AID TEAM

KEY FACT: *College expenses can be one of the biggest financial challenges that parents and their children encounter to achieve their educational aspirations.*

GOAL: *To increase the rates of retention and student success by ensuring that financial barriers are minimized.*

Planning for college can be one of the large financial weights on the minds of parents and students. In fact, preparing for college is next in line to buying a house on the financial planning calendar for most families. To reduce financial barriers for students at OCCC, the Financial Aid Team members are participating in outreach efforts to maximize the number of Free Applications for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). As well, the team plans to organize events on campus to better educate students and prospective students on the financial services available to them. And these efforts are yielding results: for the first time in several years the percentage of students who applied for financial aid exceeded the percentage of students who didn't apply.

It's never too late to find a way to make paying for college manageable. In fact, the Financial Aid Team hopes to develop a “Cost Calculator” for students and parents, available on the OCCC web site. The Cost Calculator would assist students in making informed decisions about the fees related to courses as well as help to create an individualized enrollment plan that would include an effective approach to paying for future classes necessary for their career.

The use of technology in Financial Aid and Veterans Services will also be expanded to improve efficiency in this area.

Team co-chairs are Harold Case, Director of Student Financial Support Services; Stephanie Hayes, Professor of Psychology.

Team members are Sergio Gallegos, Admissions Advisor; Paula Gower, Director of Marketing and Public Relations; George Maxwell, Personal and Academic Advisor; Meghan Morgan, Financial Aid Client Services Coordinator; and Joan Sublett, Financial Aid Advisor.
