

ACHIEVING THE DREAM
Oklahoma City Community College
Faculty Focus Groups
October 23-24, 2007

Facilitators:
Dr. Kathy Hagler-Moderator
Dr. Janice Garner-Recorder

The purpose of the faculty focus group discussion was to address three major areas of the College:

1. Student's lack of preparedness for their educational experience
2. College level courses that have a high percentage of withdrawal or failure rate
3. Student's choosing to leave the college prior to completing their degree

To begin the process, the four faculty groups were presented with:

- The ground rules for discussion (respect other opinions, listen and consider everyone's opinions and focus comments on ideas not people)
- Information on data regarding OCCC students:
 1. About 65% of students tested when applying to the college must complete a developmental math course. The data shows that 50% of these students withdraw or fail these courses
 2. The top five 1000 level courses students have difficulty in succeeding:
 - U.S. History to the civil war*
 - College Algebra*
 - General Chemistry I*
 - Human Anatomy & Physiology*
 - American Federal Government*The top five 2000 level courses students have difficulty in succeeding:
 - Accounting I- Financial*
 - General Zoology*
 - Principles of Macroeconomics*
 - Principles of Management*
 - Accounting 2- Managerial*
 3. Approximately 60% of students continue from fall semester to spring semester. About 35% are here the following fall.

Faculty focus groups were asked to review potential causes for reasons students do not succeed in these courses and what the college can do to address these reasons.

GROUP I
Tuesday October 23rd
10:30-12:00

STUDENT LACK OF PREPAREDNESS

Reasons	College Solutions
1. Gap between high school and college	1. Early alert system- Notification
2. Poor preparation – elementary, middle and high school	2. Preparation class- teach students how to study
3. Fourth year math not required in high school	3. Middle college approach – Expand 8 th grade transition to college
4. Attitudes in Oklahoma about higher education – values	4. Concurrent enrollment (opposite of open enrollment)
5. No expectations from family to attain higher education	5. Improve infrastructure
6. Poor language skills- written and verbal	6. Improve recruitment of “high end” students
7. Students just meet requirements to graduate- no future goals beyond finishing degree	
8. Lower expectations in science and math	
9. Systemic American cultural values – Lack of focus on academics and achievement	
10. If student is a high achiever in high school- the goal is not to go to community college	
11. Low Student motivation	
12. Community college attracts more low achieving students than universities	

HIGH % of STUDENT FAILURE/WITHDRAWAL

Reasons	College Solutions
1. Low motivation	1. Send mid term grades to students
2. Time and demands on students	2. Move withdrawal date
3. Stress/Personal Issues- Life crisis	3. Require consultation for student to withdraw after speaking with someone (advisor, counselor)
4. Consumer attitude	4. Do a better job assigning prerequisites
5. Poor understanding of the learning process	5. Improve loophole in system for prerequisites not being met
6. Not working on general education courses- only interested in their major	6. Model the nursing program on prerequisites
7. Lack of critical thinking skills	
8. Most students work, have family and try to go to school full time	
9. Lack of concentration on studies	
10. Lack of prerequisites for courses	
11. Expectation that community college	

courses are easier	
12. Low expectations of student success	
13. College make it too easy to quit for students	
14. Student can withdraw without consultation with anyone	
15. Grades define learning to students-Pressure	
16. Wait to take math until senior year	

STUDENTS WITHDRAWING PRIOR TO COMPLETING DEGREE

Reasons	College Solutions
1. Some part time students only come to take a few classes	1. Get clearer picture of the problem
2. Need better information on data- statistics	2. Better communication with universities
3. Full time university students take online classes at community college (see them as fill in classes)	3. Emphasize value of AA degree
4. AA degree- no value to students; the four year colleges lure students away	4. More contact with students for goal setting- teachers need regular communication to help students set goals

GROUP II Tuesday October 23rd 2:00-3:30

STUDENT LACK OF PREPAREDNESS

Reasons	College Solutions
1. Student priorities	1. Does correlation with math= succeeding in other courses?
2. Are community colleges looking at the right thing- "Entry Access"	2. GAP between high school testing and success in college
3. Cultural/Social Issues	3. Formula for success = balance between work, family and school
4. Emotional immaturity	4. Test students again after completion of developmental classes
5. Student problems with Technology	5. Bring social services into the school such as child care
6. In-house access process not adequate	6. Another model tried elsewhere- Watsonville Digital Bridge Academy- Social Cohort- Mentoring- first semester developmental
7. Students don't know how to learn	7. Do not have developmental and credit courses together
8. Lack of student motivation	
9. Family history/no college	
10. No value to family/no support	
11. Undeclared students more likely to fail	

12. Students want financial aid/college pushes financial aid to full time students	
13. Students have too many obligations- school, work and family for full time	
14. College (financial aid) pushed students toward full time for college security (money)	
15. College locked into model of “seat” time	
16. College pushes faculty to sign waivers for students	
17. Students use rote learning-memorization not critical thinkers	
18. Don’t require ACT scores	
19. Community colleges attract special needs students—they have no place else to go	
20. What is “Benchmark”- if pass –but not reassess after developmental courses	

HIGH % of STUDENT FAILURE/WITHDRAWAL

Reasons	College Solutions
1. Students don’t study	1. Provide a full day of training for online courses: Orientation, Basic application, Overview of process
2. No drop-in day care	2. Online orientation for faculty, staff and students
3. No transportation	3. Focus on learning as a process- not a product—for both students and faculty
4. Financial problems	4. Create a process for intervention before a student is allowed to drop/withdraw
5. No sleep	
6. No health care	
7. Miss too many assignments- 50% drop	
8. Absenteeism - miss too many classes	
9. Students don’t understand expectations— think some courses aren’t academic such as theater	
10. Not interested in Gen-Ed courses	
11. Students can’t manage technology; it interferes with their learning	
12. Students don’t know who to talk to for technical support	
13. No access to technology training	
14. No Gen-Ed requirements on technology	
15. Not ready for higher level learning	
16. Not willing to work “takes too much time”	
17. If students don’t get what they want- they	

leave	
18. Students think teacher responsible for student learning—not the student	

STUDENTS WITHDRAWING PRIOR TO COMPLETING DEGREE

Reasons	College Solutions
1. Student gets a job	1. Change college approach/focus – OK not to get degree
2. Student moves	2. OK to take one or two classes
3. Grade failure	3. Reconfigure financial aid
4. Life problems/issues	4. More prerequisites – not grade inflation
5. Get around degree seeking status	5. More work study programs on campus-related to financial aid
6. Hidden agendas for being in school (parent’s insurance)	6. Embrace part time students – take 6hrs. of credit for 4 years—change the paradigm they have and the way we talk about it
7. Only get credit for first time entering freshmen	7. Work with students on how to be successful
	8. Help students feel successful by being completers

**GROUP I
Wednesday October 24th
12:00-1:30**

STUDENT LACK OF PREPAREDNESS

Reasons	College Solutions
1. Lack of “Good” high school teaching	1. Faculty provide opportunity to evaluate student learning (process other than tests) writing assignments--comprehension
2. Poor discipline	2. Faculty accountable for student writing
3. Older students---too much distance between education experiences	3. Improve self-esteem by finding way to help students know they are not alone, “Not Stupid”
4. Poor study habits	4. Success in College Life Class – provides where to find information and help
5. No retention of math skills	5. Refer students to communication lab
6. Lack of time-expectations	6. Take students to labs, library---don’t assume they know how to use them
7. Lack of support/family	7. Advising to students to set goals
8. Financial problems	8. Re-emphasize “Smart Thinking” to Faculty
9. Lack of attention span- Text message mentality	
10. Lack of motivation	
11. Lack of maturity	
12. GAP between college expectations and	

student expectations	
13. Minimum wage jobs available ---a. Need money now b. Don't have to be serious about the future	
14. Immaturity- no urgency	
15. Students see no need to plan ahead	
16. Immediate gratification	
17. Non English speaking---have not completed reading –writing skills –affects comprehension	
18. First generation students- no support from family—no encouragement	
19. Highest predictor is supportive person “cheerleader” to succeed	
20. Students afraid to ask for help	

HIGH % of STUDENT FAILURE/WITHDRAWAL

Reasons	College Solutions
1. Reasons from preparedness list (above) also account for high % of withdrawal/failure rate	1. Faculty must sign for withdrawal
2. Most faculty don't use the early alert system	2. Teacher “nagging” –Individual and by class- Target quiet students – give attention
3. Challenge of managing work, school & family	3. Help students take work “one piece at a time”
4. Practice of setting clear goals is missing for students	4. Online vs. in-class courses
5. Teachers gear too much work outside of class for students with multiple roles	5. More retention training for faculty
6. Lack of support at home	6. Success breeds success for students
7. Poor time management skills	7. Study “best practices” for retention
8. Take too many hours to keep financial aid	8. Clear plan for success
9. Students must go full time to keep parent's insurance & work plus other roles	
10. Many reasons for withdrawal other than failure	
11. Students expect lower level work in classes like music—courses have more depth than students expect for electives	
12. Even with “no child left behind” student skills are lower than should be from H.S.	
13. Don't require faculty approval for withdrawal	
14. Students aren't independent learners	
15. Students don't know how to study	

STUDENTS WITHDRAWING PRIOR TO COMPLETING DEGREE

Reasons	College Solutions
1. Job	1. Students must see faculty advisor—do not let students self advise
2. Accomplished what they came for	2. Use mentors from community
3. Got basics and left	3. Passion—“Cheerleader” in student’s life from college or community
4. Got courses needed to return to OU or OSU	
5. Life crisis or life changes	
6. Nature of community college—come and go	
7. Frustration	
8. Students are self advised---They don’t know the requirements	

**GROUP II
Wednesday October 24th
4:00-5:30**

STUDENT LACK OF PREPAREDNESS

Reasons	College Solutions
1. First generation college student in family	1. Focus on vocabulary
2. Not prepared in High School	2. Success Class—Required for all college freshmen (measure for results since this is new to the college)
3. Poor study skills	3. Use student mentors to talk to new students
4. Expectation is attendance = passing	4. Advising—students need to know choices for taking courses
5. Technology—inconsistency in high school training	5. Incremental rewards in success class
6. Limited vocabulary	6. College should help students calculate hours for realistic success – 2 x credit hrs + work hours per week = (50 or above—at Risk)
7. Rote learning-memory----no critical thinking skills	
8. Lack of maturity	
9. Time management problems	
10. Cultural issues—stop reading early in life	
11. Listening vocabulary larger than reading	
12. GAP in education process for older students	
13. “Stop-out” – miss a semester and lose ground in learning	
14. Lack of awareness of work involved in college courses	
15. Work + 16hrs.of courses –Have no concept	

of amount of work involved	
16. Students want to be babied in new information classes like technology	
17. Pressure to take 12 or more hours because of financial aid and parent's insurance	

HIGH % of STUDENT FAILURE/WITHDRAWAL

Reasons	College Solutions
1. Protecting grade point average "Wanting – Needing A"	1. Foster student strengths
2. Don't care about Gen. Ed.	2. Need more/better faculty advising
3. Not willing to do work required	3. Require faculty advising to enroll (academic advisors in dept. may not be faculty)
4. Emotional health- Life issues	4. Skills test to evaluate level in beginning of class
5. Fail one course- leave and do not return	5. Math integration in all courses – practical applications
6. Penalties for late or missed work—wide range of variation between teachers	6. Provide experiences in college that will transfer to work place
	7. Better system for follow up on students
	8. Make sure college funds are released to student in a timely manner to buy books etc. (financial aid)

STUDENTS WITHDRAWING PRIOR TO COMPLETING DEGREE

Reasons	College Solutions
1. Never intended to get degree at community college – "student intentions"	1. Call students who have not enrolled in next semester (follow up)
2. Do they indicate plan to get degree to get financial aid?	2. Educating students about benefits of degree in the beginning of college
3. Programs such as "CAD" provide basic work skills that allow student to get a job without a degree	3. Ask for more data on degree seeking—undeclared students need advising
4. Life gets in the way!	4. Campus involvement for students—work, organizations, newspaper, movie night etc. Expand "Human connection"
	5. Expand student teamwork skills
	6. Provide child care services
	7. Are all community colleges competency based?