

## THIS IS THE SECOND OF A TWO PART POSTING ON WHAT OUR STUDENTS ARE LIKE AND HOW WE CAN HELP THEM SUCCEED AT SCHOOL

The list provided below gives suggestions for helping first semester students and others succeed in college, especially developmental, re-entry and nontraditional students. This list is the result of the second collaborative workshop which I facilitated at Cape Cod Community College. The results of the first workshop, where we identified what we perceived our students to be like, were posted earlier. The second workshop addressed the question "What can we do to help all our students succeed in their first semester?".

A brief description of our current services is also given below to help put the suggestions in their proper context. Considering the degree of services we currently provide it may be a little surprising that the list of student characteristics was as negative as it was. This does appear to be indicative of the times, based upon the responses I received to the first post, however.

The list is not meant to be complete but rather a starting point for us to begin focusing our attention on the problem of helping both under prepared students who may not be very motivated and those students who are motivated and prepared. Our attention was directed mainly toward the former group with the understanding that the better students will also benefit from many of our suggestions.

### CURRENT SUPPORT MECHANISMS FOR NEW AND RETURNING STUDENTS

\* All new students are required to take a computer placement test in english and math in order to obtain appropriate advising. This is done in the Summer or between semesters in the winter. Immediately after taking the assessment the students meet with an advisor to work out a schedule. Advisors are senior faculty who work part time during the advising periods and are familiar with the needs and stresses which new students are under.

\* Students are assigned a permanent advisor, generally in their area of interest if one is defined. They are required to meet with their advisor at least once a semester to obtain scheduling information.

\* All faculty have assigned office hours to be available to students.

\* Tutorial facilities are available in the form of a math lab, computer assisted writing lab, academic development center, and computer lab.

\* A fully equipped learning disabilities lab is staffed full time and there is a learning disabilities specialist on campus part time to make diagnosis and help advise students.

\* There are a variety of support services such as Coaches and Mentors, Project Advance, Tech Prep, a counseling center, full time school nurse, a career placement office, student senate, many clubs and organizations, etc.

\* There is a voluntary student orientation half day prior to the beginning of each semester.

\* Students who receive a midterm warning grade are sent a letter from the registrar suggesting they see their professor and/or advisor for extra help.

\* The college has a day care center for single parents, working parents and day care emergencies (regular day care closed), etc.

\* A walk in advising center staffed by full time faculty and available during most day school hours for students who need immediate advice and whose regular advisor is not on campus

\* Registration has been computerized and extended over a 2 week period. Students see their advisors to get their registration times and work out a schedule. They may register any time after their initial time. There is little waiting on line and they are registered immediately. Previously registration took place on a single afternoon with students pulling cards and waiting on long lines. Advisors are available throughout the process to handle problems or questions.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR INCREASED STUDENT SUCCESS

### SCHEDULE FOR SUCCESS

\* If students need 3 developmental courses (reading and study skills, writing, and a math course such as algebra or basic math) then strongly advise them into a College Success class for their fourth course instead of a college level class, assuming they need a full load of 12 credits.

\* For students who score low enough on the placement test recommend they take only 2-3 developmental courses to enable them to get acclimated to the college environment and experience.

\* Schedule classes over 5 days (MWF and TH schedules) instead of all classes in a single time frame such as MWF. This leaves time in between classes to study and/or work with classmates. Many DE students have trouble handling concentrated amounts of material given in 4 classes in one day.

\* Schedule the same students into all 4 classes or as many as you can. This is intended to help build relationships among students through repetitive contact and by having them work together in several academic areas.

\* Encourage faculty who use collaborative teaching or other interactive methods to teach these sections in order to facilitate student interaction.

### INCREASE TEACHER AND STUDENT AWARENESS OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

\* Simplify and condense support programs (Project Coach, Project Advance, Coaches and Mentors, Academic Development Center (ADC), Math Lab, Counseling Center, school nurse etc).

\* Increase student awareness about the support services.

\* Improve communications about these programs to the faculty as well as students through a brochure or publication, or some other mechanism. (Many faculty expressed concern that they were not trained to handle special problems and were not aware of who on campus was.)

\* Have a special, short orientation for each class in the math lab and ADC. Many students are hesitant and even afraid to visit either center. Physically bringing them there and introducing them to the tutors might encourage them to return to get help when they need it.

\* Improve the student orientation provided during the period before classes. Consider making it mandatory and expand the program to deal with issues such as time management, study skills and preparation etc. Include social occasions or structured situations for students to meet each other.

### COURSE AND CURRICULUM RELATED SUGGESTIONS

\* Increase the intensity of DE courses i.e. more hours in class.

- \* Schedule students into the math lab and ADC as a fourth class hour.
- \* Expand paired courses (DE courses with career oriented courses.
- \* Increase computer assisted instruction. (There is some concern here that computers not be used to replace people, since person to person contact is very important with all students.)
- \* Expand peer tutorial courses by having tutors in the classroom as we do in the ADC and math lab. This presumes a collaborative teaching approach. Increase the incentive for tutors through credits or salary
- \* Increase the number of modular courses offered.
- \* Expand math offerings to change the one size fits all mentality i.e. one math sequence from basic math through intermediate algebra leading to precalculus. Establish a precollege math sequence for statistics, business math, and survey of math, which addresses math reasoning, problem solving, and practical problems as much as pure algebra.
- \* Look into developing a practical algebra based math course for A. S. Career degree programs.

#### ASSISTANCE FOR FACULTY

- \* Increase professional development opportunities and training for diverse student needs (learning and social needs).
- \* Increase assessment of learning styles and teaching styles and investigate ways to match these, understanding the limitations here.
- \* Provide additional support for teachers who encounter special problems
- \* Expand the learning disability identification and advising program. Many faculty are unaware of students with LD problems and many students are unaware that they have LD problems.

#### STUDENT ORIENTED SUGGESTIONS

- \* Survey successful students for input on what helped them succeed. Ask existing students and alumni for suggestions on improving the college.  
     Hold collaborative forums for students similar to the faculty forums and include faculty, staff and administrators.
- \* Increase amount of time spent with students by faculty, staff and administration. The difficulty of getting the students to do this was discussed but it was felt it is still worth a try.
- \* Make matriculation a special occasion through an acknowledgement/ congratulatory letter or other means. It was felt that a public ceremony would not be helpful since that would look too much like a high school graduation again.
- \* Use students as mentors in the advising and support process.

\* Develop a faculty mentoring program for at risk students, separate from or in addition to the course selection advising process.

\* Have more independent study options and special projects for students with special interests.

\* Examine graduation requirements.

More than two degree tracks

Alternate programs

Increased certificate programs

Math in particular should be useful math

Not all courses need to be seen as transferable

\* Increase efforts to recruit tutees. Many students who need help will not ask for it unless they are encouraged by a peer or advisor or faculty member.

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Date: Thu, 02 May 1996 08:31:16 -0500

From: Virginia Blasingame <blasingv@babbage.franklin.edu>

I have appreciated this series. You provide stimulate a lot of discussion around here with all your postings. I send them to my boss (academic vp) and DE faculty. They all find the observations very interesting. Sometimes we think our students are the only ones with these traits.

I also am interested in how you managed to get the faculty input on your campus. Were these workshops part of a regular series? In other words, what prompted them -- and you as facilitator?

Thanks for all your good work. I spent some time yesterday cleaning up some old postings, preparing for filing, etc. Many of the good ones were yours. I wish more DE students could have math faculty with your ideas. Trying to get faculty to emphasize the affective domain here is not an easy sell. As much as I love the faculty as persons, most of them fail to realize how much attention students need paid to their feelings, comfort, etc. OH well, we try to help them when they get here, at least.

Virginia Blasingame, Director, Teaching and Learning Center  
Franklin University, Columbus, OH blasingv@franklin.edu

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Date: Wed, 1 May 1996 13:11:40 -0400

From: Jodi Hunt <huntj@CAYLIB.CAYUGA-CC.EDU>

Subject: Reply-Developmental Students

Usually I'm a list lurker, but this discussion has really piqued my interest. As the English Specialist at a two year community college, I wonder every day how some of our students ever made it through high school and I know many of them will make it through college. Many don't even have the ability to put together a simple sentence when I first see them.

While I believe it's very important to get to the root of the problem (budget defficiencies, environment, learning disabilities, instructors who are either unable or unwilling to inform themselves about how to deal with this "new" type of student), what is of utmost importance, in my mind, is dealing with the immediate problem on hand. As educators it is up to us to find a way to not only deal with the larger problem (our social responsibility?), but we must help prepare students who are under prepared. That may mean we need to spend out of class time reviewing (for the first time, perhaps) the basics or we may have to alter how we teach so as to

include "review" in the context of our lessons/assignments. Another alternative is to refer students to people who can help them (ie, tutors, Learning Skills Center, computer software,etc...) I realize this may be a difficult thing to do, not all students in a class need that review, but we need to be problem-solvers.

Jodi Hunt English Specialist/Instructor Cayuga Community College

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Date: Wed, 1 May 1996 22:11:21 -0500

From: "Dr. Bob Holderer" <RHOLDERER@EDINBORO.EDU> tcc-1

The suggestions sound good; however, I would be cautious about restricting students to developmental courses only. Many students, no matter how academically underprepared they are, will get upset if they discover that they are taking nothing the first semester that will accumulate credits toward their degree.

While a college success course seems like a nice idea to add toward the developmental reading, writing, and math, I would suggest trying very hard to get the students into at least one class that will "count" toward their graduation requirement. Otherwise, students get frustrated that they are investing time and money in classes that do not "count." While on one hand students realize down deep that they are not quite prepared for "regular college stuff," they are still upset that they are not doing anything that will contribute quantitatively toward graduation. I have seen this type of student drop out. On the other hand, giving these students at least one course that will count helps their morale. At the end of the semester they can see that they are at least three credits on the way.

Concerning assessment, I am troubled by computerized testing for writing skills. The ability to write does not really lend itself to activities where students must answer multiple-choice questions. We have gone to a writing sample only. It is relatively easy to determine who needs basic writing from a writing sample. We determine placement by writing sample with other indicators to verify what we have determined by the writing sample. We have had a lot of success with this.

Bob Holderer Director of Composition Edinboro University of Pennsylvania

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Date: Thu, 2 May 1996 08:19:09 CST6CDT

From: \* John Pickrell <PICKRELL@vet.ksu.edu>

Helping the underpressed as you call them...I've never had a name other than needy...whether wealthy or poor beyond imagination is best done, at least with me by asking them what they need, and showing them that what they have is equal to the task of getting what they need.

In some, this does not go down without a fight (see Stand and Deliver and Dangerous Minds for details), but its the most rewarding pastime you can ever imagine.

Your list looks like a different approach...you're going to organize them into it...usually in such unorganized individuals as myself this is unproductive...in march by the numbers and in straight line types of people it is also unproductive. This leaves the great middle ground, and I'm betting that if you have enough love and enough desire to show them that what they have is equal to what they need to get, and actually TELL them that (don't be shy/subtle) you'll get there.

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Date: Thu, 02 May 1996 09:09:59 -0004

From: Leigh Ann Jervis <JERVIS@mailpl.coop.pace.edu>

Subject: Re: Helping students succeed

Here are some more suggestions for you that I have seen implemented at Pace University in Westchester:

1. A University 101 course that is designed to familiarize students with the facilities available to them on campus, as well as teach time management and study skills. The class is meets for 2 hours each week, and is graded on a pass-fail basis. Students do such things as have a scavenger hunt across campus for brochures from various departments that are there to help them. The brochures are then read in class and students discuss when such services should be utilized.

2. Study groups for various classes are offered in tutorial services (the university tutoring office) There is no charge for the groups, and they are run by students whom the professor has selected from previous classes. (for example a chemistry major who had done well in Chem 101 would run a study group for that class) Students are free to express any questions about the course material, and then the problems are solved as a group with the leader there mainly to mediate. The leader reports to the teacher what topics were discussed, and the level of difficulty that the students are having with the topic.

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Date: Wed, 1 May 1996 23:59:40 +0000

From: Stephen Carden <cardesd@OCC-UKY.CAMPUS.MCI.NET> commcoll

Ted,

Your suggestions seem right on the mark. As to increasing student success, emphasis might be given to recruiting (promotional materials and first personal contacts on campus), orientation programs (organized by some criteria, such as major, which are led by the instructors of their first courses who are the best teachers), and mentoring programs (to help students find their way and not feel so confused and overwhelmed). These changes require, of course, a campus-wide effort.

Stephen Carden cardesd@occ-uky.campus.mci.net

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Date: Fri, 03 May 1996 08:20:43 -0400 (EDT)

From: tvicker@junix.ju.edu (Tom Vickery)

I quickly read through the posting and am glad I requested the resend. We at JU are struggling with the same kinds of problems. We are a private school and several times more expensive than the state univ across town. As a consequence of our being more costly and of their being amazingly insensitive to students--faculty members do not advise students; students have such a difficult time getting the courses necessary to graduate that they say UNF doesn't stand for U of No Fla but for U Never Finish!--as a consequence of these factors, we get a most unusual mix of students. And then we get lots of snowbirds--students from the northeast, middle Atlantic, and midwestern states--who appreciate a relatively inexpensive private liberal arts university in a decent climate. And then we are strapped with the same problem of other institutions--having a population of students who do not look upon books as a preferred or even desirable means of learning but not the money or faculty necessary to really go high tech and create an academic MTV-like curriculum.

Tom Rusk Vickery

Jacksonville University Jacksonville, FL 32211 904-744-3950, x-7130

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Date: Thu, 2 May 1996 08:42:39 -0600

From: Bill Kuba <bkuba@HOMER.LIBBY.ORG> edstyle

I couldn't have set it up better. If you folks ever have openings drop me a line. One thing: In our area we found individuals who have the tools to succeed but not the confidence. I'm sure you have a group of students who fit in that area. We developed a type of pre-vocational ed. course that lasts 6 to 8 weeks. My dissertation is based on this program. I used the Inventory of Learning Process (ILP-R) by Ron Schmeck for an evaluation tool. I found it to be the best in giving use full information on learning profiles of the students. If I had the opportunity to develop a program for "students-at-risk" I would use the ILP-R as an entrance evaluation tool.

Two quick thoughts out of my work with students and the research:

1. Some student diagnosed with a learning disability may just need help developing learning process skills.
2. Some students diagnosed with a learning disability may have a learning style that is contrary to the measurement tool being used to evaluate the student.

If these observation have some validity I would say the student has a "learning conflict" rather than a learning disability.

Bill Kuba, Director  
Office of Student Services                      bkuba@homer.libby.org  
Lincoln County Campus  
101 E. Lincoln Blvd.                              406/ 293-2721  
Libby, MT 59923

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Date: Wed, 8 May 1996 17:13:16 -1000  
From: Sandra L Kelley-Daniel <skelley@HAWAII.EDU>  
Subject: Re: helping students succeed

Dear Dr. Bob:

On Wed, 1 May 1996, Dr. Bob Holderer wrote:

- > The suggestions sound good; however, I would be cautious about
- > restricting students to developmental courses only. Many students, no
- > matter how academically underprepared they are, will get upset if they
- > discover that they are taking nothing the first semester that will
- > accumulate credits toward their degree.

I agree. Although many students are reluctantly willing to take courses to 'bring them up to speed', in my experience many often feel somewhat cheated in that these courses do not "count". I think this needs to be addressed. When they can, our counselors often try to get DE students into a course that will "count" (though sometimes this turns out to be something they can't handle), but maybe there are other solutions to this problem.

Perhaps there is a way that at least part of the credits assigned to these developmental classes could be "counted" towards graduation.

The latter isn't an idea I've seen anywhere else (though my data base is limited), and may be more problematical than not, but it seems like a good idea to me! How does your school handle this problem?

- > While a college success course seems like a nice idea to add toward
- > the developmental reading, writing, and math,

I really support this idea. I teach at this level (and above), and invariably my DE students need a lot of help learning how to be a successful student. If this kind of course was mandatory, built in to the program in some way, these students would do much better when they began to take "countable" courses. As it is, unless the reading/writing teacher takes the time to teach study skills, time management skills, etc., students improve their reading/vocabulary/writing but aren't that much better at being a student. So they bomb tests because they don't know how to study or how to take tests; or they apply a tried and true study pattern (like flash cards) to everything, and are disappointed and confused when the results aren't the same. Of course, students who don't test in at the DE level often have the same problem ... actually, I'd recommend some kind of student success training for (almost) everyone.

Well, I really went on the soapbox that time!

- > Concerning assessment, I am troubled by computerized testing for
- > writing skills. The ability to write does not really lend itself to
- > activities where students must answer multiple-choice questions.

At least there is something other than a reading test! Just because someone does well on a reading test doesn't mean he/she can write at the same level ... and that's all many 2 year colleges use. If more campuses used writing samples as well as reading placement tests, their composition courses would be more effective.

As it is, in the DE classes I've taught (and many I've heard about), students' writing skills run the gamut from "just needing a brush-up" to "haven't a clue how to put together a complete sentence", and brother is that a complex class to teach. When the fates shine on me and my students are more homogenous (wherever they are), I can reach more of them with in-class mini-lectures and activities. When the usual situation exists, I have to spend a lot of time out of class in on-on-one instruction to help those who would otherwise be almost completely lost -- or drop out. I don't mind helping them, of course, just wish things were different, as I think they would be if we could use writing samples to group students more efficiently.

We > have gone to a writing sample only. It is relatively easy to > determine who needs basic writing from a writing sample. We determine > placement by writing sample with other indicators to verify what we > have determined by the writing sample. We have had a lot of success > with this.

How do you do this? We've been stymied by the lack of funds to pay teachers to read writing samples (the 4 year university here in Hawaii

does this, the 2 year campuses don't, because the latter don't have the  
wherewithal). Any suggestions?

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