

UHD Retention Task Force  
Minutes, October 23<sup>rd</sup> 9-11 in A625

**Present:** Carolyn Ashe, Chris Birchak, Katrina Borders (guest), Jemma Caesar, Chris Cheatham, Greg Dement, Louis Evans, Sara Farris, RaShonda Flint, Gary Greer, Susan Henney, Ed Hugetz, Faiza Khoja, Lisa Morano, Kwame Opuni (guest), Tommy Thomason, Souraya Mitri, Bill Pogue, Timothy Redl, Bill Waller, Laura Wesley

**Absent:** Ron Beebe, Ermelinda Delavina, Isidro Grau, Tomikia LeGrande, Poonam Gulati

1. Approve minutes of last meeting.

Carmen motioned to approve the minutes, Tommy seconded, all approved.

2. Presentations

a. Where we are, some obvious recommendations coming forward (Lisa)

Lisa reviewed plans for the day, stated that we need to learn more about why each one of the FTIC students leave. We know where they go, but not exactly why they live. She asked if it was possible for our current intrusive advising could figure that out or if there was a way to create an exit survey for each student. Lisa also stated that another recommendation that needs to come from the Task Force be that every retention strategy at UHD include a standard assessment plan. In addition, assessment requirements should come from a particular office and be collected and analyzed by a particular office. These plans are apparently underway.

Lisa presented a diagram of overlapping services (arranged differently for a new way of considering the interactions of services. These included Before the First Day, Student Activities, Community Engagement, Classroom Success, Engagement with the Discipline and Essential Services. She stated there needs to be better connections between these resources and the student. The student cohort/learning community appears to be a good model for connecting students with these areas. If we consider the learning communities we already have (Scholars Academy, Honors) and those we want to create (Minority Male, Katrina Borders' summer programs), this appears to be a strong model that is scalable if all departments participate. Participation from most departments would not involve many faculty.

b. Retention Awards Update (Faiza)

Faiza described the projects of two colleges that were awarded Retention Awards by the Coordinating Board. Odessa College designed a program of four instructor commitments to improve student persistence and success. The following summary is taken from slides forwarded by Faiza. *Odessa specifically was a faculty led initiative where faculty committed to: knowing each student's name from the first day of class, monitoring student behavior and progress and to intervene immediately, having 1 on 1 meetings with every student early in the semester, developing a clear and highly structured course. Their goal was to become the best community college in the nation*

*and since 2011 they have seen dramatic increases in courses completed, courses completed with a C or higher and degrees earned.*

The second award was to Sam Houston State for their Minority Male Initiative program. This program put students in small groups of 10-12 and they had tremendous success. The specifics of the program taken from their presentation (supplied by Faiza) included the following details. *Students had required weekly meetings with a mentor for 1 hour, monthly speaker series and events including orientation, team-building, etc., study skills were given, academic and other resources organized and students were given money for books, scantrons, polos and graduation cords. The five year graduation rate went from 25% to 63% with these cohorts.*

c. What we know about our students (Jemma)

Jemma reviewed data we have for the first time from our FTIC students using the CSI data. 82% of our students are first generation, 43% were B+ students in high school, 37% work 20 hours or more and only 0.7% work 40 or more hours. A total of 69% of our students have the characteristics for dropout proneness, 59% have predicted academic difficulty, 57% have self-reported educational stress and 71% are receptive to institutional help. Students are receptive to help in selecting academic program, careers and occupations, study skills, writing and reading skills and behavior and social issues. Jemma stated that it seems reasonable to design student programs for our FTIC students that address what they are asking for.

d. Subcommittee Before the First Day (Chris and Chris)

This group presented efforts that are currently going on at UHD to support students prior to the first day. These include recruitment, scholarships, admissions, credit by exam, numerous types of orientations, College Success Inventory (CSI), Freshman Convocation and Common Reader. This group suggests comparing the formats of the 2-day, 4-day and 3-week orientations, considering specific learning outcomes for these orientations, improving the engagement of freshman with establishing communities of learners and building earlier relationships with the colleges (perhaps bring an orientation day or half day to the college). This subcommittee also recommends expanding recruitment strategies and studying the implementation of freshman admissions standards.

e. Subcommittee Academic Support (Bill W.)

This subcommittee reviewed tutoring centers/programs, peer mentoring programs, curriculum innovation and course redesign initiatives and faculty development programs. They established a goal for the subcommittee: ***Contribute to improved student persistence and graduation through a teaching and learning ecology that enhances student acquisition of important knowledge, skills and critical thinking abilities.***

Objective 1: Motivate students to engage and persist in learning activities. They recommend wider exposure to evidence-based classroom strategies and implementation of co-requisite remediation options in all developmental areas.

Objective 2: Motivate faculty to adopt evidence-based teaching practices. They

recommend alignment with R&T policies, promote IDEA system and create better data inventories for faculty.

Objective 3: Increase the *relative* amount of time students are engaged in learning activities. (Relative time = Time engaged/Time available). They recommend scheduling courses in consolidated time blocks, moving to MWF and TR class schedule for 1000 level morning block classes, schedule time for tutoring/advising and convert more gateway courses to 8-week class option.

Objective 4: Increase the efficiency of the learning activities students are engaging in. They recommend uniform syllabi for gateway classes, pilot/promote online tutoring and modularizing gateway classes and making options for near-miss students to just retake the final.

Objective 5: Increase the quality of the learning activities in which students are engaging. (Quality of learning = Knowledge outcomes + Forms of thinking + Skill level). They recommend encouragement of HIPS and community engagement (QEP) and implementation of teaching squares to foster an environment of teaching improvement in a non-punitive environment.

f. Subcommittee Academic/Co-curricular (Carolyn)

This group evaluated designated cohort models at UHD (many formats). They recommend degree mapping with faculty input and expansion of HIPs/Service Learning activities such as internships, undergraduate research, study abroad and student employment on campus. They also recommend career exploration week, collaboration of colleges and advisors and other Career Exploration Opportunities (CEOs). They recommend continuation of First year experiences and following up with second year experiences.

g. Subcommittee Student Support (RaShonda)

This group is summarizing areas of advising, career services, disabilities services, financial aid, student activities, student conduct, Title IX and Veterans Services. Although most efforts have some form of data collection, there is no established assessment practice. Based on what works in advising they recommend 1:1 professional advising, roadmap of courses, on-track graduation advising and better integration of advising with career services and financial aid. Their initial recommendations are identifying consistent tools to collect and assess data and to find an integrated retention and student success planning software.

3. Subcommittees break out and discuss

a. What do you think we need to share with the faculty at the Town Hall (mid-November)

Academic Support subcommittee – This group recommends presenting Objective 2 to motivate faculty to share and adopt evidence-based teaching practice which means we will need to support Objective 1, wider exposure to evidence-based classroom strategies. We can do this through course innovation initiatives and teaching circles. They encourage faculty support of IDEA and inclusion of IDEA information into evaluation rubrics. For

Objectives 3, 4 and 5 they recommend we present methods to improve time on task including extended sessions, 8-week terms, block scheduling, MWF/TR for 1000-level courses. They recommend presenting improved efficiency through tutoring, uniformity of gateway course syllabi, learning commons and online tutoring. Finally, they recommend faculty can help improve quality of student learning through integration with technology and HIPs.

Prior to First Day – This group recommends we invite faculty and staff to the Town Hall. The big ideas that we should present are “informed” recruitment where data is used to combine scholarship and recruitment and to make stronger college and major connections early on. They recommend presenting the ideas of a college-based orientation component and the idea of every FTIC student being a part of a Community of Learners.

Academic/Co-curricular – For the Town Hall they recommend Faculty and Staff be included. They recommend coverage of information based on slides (presented). They also recommend that the Town Hall endeavor to cover the breadth of present program already in place. This group recommends not relying on outside experts, but instead capitalizing on the Noel-Levitz survey data (Jemma presented) and the resources already in place.

Student Support – This group also recommends inviting both faculty and staff do the Town Hall. They recommend emphasizing that improvement will require collective efforts and earlier interventions. They also recommend degree maps, advising and career services integration and a second year CSI Assessment. The focus should be on continuous improvement and studying the critical points for our students.

b. Where should we focus next (if time allows)  
(Time did not allow for this.)