

The Campaign for Student Success at Queens College: Promoting Achievement & Excellence in Undergraduate Education

History

At Queens College, Part Two of the CUNY initiative builds upon the wide reach of Part One, in which all departments and offices whose function is the education of undergraduates examined their programs and identified best practices as well as areas in need of improvement. Regular reports on the progress of the Campaign are presented at the Provost's bi-weekly meetings with the academic deans, the regularly scheduled meetings of the Committee on Personnel and Budget, the monthly Provost's office staff meetings, and the meetings of the Academic Senate. In addition, the college community has been directed to the Provost's website where all related documents are posted. Among the several documents informing the Campaign are the reports of the CUNY Task Force on Retention, the Reading, Writing and Mathematics reports, the College's Enrollment management reports and the *CUNY Campaign for Success Data Book* as well as data on student success in introductory courses and gateway to the major courses.

The College Team

The College's team for this project, coordinated by June Bobb, CUE Director and Acting Assistant Provost include: Vincent Angrisani, Director of Admissions; Martin Braun, Professor of Mathematics and Director of the Freshman Year Initiative (FYI); Mary Bushnell-Greiner, Professor, Elementary and Early Childhood Education; Alexandra deLuise, Professor and Coordinator of Instructional Services (Library); Tom Gibson, Assistant Director, SEEK; Sarit Golub, Professor, Psychology; Nancy Hemmes, Professor, Psychology; Wanda LaLond Associate Director, Registrar's Office; Ken Lord, Assistant to the Provost for Educational Technology; Donna Lipper, Assistant to the Provost for Academic Data; Meg McAuliffe, Office of Institutional Research, Liz McCaffrey, Director, Counseling and Advisement Center; Carole Rhodes, Professor, Secondary Education; Dean Savage, Professor of Sociology and Chair of the Academic Senate; Donald Scott, Professor of History and Director, Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL); Laura Silverman, Director, the Advising Center (AC); Jason Tougaw, Professor of English and Director of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC); and Ross Wheeler, Director of Honors and Scholarships.

Team members served on one of the four working groups identified by the University: Changing the College Culture; Improving Teaching and Learning, Coordinating Student Services, and Assessing the Campaign. The team has drawn on the work of the faculty and administration on the Middle States Self-Study and the President's Strategic Planning Initiative. Emerging from the examination of current practices, and the recognition of strengths and acknowledgement of weaknesses, comes a renewed commitment to ensure the success of our students. We seek to reinforce the concept, at all levels, that the College is not a collection of fragmented parts, but a place devoted to education as a significant human experience, and a place where excellence and equity are valued.

Planning for Success: Communicating a Culture of Success

Students need to know that Queens College and success are synonymous. This message of success should be reinforced across the college, with all offices and departments emphasizing the centrality of students to their efforts. The working group on *Changing the College Culture* recommends that the following areas be assessed to determine the degree to which these areas foster or inhibit student success:

- What message(s) do our current communications send to students? Can our communications better relay the centrality of student success - for example, letters of probation, readmission, return to good standing, deans list? Do we sufficiently celebrate student success? An assessment of our current communication practices across the campus should be conducted to ensure that we are sending a consistent and appropriate message to students.

Suggested Course of Action:

The College will review all communications sent to students. This may be a lengthy process, but if consistency of message is our goal, we need to assess the extent to which consistency now exists.

- Can the college, through departments and relevant offices more strongly communicate the importance of declaring a major? Majors can provide students with a sense of purpose and direction; majors help students establish a vital link to the College. Early declaration of majors is important if students are to complete their education in four years.

Suggested Courses of Action:

- While the importance of declaring a major is stressed at new-student orientations for freshmen and transfers, faculty should continue to be encouraged to participate so students can begin early to connect with faculty in departments. Connection with the major is most effectively established through student and faculty relationships.
- Institutional barriers inhibiting declaration of a major at the point of application should be removed when feasible.
- Majors that maintain specific admission requirements should offer advising/orientation sessions for potential students. This is in the departments' interests, as it identifies a potential applicant pool and enables early redirection efforts for students unlikely to meet admission requirements.
- To ensure that students can make steady progress toward graduation in structured majors (Computer Science, Education, Accounting, Mathematics, Sciences), departments should consider one to two years of advanced notice of course offerings within these sequences.

Improving Teaching and Learning: CUE, the Campaign and Faculty Development

The goal of our Faculty Development Programs is to improve the educational experience of students through their contact with faculty members who effectively combine teaching, scholarship, and service, and foster a campus culture that values and supports excellence in teaching, learning, and research. To accomplish this, faculty development must focus on: 1) the faculty member as a teacher (currently addressed by departments and by college-wide programs

like WAC, the CTL, the Library, and the Educational Technology Lab), and 2) the faculty member as a scholar and professional, currently addressed primarily by departments.

Current Faculty Development Programs

To create a "community of practice," the College has provided contiguous space to house the CTL, WAC and the Faculty Technology Laboratory. These programs have a shared mission to offer the faculty development necessary to make the focus on methods, practices, and competencies in the College's new General Education curriculum a reality.

The New Center for Teaching and Learning will:

- Host the CUNY General Education Conference; faculty working groups will create opportunities for faculty to work on implementation of the College's new General Education curriculum, bolstered by participation in national conversations about liberal education.
- Offer Faculty development workshops on pilot Perspectives on the Liberal Arts and Sciences (PLAS) and synthesis courses.
- Consult with WAC Faculty Partners to coordinate the development of writing curriculum and goals with Gen Ed curriculum and goals.
- Offer Teaching with Technology workshops, in collaboration with WAC and the Educational Technology Lab.

Writing Across the Curriculum

- The WAC Faculty Partners program: 8 faculty working in Division groups, with CUNY Writing Fellows (CWFs), will assess the needs with regard to writing instruction of individual departments and develop resources to meet those needs.
- Collaboration with Bard College's Institute for Writing and Thinking: Bard Associate Alfie Guy facilitated the Fall 2006 Faculty Partner Orientation; 10 faculty and 6 CWFs will attend the IWT Weekend Workshops in December; Bard associates will visit QC for an on-campus consultation during the Spring 2007 semester.
- Twice-yearly workshops open to all faculty: These focus on topics such as "Taking Stock of Student Writing," "Designing Effective Assignments," and "Preventing Plagiarism by Designing Creative Research Projects." This year's fall workshop will be developed in collaboration with FYI and the Library.
- Workshop Series: Teaching and Learning in the Computer Age, in collaboration with College Now, the Educational Technology Lab, and the Center for Teaching and Learning.
- Blogging Across the Curriculum Pilot: 5 courses using Movable Type software to create course weblogs, in collaboration with OCT and the CTL.

The Educational Technology Lab will present:

- QC IT Day: Conference featuring IT projects and initiatives on campus

- Brown Bag Lunches: These will address faculty needs regarding teaching with technology
- Introduction to Blackboard: Sessions offered for new users or those who want a refresher
- One-on-one faculty consultation in the lab: Faculty may use the lab's equipment and receive instruction on how to use it

The Library

The Library works actively in support of undergraduate retention and success in several ways. It collaborates with faculty from many departments and programs through its active teaching program. Librarians have established relationships with the English Composition program, the subject departments where instruction sessions are requested, the SEEK Program, ELI, FYI, ACE/Weekend College, and Summer School. It also offers the following programs:

- The Library Instruction Program: The Library is an active leader in teaching critical thinking that emphasizes the teaching of concepts for lifelong learning
- The Library Mentorship Program: Assigns a tenured faculty member with subject background similarities to newly hired library faculty
- Internship Program: A mentorship program with the college's Graduate School of Library and Information Services
- New Faculty Workshops: These are held every semester, introducing new faculty to collections and services and to meet their assigned library bibliographers who will collaborate with them on the acquisition of library materials in their fields

Coordinating Services for Students: Building on our Accomplishments and Setting Priorities

Academic advising, counseling, and the provision of student services and assistive technologies are necessities that enhance and support a student's entire undergraduate experience and to ensure an equal college experience for all students.. Therefore, the College has the following goals in the area of student services:

- Clarity and Accessibility of Information
 - Ensure the clarity, uniformity, and accessibility of college-wide information
 - Build upon the creation of the "Advising Consortium" that brings together all offices devoted to advising and student services for collaborations and program building
 - Continue the development and use of eCat (Degree Works)
 - When all points of advising are using the same tool, the advice given to students will be clear and consistent.

- Customized Advising Opportunities
 - Offer consistent and customized advising opportunities from students' initial admission to graduation.
 - Outreach through TAP Audit program. This College Initiative seeks to address appropriate course selection to ensure state aid compliance and brings together the offices of Financial Aid, the Registrar, the Academic Center, The Center for Counseling and Advisement and the Office of the Provost. The College will work to achieve greater departmental understanding and involvement in this process.
 - Increase Transfer Admittance to the College through Workshops. In fall 2006, advising and registration workshops were attended by 76% of incoming transfers.
 - Expand the Sophomore Initiative Program. This retention program targets students bi-annually at a critical step in their academic careers and offers tailored services, individual advising and specific workshops.

- Implementation of Electronic Communication and Technology
 - The college will campaign for the use of e-mail and other electronic technologies by staff, faculty, and students to create community, association and connection. The Registrar will offer a one-year transition process before total implementation of transactions by email.
 - Phase in eCAT (DegreeWorks) campus-wide. This system went live at the end of May 2006. The Academic Center and Counseling and Advisement are piloting this program, introducing students to it, and are reporting inconsistencies and issues, which is serving to further develop and maintain the system's integrity.

- Data Mining for Assessment and Improvement
 - Continue to use technology to research and mine the College's educational trends for the purpose of continued development and management of curricula, course offerings, resources, and the identification of problem areas and issues to be addressed.
 - Assessing the Campaign: Changing the Culture. While not directly mentioned in the four goals of the Campaign, it is necessary to measure how much students have actually learned. The Spellings Report emphasizes this goal; it is central to the College's mission to graduate students well equipped to function as citizens of the world. At Queens NSSE (the National Survey of Engagement) was administered to a sample of QC students in 2000 and 2005. The College is scheduled to take part again in 2007.
 - Another means of assessment is the Collegiate Learning Assessment which seeks to measure how much 'value-added' individual colleges provide.

- Academic Intervention and Retention

The *Campaign for Success at Queens College* will focus on retention in two essential areas: timely degree completion and significant student learning outcomes. To encourage students to remain with their cohort, and to increase the probability of graduation, students will be encouraged to complete 30 credits

annually. Winter and summer offerings should be designed to make this possible for the working student. Departments will be asked to provide 4 year curricular plans for majors. Many departments have already taken this action.

- Consolidation and Coordination of Advising Resources
 - Degree Works will facilitate the coordination of services to students. The College will initiate studies of students who drop out or transfer to other institutions. The Tutoring Center will track the records of students who take advantage of tutorial and writing and math training. It will look at the numbers of students who participate in these programs and analyze the outcomes.
 - The National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty indicates that the average number of hours faculty spend advising students is a little over 6 hours a week. The College will invest in encouraging faculty advising. The Provost's Faculty Advising Initiative for transfers and new students, organized by the Advising Center, is such an investment.
 - The assessment subcommittee of the College's Strategic Planning Task Force has been assigned the task of proposing assessment measures. The assessment part of the Campaign for Student Success will align with the Strategic Planning recommendations and the outcomes of the Middle States Self-Study that identify questions key to the process of evaluation: What should students learn? How well are they learning it? How do we know? How can the information gained from this research improve teaching and learning?
 - Increased connection to "gateway to the major" courses. The College will continue to build accessibility to these key courses through current conduits of specially-designed FYI major communities and the Transfer Class Reservation Program. The College will increase FYI communities and create communities for transfer students. The FYI program will continue to develop its *Reacting to the Past pedagogy* by developing new games.
 - Academic Support Services will increase tutoring in content area courses and in courses with high failure rates.
 - Clarifying advising services. The College, in an effort to clarify its advising services is involved in a major reorganization. The Advising Center will be renamed the Academic Advising Center and the Office of Counseling and Advising will be renamed the Office of Counseling. This action will clarify for students the distinct responsibilities and functions of each unit. All academic advising will be lodged solely in the Academic Center and personal and psychological advising will be located in the Office of Counseling. This separation has positive implications for increased retention as the Academic Advising Center will initiate the early identification of at risk students followed up by necessary interventions. In addition, the Advising Center will work to increase its services to part-time and Weekend College Students. With the addition of four advisors in the near future, the Center will be able to expand its services substantially.
 - The Center will continue to build its collaborations with the Office of Counseling and Student Services as together they work to improve the Family and Student Orientation Program.