

Core Team Meeting

June 20, 2014

Lynn Library 207

9:00 a.m.

Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Austin, Danita McAnally, Janet Barton, Janine Goode, Penny Massey, Megan Eikner, April Sessler, Jason Norman, Bruce Moseley, and Olga Bustos

Others present: Kristin McDonald-Willey

Student Representative: Andrew Alexander

Recorder: Carolyn Leslie

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dr. Paul Matney, Heather Voran, Dr. Kathy Wetzel, Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, Susan Burks, Carol Bevel, Dr. Tamara Clunis, Melanie Castro and Student Representative: Seth Brogdon

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (Bob Austin)

- Bob Austin asked for approval of the minutes from the April 25, 2014 No Excuses Core Team meeting. Janet Barton made a motion to approve the minutes and Penny Massey seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by majority vote.

CALL FOR ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS AND ACTION ITEMS (Bob Austin)

- Megan Eikner requested that an agenda item concerning setting parameters in order to measure success in continuing education courses be added. Bob Austin stated that this item would be added under **Discussion Items**.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- **AC No Excuses Web Presence (Kristin McDonald-Willey)**
Kristin is in charge of instructional and non-instructional accountability. She has been working to create a website specific to No Excuses. The committee discussed that the information on the No Excuses webpage is good but that it is buried and difficult to find. The information seems to also be geared to accreditors, employees of the college and anyone who is already involved with the college.
 - Bob Austin suggested contacting David White to ask him to create a label for a URL that is specific to No Excuses such as noexcuses.actx.edu/noexcuses. He suggested that this page also be linked to other pages so there would be a simple link to the No Excuses page.
 - Penny Massey will ask for a URL and drop down button that will be linked to the No Excuses page.
 - Bruce Mosely will research and see what needs to be published on the link.
- **Course Scheduler Update (Bob Austin)**
Bob gave an update as to the implementation of the Course Scheduler software. The software should be working the week of June 23rd. This software is designed to help students be

successful in building a school schedule that is best for them. The software has the ability to work out every scenario. Bob stated that the software has a reporting feature that allows those at AC monitoring the program to see when students are requesting classes. In the past, it has been difficult to tell if the master schedules are meeting the needs of the students. Currently, students must go through a portal and log in to access Course Scheduler but Bob stated that there is a discussion to open this up to anyone who is interested in taking courses at AC.

- **Success Data (Megan Eikner)**

- Megan stated that a question came up after the April meeting as to whether the Achieving the Dream guidelines also included continuing education.
- Bob stated that there is specific data that must be reported to Achieving the Dream and formal completers through continuing education programs are included in this data.
- Megan requested clarification as to how a CE completer will be defined since certification for a continuing education program can consist of 2-10 classes. She said it is important to define the guidelines for continuing education so that the correct data can be recorded.

PROMISING PRACTICES

- **Efforts to Encourage Full-time Enrollment (April Sessler)**

- Bob Austin showed the committee a video produced in the state of Hawaii called "15 to Finish". The video talked about the statewide effort in Hawaii to motivate students to go to college full time and complete a course of study. Data has shown that students who complete 15 hours a semester and take core classes first, have more success and less debt.
- April Sessler said that this movement makes sense but we have been caught up over the years with the idea that our students have other things they are doing with job, family, and life responsibilities. At the end of their college experience, these students have a lot of debt and no degree.
- Jason Norman and April have spoken with the advisors at AC concerning this problem and the advisors are on board with showing students how much less time it will take for them to complete with 15 hours a semester than dragging it out taking fewer hours. Comments were made as to how many times students who come straight from high school don't know how the semester hour and class load works so they are surprised to see the difference in time to complete based on the number of hours they take each semester. Members of the Core Team suggested showing the "15 to Finish" video at New Student Orientation. Suggestions were also made to use 15 hours in all examples such as figuring GPA's or time to complete. April asked committee members to think of other ways to deliver this message to students.
- Bob stated that another factor for student success is employing student workers. The college has incrementally increased the amount of money that is spent on student hire over the last 3 years. A student's rate of success is higher when they work and go to school at the same place.
- Bob gave committee members a handout from Complete College Texas which is part of the national group, Complete College America. This is an initiative in Texas to reduce the time to complete a degree by increasing intensity in the number of hours a student takes. (See Handout)
- Core Team Members gave several ideas on how to help students have the vision and motivation they need to complete in a timely manner. The ideas expressed were:
 - When advising the student, ask them how many hours they plan to take each semester. Show them how long it will take to complete on their plan and how long it will take to complete with 15 hours a semester.

- Look into helping students sequence classes in a way that can help them meet their goals. Bob said that if you give people a pathway, they will follow it.
- Encourage the student to use the scheduling software to help them refine their schedule in a way that helps the student meet their goals toward completion or transfer.

- **Financial Intervention Update (Olga Bustos)**

- Olga looked at situations of several students who had to be deregistered from classes for lack of payment. If a student has no financial aid or has not made a payment at all, they are purged from their classes after the last day to pay. If a student has financial aid, they are not deregistered. If they have made a partial payment, the student is sent a letter and given a week to make payment. Olga looked at the students who were deregistered for non-payment to see how they were doing in their classes. Most were making d's and f's. Olga's suggestion was to look at the students who signed up for the payment plan and are passing their classes but don't have the money to finish. In the previous spring semester, the cost of helping these students would have been about 5-6 thousand dollars but the overall return would have been much more for the student as well as the college. These students would have a hold on their account for nonpayment and not be able to register for further classes unless they were able to clear up the hold. The number of students Olga looked at for this scenario was about 30.
- April gave a suggestion as to how these students could be helped:
 - Meet with a financial advisor or Jordan Fajardo which may help to identify something in the student's life that is affecting them.
 - Go through the benefit bank to help with physical needs.
- Bob recommended that the Core Team come up with a plan of action at the next meeting on July 18th. Bob, April and Olga will meet and put a plan together.
- April suggested identifying the wrap around supports and put in a request for action, form a committee to review the information, then, pilot the program. Dr. Lowery-Hart, Bob, and Danita can go to the foundation to see what can be done in the way of scholarship money. The foundation has created a no excuses fund.

- **Donuts and Directions (Early Connections Best Practice) (Bob Austin and April Sessler)**

- Bob referred to Carol Bevel's example of helping students find where they needed to be during the first week of classes and how encouraged she was to do this.
- Bob said that employee groups and those interested should be given the opportunity to man tables and help students orient to their new situation. This shows the student that someone cares about them. Bob will have more information on how this can be implemented at the next meeting.

ACTION ITEMS

- **Full-time/Part-time for Application (Janine Goode)**

- Janine Goode is a Systems Analyst for IT and works with Rita Wilson on the Apply Texas application process.
- Janine is wanting to implement a way to influence student success through a full time data standpoint at the first moment of influence toward the student. This could be done on the application by asking if the student is planning to attend school full or part-time. Students could be contacted to go over what full-time vs part-time means in order to help them in making plans to attend school. Reports could be run to gather the needed data on whether this means of contact is assisting them in making a decision to attend part-time or full-time.

- There was a discussion as to how this should be worded because most of the time, students filling out applications for college aren't familiar with the terminology.
- Bob asked if the Core Team recommended adding questions to the Apply Texas application for Amarillo College. Janine made a motion, Jason Norman seconded the motion and all were in favor. Janine will tell Rita that this was approved. She will work with Rita, Diane Brice, Jason Norman and Kelly Prater to put the questions on a section of the application where they will be most effective. She will show these changes at the next Core Team meeting on July 18th and report on how it is working. It was discussed how this information will be useful for program coordinators.

ADJOURNMENT

- The meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, July 18th at 9:00 a.m.

Recorder: Carolyn Leslie Carolyn Leslie

GAME CHANGER

✓ Time and Intensity

< 30%
graduate
on time

For every 100 Texas university students, less than 30 graduate on time. At community colleges, almost no one graduates on time.

The consequences are clear when so few students finish college on schedule. For starters, the longer it takes to graduate, the more it costs students and the taxpayers who subsidize them. In Texas, an extra *semester* of college costs the typical university student \$3,500 and a student at a two-year college \$1,100 — which is often tacked on top of student loans.

Wasting money isn't the only consequence of running the clock. The longer it takes to graduate, the more life gets in the way. As the calendar turns, students find their lives increasingly taken over by jobs, relationships, marriages, children, and mortgages. These happy circumstances incrementally rob more and more time and attention from studying and progress toward academic goals. So, the more life gets in the way, the less likely graduation becomes.

For too many Texans, the end results are a few years of courses, no degree, and often crushing debts: It is estimated that college dropouts in

Texas today carry somewhere between \$6,500 and \$12,000 in student loans, depending on whether they attended a two- or four-year institution. The lasting financial burdens of their failure become suffocating obstacles to success as dropouts discover they cannot qualify for good wages and rewarding careers.

For Texas, the corrosive effects of lengthy time to degree cascade across the economy: Fewer Texans earn the incomes necessary to buy homes, cars, and other necessities or even cover the basic costs of educating their children or providing their health care. Critical skill gaps widen, employers resist creating new jobs or relocate altogether — and Texas falls behind.

Time is the enemy of college completion in Texas. The state simply cannot attain the college graduates it needs to be competitive without adopting policies to significantly cut time to degree and increase full-time enrollment at a minimum of 15 credits per semester. Consider these sobering facts:

■ Texans are taking too much time to earn a degree.

Associate

Should take
2 years

Full-time students take **4.7 years**



Part-time students take **5.2 years**



Bachelor's

Should take
4 years

Full-time students take **5.3 years**



Part-time students take **6.0 years**



DO THIS: Reduce Time to Degree, Increase Intensity

! STATUS Texas isn't new to this issue. Back in the mid-1990s, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) published a groundbreaking report flagging the problem and itemizing practical strategies for shortening time to degree. Heading into the 83rd Texas Legislature, THECB is calling attention to the fact that the excess hours earned by the university graduates of the 2011 class alone **cost Texas taxpayers an estimated \$15 million.**

Over time, policymakers have listened and change is happening. Texas is working to accelerate time to degree and reduce excess credit hours through a shared responsibility model between the state, institutions, and students. To reduce the likelihood of unnecessary credits, universities lose their state subsidy when students exceed 30 credit hours beyond their credit requirements. Additionally, students can be charged out-of-state tuition if they take classes with content similar or identical to ones they already have completed or attempted.

✓ RECOMMENDATIONS

However, there's still plenty of room to do more — and lawmakers can play a key role. Consider the following policies for improving student success and holding down costs for taxpayers:

■ Limit the amount of credits required to earn an associate degree. Texas has already capped bachelor's degree programs at 120 credits, except when accreditation or licensure requirements demand more. That's not the case with two-year degrees — and the nearly 100 credits being earned on average by associate degree graduates proves the need for a cap. In nearly all instances, quality associate degrees can be accomplished in a maximum of 60 hours — and that reasonable limit should be implemented in Texas this year.

2 PROOF POINT

20 states now have credit caps for associate and bachelor's degrees, and three states are in the process of adding them.

■ Cut taxpayer subsidy in half for excess credits. Texas taxpayers now subsidize up to 30 extra credits beyond bachelor's degree program requirements. That's a whole additional year on campus underwritten by taxpayers! It's no wonder that bachelor's degree graduates are leaving college with nearly 150 credits on average when 120 is almost always enough. Legislators should cut this support in half, signaling to students that excess time on campus will be at their own expense. The same should be done for associate degree programs.

■ Create incentives for Texans to take "15 to Finish." The math is pretty obvious: There's no chance of graduating on time without accomplishing at least 15 credits each semester, or 30 over each academic year. Yet federal financial aid policies only require that students be enrolled in 12 credits each semester to be considered eligible for assistance. Most damaging, this standard has become known as "full-time" attendance. Sadly, the situation in Texas is actually worse: The premier state financial aid program, TEXAS Grants, only requires 9 credits each semester for eligibility. To shorten time to degree, financial aid policies must create incentives for on-time completion. Full-time should mean "15 to Finish."

2 PROOF POINT

In the first year of its "15 to Finish" initiative, student enrollment in 15 credits or more increased by one-third on Hawai'i's four-year campuses.