Innovation Center

Roundtable

October 29, 2015

Completion Rates

Moderators: Norah Kerr-McCurry, Director TLC

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| Anderson, Richard  Barnett, Sara  Boyle, Joe  Breyta, Glen  Burke, Barbara  Burkitt, Kevin  Burns, Bill  Flinn, Donna | Goode, Cathy  Healy, Terry  Martin, Catherine  Natter, Meg  Proctor, Oly  Shaloum, Jonathan  Wang, Linda |

Attendees:

Norah explained that today’s topic, Completion Rates, was chosen because Dr. Reed had discussed completion rates at a meeting and questioned whether students are receiving the support they need to be successful. An important point to consider is that course design is crucial and is one of the factors that faculty can control.

Brookdale’s Monitoring System

* Donna Flinn, Retention Committee
  + Monitoring letters and mode of delivery are up for discussion. Students are not checking their email and there is a FERPA issue if email is used.
  + There are many other modes of delivery available.
  + The language in the letter has been softened and the letters were revised at the end of the summer.
  + The first attendance monitoring by faculty is required in order to maintain financial aid.
  + Faculty request an additional code for “not completing assignment.”
* Barbara Burke, English, noted that attendance is required for financial aid; yet, Brookdale does not have an attendance policy. Individual faculty establish requirements and include attendance in the syllabus.
* Sara Barnett, Psychology, sends personal emails or meets in person with students that are struggling in order to make a personal connection with the student. She also suggested that one monitoring be done for the financial aid requirements and then separate alert forms, with a brief explanation of the issues, could be sent from the professor to the student.
* Cathy Goode, Counseling, informed the group that there is fully online counseling available for students in trouble, including academic counseling. This service has been available for several years and asked that the link be put in all course syllabi. She distributed flyers for faculty to distribute to students.
* Norah questioned “what to do with no show in face-to-face classes and students that do not log in to online courses” and she added that there is a 10 point difference in retention rates comparing face-to-face and online courses. She also stated that both types of courses have to be treated equally. Support is given to online students through virtual and face-to-face orientations, online tutorials, letters of welcome and learning management system information.
* After Donna asked what other schools where doing, Joe Boyle, Sociology, said that at a college he had previously taught in, students were automatically dropped if they did not attend the first class or had not logged in to the online course. Terry Healy added that Southern New Hampshire drops students that don’t log in.

Course Design, Adjunct Faculty and Online Students

* Bill Burns, Dean-Innovation & Learning Resources, continued the conversation noting that at Harrisburg Area Community college, courses go through the Quality Matters (QM) process and faculty are required to take refresher courses in QM.
  + He continued noting that Brookdale doesn’t have a QM process in place.
  + Middle States preparation should begin now on issues such as course rigor, credit hours and ID verification in anticipation of the upcoming visit.
* Meg Natter, English, discussed faculty evaluation and said that online courses are not included in faculty evaluations. Norah added that course quality is not addressed in an evaluation.
* Some adjunct faculty ask “Where is the course?” and the answer can be that there is no course material available.
* The Math department has a course of record that gives faculty a starting point. Meg added that the English department has materials ready for adjuncts. Donna said Canvas shells should be available to adjuncts to build on.
* Joe noted that he does not share his course material because he has had two instances when faculty have stolen his course material and tests.
* Barbara suggested that a booklet with guidelines should be available to faculty.
* Bill suggested that curriculum development money be used to revise and create enhanced courses.
* Meg said her department is tracking how many times a student retakes a course and said the 095 class cannot be online. Terry added that mature, organized students will succeed in online courses.
* Joe noted that 70% of BCC’s students have to take basic skills courses and he feels this is a disproportionate number owing to an “under prepared population.” He also noted that there are no basic skills requirements for sociology or criminal justice programs.
* Linda Wang, Math, basic skills instructor, said “We all try our best.” Her completion rate is not always high but with the “right group” then her rates excel. She checks to see how many times a students is working in Canvas. This term, there are one or two students that haven’t signed in.
* Oly, Mathematics, pointed out that she had an online student in the lab that could not read; and, therefore, should not be taking an online course.
* Donna asked if you can establish communication in an online course and Norah replied that course design is the answer to that question and she addresses this issue in the online certification course that is offered each term to faculty that want to teach a fully online course.
* Kevin Burkitt, Innovation Center, noted that technology must be understood to be successful in an online course. He teaches a hybrid course and said students want immediate response from the instructors. “That’s where they live today.” Students tend to think they are the only one in the class.
* Anonymity, convenience, life styles, health issues, etc. are only a few reasons for taking an online course. Some students are shut out of face-to-face classes, so they enroll in the online version. That explains the pickup in enrollment just before the term begins.
* Joe thought it would be a good idea to require all students to take one digital course.
* Bill said there were “…great ideas here” and “…these are the issues that the Innovation Center wants to talk about.”
  + Tracking courses that are coming out with high completion rates within a department
  + Checking in with OCC who closed registration on Aug. 31st this year. Will they do it again?
  + Checking to see if we are employing best practices
  + Removing from stats the students that do not show in the classroom or online.
  + Getting counseling involved.
  + Looking at an attendance policy. Suggestion: 4 absences then fail.
  + Ensuring students and faculty are aware of the learning resources available.
  + Embedding a librarian in research classes.
  + Upgrading course design implementing QM

Norah thanked everyone for attending. The next Roundtable will be on December 3, 2015.