



Achieving the Dream

Houston Community College System
Meeting of Core and Data Teams
Tuesday, November 23, 2004
Noon – 3PM
3100 Main, Seminar Room A

Minutes

The meeting began at noon with lunch and table conversations. Margaret Drain delivered the first report from the Data Team. Margaret described the “general record profiles” for Achieving the Dream cohort students, those entering in summer/fall of 2002, 2003, and 2004. Some interesting tidbits include the following:

- HCCS entering students are about equally divided in declaration of majors – with approximately one-third declaring academic, one-third declaring workforce, and one-third declaring undeclared upon entry.
- HCCS entering student ages from 14 to 82 with the most recent cohort averaging 23.8 years old.
- HCCS entering students are predominately female, by 54.3 percent.
- HCCE entering students are predominately Hispanic (29.6%), African-American (25.2%), White (23.7%), Asian (10%), and non-resident alien (7.5%).
- Only 25.2 percent of entering students in Fall 2004 graduated from high school in the prior spring.
- The vast majority (93.8%) of entering students did not already possess a post-secondary degree.
- Three-fourths of entering students (76.6%) took a placement test (they were not otherwise exempt) and most required remediation in math (65.7%), writing, (36.7%), and reading (29.4%). (Question for Margaret – are these the percentages of students whose scores indicated a need for remediation or the percentages of students who actually enrolled in remedial classes?)
- About 5 percent (4.8%) of students took an ESL exam and 3.6% placed into ESL classes.
- Only 2.5 percent of entering students had previously taken dual credit classes with those students having earned an average 6.7 SCH.

Charles referred the group to a new article recently published by ATD partner Public Agenda, "Facilitating Achieving the Dream Planning through Public Engagement Strategies." The article is excellent, discussing pros/cons of three means of public engagement: focus groups, stakeholder dialogues, and community forums. The article may be accessed on our ATD web site at:

http://www.hccs.edu/system/Instructional_Services/dream.html .

Charles also distributed the public information release from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board with the latest statistics regarding the state's Closing the Gaps results. For more information, refer to the Coordinating Board website at:

http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/Closing_the_Gaps/ A new website is also available that will combine resources from the Coordinating Board, the Texas Education Agency, and the State Board for Educator Certification. Known formally as the Texas PK-16 Public Education Information Resource, it is located at; <http://www.texaseducationinfo.org/>

Fena Garza, Chair of the Student Involvement Committee, reported on her committee's work with both internal and external groups, including the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the NAACP. She suggested that we all work together to create a survey that could be administered to multiple groups to solicit feedback on what services are deemed most essential in promoting student success at HCCS. Please email any ideas regarding student survey items to Fena.Garza@hccs.edu.

Irene Porcarello, Chair of the Community Involvement Committee, introduced Jose de la Isla who is chairing a Board organized (March 2004) committee of 42 public citizens to determine what actions the college may pursue in improving student recruitment and retention. Jose noted that the number one factor emerging from discussions of the group is the need for improved information and services by HCCS regarding financial aid for students and their parents. He also emphasized that HCCS still has problems of perception among many citizens in terms of understanding what our mission is and how well we perform. It is crucial for HCCS to improve customer service to ensure public understanding and support.

Michael Edwards, President of the HCCS Faculty Association (chaired by Neal Tannahill), delivered the report of the Faculty Involvement Committee. He offered numerous suggestions, including: (1) the increase of funding for instructional support services as labs and tutors; (2) increased course offerings in topics of contemporary relevance as leadership and civic awareness; (3) operation of ATD "camps" for participation by targeted families; (4) increased involvement by business partners in provision of internships; (5) field trips/tours for students; and (5) compensation for faculty in terms of stipends/alternative assignments for ATD projects.

Maria Straus, Chair of the Communication Committee, said her group is working with HCC-TV on two projects: (1) production of high-profile public service announcements that might be marketed to commercial stations in an attempt to increase awareness of the project's importance; and (2) production of a monthly 30-minute HCC-TV show that would feature students and experts from the ATD Core and Data Teams to highlight and explain the project's work. Lupe Casares, producer of the award-winning series "The Culture of Silence" joined Maria to talk about the power of symbols in delivering an effective message.

Kay Lynn Moran, Chair of the Developmental Education task force, delivered the report for her group. She related several suggestions: study of both successful and unsuccessful students to determine factors that contributed to student success; pairing of courses (American History and GUST 0342) to create learning communities and improved contextual learning, and the integration of service learning into developmental education courses (e.g., HCCS students reading to elementary school children, etc.)

Joanne Lin, Chair of the “gatekeeper” courses task force, discussed student issues and strategies for such gatekeeper courses as MATH 1314, ENGL 1301, HIST 1301, and BIOL 1406. Several common challenges emerged, as poor study and time management skills by students and a general lack of understanding of the requirements/commitment needed to succeed in college. HCCS must pursue and enforce mandatory enrollment for students in GUST 0303, provide adequate tutoring and learning lab services, provide activities connecting students to the college, provide faculty advising and mentoring, and professional development for faculty, particularly adjuncts, in understanding and applying principles of effective teaching and learning practices.

Al Barringer delivered the report for the Course Completion task force (chaired by Beverly Walker-Griffea). The committee noted three major problems emerging from their survey of students: (1) students entering college are unprepared for the realities of attending college; (2) faculty members are unprepared for teaching the typical nontraditional students that HCC registers each semester; and (3) HCC policy and procedures do not reflect accountable processes that ensure student course completion. For each problem area identified, the committee also offered multiple solutions, including hiring student “peer counselors” during registration, mandatory pre-registration orientations, meshing of academic and developmental courses, expansion of GUST 0101 and taught by all faculty, improved professional development for adjunct faculty, adherence to late registration cut-offs, enforcement of a consistent drop policy, assurance of adequate placement and assessment of all students, establishment of an exit interview policy of students who drop, offering of GUST 0101 and 0303 to high school students, and establishment of e-mail addresses for all students.

Sue Cox, Chair of the Retention Committee, noted there are four types of retention HCCS must address: in class, fall to spring, fall to fall, and completion of student goal. She noted that her committee brainstormed the following essential “drivers” for student retention: (1) financial aid, including child care, bus tokens, etc.; (2) learning support activities and services both in and out of class – labs, tutoring, mentoring, relationships, etc.; (3) personal/career support activities and services – orientation, engagement activities, service learning, etc.; (4) planning – degree plans, degree audits, counseling; (5) early intervention programs and services; and (6) cultural issues and opportunities – not just one day celebrations, but true understanding of how we help infuse cultural understanding and awareness among all students, faculty, and staff.

Larry Markey, Chair of the Completers task force, delivered the final report. He noted that the numbers of HCCS completers continues to rise, advancing from 1735 in 1999 to over 5800 for 2004. He detailed several strategies employed, including reshaping of curricula to provide logical exit points, addition of the core curriculum certificate and many marketable skills certificates, intensive search of students’ transcripts once they reach 55+ SCH or enrollment in capstone courses, “transfer back” initiatives with area universities, and others.

Byron McClenney, our ATD Coach, followed with his observations and comments. He noted that on the one hand, we may be on the verge of a truly transformative agenda for HCCS, but warned us, on the other hand, not to try to tackle too much and thus get lost in the “minutiae” of details. He urged us to focus on big-picture themes and he observed the emergence of the following:

- (1) Need for additional professional development for faculty (especially adjuncts) and staff, focusing on things that matter, as cultural competence and effective practices of teaching and learning.
- (2) Provision and support for student engagement opportunities – continued improvement and implementation of our GUST 0101 and 0303 courses, and creation of additional learning communities for students (Global Studies, Mexican-American/Latino Studies, Women’s Studies, etc.) He emphasized that we should examine our results from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). He noted that our most recent results indicate that only about 15% of HCCS students are engaged in activities outside of class. This means that fully 85% of students need to be “engaged” in class. The research indicates that students who are fully engaged, academically and socially, have the best success in terms of achievement, persistence, and completion.
- (3) Need for additional resources for learning support facilities, activities and services – learning labs, tutoring, etc.
- (4) Focus on the retention strategies outlined by Sue Cox’s committee.

Charles ended the meeting with asking the group “what about our next steps?” The most important and immediate need will be planning for the All College Conference to be held on Friday, January 28, 2005. Charles will be meeting with a planning committee for the conference next week and he suggested that the conference theme be centered on Achieving the Dream with several break-out sessions led by ATD committee and task force leaders. Please email charles.cook@hccs.edu with your thoughts and suggestions for the all college conference.