COMPLETE COLLEGE GEORGIA PROGRESS REPORT
DALTON STATE COLLEGE
JUNE 2013

Updates, Programs, Future Work

Partnerships with P-12 Systems

During the 2012-13 academic year we engaged in several activities to increase/improve our partnerships with our local P-12 school systems. To begin our year, we had a faculty workshop with a featured speaker on understanding current high school culture and the students entering our institution as freshmen. We then completed our year with a program on brain-based learning led by Dr. Carolyn Hopper, Learning Strategies Coordinator for Middle Tennessee State University, on ways to more fully engage students in the learning process. We invited local high school faculty to attend, and five did participate. Our math faculty have visited classrooms in some of the local schools, working with high school faculty and providing demonstrations of a college level class experience. Our faculty are in on-going dialogue with local high school teachers about how to better align the high school curriculum with the knowledge and skills required to be successful in college level courses. Our School of Education faculty had a special workshop on the Common Core to better educate themselves about the changes in the high school curriculum. In addition, our education faculty each "adopted" one of the local schools and they are working closely with the school leadership to identify ways they can be of assistance.

The Dean of our School of Education personally visited all of the schools in Dalton, Whitfield County and Murray County, and established a local principal's council, which meets each semester and provides an opportunity for the local principals to discuss issues of common concern with our education faculty. We have filled our Goizueta Foundation Endowed Chair position in our School of Education, and he will begin work this summer. A large portion of his time will be devoted to working with the local schools to provide outreach and support to encourage more Latino/a students to graduate from high school and enroll in college.

Our local city and county school systems (Dalton and Whitfield) have joined together with the larger community as a part of our Archway Project to focus on literacy. Several of our faculty have volunteered to participate in the local schools and with community events to encourage reading at all ages, but especially for younger children. We have allocated some funds from our FY13 budget to create a model classroom on campus for our School of Education faculty to use in preparing students to be more effective teachers in the public schools, and we will also be inviting groups of students from the local schools to visit and engage in interactive activities in the space.

We are also doing more on campus to improve college readiness. We doubled enrollment from last summer to this summer in our Summer Academy program designed to assist ESL high school students in successfully completing high school. After seeing a significant number of applicants for admission to the college for fall 2013 who lacked the minimum standardized test scores, we added a test prep course to our Summer Bridge program. We received a Workforce Investment Act grant worth $125,000 annually for three years to assist in the continuation and expansion of our Near Peer program. The additional funding will enable us to expand our program into two additional school systems. Thus far, forty-two percent of the graduates of the program, which is designed to increase the postsecondary college going

rates of underrepresented populations, have enrolled in college.   We have also increased our dual enrollment participation for next fall by utilizing the strategy of on-site course delivery.

Improve Access and Completion for Traditionally Underserved Students

Results from our graduating student surveys, NSSE, the ALFI survey of adult students, ETS data from a pilot project this fall, and other sources continue to document that some groups of students on our campus struggle more than others. In particular, older, non-traditional students with multiple job/home/school responsibilities have difficulty, as do first generation college students and students from families with low/very low incomes, especially if the student is not eligible for HOPE or other scholarship aid. Using a first-time cohort from 2008, we were able to determine that adult learners withdrew from an average of 6.25 courses, while the cohort average was 5.5. Adult learners also changed majors at a slightly higher rate than the cohort as a whole, 3 times versus 2.5 times. We are continuing to explore how we might better help these students succeed. We have offered a free, online caregiver resource (locations, articles, "live chat" access to experts, webinars, etc.) at http://www.caresquad.com/ to faculty, staff and students beginning in spring semester 2013, and we are expanding our online offerings, including a collaborative eMajor program with Valdosta State University in the fall. We have continued to participate in the Adult Learning Consortium that included targeted marketing to adult students, two Quick Admit days each semester, and expansion of our PLA activities. We are currently working on setting up a veterans' resource center and veterans' group on campus. We have also received funding to hire a Director of Hispanic and Latino Outreach, effective fall 2013, to work with our significant population of Hispanic and Latino students (18%) with the aim of increasing retention and graduation rates. The director will work with students to identify appropriate campus support offices and resources.

We have begun to sort through our data on course repeats and withdrawals to determine if we want to change our policies in that regard. Similarly, we are looking at data on major changes to see if there is something we can do to reduce the "swirl". Since sixty-one percent of our students receive need based financial aid, we provide assistance with completing the FAFSA, including going into the local schools on designated days to assist high school students.   We have had a private donor give $300,000 a year for 10 years in scholarship money to help support student athletes. We are exploring some alternative scheduling options, and we are examining possible ways to revise and improve our early alert system. Our First Year Experience Director is revising the FYE course based on his feedback and experience last year, which was his first year as director and the first year we have brought the FYE program back under academic affairs.   He is also developing an online option so we can make the course available to a larger number of students. Our professional advisors are working closely with program faculty to try and redirect students into more appropriate majors when they are not accepted for their first choice, such as redirecting pre-nursing students who are not accepted into social work.

We have examined the National Student Loan Clearinghouse data and the findings do not indicate a large number of students are leaving Dalton State to attend elsewhere. In the fall 2012, Academic Resources staff spoke to 138 students initiating complete withdrawal, and the majority (79%) said they would return. During the upcoming academic year, we will administer the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey at the beginning of the academic year and the Your First College Year survey at the end of the academic year. This data will enable us to gain insights into what expectations our incoming student population had about college, and what actually occurred.

Shorten Time to Degree

We have done several things to try to improve advising. All faculty, advisors and students have been trained in use of DegreeWorks, and all are using it for advising. The Registrar has developed DegreeWorks tutorials for students that are covered in new student orientation and are accessible online at http://www.daltonstate.edu/registrar/degreeworks-tutorials.html . All new students are given a complete guide to their program of study with suggestions for what to take in each semester to complete the program in a timely manner, along with a two-year posting of course schedules to help them plan ahead. The two-year course schedule is accessible online at http://www.daltonstate.edu/class-schedules/index.html . We have expanded our PLA program and we are encouraging faculty/chairs/deans to develop more alternative schedule and delivery formats as they plan future schedules. We are also encouraging faculty to develop more hybrid/online courses and providing training and technical support through our Educational Technology Center.   We were recently approved to offer a collaborative online bachelor's program with Valdosta State, which will be our first completely online program option. As mentioned above, we are also exploring some policy changes related to the number of repeats, withdrawals and major changes allowed without penalty. We encouraged faculty to offer more summer school courses this summer, but our enrollment was lower than last year, resulting in several of the courses being cancelled.

Restructure Instructional Delivery

We are revising our promotion and tenure policies, and the new policies will include a more individualized assessment for faculty that will help better identify things they are doing well as well as those areas where they may need improvement. This past year we redesigned our faculty development program and established a Center for Academic Excellence (CAE). The center sponsored many different types of faculty development opportunities, including individualized technical support, book groups, workshops, webinars, SafeZone training , speakers, and a teaching and learning conference on campus. In particular, we had around a quarter of our faculty members attend a workshop entitled "Retaining your Students" and had over a third of our faculty members attend the spring teaching and learning conference with around 15% of the faculty members presenting at the conference. The CAE also hosted a joint QEP Event on "Brain-Based Learning" which was attended by over 20% of the faculty members. The year before we engaged about a third of our faculty in a course redesign initiative, and this year those who participated were to implement some of the things they learned and committed to do differently. We have been conducting an assessment of those efforts during spring semester and will have a report soon on the results in their classrooms from the changes they have made in their instructional practices. We also conducted a competition to award a number of faculty members iPads at the beginning of the year and they provided demonstrations of the kinds of things they were doing in their classes with the technology during our teaching and learning conference. As we analyze this year's student outcome data, we will be able to get supporting documentation of the impact of their work. This past year was the first year of our newly designed First Year Experience program, and the director is assessing the student outcomes and faculty feedback over the summer to help with revisions for next year. We will begin discussions during the summer about the establishment of a First Year Learning Initiative and possible credentialing for first year courses as well.

We are encouraging faculty to develop more hybrid and online courses, and we have just been approved to participate in the eMajor program for the system. While the number of hybrid and online course offerings has remained the same from last year to this year, the schools have focused their online and

hybrid offerings on courses that better lend themselves to the online environment and have historically greater student success rates.

Transforming Remediation

Improving outcomes in our English learning support courses is our QEP, and we kicked it off this academic year. Many changes were made to the course as a part of our QEP, and these supported student success. Among the changes were a drop in class size from 28 to 20, the requiring of at least five visits to the Writing Lab of students enrolled in the course, the integration of responsive writing technology (known as automated writing evaluation) as a part of the coursework, and the creation of learning communities that paired each section of English 0098 with a linked section of FYES 1000, the First-Year Experience Seminar. Our first-time COMPASS pass rates increased from the low 50%s, where they have been for several years, to 75% in the fall. Spring data is not yet available. In addition, the math faculty have developed several new approaches to math learning support that were approved through our internal approval process this year and will be implemented in the fall. One involves combining the two levels of learning support math into one 6-hour course, with the first level being taught the first half of the semester and the second level the second half. Another involved offering learning support as a co-curricular element of the first college math course (not college algebra).

Changing Campus Culture

We requested and received some special funds to engage in targeted marketing for this year and we will be working on developing a "brand" to better establish a shared identity among different stakeholder groups associated with the institution. We are beginning to engage in activities that are designed to build traditions, like an annual chili cook-off, different student activities that will be offered routinely, like family night, and athletic events, beginning in the fall when our new athletics program goes live. We are also exploring how we might offer more support services and improve general campus life. As mentioned earlier, we now are offering a free, online caregiver resource, we obtained private funds to renovate a portion of the gym, and we are working on obtaining funding to renovate the student center and replace our existing housing stock. Residential life, campus recreation, and student life staff are offering an increasing array of programs and activities for students, and we are discussing additional things we might do for faculty and staff that are low/no cost but that would provide recognition and support. During the fall of 2013, we will administer the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey of Diverse Learning Environments to help us better understand the impact and effectiveness of programs and policies on our campus.

Partnerships

Following the spring CCG summit, we have begun meeting with our partners from Georgia Highlands College and Georgia Northwestern Technical College to determine areas where we might share resources and/or engage in joint activities that will benefit all of our students. Currently, each campus is working on an inventory of activities in the CCG areas, and we will then get back together and see where we have common interests that we can work from. One immediate change we made to the benefit of students was that partner institutions would work together to place student applicants at the most appropriate educational institution. That decision has resulted in an increased sharing of information and helping facilitate student transfers among institutions.

We will continue our work with the P-12 schools in our area through our School of Education, through our faculty who teach in areas of the Common Core, our dual enrollment program, and college readiness programs to encourage more students to complete high school, enroll in college, and complete a certificate or degree.

Key Observations and Evidence

We have been slower than we anticipated getting some of our data tracking/analytics efforts up and running. We requested and received funding in our FY13 budget to purchase and implement the iDashboard program, but because of budget cuts, layoffs, technical glitches and other problems, we are just now getting all of the information loaded into it so that it can be operational. We did purchase and begin to implement the WEAVE assessment program during this school year, however, and we are just now beginning to get some data from there.   By linking the three CIRP surveys we will be administering this year, we hope to gain valuable insight into how and why our students changed over time, and we will be able measure the effectiveness of our campus programs and policies. We also continue to have our traditional collection/monitoring systems, such as Banner and data available from the USG, IPEDS, the National Clearinghouse, etc.

Sharing Lessons Learned

Because of the lag time in collecting and analyzing much of the data we are interested in, it is difficult to be able to use it to inform decisions and budget requests in a timely manner.

Many of the things we want to do and have committed to do require longer than a year or two to implement, such as revising the faculty promotion and tenure policies, revising other academic policies that need to involve a lot of different people's input, creating new programs/processes, and obtaining funding for projects/programs/special initiatives. Also, once implemented, there needs to be another year or two before we begin to get reliable data, for example outcome data for a revised FYE program, outcome data for instructional innovations, etc.

Full impacts on retention and graduation take time to play out, so it is difficult to know how successful these activities ultimately are until at least a couple of years of implementation, and in the case of 4-yr degrees, a full 6 years.

People initially resist change but can be convinced to get involved if they see a benefit to themselves or for the students.