

**Student Support Services Working Group**  
**August 12, 2014**

**Chair: Christine Shane**

Attendance: P. Weizer, J. Fiske, T. Rousseau, C. Shane, R. Hynes, H. Parkinson, J. McMenamy, C. Goldman, and M. Krell

Meeting called to order 11:09am

1. Review of First Two Focus Groups: Diversity and Underserved Population and the Changing Needs of Modern Students
  - Attendees shared his/her thoughts on the process, outcomes, and themes from the focus groups.
    - C. Goldman – Thought focus groups were productive; participants engaged freely and openly, and participants brought up several good points.
    - M. Krell – Liked the emerging theme of the Fitchburg Family; student input was necessary and helpful in our process.
    - T. Rousseau – Liked the focus on academic achievement; likes the vision and goal to provide services to help students achieve academically and retain students, which will in turn attract students to the Fitchburg Family.
    - C. Shane – Student examples were very helpful; Spanish lessons for faculty and staff were a good idea; very pragmatic recommendations from students; like the idea of using students as peer mentors and in an ambassador role; the faculty may not be as responsive to the learning, disability, and health needs of students, however this is not just about student services but about the campus as a whole.
    - R. Hynes – The process was productive and student data that was important. One concern was that there was a lot of talk of aggregate data, however student services is individualistic making it difficult to take general ideas and apply it across the board to student services.
      - R. Hynes reported that he conducted a study a few years ago regarding the concerns students have that faculty should know and the concerns faculty have that students should know. This revealed misconceptions on both the part of students and faculty. R. Hynes suggested it might be worthwhile to revisit this study and collect current data.

- J. McMenemy – Discussed the importance of breaking down the different sides of the university. When we are all working together with the same goal, we gain a better understanding of each other and from where each side is coming. Additionally, there is value in exploring where the sides have and might cross.
- H. Parkinson – Supported the comments of the group and emphasized that student input is key.

## 2. Outcomes and Themes:

- The following are themes that are continuing to resonate through our discussions:
  - Career services and career development for students to take the next step is necessary
  - A niche population worth exploring is veterans
  - The benefits of first year or multiyear programming (It was acknowledged that this would require faculty and staff to come together.)
  - We have seen in the literature and from experience that there is often lots of discussion about strategic planning, however when it comes to implementation, there may be a resistance to change.
  - How can we make student services more inviting? Suggestions include: extended hours, weekend hours, childcare services, family initiatives, commuter services, diversity initiatives, etc.
  - Help students with obtain careers and future employment
  - Importance of internship and experiential education
  - Explore the benefits of competency based curriculum further
  - Attract faculty and staff who are supportive of our vision
  - Advising is insufficient
    - P. Weizer and J. McMenemy just returned from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) conference. They reported attending a session about a school that used a professional advisor for all freshmen. During the first year, the students had a faculty mentor for career advice, however all academic advising was done by professional advisors. These professional advisors also taught a no credit freshman seminar course. Results from this model suggested retention improved considerably.
    - Another suggestion from the AASCU conference was to provide freshmen with schedules for the full year, rather than just semester by semester.
    - When we are considering a comprehensive model for student success, how can we combine all of these pieces? The group discussed advising combined with a thoughtful, systematic, coordinated approach to student success, with faculty buy in

### 3. Additional Topics to Discuss:

- Veterans Services
  - Could be an untapped population for the university
  - The GI Bill helps support students access college
  - We would need to support them on campus (Veteran's Services Office, Disability Services, Counseling Services)
  - These students have unique responsibilities including family, finance, etc.
  - UMASS Lowell has a Veteran's Services office and solid population
  - As a group, we need to investigate further.
  - T. Rosseau noted that an office of veteran services in and of itself may not attract veterans.
  - If any group members or others have additional information on veteran services in higher education, please email Gail at [gfeckley@fitchburgstate.edu](mailto:gfeckley@fitchburgstate.edu) for posting on the blackboard site.
  - J. Fiske suggested inviting someone from VA or ROTC to talk to the group.
  
- Competency Based Curricula –
  - Southern New Hampshire University has a model competency based framework.
  - The group discussed whether or not this topic would be considering in the scope of this group's mission. Students services would eventually be needed to support students in this should be choose to go down that route.
  
- International Students
  - Idea: Spanish language immersion programs over the summer
  - Do we want to increase this area?
  - This discussion will continue at our next group meeting.

### 4. Announcements:

- We are going to combine the administration and resource allocation focus groups; both topics will be discussed at the August 20, 2014 focus group. The August 27, 2014 focus group will be cancelled.
- The last focus group will be best practices on August 21, 2014.

### 5. Closing Items/Comments:

- None

Meeting adjourned 12:19pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Megan Krell