STUDENT SUCCESS TASK FORCE
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE
REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Introduction

The Student Success Task Force Student Support Services sub-committee was tasked with examining the efficacy of student support programs throughout the university. In particular, the sub-committee examined the efficacy of these support services in relation to student retention, success and graduation rates. To accomplish its goals, the sub-committee conducted interviews with a number of Student Support Services at SCSU: University Access Programs, the Disability Resource Center, Campus Writing and Tutorial Centers, the Multicultural Center, Counseling Services, the Student Health Center, and the Center for Adaptive Technology. The sub-committee examined the following campus data:

- The “DWF” report to identify the liberal education and developmental courses with which students struggle most.
- The results of student surveys focusing on the areas students identify as obstacles to their success.
- Best practice research, including support practices most associated with improved retention, success and graduation rates

Recommendations

1. Improve the marketing and promotion of all student support services
   - Students are often unaware of the full range of support services available to them. Suggestions include the following:
     - Provide a centralized resource webpage where students can find out about all the student support services available.
     - Create a document that describes all of the student support services available and make that document available to students during NSO and other campus fairs.
     - Provide the resource document to faculty and other offices on campus to increase awareness among faculty and staff who in turn can better direct students to the needed resources.
     - Investigate other methods to better promote the services.

2. Increase the academic support services available to students
   - Support services staff have identified a number of academic-related issues that can be addressed through better support:
     - There is no academic support available for some of the classes with a high withdrawal/fail-rate. Best practices indicate that supplemental instruction using peer-assisted and/or learning-specialist-led study sessions, especially for the
classes with high “DFW” rates, is a valuable tool in improving retention, improving student grades, and increasing graduation rates.

- The Tutorial Center, Writing Center and Study Skills Enrichment Office are severely understaffed, limiting the number of services they can provide. An increase in staffing would allow the centers to provide sessions for a variety of subjects not currently covered but identified as subjects in which students struggle.

- The tutoring needs of students with disabilities need to be covered by tutors trained in the needs of students with disabilities. While this is currently happening on a small scale, more tutoring support is needed.

3. **Extend the hours that services are provided**
   - While most offices operate on the 8:30 – 4:30 schedule, students’ needs extend past those hours with classes running until 10 pm every weekday and a variety of classes offered on Saturdays. Many of the support services would be able to reach more students by extending the hours they are available.

4. **Increase cooperation between support services staff and faculty**
   - Increase faculty awareness of the services provided by the Tutorial and Writing Centers. Increase faculty understanding of how the services provided by the centers can address academic issues with which students struggle.

   - Explore ways to increase student participation in sessions provided by the centers.

   - While there exists some cooperation between offices as evidenced by informal referral systems that operate between various support services offices and the Counseling Center, a more systemic approach is needed.

   - The characteristics and needs of Southern’s students are constantly evolving. While most of the offices provide training and workshops for faculty, attendance by faculty at such trainings should be increased.

5. **Increase the physical space available for the student support services**
   - Many of the student support services operate in physical spaces that are not sufficient for their needs. Space issues were brought up by many of the student support services offices interviewed. The Counseling Center is forced to identify space in the Student Center to hold what should be private group therapy sessions; the Tutorial and Writing Centers operate in a constraining environment; Student Health Services operate in a space that is too limited for their needs. In order to provide the increased number of services students need, physical space considerations need to be examined.
6. Increase employment opportunities for students both on-campus while enrolled at SCSU and statewide after graduation
   • The on-campus job search system is inefficient and cumbersome, causing students difficulty in finding which jobs available on campus.
   • Increase on-campus job opportunities available to students.
   • Increase awareness of post-graduation career choices.
   • Increase post-graduation career opportunities by connecting with a broader range of employers.

7. Increase staffing to support all students
   • Many of the offices interviewed are understaffed. In order to support current services and any additional services the University is looking to provide, staff needs to be increased. For example, offices such as Counseling Services operate at staffing levels well below national standards while the Tutorial Center, the Writing Center and the Study Skills Enrichment Office are severely understaffed, limiting the number of services they are able to provide. Any increase in academic support services provided will have to be matched by an increase in the staff available.

8. Examine and consider the use of technology to support students’ academic needs as well as the support for students in using the technology available
   • Best practices indicate that technology solutions are a good way of increasing academic student support. Current usage of technology to support students’ academic needs is limited. An examination of the infrastructure and technology available should be conducted.
   • Current support for students’ use of technology on campus is limited. Examining ways to provide more support for the students in using technology is important.

9. Create a Student Success Center
   • Centralized Student Success Centers are a best practice instituted by many universities as a way to address issues related to retention and persistence.
   • At Southern, poor communication between services and between services and faculty could be improved by the centralization of services.
   • Often, our students do not know exactly what kind of support they need. They should have a place to go where trained professionals can help them identify those needs, develop a plan for support, and intentionally follow-up with these students.