

# Support Services Review 2012: Admissions and Records

**Update Year:** 2012

**Date:** June 1, 2012

**Unit Name:** Admissions and Records

**Unit Leader:** Linda Kluck

## Five Fundamental Questions

### 1. What are the primary services or outcomes provided by the support services area and what is the impact of those services and outcomes on students and other key stakeholders?

The primary mission of all of the admissions and records departments is to support the College, its students, faculty, and staff employees in achieving the overall mission of providing instructional programming that: leads to certificates and degrees; serves as the basis for the first two years of a transfer degree at a four-year institution; assists with meeting students' otherwise stated goals.

The impact of Admissions and Records services is to promote and provide the broadest access to higher education to all who are seeking educational opportunities and to deliver support services to students and the college community that ensure the ultimate success of all ACC students.

Admissions and Records provides direct, timely and informative services to prospective, current and former students, teaching faculty, the ACC College Community, the citizens of the greater ACC district community at large. A&R departmental programming is designed to support the teaching and learning environment that results in optimum student success and goal achievement. A&R creates and delivers innovative and responsive admissions, registration, recordkeeping, TSI compliance, and graduation services that provide students, staff, and faculty with efficient, accurate and timely services.

In order to meet this mission, campus and district Admissions and Records Office services include, but are not limited to:

- Providing recruitment and admissions activities at all area College Connection Schools, and represent the college at community recruitment and informational events.
- Processing and reviewing all college credit admissions applications (domestic and international students), including making state and district residency determination
- Design and deliver timely and accurate registration process
- Evaluating incoming transcripts and post applicable transfer credit
- Auditing and maintaining student files and ensure accurate and complete student records in compliance with all ACC, state and federal recordkeeping requirements and laws
- Ensuring compliance with the Texas Success Initiative (TSI), by reviewing student records for compliance with TSI regulations.
- Processing graduation applications, complete degree audits and ensure accuracy and completeness of all college credit degrees and certificates that are awarded.

**2. What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats present that enhance or hinder the unit's ability to provide those services and meet the expected outcomes during the next five years?**

The Admissions and Records SWOT analysis was conducted on March 2, 2012. There were 23 attendees participating, including A&R staff members, ACC employees from outside the A&R department, faculty, and students. Additionally, several departmental self-review meetings that included many other A&R staff members were held in the 2011-2012 academic year, to gather additional input and communication about A&R services and intended outcomes.

**a. Strengths:**

- i. Staff with a high caliber of strong customer service skills; caring, friendly, respectful of all (students/staff/faculty)
- ii. Knowledgeable staff who have a broad and diverse understanding of admissions, registration, recordkeeping, college operations, regulations and laws
- iii. High quality of accurate and timely information and services provided
- iv. Responsive to all needs presented, regularly going above and beyond expectations and needs
- v. Ability to embrace and integrate new technologies quickly, to better serve students
- vi. Strong, respectful leadership, excellent staff longevity, high degree of functional and supportive teamwork environment
- vii. Great communication (quality, timely) and good volume of internal communication and regular feedback
- viii. Organized, excellent recordkeeping, able to handle high and increasing volume of work with little or no additional resources.

**b. Weaknesses:**

- i. Need formal training for new staff and ongoing, frequently occurring training and re-training for current staff, to increase consistency with all processes.
- ii. No audit process for records office consistency in data input
- iii. Too much information to know and too many various processes and procedures to remember
- iv. Not enough advanced technology to support the departments needs
- v. Not enough IT support when needed to run systems smoothly and correctly and to implement new demands
- vi. More internal and external communication—inter-departmental, with students, and between the college and the departments
- vii. Not enough staff and resources to meet college demand for new programming and additional workload due to increases in enrollment and functions being required
- viii. Many steps and tasks students need to complete in order to be cleared to register-need better information on web. Need better website for current students on all things they need to take care of as well.
- ix. Changes occur when process is broken or a change happens, but not on a regular basis, to help with staff understanding or training.

**c. Opportunities:**

- i. Use of more and better technology to reduce workload and data errors.
- ii. More and better organized information on the A&R web pages to provide information to students
- iii. More Helpline staff and more level II queue licenses to answer more incoming calls
- iv. Cross-training between HBC and campuses, to better understand the scope of services at all levels.
- v. Cross-training between A&R and other departments to increase understanding and reduce boundaries between areas.
- vi. Better utilization of staff to produce more timely entries and availability of records to other campus departments
- vii. Process reviews to find efficiencies, streamline operations and increase understanding.
- viii. More and enforced deadlines to have students prepared earlier and be more successful
- ix. Create A&R communication and information sessions for new and current students
- x. Better and more use of web-based communication tools for procedures and changes

**d. Threats:**

- i. Ongoing, short-notice major changes to institutional policies, requiring staff time and resources taken away from core functions.
- ii. Executive team decision made without regard to impact on college resources or staff—immediate and less-thoughtful ideas directed without input from stakeholders.
- iii. Continuing significant increases in enrollment combined with little or no additional resources, resulting in long hours with no breaks, staff burnout and eventual staff turnover.
- iv. No time provided for training (always in high volume activity/no down time)
- v. Changes to and loss of financial aid, reducing enrollment
- vi. Unfunded and un-resourced legislative and college mandates
- vii. Declining enrollment leading to reduced appropriations, possibly leading to reduction in staff
- viii. Staff and faculty across the college frequently do not understand the basic operations of the A&R department, resulting in inaccurate information being given to students and unnecessarily time-wasting “run-arounds” that students go through.
- ix. With additional use of technology, fewer processing staff needed in records office
- x. Technology outages and processes that break causing disruption to services

**3. Using the answers to the first two questions, what improvements to primary services and/or intended outcomes will occur in the next five years?**

The improvements to primary services and or/intended outcomes that will occur in the next five years are listed below:

**Develop and deliver formalized staff training modules**

*To meet the identified weaknesses in the SWOT analysis (i., iii) and threats (iv.)*

Students, staff and faculty depend on the accuracy and completeness of the direct and supportive services provided by all A&R staff. In order to maintain the integrity and usefulness of the information and services we provide, all staff must be trained on a complex and voluminous amount of policies, processes and procedures.

**Implement cross-training opportunities between A&R areas:**

*To meet the identified weaknesses in the SWOT analysis (i.,vi.,vii) and threats (i., iii., vi.)*

Unfunded and un-staffed College and regulatory agency mandates are stretching current staff limits and resources beyond the department's ability to effectively deliver its services. By providing cross-training, the Admissions and Records office may be able to better utilize current staff resources to meet needs across units when currently-assigned office staff are not equipped to handle the volume of new and changed policies and procedures. This will also further develop the cohesiveness of team members working together and responsiveness to short-notice changes.

**Increase use of available technology to streamline processes:**

*To meet the identified weaknesses in the SWOT analysis (iv., vii.) and threats (i, iii.)*

Changes and advancements in technology are critical to the ongoing functionality of the department and the college as a whole; therefore all opportunities to increase the effectiveness of the functions need to be explored, evaluated and implemented wherever possible, given resources for doing so. In order to effectively deliver the volume of support services to staff, students and faculty (without any additional staff allotments) the "lower-touch/higher tech" solutions will need to be maximized.

**Re-design all A&R web pages/presence:**

*To meet the identified weaknesses in the SWOT analysis (iv.) and threats (viii.)*

In the digital age, nearly all of the information that ACC provides to prospective, new and current students is done via the internet. It is critical to maintain current and high functional web processes and pages to ensure the success of all students in navigating the student experience and ultimately meeting their goals. The ACC admissions application is in need of a complete review and re-design, including incorporating the past few years worth of ad-hoc change that have been 'tacked on' here and there to cover compliance changes. This will address the fundamental service and outcome, "Providing recruitment, admissions, and registration services to increase access and successful enrollment."

**Admissions and Records process reviews:**

*To meet the identified weaknesses in the SWOT analysis (i., ix.)*

Staff in each office/unit/campus will identify the top 5 processes for which they have the most questions or difficulty with. The list will be focused to the top 20 single processes that will undergo a full process review, and revision or streamlining wherever needed. The outcome of each review will result in a training activity for all A&R staff, to learn about, fully understand and incorporate the process into daily work. All changes will be incorporated into existing procedures and training manuals. This will work to ensure that the department is providing the most current and timely support to students, staff and faculty, to reduce the issues that arise and allow for more successful student outcomes.

**4. How will the unit measure the extent to which planned improvements have resulted in better service or intended outcomes for students or other key stakeholders?**

<b>Primary Service Issue</b>	<b>Improvement</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Current</b>
Providing accurate information, consistent and relevant services	Develop and deliver formalized staff training modules	Number of training modules developed and delivered to staff; fewer complaints about inaccurate or incomplete information will be reported on the departmental POS surveys.	No baseline documented consistently, will use the 2012-2013 year's activity to establish baseline	Training modules developed and delivered for a minimum of 10 foundation/functional tasks.	Ad hoc, sometimes informal, delivered by multiple supervisors across the department using locally developed training materials
	Implement cross-training opportunities between Admissions and Records functional units	Number of staff who become fully cross-trained in functions outside of their routine job duties	Fewer than 10% of the current staff have spent time learning about and understanding the processes of other units within Admissions and Records	50% of all Admissions and Records staff will have been assigned to train and learn a departmental job function outside of their assigned job duties	Informal and on a need-to-know basis, usually to cover a staff shortage in one unit with staff from another unit.
	Admissions and Records process review	Number of top-rated processes that undergo full process review and possible improvements.	No current baseline for formal process review. The 2012-2013 year will establish the baseline.	20 broad and widely-used processes will be fully reviewed. Training on each will be developed and delivered to all A&R staff.	Processes are not routinely reviewed unless something is broken or a policy change fundamentally alters the procedures.

Primary Service Issue	Improvement	Measure	Baseline	Target	Current
Providing recruitment, admissions, and registration services to increase access and successful enrollment	Re-design web-based admissions application.	Admissions application will be re-designed to better provide current and relevant information to prospective and new students.	Current web application; no real "baseline" measure for this item.	Completely updated, accurate and functional web-based admissions application.	Current web-based admissions application is dated (look and feel) and needs to be better organized and updated to better inform all prospective students.
	Re-design all Admissions and Records web pages/presence.	Admissions web pages will be re-designed to better provide current and relevant information to prospective and new students.	Current web pages; no real "baseline" measure for this item.	Completely updated, accurate and functional Admissions and Records web pages.	Current web pages are dated (look and feel) and needs to be better organized and updated to better inform all students, staff and faculty.
Promote and provide access to the college, to provide direct admissions and enrollment services, to provide the ongoing support services students need in order to successfully achieve their goals.	Increase use of available technology to streamline processes	Number of new processes or enhanced current processes that are programmed and implemented for students and/or staff use.	4-6 processes are implemented, enhanced or changed per academic year, on average.	Collaborate with Information technology staff to research new possibilities, and deliver an additional 4 technology improvements per year.	Currently approximately 4-6 major processes are developed and/or are enhanced every year to better deliver streamlined student and/or faculty services.

**5. How will the planned improvements align with and contribute to the Mission and Intended Outcomes of Austin Community College?**

The planned improvements align with and contribute to the College's Mission and Intended Outcomes by providing the highest quality, most accurate, streamlined and functional services to students, to other members of the college community who provide support to them and the faculty who provide the teaching and learning environment. By effectively, efficiently and accurately training, communicating and streamlining the Admissions and Records services, students are better prepared and informed about the college and the expectations for the students. These improvements are designed to help students (and others who help them) be able to more successfully navigate through the college experience and successfully achieve their goals. In doing the, the result is to increase persistence, facilitate the successful course completion. Additionally, these planned improvements align with the college's values of Communication, Access, Responsiveness, Excellence and Stewardship (CARES.)