

# Support Services Review

2013 Student Services Dean RGC Voncille Wright

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

The Rio Grande Campus Student Services department embraces a supportive, personalized approach to education. We consider student success as the foundation of our department and our staff strives to deliver services that promote the academic, personal, and social growth of each student. In collaboration with Rio Grande faculty and staff, Student Services creates an environment that stimulates learning while respecting and celebrating student diversity. The department recognizes and appreciates the student's contribution to Austin Community College and encourages their positive impact on society.

The RGC Student Services department consists of:

- Assessment Center
- Academic Testing Center
- Counseling Department
- Academic Advising Center and
- Office for Students with Disabilities.

Student Services staff provides direct and informative services to students, faculty and staff; as well as, the Austin Community College community and the community at large. Our services include, but are not limited to:

- Advising prospective, current and former students on various aspects of the college such as majors, course selection, transferability and degree plans
- Assist with assessment, recruitment and advising activities at all area College Connection Schools
- Review transcripts, interpret test scores and other information for the Texas Success Initiative
- Document advising and counseling sessions in college computer systems
- Disseminate information on the enrollment process including admissions, financial aid, assessment, advising and transfer
- Facilitate workshops in support of recruitment and retention
- Provide educational counseling services for current and prospective students to help them achieve their educational goals (graduation, workforce, transfer)
- Provide comprehensive educational counseling services and specialized strategies for at-risk students including students who do not meet Academic Standards of Progress, students mandated to take developmental education courses, students from underrepresented populations.

# Support Services Review

- Provide career counseling services to help students select a major/career
- Provide short-term counseling services for students in crisis and make community referrals as needed
- Provide consultation with faculty and staff regarding college policies and programs including classroom management, student discipline, adult development theory
- Manage operation of the Assessment Center for test scheduling and administration
- Provide testing instruction and monitor students as they test, following established Testing Center security guidelines
- Conduct intake interviews, gather disability documentation and determine program eligibility and accommodation needs for students with a disabilities
- Coordinate with faculty and staff to ensure equal access to educational programs and the effectiveness of accommodations in the educational process

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

The Rio Grande Student Services SWOT analysis was conducted on February 8, 2013. There were twenty-six participants consisting of RGC student services staff, faculty, and students.

a.Strengths:

- i.Excellent customer service: willing to go above and beyond expectations for students
- ii.Caring, committed and student-centered staff
- iii.High student advocacy and focus on student success
- iv.Highly trained, competent and skilled staff who remain up to date on new policies and changes
- v.Assessment and advising/counseling help place students in correct classes
- vi.Accessibility of staff and ability to handle large volume of students
- vii.Staff interacts and responds to faculty referrals
- viii.Staff follows up on questions, problems and always seek resolutions
- ix.Offices work cohesively together, closely aligned staff
- x.Effective leadership at each level

b.Weaknesses:

- i.Lack of cross training between departments
- ii.Some inconsistencies in information provided
- iii.Updated information does not flow down to staff in a timely manner

# Support Services Review

- iv. Staff would benefit from more professional development opportunities
- v. Student services and academic departments often operate in separate silos
- vi. Limited input from service providers on policies affecting students; and policy changes without proper notice during busy periods
- vii. Understaffing and lack of funding for services and tools needed for students
- viii. Limited assessment and testing center facilities

## c. Opportunities:

- i. Ongoing training of student services assistants
- ii. Interdepartmental training and update sessions for advising, counseling, assessment, testing center and OSD staff to ensure consistency of information
- iii. New policies posted online as soon as possible in a central location
- iv. Staff development for improved internal communication/team building/student services retreat
- v. Integrative meetings and conversations between student services and academic departments
- vi. Counseling and Advising liaisons matched with academic department
- vii. Input from student services staff prior to the implementation of new pilots and programs
- viii. Funding for hiring and training hourly staff

## d. Threats:

- i. Lack of ACC budget support for student services
- ii. Increased student needs vs. reduced resources
- iii. Hiring freeze
- iv. Precipitous growth without additional resources may result in decreased quality of services to students
- v. Mandates from legislature and coordinating board without enough information from service providers
- vi. Mandating additional services and hours with no additional staffing
- vii. Lowered enrollment may result in decreased funding

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

Improvements to primary services and/or intended outcomes that will occur during the next five years:

- Implement cross-training opportunities for Student Services Assistants across departments

Addressing Weaknesses i. and Opportunities i.

Student services must continue to provide high quality efficient services to students, staff and faculty, while facing budget cuts, a hiring freeze and enrollment changes. Cross training of student services assistants will enable the department to efficiently allocate limited staff resources to critical

# Support Services Review

areas, especially during peak periods. It will also promote shared responsibility among team members; increase the knowledge base and job skills of staff; and have a positive impact on all stakeholders. The Dean of Students will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the yearly cross training process. The five year goal is to train 90% of the staff to cover more than one position in counseling, advising, OSD, assessment and the testing center.

- Provide opportunities for continued training for staff

Addressing Weaknesses ii. and Opportunities ii. & iii.

ACC students, staff and faculty depend on the accuracy of information provided by student services personnel. Staff will be trained consistently on the numerous complex policies that affect students, and be able to communicate them effectively. Staff members will be required to attend college-wide advising updates and district-wide departmental meetings, and update campus student services staff. Student Services staff will meet before the beginning of each registration period to reevaluate existing procedures and for updates on new policies. Attendance will be monitored and discussed during each employee's annual performance review by the appropriate departmental supervisor.

- Provide team building and professional development training for staff

Addressing Weaknesses iii. & iv. and Opportunities iv.

Communication skills, mutual respect and understanding are essential for a cohesive staff to provide consistent quality service to students. An annual student services retreat, staff meetings, and professional development activities will foster team building, and allow staff to grow both professionally and personally. The Dean of Student Services will appoint a planning committee annually to implement and monitor team-building activities. Attendance will be required and noted on each employee's annual performance review by the appropriate departmental supervisor.

- Use technology to create central location for information sharing

Addressing Weaknesses iii. and Opportunities iii.

With many policy and procedural changes from both administration and academic departments, student services staff will benefit from a central location for updated information and to maintain communication. This centralized location will have a positive impact on all stakeholders and will ensure the dissemination of current relevant information. A designated staff member will be responsible for creating and updating the website. The Dean of Student Services will review annually the effectiveness of the system.

- Increase communication with academic departments and faculty members

Addressing Weaknesses v. and Opportunities v. & vi.

Student Services staff will work closely with faculty to share information and departmental changes to increase student retention and achievement. Rio Grande student services will host "Meet and Greet" sessions with faculty members twice a year to share new department developments and changes; establish connections; and increase other collaborative efforts for student success.

# Support Services Review

Counselors and advisors will serve as liaisons to departments and programs to disseminate information, and refer students as needed. Student services, faculty, staff and students will benefit from the combined efforts. The Dean of Student Services will appoint a committee to plan and host the “Meet and Greet” sessions each year.

- 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?

Improvement	Measure	Baseline	Target	Current
Implement yearly cross training for Student Services Assistants across departments	Number of staff cross-trained in other functions outside of their routine job duties	Fewer than 25% of current Student Services Assistants have knowledge and understanding of the processes of other departments	Year 1: 50% of clerical staff will be trained in one job function outside of their assigned duties. Year 2: 70% of clerical staff will be trained. Year 3: 90% of clerical staff will be trained.	Informal training as needed when there is shortage of coverage

## Support Services Review

<p>Staff representatives will attend district-wide advising updates and departmental meetings</p>	<p>Number of staff members who attend district-wide advising updates and departmental meetings</p>	<p>40% of current staff attend district-wide meetings and updates</p>	<p>Year 1: 60% of staff will attend district-wide advising updates and departmental meetings. Year 2: 70% of staff will attend. Year 3: 80% of staff will attend.</p>	<p>Staff attend meetings when scheduling and coverage allows</p>
<p>Staff will meet each semester to evaluate procedures and receive updates before each registration period</p>	<p>Number of staff members who attend and participate in internal meetings</p>	<p>No baseline documented, the 2013-2014 year will establish the baseline</p>	<p>Year 1: 80% of staff will attend and participate in internal meetings each semester before the registration period. Year 2: 90% of staff will attend.</p>	<p>Departments meet separately</p>

## Support Services Review

<p>A website will be developed for staff to receive policies and procedures updates</p>	<p>A functional, informative website will be developed</p>	<p>No baseline documented, the 2013-2014 year will establish the baseline.</p>	<p>A central website with regularly updated information will be developed and maintained for all staff. Frequency of usage by staff will increase by 25% by year 2 as determined by website views.</p>	<p>Staff learn of updates through departmental emails or by word of mouth</p>
<p>Rio Grande student services will host two “Meet and Greet” sessions for faculty each academic year</p>	<p>Two “Meet and Greet” sessions for faculty and student services will be held each academic year</p>	<p>No baseline documented</p>	<p>Two “Meet and Greet” sessions will be held each academic year and evaluated for effectiveness by the planning committee and through attendee satisfaction surveys.</p>	<p>Pilot “Meet and Greet” session was held April 2013</p>

# Support Services Review

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 high quality, accurate, student-centered services to our students and general stakeholders. The planned improvements are designed to ensure that students reach their academic goals, and to assist them in successfully navigating the system. These goals will be achieved by effectively, efficiently, and accurately training, communicating and streamlining services. This outcome will be to increase student persistence, and facilitate the successful course completion. Additionally, these improvements align with the college's values of Communication, Access, Responsiveness, Excellence and Stewardship (CARES), and the Student Success Initiative.

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