

Username dohanlon@austincc.edu  
Unit Review Leader: Hazel Ward  
Unit Name: Dean, Communications

1.

What improvements have been planned/implemented:

The discipline in my area that enrolls the largest number of students is English, especially the two Freshman Composition Courses, E1301 and E1302. By the same token, both have a high attrition/low success rate, especially E1301. Let's look at the data for a moment.

From Fall of 2007 to the Fall of 2011, ACC enrollment has increased from 33,058 to 45,100, an increase of 34.59%.

From Fall 2007 to Fall 2010 (the most recent Fall semester for which data is available) enrollment in English courses increased from 9,521 to 11,802, an increase of 24%.

In Fall, 2008, the completion rate in E1301 was 58.5%; in Spring 2009 the completion rate was 51.3%. While there was an increase in the completion rate for Summer of 2009 (70.9%) and Fall of 2009 (60.3%) ensuing years showed either a drop in completion or fluctuating rates.

To increase retention and reduce attrition a team was formed by the departments of English and Developmental Writing to study the essay scores of entering freshman students and offer a recommendation. Through fall '10 research was conducted and a proposal was submitted through the shared governance channels that the essay score of entering freshman be moved from a 5 to a 6. This change was implemented in fall '11. In addition, the Developmental Writing Department and the English Department scaled up its offerings of a learning community called Composition 4.0 so that students could "fast track." Both these ventures were spearheaded by the department chairs and the Dean.

2.

How did you decide that these improvements would benefit your unit or what weakness is the unit trying to improve:

In addition to the success rates outlined above the English Department and Developmental Writing Department looked at the withdrawal rates for E1301. In Fall of 2008 the withdrawal rate was 26.7%; in Spring of 2009 32.2%; Summer of 2009 saw the lowest withdrawal rate of 19.9%. Spring of 2011 saw a withdrawal rate of 30.4%. Students cited a number of reasons for dropping the class, but two stood out the most: "course too difficult" and "course takes up too much time." When instructors dropped students the reasons differed; for example, instructors cited "failure to progress" and "students were not prepared for the work in the course" and "excessive absences" as their reasons for dropping students.

Raising the essay score from five to 6 will insure that students have the skills necessary to succeed in the course. Offering the Composition 4.0 learning community will enable students to exit remediation at the same time they are completing the credit course.

3.

Measures: what measures are going to be used to determine if the improvements were

successful.

We will obtain data from the first cohort of students who were required to have an essay score of 6 in order to enroll in E1301.

We will obtain success data for those students enrolled in Comp 4.0 who then enroll in E1302.

We will analyze attrition and retention in both these courses to determine if both these measures have had an impact on student success.

3a. Baseline data: the data used to determine improvements were needed

(Please see information contained in the section on improvements planned and implemented)

3b. Target goals: the data that shows your improvements have achieved your goals

Lower the percentage of students withdrawing from E1301 by 5% minimum and then gradually increase the percentage

Increase the success rate of E1301 students by 5% minimum and then gradually increase the percentage

Increase sections of Comp 4.0 to “fast track” students through remediation and allow them to complete a college credit course

3c. Current data: where you are currently in reaching your target

First full implementation of the essay 6 score began a little over a year ago. Data is not yet available

Comp 4.0 sections have increased by 50% and will continue to increase

Narrative:

The Dean’s office, Communications, is a conduit for helping the disciplines within the area insure the success of ACC students. This means advocating for budgetary resources, requesting full time faculty for the areas that have the greatest need, obtaining administrative help, developing cooperative teamwork among the departments and ultimately helping each to maintain the policies and procedures that govern the college.

The collaboration that took place between English and Developmental Writing is just one example of how two departments can work together for student success.