

September 2004

The Student Access and Success Committee (SASC) formed last year from the merger of the Minority Recruitment and Retention and the Student Success Committees. The purpose of the SASC is to improve the access and success of students, with a focus on under-represented students. Will students select ACC and if they do, will they stay? Student recruitment and success are the responsibility and opportunity for each of us.

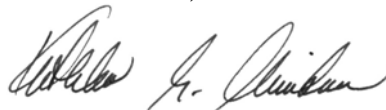
“Closing the Gaps” is about increasing the number of students who come to ACC and who complete their educational goals here. But what can we do to increase those numbers? This white paper describes our recruitment and enrollment processes, identifies ACC’s gaps, and presents recommendations to close those gaps.

The SASC will be referencing this paper to identify the gaps in student access, participation, and success in order to initiate and advocate for those programs/activities/processes that will reduce or eliminate the gaps. We encourage you to use this white paper in your areas for:

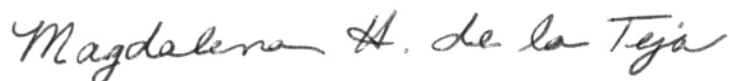
- Writing position papers, grant proposals
- Goal setting
- Strategic planning
- Master planning
- Budget planning
- Facilities planning

To close the gaps in student access and success at ACC, it will take active and sustainable involvement from each of us. After reading this white paper, we invite you to reflect on what contribution(s) you will make toward this goal during 2004-05.

Best wishes,



Kathleen Christensen, AVP, R&SS



Magdalena de la Teja, Chair, SASC



Student Access, Participation, and Success White Paper

September 2004



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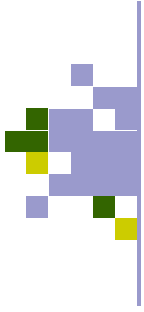
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a. Executive Summary

The purpose for writing this white paper is to examine current processes and map out a plan and set of practices to be implemented in order to improve access and achieve successful student enrollment with special emphasis given to underserved populations.

Austin Community College has pockets of excellence in several areas and processes. In addition, many dedicated faculty, staff, and administrators make an inadequately funded system work. However, in order to attract the range of students that reflects the community, the college must reassess and reassert priorities, as well as find and implement creative ways to meet the challenges of serving a growing and increasingly diverse population.

While the college has been effective in harnessing the power of technology to deliver instruction and to streamline administrative processes, it has lagged in automating key student services. This, coupled with inadequate staffing, impairs students' ability to navigate through the system effectively and seamlessly.

Regarding recruitment and participation, the college would greatly improve the effectiveness of current processes by making data driven decisions. Many of the areas represented in this paper emphasize such a need to facilitate both program implementation and evaluation. Insufficient staffing remains a pervasive concern because of the negative impact this has on the delivery of services.

The challenges and recommendations listed below for each area suggest that the next step should be the formulation of a comprehensive strategy for increasing participation of underserved students at ACC.

Student Recruitment

Challenges

- Wide gap between prospective students and actual applicants
- Support from high school administration
- Student and parent awareness of recommended high school plan for optimal college preparation
- ACC faculty and staff representation in recruitment events
- Collection of data on student feedback related to effectiveness of recruitment events
- Identification and removal of barriers contributing to low ethnic minority participation

Recommendations

- Increase collaboration with AISD Project Advance counselors
- Encourage greater ACC departmental participation in recruitment events
- Improve information on education and career planning
- Replicate San Marcos recruitment initiative
- Review ACC's "Closing the Gaps" participation targets and determine whether these need to be adjusted for 2005 and beyond

Admissions

Challenges

- Inadequate staffing
- Programming and manipulating web-based information and communications systems
- Inadequate space
- Need for collection of data to identify first-generation college students
- Admission of students after classes begin
- Low participation and enrollment rates by ethnic minority students

Recommendations

- Use the Master Planning and Budgeting processes to improve funding and staffing
- Increase support to implement and run technological system program enhancements
- Expand dedicated space
- Revise the Admissions application to allow for the collection of information to identify students who are first-generation in college
- Investigate through the Admissions and Registration Task Force the effects on student success of allowing admission of students after classes begin
- Conduct a study through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to determine the factors contributing to the low participation and enrollment rates of ethnic minority students
- Continue to investigate and analyze admissions processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness for students

Financial Aid

Challenges

- Timely award to needy students
- Gap between large numbers of applications submitted and processed vs. students enrolled and aid disbursed
- Inadequate staffing
- Inadequate space for private financial counseling
- Analyses of present processes so as to reduce financial aid applications processing time

Recommendations

- Use the Master Planning and Budgeting processes to improve funding and staffing
- Increase reliance on technology to provide efficient delivery of services
- Expand dedicated space
- Analyze processes to reduce financial aid application processing time

Assessment

Challenges

- Growing need for assessment services for Distance Learning students
- Continuing challenges regarding assessment testing of students with disabilities
- Enhance assessment services at Cypress campus
- Ensure that increased demand for assessment services is met with increased funding and staffing

Recommendations

- Improve assessment services for Distance Learning students
- Improve assessment services for students with disabilities
- Provide full range of assessment services at Cypress campus
- Cross-train faculty and staff to provide comprehensive assessment information and services to a greater number of students
- Use the Master Planning and Budget processes to improve funding and staffing

New Student Orientation

Challenges

- Number of students who do not attend new student orientation
- Determine the effectiveness of the orientation program
- Lack of orientation “hold” feature as part of the registration process
- Inadequate funding, staffing, and training
- Providing an exciting and helpful orientation program

Recommendations

- Study how to ensure that targeted new students participate in the orientation program
- Collect data related to the retention and success of students who have been oriented to determine the effectiveness of the orientation program
- Use the Master Planning and Budget processes to improve funding and staffing
- Re-engineer the orientation program during 2004-05

Academic Advising

Challenges

- Expansion of advising to include all students (new, returning, and continuing)
- Expansion of advising to include Distance Learning students
- Insufficient funding and staffing
- Accuracy and consistency of advising information, including transfer services
- Keeping up-to-date information on Academic and Workforce Education program websites
- Integrating career development information to help students determine a major
- Enhancing academic counseling support for students academically at risk

Recommendations

- Implement a formal faculty advising system during 2004-05
- Use the Master Planning and Budgeting processes to improve funding and staffing
- Enhance collaboration between Student Services and the instructional areas for better quality and consistency of information provided to advisors
- Improve focus on quality academic advising, including transfer services
- Improve academic advising data collection process for accurate information on student population
- Automate student intake system in Student Services
- Integrate career development information for students during the enrollment process to help undecided students declare a major

- Strengthen academic counseling services for students academically at risk
- Develop mechanisms to provide consistent advising services and information, both in person and online

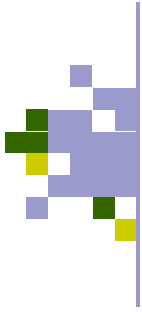
Registration

Challenges

- Inadequate staffing
- Programming and manipulating web-based information and communications systems
- Late registration of students after classes begin
- Limited availability of class sections during high demand times
- Low participation and enrollment rates by ethnic minority students

Recommendations

- Use the Master Planning and Budgeting processes to improve funding and staffing
- Increase support to implement and run technological system program enhancements
- Investigate through the Admissions and Registration Task Force the effects of allowing late registration of students after classes begin
- Conduct a study through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to determine the factors contributing to the low enrollment rates of ethnic minority students
- Continue to investigate and analyze registration processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness for students



b. Foreword

The Austin Community College Student Access and Success Committee (SASC) formed in 2003 through the merger of the Student Services Committee and the Minority Recruitment and Retention Committee. Membership includes stakeholder department representatives, as well as students, faculty, and employee association representatives.

Purpose: To recommend and establish a comprehensive strategy to increase participation and success for all ACC students.

Functions

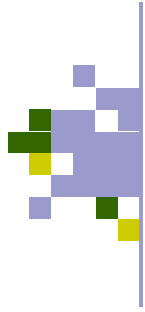
- Review and analyze annual data on student participation and success and make appropriate recommendations to improve participation and success for all ACC students.
- Identify opportunities for and threats to increasing student participation and success, especially for underserved populations.
- Recommend institutional goals, priorities, and strategies for participation and success efforts, including those that target underserved populations.
- Formulate a comprehensive strategy for increasing student participation and success, and recommend group(s) for specific assignments.
- Develop recommendations for college-wide policies and procedures related to increasing participation and success.
- Collaborate and communicate with other groups in the shared governance structure, employee associations, departments, administrative units, and the Board of Trustees, to ensure that identified outcomes are achieved.

Acknowledgements

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2003-04 SASC members: Dr. Kathleen Christensen (chair), Levi Barnes, Walter Cooper, Dr. Mariano Diaz-Miranda, Dr. Tyra Duncan-Hall, Loretta Edelen, Laura Hague, Velda Jackson, Shaundra Jones, Susan Jones, Dr. Sharon King, Linda Kluck, Marie-Line McGhee, Ana Mejia-Dietche, Laura Ore, Marvilyn Reyes, Cheryl Richard, Bill Scanlon, Tikesha Wren Smith, Dr. Magdalena de la Teja, Stacey Thompson, Katherine Viek, Roslyn Wallace, and Julie Wauchope.

2004-05 SASC members: Dr. Magdalena de la Teja (chair), Dr. Hector Aguilar, Terry Bazan, Dr. Val Cantu, Dr. Naomi Carroll, Dr. Kathleen Christensen, Dr. Mariano Diaz-Miranda, Dr. Tyra Duncan-Hall, Loretta Edelen, Alicia Garza, Laura Hague, Mary Harris, Susan Jones, Dr. Sharon King, Marie-Line McGhee, Ana Mejia-Dietche, Laura Ore, Tobin Quereau (co-chair), Marvilyn Reyes, Tikesha Wren Smith, Stacey Thompson, and Roslyn Wallace.

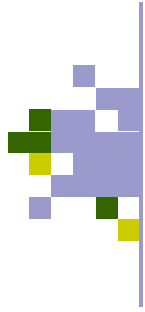


1. Introduction

The SASC members present in this white paper a detailed analysis of the practices as they relate to new students entering ACC. The purpose is twofold: 1) to target areas that need improvement; and 2) to recognize and strengthen best practices.

This initial step of evaluating practices and procedures will help create a blueprint while moving from planning to implementing and facilitating greater enrollment accessibility and success for a growing number of prospective students.

Reviewed here is each step involved in ACC credit enrollment and registration processes, including student recruitment, admissions, financial aid, assessment, new student orientation, academic advising, and registration. Each process consists of a description of its current function followed by a critical analysis as it relates to the goal of student access to ACC. This white paper includes challenges and recommendations and concludes with suggested next steps for improving access.



2. Student Recruitment

Purpose

The Student Recruitment Office (SRO) is responsible for expanding recruitment efforts to increase access to higher education for the ACC service area, recruit students from underserved and historically under-represented populations, and assist students in the transition to college. The SRO goal is to convey the message that an education at ACC is possible for a diverse population with a variety of educational and career interests.

Description of Activity

Efforts are made to visit every high school within the ACC service area; however, SRO provides expanded service to 16 high schools identified as high priority.

Several variables are used to determine high priority schools: number of ethnic minority students; number of economically disadvantaged students based upon free/reduced lunch certifications; number of failing TAAS scores; and number of students continuing their education after high school. A priority school is assigned a recruitment specialist to collaborate with high school faculty, staff, and administrators.

Recruitment specialists

- Coordinate classroom visits
- Participate in school-sponsored career/college fairs and parent night events
- Arrange ACC campus tours
- Coordinate open house visits
- Organize College Days events at high schools to provide opportunities for academic, workforce, and Student Services representatives to share information and meet with high school students, faculty, and staff
- Organize Access to College events at high schools to provide individualized assistance with the ACC admission and financial aid application process
- Maintain ACC brochure racks and distribute information as needed

SRO staff also assists ACC's Adult Education and Early College Start students with transition to college. In addition to these recruitment and outreach activities, SRO staff responds to requests for information from prospective students, families, and community members. The SRO staff works with admissions, financial aid, advising, and counseling staff to provide a seamless web of services. SRO recruiters are also trained as advisors to facilitate a more continuous stream of services.

Staffing

SRO has four full-time recruitment specialists. Three part-time student ambassadors participate in all recruitment and outreach activities. A senior computer support tech and administrative assistant II make up the support staff responsible for the collection, input, and consolidation of student data and reports.

Data

Purpose: To expand student recruitment efforts to increase access to higher education for the ACC service area, to recruit students from underserved and historically under-represented populations, and to assist students in their transition to community college.

Intended outcome: Expanded recruitment efforts and targeted follow-up strategies will increase the number of prospects who become ACC applicants and enroll.

Assessment criteria: Based upon semester and yearly Datatel reports, at least 200 prospects reported in Datatel will become applicants and at least 75 percent of the applicants will enroll.

Results: Datatel reports for the 2002-03 academic year indicates 456 prospects reported in Datatel became applicants and 191 of these applicants enrolled in an ACC class. The criterion for the number of prospects who became applicants was achieved. However, the percent of applicants who enrolled was below the criterion (75 percent).

Table 2-1:
Comparison of Eligible Prospects, Applicants, and Students Who Enrolled in an ACC Class –
Academic Year 2002-2003

Category	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Non-Resident	Other	Total
Prospects ¹	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,311
Applicants ²	145	81	201	23	0	2	4	456
Enrolled in an ACC Class ³	72	16	82	8	0	4	9	191
¹ Prospects are students the Student Recruitment Office comes in contact with at recruiting events and who complete prospect cards. They range from ninth through 12-graders. ² Applicants are prospects who submit an ACC Admission application. ³ Enrollees are prospects who complete the admissions process and register for an ACC class.								

Source: ACC Computer System, Student Recruitment Office

Table 2-2 shows the number of Early College Start (ECS) students by high school districts in the ACC service area who enrolled fall 2003 and spring 2004.

Table 2-2:
Early College Start (ECS) Students Who Enrolled in an ACC Class –
Fall 2003 and Spring 2004

District/High School	Number of ECS Students Fall 2003	Number of EC Students Spring 2004
Austin ISD/Akins	17	31
Austin ISD/Anderson	31	25
Austin ISD/ Austin	38	31
Austin ISD/Bowie	38	37
Austin ISD/Crockett	14	15
Austin ISD/Garza Independence	21	23
Austin ISD/Lyndon B. Johnson	10	10
Austin ISD/Johnston	5	10
Austin ISD/Lanier	4	2
Austin ISD/McCallum	39	60
Austin ISD/Reagan	0	1
Austin ISD/Travis	5	3
Bastrop ISD/Bastrop	12	21
Blanco ISD/Blanco	0	2
Del Valle ISD/Del Valle	23	25
Dripping Springs ISD/Dripping Springs	7	6
Eanes ISD/Westlake	58	48
Elgin ISD/Elgin	8	39
Fredericksburg ISD/Fredericksburg	49	95
Georgetown ISD/Georgetown	156	161
Georgetown ISD/Chip Richarte	0	2
Harper ISD/Harper	18	16
Hays ISD/Hays	75	53
Jarrell ISD/Jarrell	17	16
Johnson City ISD/Johnson City	3	5
Lago Vista ISD/Lago Vista	4	2
Lake Travis ISD/Lake Travis	79	113
Leander ISD/Cedar Park	47	43
Leander ISD/Leander	21	27
Liberty Hill ISD/Liberty Hill	29	21
Lockhart ISD/Lockhart	63	57
Luling ISD/Luling	18	17
Manor ISD/Manor	28	30
Nixon-Smiley ISD/Nixon-Smiley	17	19
Pflugerville ISD/Connally	20	24
Pflugerville ISD/Pflugerville	59	50
Prairie Lea ISD/Prairie Lea	0	1
Round Rock ISD/McNeil	22	35
Round Rock ISD/Round Rock	24	29
Round Rock ISD/Stony Point	21	17
Round Rock ISD/Westwood	66	52
San Marcos ISD/San Marcos	53	46
Smithville ISD/Smithville	3	2
Wimberley ISD/Wimberley	36	30
Total - All High Schools	1,258	1,352

Source: ACC Early College Start Office

Fall 2003 enrollment data reveal that ACC has surpassed its fall 2005 “Closing the Gaps” projected enrollments for minority students. Specifically, actual fall 2003 enrollments for black students has surpassed projected fall 2005 enrollments by 3.7 percent and actual fall 2003 enrollments for Hispanic students has surpassed projected fall 2005 enrollments by 3.9 percent. It is important to note that these increases may have more to do with our region’s continued growth and an acute spike in the number of unemployed, than with ACC’s efforts to increase minority participation and completions.

Table 2-3:
ACC Participation Rates and Progress Toward Closing The Gaps Fall 2005 Targets

Ethnicity	Fall 2000	Fall 2003 ¹	Increase from Fall 2000 to Fall 2003	Increase Remaining to Fall 2005 Target	Fall 2005 Target	Percent of Target Achieved
White	16,417	17,463	1,046	1,255	18,718	93.3%
Black	1,710	2,023	313	-73	1,950	103.7%
Hispanic	5,330	6,314	984	-237	6,077	103.9%
Asian	1,552	1,515	-37	-327	2,735	112.0%
Other ²	847	1,547	700			
Total	25,856	28,862	3,006	618	29,480	97.9%
¹ Certified Data – data that are reported to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and verified by ACC as of the term’s official reporting date (census date). ² The category “Other” includes Native American students, International students, and students not identified by ethnicity.						

Source: ACC Student Database

According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s July 2004 “Closing the Gaps by 2015: 2004 Progress Report,” Hispanic enrollment is not meeting the statewide percent of targeted increase. The report states, “Although 2005 targets have been reached for total enrollment and for black and white enrollment, Hispanic enrollment is not yet on track. Texas must increase Hispanic college enrollment by an additional 48,041 students to reach the 2005 target for that group. In addition, the percentage of recent high school graduates who enter college is not increasing, suggesting a need to enhance efforts to encourage them to prepare for and succeed in college.”

Table 2-4:
Texas “Closing the Gaps” Annual Enrollment Progress Toward 2005 Participation Targets

Ethnicity	Fall 2000	Fall 2003	Increase from 2000 to 2003	Increase to Reach 2005 Targets ¹ (Less Fall 2000)	2005 Target	Percent of Target Increase for 2005 Achieved
Black	108,463	132,211	23,748	23,537	132,000	100.9%
Hispanic	237,394	291,959	54,565	102,606	340,000	53.2%
White	570,042	626,201	56,159	20,958	591,000	268%
Total	1,019,879	1,176,937	157,058	149,121	1,169,000	105.3%
¹ The plan’s original 2005 targets were updated to reflect more recent demographic projections by the State Data Center. The original targets called for increasing total enrollment by 150,000 students over fall 2000 levels, while increasing black enrollment by 22,200 students, Hispanic enrollment by 101,600 students, and white enrollment by 24,100 students.						

Source: THECB Closing the Gaps by 2015: 2004 Progress Report, July 2004

Based on the statewide progress toward 2005 participation targets shown in Table 2-4, ACC may want to review its “Closing the Gaps” targets and determine if the ACC targets need to be adjusted for 2005 and beyond.

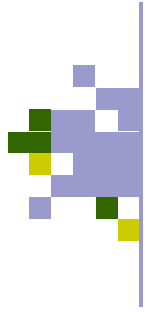
Challenges

- A more than 50 percent gap between prospective high school seniors and ACC applicants. Gaps also continue in the percentages of ethnic minority applicants compared with their enrollment
- Coordination of mass application sessions is needed
- Insufficient support from some high school administrators to allow their students time out of the classroom for SRO events
- Maintaining participation from ACC academic, workforce, and student support services representatives at open houses, College Days, and campus tours
- Capturing data from students to identify which SRO events have the greatest impact and providing additional follow-up activities

- Identification and removal of barriers contributing to low ethnic minority participation.
- Initial contacts and follow-up activities will continue to be a focused effort.
Strengthening collaboration with the Early College Start and Tech Prep offices remains a priority

Recommendations

- Improve high school support by collaborating with Austin ISD Project Advance counselors for better access to high school students, faculty, and administrators
- Increase ACC departmental participation as well as increase efforts to align special tours and activities based on student-identified career interests (e.g. health sciences, culinary arts, and automotive technology)
- Provide information on specific educational paths leading to a successful career to assist students in making more informed decisions about college and career choices
- Implement follow-up activities to identify why students are not submitting applications
- Replicate the San Marcos Initiative in other school districts
- Contact a random group of prospective high school graduates who did not enroll at ACC in an effort to gather data that will provide information regarding barriers to registration and enrollment, concerns about classes, or areas of improvement for SRO
- Contact a random group of former SRO prospective students who did enroll to see how their first semester in college is proceeding and gather data regarding factors that contributed to their successful transition to ACC student
- Review ACC's "Closing the Gaps" participation targets and determine if they need to be adjusted for 2005 and beyond



3. Admissions

Purpose

The functions of the ACC Admissions and Academic Records unit include

- Providing information and materials about the College to prospective students
- Administering the admissions process
- Facilitating student registration services
- Providing direct and indirect support services to faculty, instructional support units, and other Retention and Student Services staff
- Collecting and maintaining the integrity of all student academic records
- Assuring compliance with ACC policies, state laws and mandates and federal regulations.

The ACC Admissions Office maintains and assures ACC's open-door policy, designed to allow the broadest access to higher education to all who are seeking educational opportunities.

From the ACC mission:

Austin Community College operates on the belief that open access to quality postsecondary educational experiences is vital in a rapidly changing democratic society, therefore, the College exists to provide such educational opportunities to all the people of the Austin Community College service area. Hence, Austin Community College maintains an "open door" admissions policy, offers a comprehensive variety of educational programs, and actively seeks to eliminate barriers in the educational process.

In all functions, the ACC Admissions and Academic Records unit strives to provide high-level, accurate, efficient, and effective services in support of the educational mission of the college.

Description of Activity

Prospective Students and Admissions

Admissions and Records staff responds to mail, e-mail, telephone, and in-person inquiries about ACC and its programs. The office provides admissions applications, course schedules, college catalogs and instructional program information to prospective students. Staff is trained to provide a wide range of general and specific information about ACC, its programs and services.

Admissions Office staff assists and supports prospective students through ACC's admissions process. Admissions procedures are designed to facilitate a smooth entry into the institution while complying with ACC policy, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and federal record keeping regulations, and accrediting agency guidelines. The admissions process is outlined below.

Applicants complete an admissions application, via either a paper application which is available on request (by mail, e-mail or telephone) at all ACC campuses and centers, local area high schools and other community based agencies or via the ACC web application site. Initial paper application processing is done on campuses and at the Highland Business Center, after which they are forwarded to the Information Technology (IT) unit for electronic entry into the Datatel Student Information System. Web-based applications are complete after all Texas state residency information is submitted.

Admissions and Records staff are charged by the state of Texas and by ACC with determining and assessing the proper residency classification for in- and out-of-state residents and in- and out-of-ACC taxing district classification. By Texas law, all students must complete and sign the residency oath and information form prior to admission to any state-funded institution and every year thereafter when the student has not been in attendance for one academic year. Additional residency documentation may be required to determine eligibility for Texas resident tuition purposes. Admissions staff inspects and certifies all supporting documentation in order to report accurate student residency status to the state each semester.

Applicants are required to submit official transcripts from all secondary and postsecondary institutions attended prior to enrollment at ACC. Data such as dates of attendance, degrees earned, Texas Success Initiative (TSI) status and test scores are obtained from incoming transcripts and are entered onto each applicant record in Datatel. Staff in the Records Office at HBC is responsible for all incoming data entry. Applicants most often submit transcripts in person at the campus admissions offices. Applicants are given a free photocopy of each transcript that is turned in to Admission, for use when meeting with an advisor or counselor when planning for course registration.

Transfer Applications: Transcript Evaluations

In compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) requirement, all incoming transcripts received by the college are evaluated and applicable credit is posted to student records prior to the end of first semester of enrollment at ACC. Students are notified of all transferable credit upon credit evaluation and posting.

The Records Office developed and implemented the web-based student records access system, allowing students to review their academic records including all transfer credit accepted at ACC. This increased communication with students is designed to facilitate students' progress through degree programs, increasing the graduation rate and assisting students in making transfer decisions.

Staffing

The Admissions and Records Offices are located at each of the six campuses within the College's service area, and at the administrative services building, the Highland Business Center (HBC). At each campus there is an Admissions and Records Office Coordinator and between 1 and 3 Admissions services support staff, depending on the size of each campus. Offices at HBC include those of the Director of Admissions and Records, the Registrar, new student application processing, student records, transcript evaluations, grade processing, and transcript orders. Admissions and Records staff provides support to all of Retention and Student Services areas, faculty, staff and students.

Table 3-1:
Admissions and Records Office Staffing Per Campus

Staff	HBC	CYP	EVC	PIN	NRG	RGC	RVS	INTERNATIONAL	TOTAL
Adm/Supv.	3	1 Supervisor for all three campuses			1	1	1	1	8
Classified	22	1	1	1	3	3	2.5	2.5	36
Total	25	2	1	1	4	4	3.5	3.5	44

Source: Admissions and Records Office

Admissions Office staff serve all prospective, new, current and former students, often and typically during multiple visits to the Admissions Office for various services including

- Prospective student information
- New student admissions
- To collect all subsequently submitted admissions documents (transcripts, supporting residency documents, etc.)
- For registration assistance
- To provide copies of student class schedules
- To distribute student identification cards
- To produce enrollment verifications
- To assist with schedule changes, refund requests and withdrawal requests
- To fill orders for and produce official ACC transcripts

Data

Effectiveness Measures

Purpose: Student Services strives to provide exemplary programs that support the teaching/learning process and to increase opportunities for students to define and reach their educational and career goals.

Intended outcome: The applicants who register and attend ACC will reflect the demographics of the applicant pool.

Criterion: Based on demographic data from the yearly applicant pool and the annual headcount enrollment of first-time at ACC students, at least 75% of each demographic group represented in the applicant pool will enroll.

Results: Previous annual data are not available, thus fall 2003 data were used to assess this outcome. ACC did not meet this criterion for the fall 2003 semester (Table 3-2). Approximately half of all applicants in each ethnic category actually enrolled (Table 3-2).

Table 3-2:
Comparison of ACC Fall 2003 Applicants and Registrants by Ethnicity

Ethnic Group	Students Who Completed an Application for Fall 2003 ¹		Applicants Who Enrolled at ACC for the First Time (FTACC) in Fall 2003*			% of FTACC
	N	%	N	% of applicants	Criterion (75%)	
White	8,846	59.4%	4,782	55.1%	Not met	64.0%
Black	1,318	8.9%	468	35.5%	Not met	6.1%
Hispanic	3,385	22.7%	1,600	47.3%	Not met	21.0%
Asian	629	4.2%	316	50.2%	Not met	4.2%
Other ²	704	4.7%	356	50.7%	Not met	4.7%
Total	14,882	100.0%	7,612	51.2%	Not met	100.0%

¹ Duplicated headcount due to data system query limitations.

² The category "Other" includes Native American students, International students, and students not identified by ethnicity.

Source: ACC Student Database

Analysis of fall 2003 application data revealed that two-thirds of applicants were cleared to register and 58 percent of applicants registered.

The majority of new student applications for each semester are received after the priority application deadline has passed. This causes the bulk of admissions activity to occur during the peak registration period, resulting in additional admissions processing time and delays in other processes, including assessment and advising. Students are encouraged to complete their admissions application in a timely fashion; however, ACC does not apply any penalty to those who do not. Three-quarters of students who submitted their application after the priority deadline enrolled in classes (Table 3-3).

Table 3-3:
Applications Received after the Priority Application Deadline -- Academic Year 2002-2003

Semester	Post-Priority Application Time Frame	Number of Applications During Post-Priority	Total Semesters' Applications	% of Post-Priority Applicants	Enrolled	% Enrolled Applicants
Fall	7/11– 8/5/02	10,062	15,678	64%	11,256	72%
Spring	12/1/02– 1/15/03	5,937	9,448	63%	7,281	77%
Summer	4/21/03– 5/27/03	8,893	12,303	72%	10,040	82%
Total	-	24,892	37,429	67%	28,577	75%

Source: ACC Student Database

Challenges

- **Staffing.** One of the biggest challenges in the Admissions and Records Offices is that of not having staffing levels keep pace with the enrollment increases and not having the job classification of entry-level positions keep pace with the increased technical demands placed on staff. Inadequate staffing often results in students waiting a long time for regularly and frequently needed support services. Campus Admissions Offices provide a wide range of highly detailed and often complex services to prospective, current, and former students, and the faculty and instructional support staff on campuses. The critical front-line staff in Admissions and Records Offices is historically the lowest classified and paid staff in Retention and Student Services, leading to frequent staff turnover. In most cases, staff must be prepared to respond to and support a diverse population of first-generation college students who are under prepared for navigating the College's systems and programs. A great deal of customer service skills and abilities are required of those staff coming to ACC with the least amount of practical experience. In addition to the ongoing challenge at all Admissions Offices of inadequate staffing, there is insufficient space for services at all Admissions Offices. Student walk-in traffic at campuses has continued to increase each year. All campuses have experienced an increase in student

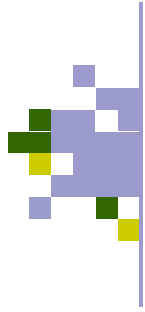
traffic with NRG having the highest volume of students served, followed by RVS and then RGC. EVC has experienced the greatest increase over the past three years, with a 136 percent increase, followed by CYP with a 110 percent increase. The Texas Comptrollers Operational Review of November 2002 pointed to the need for additional staffing, while the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools (SACS) report cited the need for additional space for all Retention and Student Service units.

- ACC currently does not collect information about whether admitted students are first-generation students in college. This information would be valuable to collect as part of the admissions process.
- Technology. Another significant challenge is that of having to develop, program, implement, and maintain the increasingly technical environment required to provide web-based services to students, staff and faculty. Current student data system entry, processing, and maintenance require knowledge of several different software and mainframe applications. This requires a lengthy investment of time and energy to train and prepare staff to carry out the tasks of the department. Programming and manipulating web-based information and communication systems is a specialized field for which the department is not staffed.
- Admission of students after classes begin causes a longer wait for processing of applications and slows service to already enrolled students during the first week of classes.
- Low participation and enrollment rates by ethnic minority students is an on-going concern and challenge that needs further study.

Recommendations

- Additional staffing to adequately serve the volume of student traffic, to be able to process all admissions applications in the timeliest manner and to reduce the dependence on temporary hourly employees for routine office staffing needs
- Increased support (resources, staffing) to implement and run technological system enhancements to allow for more automated communication with prospective students, applicants, and current and former students. One such communication is that of sending letters to all applicants upon completion of the admissions requirements. Increased and enhanced technology will allow more efficient processing of all Admissions and Records department functions
- Expansion of dedicated space, to adequately house departmental units
- Applicants are better served when all required paperwork is submitted (incoming transcripts from sending institutions) and when students have adequate time to progress through the admissions, advising, assessment and registration processes; there is a need to have applicants provide all necessary documents as early as possible prior to application to ACC

- As a multi-campus operation with centralized record-keeping functions, it is important for students to have all documents on file as early as possible to allow for a smooth transition from applicant to fully advised registrant. One possibility for sharing documents between campuses and the central administrative offices is to explore expanding the document scanning and storage systems
- Revise the ACC admissions application to be able to collect information about whether students are first generation in college and report this data as appropriate
- Studies conducted through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to determine barriers to entrance into higher education experienced by ethnic minority groups that might be addressed through Student Services programming
- Continue to investigate and analyze the admissions and enrollment processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness for students



4. Financial Aid

Purpose

The mission of the Financial Aid Office is to assist students in securing the funds necessary to pursue their educational goals at Austin Community College. The staff is dedicated to offering quality services in a caring manner while maintaining the fiscal integrity of the financial aid programs.

Description of Activity

The Financial Aid Office is responsible for managing numerous local, state, and federal financial aid programs, staying informed on changes in state and federal mandates, educating prospective and current students regarding financial aid, and providing guidance, support, and encouragement for those individuals interested in the financial-aid process.

Financial Aid Programs

Financial aid includes grants, loans, scholarships, and student work-study. The college receives an award allocation for the campus-based programs based on a federal funding formula. The campus-based federal programs are the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant and the Federal Work-Study Program. State programs are the TEXAS Grant, TEXAS II Grant, Texas work-study, Texas B-On-Time Loan Program, and the CAL Loan. These programs are also allocated based on a state funding formula. The Financial Aid Office also administers the Early High School Graduation Program and the Certified Educational Aide Exemption Program. The ACC Foundation administers certain scholarship programs; however, the Financial Aid Office is responsible for disbursing the funds to students. The Financial Aid Office also administers scholarships from outside donors and agencies such as Kiwanis, Rotary Clubs, and high school scholarships.

Financial aid programs include

- Federal Pell Grant (FPELL). A federal grant program for undergraduate students obtaining their first bachelor's degree. The Pell Grant award amount depends on the family contribution, the cost of education, and number of hours enrolled. The maximum award amount for an academic year is \$4,050 for full-time enrollment. The Pell Grant program is considered an entitlement. These funds are received periodically from the federal government based upon institutional reports that are submitted to the U.S. Department of Education reporting the student eligibility data.

- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG). A federal campus-based grant for students with exceptional financial need. The maximum award amount at Austin Community College is \$2,500 per academic year.
- Austin Community College Student Grant (ACCSG). An institutional grant for students with a high need. The maximum award amount is \$2,500 per academic year.
- Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership Program (LEAP). A grant that is funded by the federal government and matched by the state. The maximum award is \$1,000 per academic year.
- Texas Grant. A state grant for Texas residents who graduated after May 1998 and completed the recommended or advanced high school curriculum. The grant is need-based with a \$635-per-semester award at a community college.
- Texas Grant II. A state grant for Texas residents with an effective family contribution of \$2,000 or less. The award at a community college is \$635 per semester.
- Federal Work-Study and Texas Work-Study. Part-time employment. Eligibility for the work-study program is based on financial need. Students who receive a work-study award can choose from a variety of on-campus jobs. Off-campus opportunities are available at several elementary schools for reading and math tutors. The pay rate for the student worker is \$8.45 to \$10.20 per hour.
- Federal Stafford Loans. Loans that are guaranteed by the federal government. There are two types of loans. Students who demonstrate financial need are eligible for a federally subsidized loan. Students who do not demonstrate need may be eligible for an unsubsidized loan.
- Texas B-On-Time Loan. A state loan program based on financial need to assist students who have graduated under the recommended curriculum plan as of May 2003. This loan can become a grant if the student completes graduation requirements within the specified time frame as per state guidelines.
- Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS). A loan available for parents of dependent students. This loan is not based on financial need.

Cost of Attendance Budgets

Cost of Attendance budgets are used to help set financial aid awards. The budgets include tuition, fees, books, supplies, room and board, personal expenses, and transportation. There are different budgets for different student categories, such as a dependent commuter in-district or out-of-district; dependent living away from home; independent in-district or out-of-district. An example of a dependent commuter budget for nine months is \$6,168 and a dependent living away from home is \$10,524.

Application Procedures and Processes

- **Required Forms.** A student must submit the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) to determine eligibility for all financial aid programs. The student must also complete an ACC financial aid application. Students selected for verification by the federal government must provide copies of tax returns, complete a verification worksheet, and submit any other documents to verify untaxed income.
- **Priority Deadlines.** A student must reapply for financial aid every year. The first date a student can begin applying for the following academic year is Jan. 1. The Financial Aid Office gives first priority to students whose applications are received early. Applications are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. The student's financial aid file must be complete by the priority deadline so that the Financial Aid Office has ample time to process the application before the first registration and payment deadline. Priority awarding deadlines are as follows: April 1 for the fall semester/spring semester award, Oct. 15 for the spring semester only award, and March 15 for the summer semester award. Students may still apply for the Pell Grant and Stafford Loans after the priority deadline.
- **Satisfactory Academic Progress.** Federal regulations require that a student be making satisfactory academic progress at the time financial aid is paid. ACC students must maintain a minimum 2.0 grade point average and a 65 percent completion rate in order to continue receiving financial aid. The student is placed on financial aid probation the first semester in which the standards are not met. Students who fail to meet the satisfactory academic progress requirements while on financial aid probation will be placed on financial aid suspension. A student who has been denied financial aid for failure to meet the satisfactory academic progress requirements may petition by submitting a written appeal and documenting the mitigating circumstances.
- **Financial Aid Processing and Award Packaging.** Centralized at the Highland Business Center. Campus Financial Aid Offices assist students with the application process, student appeals due to unsatisfactory academic progress, college work-study placement, student loan counseling sessions, professional judgment overrides, special condition appeals, loan disbursements, and some award packaging. Incomplete notices, award packaging, processing, reconciling of accounts, and reporting are done at the Highland Business Center.

Financial Aid Information/Literature

- **ACC Financial Aid Handbook.** The Financial Aid Office publishes a Financial Aid Handbook that is distributed at all campus Financial Aid Offices and covers information mandated by the federal student consumer regulations. The Student Recruitment Office and other campus departments such as San Marcos, Fredericksburg, and the Gary Job Corps also distribute these handbooks to their students.

- ACC Financial Aid Guide—Paying for College: An abbreviated guide to give students quick and easy information about how to apply for financial aid and the cost to attend ACC.
- Financial Aid website: Features most of the information found in the student financial aid handbook and is also used to inform students of new processes or procedures.
- Posters/fliers: In addition to the award letter informing the student of their award package, the Financial Aid Office has additional information sheets to assist students in understanding their rights and responsibilities in order to continue receiving financial aid. Posters are also used as awareness tools.

Financial Aid Awareness Activities

- High School College Nights, College Days, College Fairs. In addition to awareness activities with the Student Recruitment Office, the Financial Aid Office participates in college fairs/nights at high schools throughout the ACC service area, including San Marcos, Bastrop, Elgin, Del Valle, Round Rock, Pflugerville, Smithville, Georgetown, Hays, and Fredericksburg.
- Financial Aid Awareness Week. Held at ACC campuses in February to remind students to apply early for financial aid. This also promotes the Financial Aid Fairs to be held the same month. Tables are set up at the campus with financial aid applications and literature.
- Financial Aid Fairs. Held in February to encourage ACC students to apply early. In addition to having the lending community at the fairs, the Mobile Educational Resource Vehicle (MERV), a mobile recreational vehicle with 12 computer stations, is available to assist students in completing their FAFSA applications and submitting them electronically to the federal processor. VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) volunteers are also available to assist students with completing their income tax returns.
- FAFSA Completion Assistance is also available at the financial aid campus offices and/or in the Career Center.
- Community groups, churches, governmental agencies, non-profit service networks, and insurance companies are just some of the places from which the Financial Aid Office receives requests to conduct presentations.
- Adult Education/GED class financial aid presentations are conducted on a regular basis.
- ACC/San Marcos ISD 2003-2004 initiative required that all 380 seniors at San Marcos High School apply for financial aid. The Financial Aid Office was at San Marcos High School on four days to help families submit the FAFSA and apply for financial aid at ACC. While 295 seniors started the FAFSA and financial aid process, only 26 completed the process.
- Austin ISD/Austin Chamber of Commerce Financial Aid Saturdays consist of four Saturdays in February in which financial aid staff helps students and parents complete the FAFSA application.

Federal and state mandates and programs

New federal and state mandates and programs are common in the Financial Aid Office and usually require additional work and manual processing. The Department of Education has implemented several new reporting requirements and operating processes that are both time-consuming and labor-intensive.

- The Return of Title IV refund policy requires monitoring students that withdraw prior to the 60 percent point of the semester, recalculating their awards and putting them on repayment status.
- Students who fail to earn a passing grade in at least one class also require tracking and recalculating of their award.
- The Financial Aid Office is now also responsible for understanding tax laws to the extent that if a student and parent incorrectly file the wrong tax return form the Financial Aid Office must tell the student/parent to go back and file a new return to correct the error.
- A new reporting requirement called the Multiple Reporting Record, which requires the college to contact other colleges and universities if a student has attended both schools simultaneously and received aid from both schools. Students will register at two institutions and receive aid, then the college has to negotiate with the other school to determine which school keeps the federal dollars and which bills the student for the amount disbursed.
- Common Origination and Disbursement is a new process in which the Financial Aid Office reports to the Department of Education the number of transactions and students ACC has processed.
- The new TEXAS Grant and Texas B-On-Time Loan Programs require staff to manually review high school transcripts to determine if students meet the specific eligibility requirements. Staff must review all high school transcripts submitted to the Admissions Office to determine who is eligible for this grant.
- The state's Educational Aid Exemption Program for teacher aides has also increased in the last three years. This program is processed manually and requires many steps to determine the students' eligibility.
- The Financial Aid Office now serves continuing education students because of a new grant, the Continuing Education TPEG Grant, and new aid programs such as the Alternative Teacher Certification loan program.

Staffing

The Financial Aid Offices are located at each of the six campuses within the College’s service area, and at the administrative services building, the Highland Business Center (HBC). Offices at HBC include those of the Director of Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs, the Financial Aid Associate Director, Student Loan Coordinator, and the Veterans Affairs Coordinator.

Table 4-1:
Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs Offices Staffing Per Campus

Staff	CYP	EVC	NRG	PIN	RGC	RVS	HBC	TOTAL
Adm/Supv.	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	13
Classified	1	1	2	1	2	2	6	15
Total FA ¹ Staff	2	2	3	2	3	3	13	28
VA ² Staff	-	-	1	-	-	1	3	5
¹ FA refers to the Financial Aid Office ² VA refers to the Veterans Affairs Office								

Source: ACC Financial Aid Office

Data

Financial Aid Data - Applied, Awarded, and Disbursed

The number of students applying in the last three years has increased 78 percent, the number awarded has increased 91 percent, and the number actually disbursed has increased 88 percent (Table 4-2). The total number of applicants for the 2003-2004 school year was 20,597, the number of students awarded was 9,366, and actual disbursements were 8,762. The number of applicants consists of all students whose FAFSA was sent to ACC and those who have an ACC record file; however, they may not have submitted a Financial Aid Institutional Application. All 20,597 students were sent an incomplete notice as a reminder to complete the application process for financial aid. The number of awards (9,366) consists of students who completed the process and were mailed an award letter. The unduplicated number (8,762) of students who actually received or were disbursed funds relates to those students who actually enrolled and met all eligibility requirements at disbursement.

The percentage of ethnic minority students who applied, awarded, and were disbursed has increased over three years. Table 4-2 shows the percentage of increase in each of these three areas from 2000-2001 to 2003- 2004. These totals include students with no ethnicity data available.

Table 4-2:
Percentage Increase of Students Who Applied, Were Awarded, and Were Disbursed
Financial Aid Between Academic Years 2000-2001 and 2003-2004, By Ethnicity

Student Cohort	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Overall Increase
Applied	78%	94%	74%	61%	103%	78%
Awarded	94%	102%	84%	42%	72%	91%
Disbursed	95%	99%	76%	67%	68%	88%

Source: ACC Financial Aid Office

A random survey developed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness was administered to 2,120 students who were Pell-eligible and who were enrolled at ACC in fall 2003. Students were asked several questions in order to gather data not otherwise available. Questions included how many hours they worked, whether either of their parents attended college, and the highest degree attained by each of their parents. 473 responses were collected and tabulated for a response rate of twenty-two percent. Only 36 percent indicated that their parents attended college, so we can assume that 64 percent of the students are first generation in college. If these rates were applied to the total Pell-eligible recipients surveyed, 1,357 students would have been both Pell-eligible and first generation in college.

As shown in Table 4-3, the financial aid information between academic years 2000 and 2004 indicates that the largest group of recipients and the largest dollar awards originate from the Pell Grant program. Overall, the total amount of financial aid disbursed in 2003-2004 was more than \$31 million, with the average award per student of \$3,812. For the past four years, the total number of students to whom financial aid funds were disbursed increased by 75 percent, the total dollars disbursed increased by 176 percent and the average award increased by 58 percent.

Table 4-3:
Students Receiving Financial Aid -- Academic Years 2000-2004

P ¹		1999-00	2000-01	% Change from Previous Years	2001-02	% Change from Previous Years	2002-03	% Change from Previous Years	2003-04	% Change from Previous Years
PELL	R ²	3,266	3,336	2%	4,215	26%	5,065	20%	6,040	19%
	A ³	\$4,682,271	\$5,133,399	10%	\$7,436,073	49%	\$9,759,800	31%	\$11,813,122	21%
SEOG	R	483	188	-61%	297	58%	485	63%	367	-24%
	A	\$427,722	\$288,140	-33%	\$464,232	61%	\$621,319	34%	\$504,560	-19%
TPEG	R	1,225	1,310	7%	1,322	1%	1,436	9%	1,707	19%
	A	\$999,334	\$1,642,298	64%	\$1,299,898	-21%	\$1,563,725	20%	\$1,657,958	6%
LEAP	R	27	31	15%	33	6%	30	-9%	24	-25%
	A	\$26,862	\$28,377	6%	\$26,777	-6%	\$23,719	-11%	\$27,898	18%
Texas Grant	R	118	209	77%	335	60%	495	48%	448	-9%
	A	\$81,326	\$159,358	96%	\$335,727	111%	\$515,165	53%	\$474,891	-8%
Texas Match	R	N/A	200	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A	0	-
	A	-	\$25,293	-	\$0	-	\$0	-	\$0	-
Texas II	R	0	0	-	0	-	61	-	97	59%
	A	\$0	\$0	N/A	\$0	N/A	\$67,486	N/A	\$100,965	50%
Loans	R	2,185	2,034	-7%	2,521	24%	3,077	22%	3,951	28%
	A	\$4,663,461	\$4,795,598	3%	\$5,460,239	14%	\$8,789,822	61%	\$15,785,457	80%
FCWSP	R	200	252	26%	267	6%	296	11%	268	-9%
	A	\$364,131	\$662,967	82%	\$520,624	-21%	\$586,339	13%	\$604,384	3%
TCWP	R	14	30	114%	8	-73%	12	50%	36	200%
	A	\$27,601	\$84,111	205%	\$23,329	-72%	\$23,288	-0.2%	\$122,941	428%
Unduplicated No. of Recipients		4,665	4,655	-0.2%	5,918	27%	6,801	15%	8157	20%
Total		\$11,272,708	\$12,819,541	14%	\$15,566,899	21%	\$21,950,663	41%	\$31,092,176	42%
Average Award		\$2,416	\$2,754	14%	\$2,630	-5%	\$3,228	23%	\$3,812	18%

¹Programs include grants, loans, and work-study employment. Grants: PELL - Pell Grants; SEOG - Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant; TPEG - Texas Public Education Grant; LEAP - Leveraging Education Assistance Partnership; TEXAS - Texas Grant; TEXAS II - Texas II Grant; and Texas Match - these funds are included under TPEG. Loans: Stafford Subsidized/Unsubsidized; Parent PLUS Loan; College Access Loan (CAL); and Alternative Loan. Employment: FCWSP - Federal College Work Study Program; and TCWP - Texas College Work Study Program. ² "R" represents the number of recipients. ³ "A" represents the total amount of dollars awarded.

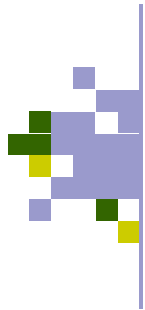
Source: Financial Aid Office

Challenges

- Increased student walk-in traffic, up 75 percent from 2001 to 2003. (CYP 78 percent, EVC 113 percent, NRG 55 percent, RGC 89 percent, RVS 71 percent, PIN 108 percent, and HBC 112 percent)
- Timely award to needy students
- The time and energy spent in processing the multitude of financial aid applications that are submitted to the college and the number of students who actually enroll and have financial aid disbursed
- Inadequate staffing
- Inadequate space for private financial aid counseling
- The financial aid cycle covers 21 months, with a significant period of overlap between two cycles, for example from Jan. 1, 2004 through Sept. 30, 2005 for the 2004-2005 academic year and Jan. 1, 2005 through Sept. 30, 2006 for the 2005-2006 academic year. (Overlap is Jan. 1-Sept. 30, 2005.) Maintaining two award cycles that contain different policies makes financial aid management different than most postsecondary administration

Recommendations

- Use the Master Planning and Budgeting processes to improve funding and staffing
- Increase reliance on technology to provide efficient delivery of services
- Expand dedicated space
- Analyze processes to reduce financial aid application processing time and to improve efficiency and effectiveness of financial aid services for students



5. Assessment

Purpose

The purpose of mandatory assessment at ACC is to determine the level at which students perform in basic skills. ACC considers appropriate course placement to be essential to student success in all academic areas. Mandatory assessment identifies students who have academic weaknesses, who are not academically prepared to perform college-level work, and who need remediation to upgrade their basic skills.

In order to assist advisors in appropriately placing students in college courses, the ACT COMPASS assessment system was adopted in December 1997 as ACC's placement test for reading, writing, and mathematics.

As a Texas public institution of higher education, ACC adheres to the policies established by the Texas Legislature regarding the Texas Success Initiative (TSI).

Unless TSI exempt, waived, or completed, each student who enters ACC must take the appropriate reading, writing, essay, and mathematics test on COMPASS before enrolling in developmental courses or college-level courses with skill prerequisites. Even students who are TSI exempt, waived, or completed may be required to take a placement test to enroll in higher-level math courses.

Effective for fall 2003, ACC began utilizing the ESL Placement Test (by ACT) for students whose primary language is not English. The use of the ESL Placement Test allows for more effective assistance with basic skills for English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students.

Description of Activity

Assessment Instruments

The COMPASS test by ACT and the ASSET test are available at ACC as state-approved tests to meet TSI requirements for students who are not exempt or who have not taken another state-approved assessment test, and as a placement test for those who need to demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing, or math skills. Performance standards for reaching college-level in reading, writing, and math are the performance standards set by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

COMPASS is a computer-adaptive test designed to determine skill levels in one or more basic academic skill areas: reading, writing/English, and mathematics. Computer-adaptive tests determine which questions are presented by examining responses to previously administered items. This technique helps avoid administering too many items that are too easy or too difficult. The higher an individual's skill level, the more challenging the items will be.

COMPASS is administered on a microcomputer using a standard keyboard and mouse. Instructions, questions, multiple-choice options, examinee responses, and other information are viewed on the monitor. No previous computer experience is necessary, and Assessment Center personnel are available to provide assistance. Only the essay portion of the test is timed. Each subtest takes approximately 45-60 minutes to complete. When used for meeting TSI requirements, the maximum time allowed to test is five hours.

The ASSET test is a paper-pencil instrument used to assess the same basic skills in writing, reading, and mathematics. Each of these tests contains multiple-choice items and requires 25 minutes of testing time.

ACT's ESL Placement test is included in the COMPASS system and is used to place ESL students into appropriate courses. ESL has three tests—grammar/usage, reading, and listening—that can be used separately or in combination. In addition to these tests, ESL students write an essay, which is graded by an ESL faculty member, and meet with ESL faculty for an interview. Except for the essay, which is timed at 45 minutes, the ESL tests are not timed.

Scratch paper is provided, as are calculators (for students taking the math portion), but all other materials including textbooks, notebooks, and dictionaries are not permitted. Students may take a break between the writing sample and the objective parts of the test. Upon completion of testing, no materials, notes, or scrap paper may be removed from the Assessment Center. Scores may be canceled if there is any reason to question the validity of results.

Scheduling of Assessment Tests

COMPASS testing is available by appointment or on a walk-in basis. A COMPASS appointment system allows Assessment Center staff to register students for any scheduled test at any campus. Campuses schedule tests according to what their staffing and budget allow. Generally, students have ample testing opportunities at ACC. Assessment is offered Monday through Friday, even twice a day and on weekends at some campuses. During peak registration periods—December and January for the spring semester, April and May for the summer semester, and July and August for the fall semester—assessment specialists increase their testing slots to accommodate the increased demand.

Students with disabilities that prevent them from taking the test under standard conditions are requested to notify the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) before registering for assessment testing. Assessment staff works directly with the OSD to arrange accommodations. Due to staffing issues, only Rio Grande, Northridge, and Eastview Assessment Centers are set up at this time to offer extended time, reader, scribe, large print, quiet room, Braille, and audio accommodations. The other campuses offer these services through OSD.

Information provided to students prior to taking the assessment test

Advisors, counselors, and clerks screen students to determine which tests they are required to take according to the major they have chosen. Students receive a routing slip if it is determined they need to purchase a COMPASS (TCOM) ticket. At the time the student receives the routing slip or makes a testing appointment, the student receives information regarding review resources:

- ACC's practice test at www3.austincc.edu/evpcss/rss/assess/samples.htm
- Free workshops on test taking skills offered by ACC
- Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) Study Guide
- THEA practice test via the Internet at www.thea.nesinc.com
- ESL sample questions on ACT's website at www.act.org/esl/sample.html
- Handout of Writing Sample tips written by ACC writing faculty

High Tech for Distance Learning

ACT will soon be launching the Internet version of COMPASS/ESL, giving ACC and other colleges access to Internet use for on-campus, high school outreach, and distance testing.

In May/June 2004, the Assessment Office began using e-Write (included on COMPASS) as an essay testing instrument that provides immediate results. Students may write their essay by hand and have it mailed for scoring, or they may type their essay on the computer and have it electronically scored immediately upon completion. E-Write eliminates the two- to three-day waiting period for results, and allows students to meet with a counselor or advisor immediately after testing, providing one-stop assessment and advising.

Staffing

ACC has three full-time assessment specialists located at the three larger campuses (Riverside, Rio Grande, and Northridge). There is a testing supervisor at Cypress who administers the assessments in addition to managing the campus' academic testing needs. One full-time hourly assessment specialist works at Pinnacle, and one full-time advising/assessment specialist performs the duties of advising specialist and assessment specialist at Eastview. The specialist at Rio Grande is the only assessment specialist in the college with a full-time staffing table clerical position. The assessment specialist at Riverside shares one staffing table clerical position with other Student Services offices. The Northridge assessment specialist has a part-time hourly clerical position assigned to assessment. All the specialists depend on hourly testing assistants to proctor the tests and perform other necessary clerical duties such as data entry.

Training of Assessment Specialists

In 2002, the six assessment specialists developed an Assessment Procedures Manual to establish uniform and consistent assessment service throughout the college. The manual is used to train new staff. Assessment specialists meet with the campus dean of student services who acts as the assessment process holder. The meetings allow for continual update and review among the specialists, to respond to questions, resolve problems, and provide improvement whenever there are changes in the area of assessment. The assessment specialists implement the assessment policies as recommended by the Assessment and Advising Task Force and approved by the college.

Data

Documentation of Assessment

Students receive a hard paper copy of their test scores, with the exception of the essay score, immediately after they test. A second copy of scores is kept on file in the Assessment Center. The written essays are mailed to ACT for scoring, and scores are received via e-mail in two to three days unless e-Write is used which allows for immediate electronic scoring of the essay. All test scores are downloaded nightly from the local assessment servers on each campus to the central assessment server and from there to the college mainframe, Datatel. COMPASS student data are stored on COMPASS until data are purged, which happens once a year. Prior to purging student data, however, customized lists of all data are printed and kept on file.

While 11,083 students underwent assessment testing in the 2001-2002 academic year, that number increased to 11,328 in 2002-2003 (Table 5-1). The numbers for 2002-2003 include 2,148 Early College Start (ECS) high school students tested, compared with 1,079 the previous year. Also, 1,194 students took the ESL test in 2002-03, compared with 659 the previous year.

The ACT descriptive report is not available for 2003-2004. From Sept. 1 through Aug. 31, 2004, 15,840 students tested representing an increase of more than 25% from 2002-2003 and about 30% from 2001-2002. The number of ECS high school students tested increased from 2,148 in 2002-03 to 2,579 in 2003-04. The number of ESL students tested decreased from 1,194 in 2002-03 to 1,082 in 2003-04.

Most campus assessment offices experienced a significant increase in testers from 2002-03 to 2003-04: CYP (21% to 1,235); EVC (50% to 1,667); NRG (21% to 4,246); PIN (31% to 1,524); RGC (1.5% to 3,792); RVS (36% to 3,376). This significant increase in testers college-wide occurred due to the changes in the Texas Success Initiative legislation that became effective on Sept. 1, 2003, which allowed the COMPASS test that ACC administers to be used as the initial state-approved assessment test of basic skills.

Table 5-1:
Initial Test Students – Academic Years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003

Demographics	Academic Year 2001-2002						Academic Year 2002-2003					
	Males (N=5,195)		Females (N=5,859)		Total (N=11,083)		Males (N=4,943)		Females (N=6,340)		Total (N=11,328)	
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Under 20	2,441	47%	2,780	48%	5,224	47%	2,204	45%	2,741	43%	4,953	44%
20 - 29	2,185	42%	2,055	35%	4,246	39%	2,042	41%	2,341	37%	4,387	39%
30 - 39	397	8%	667	11%	1,067	10%	462	9%	843	13%	1,307	12%
40 - 49	123	2%	279	5%	403	4%	179	4%	314	5%	494	4%
50 and over	25	0%	63	1%	88	1%	34	1%	80	1%	114	1%
No Response - 0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mean	22.6		23.7		23.2		23.3		24.2		23.8	
S.D.	6.1		7.9		7.1		7		8.1		7.7	
Ethnicity	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Black/African American	408	8%	591	10%	1,003	9%	521	11%	906	14%	1,431	13%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	46	1%	33	1%	80	1%	32	1%	40	1%	72	1%
White/Caucasian	2,767	53%	2,962	51%	5,732	52%	2,237	45%	2,613	41%	4,850	43%
Mexican American/Chicano	1,124	22%	1,301	22%	2,425	22%	1,242	25%	1,680	25%	2,826	25%
Asian/Pacific Islander	231	4%	193	3%	424	4%	217	4%	256	4%	474	4%
Puerto Rican/Cuban/Other Hispanic	171	3%	259	4%	430	4%	193	4%	293	5%	486	4%
Filipino	12	0%	18	0%	30	0%	11	0%	24	0%	35	0%
Other	227	4%	301	5%	530	5%	274	6%	392	6%	669	6%
Prefer Not to respond	201	4%	193	3%	395	4%	206	4%	222	4%	428	4%
No Response - 0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: ACT Descriptive Report

Challenges

- As ACC offers more Distance Learning services and expands to surrounding communities, the college must address how to offer assessment services to these students
- The testing of students with disabilities, especially related to availability of adequate space
- Enhance assessment services at the Cypress campus
- Inadequate staffing and funding

Recommendations

- Direct the assessment process holder to make recommendations on how testing for Distance Learning students will be implemented
- Continue to address the staffing issue and insufficient funding through the Master Planning and Budget processes
- Work collaboratively with OSD to improve the assessment testing of students with disabilities
- Provide full range of assessment services at the Cypress campus
- Cross-train faculty and staff assigned to ACC centers and other off-campus sites to provide assessment information and services



6. New Student Orientation

Purpose

New Student Orientation is an integral part of the process that students encounter when accessing ACC. The mission of the New Student Orientation program is to provide a variety of learning experiences to assist new students with information needed to

- Learn about the programs and services available at ACC
- Understand the relationship between course selection and educational and career goals
- Understand state and college testing requirements
- Select courses and successfully register for classes

The intended result of this information is to have new students successfully complete the remaining steps in the registration process, follow the legislative mandate and college requirements, seek assistance from the appropriate program or service, and complete a semester in good standing. It is also hoped that this information will be useful for a productive and successful college life.

ACC requires orientation for new college credit students and transfer students who have not completed 12 credit hours at another college. These orientations are conducted in group sessions or in a web-based tutorial via the Internet. Students register for a group session through the Student Services office at a campus. They do this by accessing the campus orientation schedule posted on the Internet or by calling the Student Services office at the campus most convenient to them. Counselors, advisors, and other professional staff of Student Services conduct the group sessions. At the end of the orientation session, students fill out a questionnaire with items related to the information presented during the orientation. By completing the questionnaire, the student has a document to present during the advising part of registration.

Description of Activity

New Student Orientation is a 1^{1/2}-hour presentation. It consists of the following topics: campus locations, support services, registration process for Early College Start, steps for enrollment, TSI status, ACC handbook, catalog and schedule, core curriculum, articulation and transfer services, determining semester credit hours, course load and time management recommendations, how to access the online course schedule, determining open classes, success courses, Distance Learning, web and telephone registration, calculation of tuition and fees, financial aid, payment options, textbook purchase options, withdrawals, and definition of satisfactory academic progress. Orientation is presented in a PowerPoint, or overhead, format.

Students are provided an orientation packet that contains the following: print copy of the PowerPoint presentation, orientation worksheet, course schedule, catalog, student handbook, Student Services success brochure, Student Services workshops brochure, and an ACC bookstore brochure. Optional items may include: grade point average calculation info sheet, core curriculum sheet, specific campus information (map, library hours, learning lab hours, campus testing center hours, registration assistance worksheet, etc).

Students provide written feedback that is used to improve the program. The evaluation instrument is periodically updated.

Orientation guidelines provide for a sufficient number of sessions offered by each campus to orient the number of new students who are registering for each term. The number of sessions is determined by campus enrollment.

How to access the service

Students access New Student Orientation as part of the registration process. Required orientation is highlighted under New Student Alert in the course schedule. Information regarding orientation is also part of the registration checklist. Students inquiring over the Internet can access the orientation link from the main web page of ACC. Students have the option of looking up the schedule for group orientation at the campus most convenient to them or accessing the online student orientation.

Students who are following the printed schedule are given telephone numbers of the campuses to call to request a group session. Students may register in person or call any campus to sign up for a session.

Staffing

Counselors, advisors, and other Student Services professional and technical staff conduct the group sessions. Classified and hourly staff members prepare the packets, set up the orientation PowerPoint software, and sign up students for each session. They also direct students to the website for online orientation. If access allows, students are directed to designated computers on campus for online orientation. The New Student Orientation Committee is composed of campus representatives and the orientation process holder, who is a campus dean of student services. Members meet periodically to ensure that sessions are consistent with the guidelines. Evaluations are reviewed and presentations are adjusted in response to the needs of new students.

Data

Data collected from July 1, 2002, through Jan. 31, 2003, indicate that ACC Student Services oriented 4,228 students. Of that total, 90 percent of the students who completed an evaluation either agreed or strongly agreed that they received the information needed.

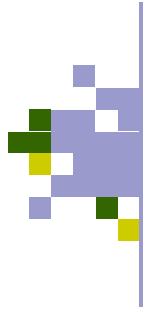
Currently there are no data comparing the retention and completion rate of students who attend New Student Orientation with those who do not attend.

Challenges

- There are still many students new to college who do not attend an orientation session. Other than an advising hold, there is not a specific orientation “hold” that bars students from registration if they do not attend a session
- The effectiveness of orientation has not been determined. No data compare the completion rate, grade point averages, or retention rates of students who have attended orientation with those who have not
- The options for the delivery of orientation are being reviewed as to their availability and effectiveness
- Staffing and training are still issues that impact the number of sessions offered and the delivery of consistent information across the college. The amount of information that is shared at each session is a concern related to how much the student is able to retain
- Budget concerns are also a challenge when considering enhancing the orientations. Limited staffing, limited budget for handouts, and room availability are definite challenges when discussing an improved orientation
- Reserving adequate space for the orientation sessions is a challenge due to limited space availability on the campuses
- Providing an exciting and helpful orientation program

Recommendations

- Study how to ensure that targeted new students participate in the orientation program
- Continue to analyze the evaluations, gather recommendations from each campus, and develop improvements to the delivery of the New Student Orientation program
- Collect data to measure the effectiveness of the orientation program
- Address staffing and training issues
- Use the Master Planning and Budget processes to increase the funding and staffing available for orientation



7. Academic Advising

Purpose

Because of its importance to college student success, most colleges and universities, including ACC, offer academic advising services to students. Academic advising is a service provided to assist ACC students in selecting courses for each semester appropriate for their major as well as their educational and career goals. The staff at ACC who provide academic advising services to students is described below. A reference herein to “advisor” refers to an advisor or counselor unless specifically noted otherwise.

The significance of academic advising is evidenced by the following: 1) academic advising is an integral part of ACC’s mission; 2) ACC has several administrative rules related to academic advising; 3) ACC has a governance task force responsible for academic advising issues—the Assessment and Advising Task Force; 4) ACC has an online Advising Procedures Manual; 5) academic advising is cited as required by Texas law for students who must enroll in developmental education; 6) there is a national association for academic advisors—the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), and ACC is an institutional member; and 7) there are hundreds of websites on academic advising and books written on the subject.

Description of Activity

Information Provided to Students

During the academic advising session, students may be provided with hard copies of

- Degree-tracking worksheets for ACC degree plans
- A core curriculum course list
- Transfer guides for other colleges and universities

Students are assisted with course selection and invited to return if they have questions or need further advising. Students who indicate an interest in transferring to another college or university are also encouraged to use the web as a resource and to contact an advisor at the transfer university of their choice. ACC has an articulation officer to maintain articulation agreements with colleges and universities and oversee the ACC transfer website. If needed, referrals are made to instructional or other Student Services offices (e.g. academic assistant deans, Financial Aid, Veterans Affairs, Support Center, and Career Counseling). Students who are required to take more than one developmental course to achieve college readiness are advised by a counselor in course selection and assisted by a counselor or clerical staff member to register in courses. Generally, students without holds on their records may register in courses by using telephone or web registration.

Documentation of Academic Advising

Advisors complete an advising form for each student advised. This information is entered on Datatel. A Texas Success Initiative (TSI) Individual Plan form is completed for each student who is TSI mandated so that the student knows what developmental courses must be taken and any testing required for TSI compliance. The advisor completes any other forms that may be necessary in the advising process. The advisor also makes notations on the student's Datatel record as necessary. A description of how an advisor documents the academic advising service is in the Advising Procedures Manual on the web at:

<http://accweb.austincc.edu/evp/advmanual.htm>. Datatel provides an effective system for documenting the academic advising services provided to students and is available online to any advisor at ACC.

High Touch, High Tech

Most academic advising at ACC is done face-to-face with students. This "high-touch" method of delivering academic advising is still the preferred one because it gives an academic advisor and student an opportunity to meet, establish rapport, and discuss the student's goals and interests. ACC does provide advising by proxy in special, documented circumstances. ACC advisors also provide academic advising via telephone if the student is able to document TSI compliance, demonstrates readiness for advising by clearance of any holds on the Datatel record, and is out of the area or otherwise unable to come to the campus during the registration period.

Advisors are also able to provide academic advising using video technology; however, this service is very limited because of the equipment expense. (A student must have access to the equipment as must the advisor.) ACC's video equipment was made available through a Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (TIF) HE3 grant (<http://irtgrants.austincc.edu/he3>) for the purpose of more effectively serving students at off-campus sites at Fredericksburg and San Marcos.

Staffing

As a response to legislative mandate, ACC established Advising Centers in fall 1989 and hired advising supervisors and specialists. Counselors had been providing academic advising services to students and continued to do so after the new staff was hired to assist with this endeavor. Counselors and academic advisors report directly to a campus dean of student services. Organizational charts on each campus are available at www.austincc.edu/orgref/orgcharts.htm and job descriptions are available at www.austincc.edu/hr/jobd_toc.htm. Currently, ACC has three full-time advising supervisors and 16 full-time advising specialists. ACC has 22 full-time counselors and three staffing table half-time counselors.

ACC does not currently have a formal faculty advising system in place; however, a Faculty Advising Committee is studying how to establish one in the near future. Workforce education faculty members (e.g., building construction, heating and air conditioning, welding, etc.) assist in advising students in collaboration with advisors. The advisors assist students regarding TSI requirements, and workforce education faculty members advise students regarding specific courses required for a workforce certificate or associate degree.

New Students

An advisor or counselor assists new students in the advising process after the student has submitted an admissions application to the Admissions Office, attended New Student Orientation (if applicable), and completed assessment testing (if needed). Generally, advisors assist students who: 1) need no more than one developmental course to achieve college-readiness skills; 2) transfer into ACC in good academic standing from their previous institution; and 3) have declared a major. Generally, counselors provide academic counseling to students who: 1) are required to take two or more developmental courses; 2) transfer into ACC on academic probation or suspension from another institution; or 3) have not declared a major.

Returning and Currently Enrolled Students

A counselor, advisor, or faculty advisor assists returning and currently enrolled students in the advising process. Generally, advisors monitor the progress of and advise returning and currently enrolled students who: 1) need no more than one developmental course; 2) have declared a new major with the Admissions Office and seek advising; 3) need assistance related to TSI compliance; or 4) are referred by a faculty member. Generally, counselors monitor the progress of and academically counsel returning and currently enrolled students who: 1) need two or more developmental courses to achieve college-readiness skills; 2) are on academic probation or suspension at ACC; 3) have not declared a major and seek advising; 4) need assistance related to TSI compliance; or 5) are referred by a faculty member. Faculty advisors who teach developmental courses may advise returning and currently enrolled students who need one or more developmental courses if the students are referred to them by a faculty member, advisor, or counselor. Additionally, faculty advisors who do not teach developmental courses advise returning and currently enrolled students who have satisfied the TSI requirements, have declared a major within the faculty member's discipline, and seek their advising assistance. At this time, there is no formal faculty advising system. ACC's goal is to increase the involvement of faculty in academic advising for students in their discipline.

Training of Advisors

Academic advisors and counselors participate in Advising Updates twice a year. The updates are coordinated by the campus dean of student services who is the advising process holder and the academic and workforce education associate vice presidents and designated deans. One update in each area is provided each semester. The instructional deans focus their presentation on new programs, curriculum changes, and frequently requested information, briefly respond to questions, and provide written handouts. These programs are evaluated by participants, and the results are used to improve the updates.

Whenever there are major changes in the area of academic advising, training specific to the changes is provided. For example, legislation changed the assessment requirements effective fall 2003; therefore, a special training session regarding TSI requirements was offered to advisors and counselors (and open to others). Advisors are provided with Datatel training as changes are made to that data system. Advisors also have available the Advising Procedures Manual online. New

employees who academically advise are provided training on the campuses specific to advising (e.g., TSI requirements, Datatel screens, advising procedures, etc.).

Advisor-to-Student Ratios

ACC has 3 full-time advising supervisors, 16 advising specialists, and 22 full-time counselors as well as 3 staffing table half-time counselors (equivalent to 1.5 full-time counselors). These individuals provide most of the advising services within the Student Services area. ACC also has 2 career assessment specialists who provide career counseling services to students and assist with academic advising. Half-time college associates may also assist in providing academic advising. Hourly advisors and counselors are hired during peak registration seasons to assist with providing academic advising. The number of these hourly seasonal professionals varies each year. Students with disabilities may be advised by Office for Students with Disabilities staff and are assisted with online registration as needed.

As of Nov. 20, 2003, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) indicated that fall 2003 student enrollment was 30,677. That translates to an advisor-to-student ratio of 1-to-689 if we count all full-time staffing table counselors, career assessment specialists, and advisors who are doing advising (total equals 44.5, not including the supervisors/specialists who work with students with disabilities). For full-time staffing table advisors (total equals 19), the advisor-to-student ratio is 1-to-1,615. For full-time counselors (total equals 23.5), the counselor-to-student ratio is 1-to-1,305. Including the 2 career assessment specialists who assist counselors in advising, the counselor-to-student ratio is 1-to-1,203.

Data

Student Services Intake

Students complete a student intake form each time they seek a service from Student Services. The most recent data, from May 15, 2003, through Aug. 31, 2003, indicate that some type of service was provided to 28,690 (duplicated headcount) students during that three-month period. These services are inclusive of all services provided by counselors and advisors. The three largest campuses provided the greatest percentage of the service: Northridge, 29 percent; Riverside, 23 percent; Rio Grande, 18 percent; Cypress 13, percent; Pinnacle, 12 percent; and Eastview, 6 percent. Efforts continue to improve the student intake form data, and staff is studying how to automate the Student Services intake process.

Student Satisfaction

Recent student satisfaction data are from the Gulf Coast Consortium spring 2002 satisfaction survey. ACC students reported being satisfied with the availability of an advisor; availability of senior institution transfer plans; and academic advising course planning. Campuses also collect point-of-service (POS) evaluation data from students who voluntarily complete the feedback forms. The table that follows is a summary and analysis of the POS evaluations between September 2002 and August 2003. The overall satisfaction rate was very high: 97 percent. It is interesting to note that the satisfaction rate during the peak period remained about the same as during the non-peak period: 97 percent vs. 98 percent. This may be indicative that the campus

Student Services infrastructure has a built-in elasticity that adjusts to demanding loads without sacrificing quality of service.

Table 7-1:
Point of Service Student Satisfaction for All Campuses – September 2002-August 2003

Time Periods	Satisfied		Dissatisfied		No Response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
-						
All Periods	2,629	97%	30	1%	39	2%
Non-Peak	707	98%	9	1%	7	1%
Peak-Period	1,922	97%	21	1%	32	2%

Source: Riverside Student Services

Challenges

- **Staffing.** One of the greatest challenges in the academic advising area is that advising at this time is mandatory only for new students, students who are TSI mandated, and students who are deemed academically at risk because they are not in good academic standing. All other returning and currently enrolled students are encouraged but not required to return for academic advising. One reason these students have not been required to participate in academic advising is because there are not enough advisors to meet this demand. ACC is moving toward requiring full-time faculty to provide academic advising to students with a major in their discipline. This initiative is a positive step toward better meeting the academic advising needs of returning and currently enrolled students. The Faculty Advising Committee will be making recommendations regarding how a formal faculty advising system will be implemented. Issues include which faculty members should advise; whether advising should be mandatory for additional groups of students; faculty training in advising; faculty advisor availability to students (advising schedule); how to advise undeclared students and assist them in declaring a major; availability of student records (e.g. transcripts) needed for advising; and Datatel training for faculty.
- **Insufficient Funding.** Another continuing challenge is that new students must wait in lines to receive academic advising at the beginning of the semester because thousands of students access these services during the peak periods associated with registration. The advising and counseling staff have been decreased over the last several years rather than increased. ACC is about to open a seventh campus in 2006 (South Austin), and advisors and counseling staff will be needed for that campus. Due to the projected growth in

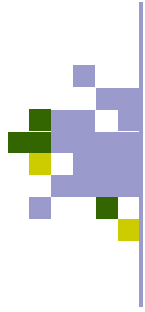
student enrollment at ACC, increased advising and counseling staff is needed, but the state contribution to ACC's budget is decreasing, making expansion of staff challenging. The need for additional staff to provide academic advising services is also important in meeting any demands associated with ACC Center and other off-campus (Distance Learning) students since these off-site students are being served at the same time that the lines of students are waiting for service.

- Accuracy, Consistency, and Quality of Academic Advising. Providing updated and accurate information about academic and workforce education programs and curriculum changes to advisors continues to be a challenge because of the frequent changes. The annual Advising Updates described previously and updated instructional websites have assisted in this area. Once accurate and consistent information is accessible to advisors, counselors, and faculty advisors, it is incumbent upon them to use that information to improve the quality of academic advising services to students.
- It is important to improve transfer advising services for students, and this improvement will be facilitated with the implementation of a formal faculty advising system and the recent assignment of a campus dean of student services as transfer process holder.
- Integrating career development information in the enrollment process to help undecided students determine a major is an on-going challenge and will be facilitated by the recent assignment of a campus dean of student services as process holder for career development.
- Enhancing academic counseling support for students academically at risk is also very important.

Recommendations

- Implement a formal faculty advising system during 2004-05
- Continue to use the Master Planning and Budget processes to ensure adequate staffing for academic advising services
- Enhance Student Services collaboration with the instructional areas to improve the quality and consistency of information provided to advisors (via instructional websites, Advising Updates, etc.)
- Make quality of academic advising, including transfer information, provided to students a priority at ACC. Communicate this through policy, unit and individual goals, and evaluations to the Associate Vice Presidents of Retention and Student Services, Academic Programs, and Workforce Education; deans; advisors; counselors; and faculty advisors

- Implement an automated student intake system during 2004-05
- Improve the data available on academic advising (e.g., Student Services continue to collaborate with OIE to provide timely and accurate reports based on the Student Services student intake forms)
- Integrate career development information in the enrollment process to assist undecided students in declaring a major
- Strengthen academic counseling services for students who are academically at risk



8. Registration

Purpose

The multi-faceted purpose of the ACC Admissions, Registration and Academic Records unit and its functions closely integrate the admissions process and the subsequent registration and record-keeping processes. The Admissions and Records offices work to facilitate student registration, along with providing direct and indirect support services to faculty, instructional support units, and other Student Services staff. Admissions and Records offices collect and maintain the integrity of all student academic records, and assure compliance with College policies, state laws and mandates and federal regulations. In all functions, the unit strives to provide high-level, accurate, efficient, and effective services in support of the educational mission of the college.

Description of Activity

The Campus Admissions and Records offices and staff at the district administrative offices work in collaboration with Information Technology to provide telephone registration, web-based registration and in certain cases, in-person registration activity. Staff provides direct support to students throughout the registration process, troubleshooting any challenges they experience and responding to inquiries regarding course availability, sections meeting times and locations, tuition and fee information, and student registration eligibility issues.

The telephone registration system allows students to register for courses once they complete the requisite assessment, orientation and advising processes. The system is accessed using the student's social security number and date of birth. Students may register, drop and add classes, make payments and verify their class schedules via the telephone system.

Similarly, the web-based registration system allows students to access the system for all of the previously described services within 24 hours of being cleared to register by an ACC advisor. The system is accessed using the student's name, social security number (or the ACC student ID number) or the student's date of birth. The web registration system allows for schedule building based on time of day or campus preference and allows for multiple course searches and registration.

Table 8-1:
Comparison of Telephone vs. Web for Course
Registration – Fall 2003 and Spring 2004

Mode	Fall 2003		Spring 2004	
	N	%	N	%
Phone	22,923	74%	19,741	66%
Web	8194	26%	10,386	34%
Total	31,117	100%	30,127	100%

Source: ACC Student Database

The Instructional Technology (IT) Helpdesk also assists students during the published registration periods, answering general questions about the telephone and web registration systems and directing students to campus-based assessment and advising services when telephone assistance is not appropriate or adequate for conversations regarding personally identifiable student records.

Admissions and Records staff serves students who are accessing the college via its distance learning courses. Staff answer questions over the telephone and via e-mail regarding registration dates, deadlines, processes and course and instructor information.

Due to ACC's policies regarding post-add/drop registration and the Datatel system limitations, all late registrations, schedule changes, class overloads, and placement level changes must be manually processed by the HBC records office staff. This is a cumbersome and time-consuming process, resulting in many additional hours of staff time during the peak of the first weeks of classes. Student success may often be compromised by late entrance into courses already in progress.

The Records Office developed and implemented the web-based student records access system, allowing students to review their academic records, including all transfer credit accepted at ACC. This increased communication with students is designed to increase students' progress through degree programs, increasing the graduation rate and assisting students making transfer decisions.

Graduation Office/Degree Audit

The graduation office works closely with the academic, transfer and workforce programs to maintain continuously updated degree requirement information in the student information system and the student web-based automated degree audit system. The graduation office staff work with students to evaluate progress through a chosen degree program, notifying prospective graduates when all degree requirements are met and working to coordinate the tri-annual awarding of Marketable Skills Achievement Awards, College Certificates, and Associate Degrees. This information helps students make informed choices about what courses are needed when they register each semester.

Payment of Registration Tuition and Fees

The registration process is concluded when students pay for their registration tuition and fees. Students are required to pay or make arrangements for payment of registration tuition and fees by the Friday of the week during which they register for classes. If this is not done, the registration is cancelled providing an opportunity for other students to register in those class sections. The Admissions and Records Office staff assists students in answering questions related to the payment process to ensure students remain successfully enrolled.

Staffing

The Admissions and Records Offices are located at each of the six campuses within the College's service area, and at the administrative services building, the Highland Business Center (HBC). At each campus there is an Admissions and Records Office coordinator and between 1 to 3 Admissions services support staff, depending on the size of each campus. Offices at HBC include those of the Director of Admissions and Records, the Registrar, new student application processing, student records, transcript evaluations, grade processing, and transcript orders. Admissions and Records staff provides support to all of Retention and Student Services areas, faculty, staff and students. Refer to Table 3-1 for the Admissions and Records Office staffing at each campus.

Admissions and Records Office staff serves all prospective, new, current and former students through the registration process during the designated registration periods and during subsequent visits to the Admissions and Records Offices over the course of every semester for various services including:

- For registration assistance
- To advise students of registration holds and to give instructions for clearing holds (obligations)
- To provide copies of student class schedules
- To make referrals to instructional units for registration assistance
- To assist with schedule changes (add/drop registration)

Data

Effectiveness Measures

Participation of under-represented students at ACC is vital to “Closing the Gaps” in enrollment as demonstrated in Table 8-2 as follows:

Purpose: The unduplicated headcount enrollment of ACC will reflect the diversity of the population the college serves.

Criterion: Based on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) demographic data (or U.S. census data) of the service area college-age population and the fall unduplicated headcount enrollment of ACC students, the percent of ACC students from each demographic group will be within +/- 5 percent of their proportion in the service area college-age population.

Results: Of the fall 2003 headcount, the percent of white (60.4 percent) ACC students were within +5 percent of their proportion in the service area college-age population. Black (7.1 percent) and Hispanic (21.8 percent) ACC student headcounts were below this criterion while student headcounts for Other (10.7 percent) were above.

Table 8-2:
Comparison of ACC Fall 2003 Headcount to
2003 Service Area College-age Population Proportions

Ethnicity	2003 Service Area College Age Population (18 to 44)		ACC Fall 2003 ¹ Headcount		+/- 5% of proportion	
	N	%	N	%	Range	Criterion
White	366,500	57.6%	18,543	60.4	54.7 – 60.5	Within Range
Black	48,270	7.5%	2,201	7.1	7.2 – 8.0	Below range
Hispanic	188,405	29.6%	6,677	21.8	28.1 – 31.1	Below range
Other ²	33,294	5.2%	3,257	10.7	4.7 – 5.5	Above range
Total	636,469	100.0%	30,678	100%	-	-

¹Uncertified Data – data that incorporate all active students from the term indicated.
²Other at ACC includes Asian students, Native American students, International students, and students not identified by ethnicity. The service area data for 2003 are from the Texas State Data Center population estimates (0.5 migration scenario). Other at the Texas State Data Center includes Asians, Native Americans, and all other ethnicities not identified above and it may not be directly comparable since ACC figures include International students.

Source: ACC Student Database and Texas State Data Center

Challenges

- **Staffing.** One of the biggest challenges in the Admissions and Records Offices is that of not having staffing levels keep pace with the enrollment increases and not having the job classification of entry-level positions keep pace with the increased technical demands placed on staff. Inadequate staffing often results in students waiting a long time for regularly and frequently needed support services. The critical front-line staff in Admissions and Records Offices is historically the lowest classified and paid staff in Student Services, leading to frequent staff turnover. Staff must be prepared to respond to and support a diverse population of often first-generation college students who are under

prepared for navigating ACC's systems and programs. A great deal of customer service skills and abilities are required of those staff coming to ACC with the least amount of practical experience. An ongoing challenge at all Admissions Offices is the documented inadequacy of staffing and space for services at all Admissions Office.

- **Technology.** Another significant challenge is that of having to develop, program, implement, and maintain the increasingly technical environment required to provide web-based services to students, staff and faculty. Current student data system entry, processing, and maintenance require knowledge of several different software and mainframe applications. This requires a lengthy investment of time and energy to train and prepare staff to carry out the tasks of the department. Programming and manipulating web-based information and communication systems is a specialized field for which the department is not staffed.
- **Late Registration.** Because ACC policy does not enforce a deadline for admissions or registration for each semester, large numbers of late applicants and registrants overtax the Admissions and other Student Services offices during the final weeks of the registration periods. This causes long waits for processing applications and other services, delaying new student intake and service.

Research shows that late registrants are (see footnotes):

1. Less likely to persist to the next semester (Street 2001)
 2. More likely to withdraw from all or some of their courses in that semester (Roueche 1994)
 3. More likely to be male but otherwise did not differ in age, ethnicity or course placement recommendations (Perkins, 2002)
 4. More likely to earn a failing grade (Roueche 2004, Street 2001)
- **Limited Class Sections.** A challenge that has arisen in the past several years is the limited number of class sections and available classroom space during high-demand times. Without the classroom and section availability at the peak demand times, enrollment will continue to be impacted.
 - **Office of Institutional Effectiveness Support:** All Retention and Student Services departments require institutional data in order to analyze trends, identify possible barriers and more effectively plan for areas that need to be strengthened in order to better assure student access and success. The support that Admissions and Records receives from OIE has grown over the past several years but does not yet meet the department's need for data at this time.

Footnotes

Perkins, Mary E. *The Late Registration Policy on Implications for Student Success at a Community College*. Office of Community College Research and Leadership, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, January 10, 2002.

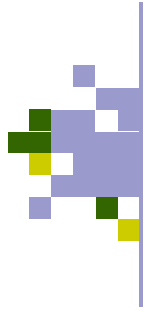
Street, Margaret A., Smith, Albert B., and Olivarez, Arturo. *The Effects of Early, Regular, and Late Registration on Community College Success: A Case Study*. Presented at the American Association of Community College's Council for the Study of Community Colleges in Chicago, Illinois, April 7, 2001.

Roueche, John E. and Roueche, Suanne D. *Climbing Out From Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Responding to the Challenges of the At-risk Student*. Leadership Abstracts, Volume 7, Number 3, March 1994.

Roueche, John E. and Roueche, Suanne D. *Abolishing Late Registration*. Innovation Abstracts, Volume XXVI, Number 9, March 26, 2004.

Recommendations

- Additional staffing to adequately serve the volume of student traffic, to be able to process all admissions applications in the timeliest manner and to reduce the dependence on temporary hourly employees for routine office staffing needs
- Increased support (resources, staffing) to implement and run technological system program enhancements to allow for more automated communication with new, current and former students. Increased and enhanced technology will allow more efficient processing of all Admissions and Records department functions, including registration
- Expansion of dedicated space, to adequately house departmental units
- A study conducted by the Admissions and Registration Task Force to determine whether it is in the best interest of ACC students to cease registration after classes begin
- Studies conducted through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to determine barriers to entrance into higher education experienced by ethnic minority groups that might be addressed through Student Services programming
- Continue to investigate and analyze registration processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness for students



9. Conclusion

The Student Access and Success Committee (SASC) white paper captures the challenges ACC faces regarding student recruitment, financial aid, admissions, assessment, student orientation, academic advising, and registration and makes recommendations for improvement in these areas.

The paper emphasizes the importance of comprehensive and targeted data collection to facilitate informed decision-making related to increasing student recruitment and participation, with special emphasis on underserved populations. Through the benchmarking contained in this paper, the college will be able to measure and evaluate whether it is improving in the services provided to retain students from application through enrollment.

To make positive strides toward “Closing the Gaps” participation goals, the college must address the critical need for new and improved processes and programs in student support services as cited in this document as well as in the operating budget requests and Master Plan objectives of these areas.

This focus on access is crucial to ACC’s efforts in realizing the promise of “Closing the Gaps”—that more students will participate in higher education at ACC and that enrollment at the college will reflect the demographics of Central Texas. The SASC pledges its full support of ACC’s core values of “Access” in fostering diversity and “Responsiveness” in recruiting underserved populations.

SASC invites every segment of the college and the community at large to join in these efforts toward recruiting and enrolling a student population that reflects the richly diverse community of which ACC is an integral and essential part.