

Student Retention Task Force

Thursday, September 17, 2009

2:55 PM

Subcommittee on Academic Policies and Procedures

Members Present: Patti Roshto
Ricky Fiorillo
James Boldin

We see our charge as to discuss and make recommendations for academic policies and procedures that impact student retention. We want student retention to be a result of encouraging student accountability rather than from easing standards.

We identified three main areas in which policies and procedures could be addressed. Those three areas were advising, creating a junior division, and withdrawing from courses.

Advising:

For advising to be effective, the adviser needs accurate information on degree requirements and credit applied. Flight Path information is often not accurate. The lack of accuracy is usually caused by transfer credit and substitutions. Perhaps the migration to the banner system will help with some of the issues.

Information in flight path must be updated on a timely manner.

Integration with actual student records (Banner) is critical.

A student should be assigned an advisers early in his freshmen year. The adviser should not be changed without cause - change of major, etc. Permanent adviser assignment would assist in engagement of the student with his program/major and foster relationships, etc. Such engagement and relationships would be instrumental in increasing student retention and graduation rates.

Ensure student has easy access to advisor's contact info to encourage communication.

Recommendation:

Provide opportunities for more advisor/student interaction via Univ 101 assignments, for example.

Advisors might be encouraged to set up Moodle class or Facebook groups for advisees.

Junior Division

The committee also discussed the impact that students' change of majors has on retention and graduation rates. We considered the possibility of having a junior division where freshmen and sophomore students are completing a core curriculum and are becoming exposed to careers and possible majors without being forced into a decision on a declared major. We felt this junior division would be especially beneficial to students admitted provisionally or by exception to the minimum ACT requirements.

Recommendation

Create a junior division for students who are admitted without meeting the minimum ACT requirements.

The committee also discussed the lack of counseling required when changing majors. Students often see a change of major as a way to avoid a difficult class without considering all repercussions.

Recommendation:

Current advisor or a Student Success Center counselor should be required to sign off on a change of major form.

Withdrawals:

Students need to understand the responsibility associated with enrolling in a class. Withdrawals should be discouraged.

Recommendation: Limit the number of courses a student can drop during his career. A fee is assessed when that number is exceeded.

Several policies in place at LSU were studied and may be feasible to employ at ULM.

Miscellaneous

Another topic discussed as being related to student retention was a need for a change in culture that is established when the freshmen first come to ULM at PREP. A message balanced between academic success and campus involvement is important in conveying the proper expectations to the students.

Recommendations:

Include student leaders in college session to impart wisdom to freshmen to direct their expectations.

Include the academic success message along with the get involved in campus life message in the PREP presentations.

We did mention the tactic of breaking large sections into smaller groups for better face time between faculty and students and also using recognition strategies at the college/program levels to foster ideals of student success but had not specific recommendations on either of those topics.

Meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patti Roshto