Fall to Spring Retention and its Effect on Graduation Rates
Kevin Smay, Assistant Vice President for Strategic Planning and Institutional Research
Giovanni Garofalo, Assistant Director of Planning and Research

For a number of years, CCAC has been tracking our Fall to Spring retention rates and three year graduation rates, which are consistently below national benchmarks. Our most recent data shows that CCAC’s three year graduation rate is less than 10% for first-time, degree-seeking students. This stands well below the benchmark of 19.2%, the median rate from the National Community College Benchmarking Project.

CCAC’s Fall to Spring retention rate tends to be three to five percent below the norms while the longer term Fall to Fall rate is nearly identical to the national benchmarks. This discrepancy in the data trends between the two retention time points led institutional research staff to examine the importance of the two retention time points. We began with the connection between Fall to Spring retention and three year graduation rates.

The analysis showed that there is a connection between retention from Fall to Spring and the graduation rates of new students. Students who returned for their first Spring term had a 14.3% three year graduation rate whereas new Fall students who did not return in the Spring had only a 1.3% graduation rate with 72% never returning to the college. In other words, a new student who is retained from the Fall to the subsequent Spring term is ten times more likely to complete a degree.
The college recognizes the connection between students’ initial success and their long-term success by developing supports like new student orientation, the Academic and Personal Development course, Early Intervention and Success Coaches for students with high developmental need. In the past five years of new Fall student cohorts, 6,000 students have permanently left the college without reaching their goals. The effectiveness of these supports will enable students to achieve their goals and dreams, as well as positively impact the college’s enrollment and bottom line. And, as we can see from our student success data trends, a big part of those supports will be to keep students enrolled and making progress once they start at CCAC.

(Editor’s note – As the retention and completion analysis shows, fall-to-spring retention is vital for long-term student success. Everyone plays a role in retention. If you notice that a student is struggling, take action at the first sign of trouble! As the next article reveals, by midterms it is often too late to intervene.)

**Early Intervention**
Norm Downey, Perkins Grant Director, Center for Learning

This Fall, the deadline for faculty to submit an Early Intervention referral is Wednesday, September 30th or roughly ⅓ of the way into the term.

Early Intervention referrals should not be based solely upon quiz or test scores, but on the faculty members overall judgment of the students’ performance. The online checklist allows faculty members to consider and highlight predictive behaviors such as attendance, participation and attentiveness that affect student performance. Faculty should make referrals as early in the term as possible to maximize the time and options available to address student problems.

This end date also provides the Academic Support Staff members an adequate amount of time to contact the referred students and to work with those students on resolving their academic barriers before the midterm grading period and withdrawal deadlines. Last Spring (the data most readily available), 1,875 Career and Technical Education students received one or more D or F grades at midterm. Yet only 147 of those were referred for Early Intervention – far less than 10%. With the Early Intervention closing date this year so close to the midterm grading period – October 8th – it is even more important to submit
referrals as soon as a student begins struggling in the classroom, before the student’s struggles turn into a poor midterm grade and then into a failing final grade.

This Fall, in order to address faculty concerns, the college’s student services staff members will be working to improve:

- outreach to students by using more attempts and a greater variety of methods to reach referred students, and
- the quality and timeliness of feedback to the referring faculty, including all attempts to contact a student as well as the type of intervention conducted and the outcomes.

Restructuring Achieving the Dream

In April, CCAC’s Achieving the Dream coaches recommended a re-visioning of the team structure to better align with college leadership’s emphasis on broadened responsibility and accountability system-wide. The coaches suggested focusing specifically on two of ATD’s five principles: Broad Engagement and Culture of Evidence. In June and July, the team met to discuss the coaches’ feedback and to re-design the ATD team structure.

The primary purpose for redesigning ATD is to expand involvement in student success efforts. This requires a deeper commitment from more people across the college and fits well with ATD’s principle for Broad Engagement, an area in which the college has struggled since joining Achieving the Dream in 2006-07. Broad engagement requires faculty, including part-time faculty, and staff to meet regularly to assess student progress and develop strategies for improving student success. It also requires collaboration between academic affairs and student services. Involvement in ATD will no longer be restricted to membership on the ATD team. The ATD team will share data and engage in problem-solving discussions with relevant groups on campus.

The secondary purpose for redesigning ATD is to help others understand and use data for decision-making purposes, which aligns with the ATD principle for Culture of Evidence. This principle requires the routine collection and dissemination of student success data; disaggregation of that data; gathering input from faculty, staff and students and assisting college personnel in using data to improve programs and services.

Success of this new structure will depend on the ATD team’s ability to engage people on campus through the data sharing and problem-solving processes. The frequency with which these conversations are built into the existing campus structures will influence the chance of success. Please consider making time to participate in the campus discussions. Your involvement is vital for success.

Jump Start Enrollment
Megan Crane, Student Success Coach, Allegheny Campus

The JUMP START enrollment event is the product of CCAC’s Leadership Development Institute (LDI) and supported by the Allegheny Campus Student Success Coaches. The need for enrollment initiatives and support within the Student Success Coach arena led to the development of an enrollment event for new developmental students at the Allegheny Campus called JUMP START.

The JUMP START event begins when the Student Success Coaches contact hundreds of developmental students after they complete the Placement Test. Often these students are confused about the next step in their enrollment plan. By using the Strong Start in the Roadmap to Your Destination as a guideline to
help plan the JUMP START event, the Student Success Coaches at the Allegheny Campus invite the students to the event with the intent of seeing students complete the enrollment process. During the event, students come to the campus and divide into groups of about five students. The student groups are guided through the Student Services office to complete the enrollment process. Students participating in JUMP START will meet with an Advisor, complete the Online Orientation, file for Financial Aid, learn about job placement, and take a college tour. In 2015, JUMP START inducted forty-one students on July 9th. This opportunity gave new developmental students the opportunity to learn about the college and spend one-on-one time with the Student Success Coaches. With the success of JUMP START at the Allegheny Campus, the Student Success Coaches at the other campuses will adopt this model in the 2016-17 academic year to support all the developmental students throughout the CCAC system and the enrollment process.

Roadmap Wins Another Award!

Each year the League of Innovation recognizes significant achievements and the spirit of innovation and experimentation upon which the League was founded. This year CCAC was one of 44 community colleges to receive the League’s Innovation of the Year award for Roadmap.

Congratulations to the Roadmap team members!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allegheny</th>
<th>Boyce</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>Central Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lucille Adkins</td>
<td>Alycia Bencloski-Brashear</td>
<td>Mary Lou Kennedy</td>
<td>Kelli Maxwell</td>
<td>Norm Downey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Breitbarth</td>
<td>Toni Carney</td>
<td>Elizabeth Throesch</td>
<td>Patsy Williamson</td>
<td>Sue Kelley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Doperak</td>
<td>Joe Dvorak</td>
<td>Andy Vey</td>
<td>Tara Zirkel</td>
<td>Sumana Misra-Zets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Kmetz</td>
<td>Devin Patterson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jason Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mary Kate Quinlan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lucy Wang</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Program Assessment Deadlines

In May, CCAC’s accreditation liaison informed the self-study steering committee that Middle States expects 100% compliance with program assessment. Dr. Faison explained that since the standards have been in place for 15 years and CCAC will be one of the last institutions to be evaluated by the current set of standards, Middle States has set the bar very high and expects full compliance with all standards but especially Standard 14, Assessment of Student Learning.

In order to meet the goal, all annual program assessment plans (Appendix E) must be submitted by the deadline September 15, 2015. This will allow time for data entry before the working group for
Standards 12 & 14 begins the process of documenting compliance with the fundamental elements. Assessment results (Appendix I) are due March 31, 2016.

If you need help completing the assessment plan, contact your coordinating dean or Mary Kate Quinlan for assistance.

**Number of CATs Collected**

Each term the Assessment Advisory Group collects CAT summary forms as a measure of participation in assessment. Last year, 120 CATs were submitted. Everyone who submits a CAT receives a certificate for their portfolios as an easy way to document participation in assessment.

Please consider completing a [CAT Summary Sheet](#) for one of your classroom assessments and submit it to aslcommittee@ccac.edu. The deadline for fall 2015 is December 21st.

![CAT Forms Collected by Year](#)

**Newsletter prepared by,**
Mary Kate Quinlan
Director of Learning Outcomes and Achieving the Dream
mquinlan@ccac.edu