Office of Advising and Counseling

Retention Initiatives

An ongoing assessment of initiatives and outcomes intended to improve student retention at Cape Cod Community College

Spring, 2007
ADVISING AND COUNSELING STAFF

Rick Nastri  Director of Advising and Counseling
Mary Olenick  Transfer Advisor
Kristina Ierardi  Coordinator of Career Planning and Placement
Alison Frisbie  Academic Advisor

Part-time Regular Advisors

Mary Anderson
Kathy Berry
Gretchen Farnham
Terri Huff
Susan Salyh
Candy Schulenberg
Neucimari Smedley
Linda Willoughby

Program Assistants

Gail Eagan
Kathy Cunningham
Maryann Mulhern
Sandy Cashen

Other Part-time Advisors

Cam Beale
Kathy Cunningham
Jayne Cedeno
Kyle Durbrow
Dawn Harney
Dick Rand
Andrea Toran-Strout
Michael Strimska
Nancy Walker
Office of Advising and Counseling
Retention and Graduation Initiatives

2007

As we begin the Fall, 2007 Advising for Preregistration for Returning Students and the Assessment Advising for New Students, I wanted to share how our work may have contributed to an increase in the College-wide effort to improve student retention and graduation rates. I am convinced this increase is due in part to the creative commitment all of you have provided to our students with good, effective advising. This report is a reflection of what we as a team in Advising and Counseling have worked together to put in place to improve student retention. Please review these initiatives and as we continue to work together, know that these efforts do yield positive results in this important area.

The Advising and Counseling staff has incorporated and recommended a wide variety of ongoing initiatives to improve student retention and graduation rates over the last few years. These initiatives have helped contribute to a noticeable improvement in both areas as outlined below. One purpose of this report is to provide an ‘outcome assessment’ on the initiatives currently underway and how that outcome may have led to a recommendation for follow-up action.

**Fall to Spring Retention – Five Year Comparison**

2001/2002 – 59.08%
2002/2003 – 61.42%
2003/2004 – 60.84%
2004/2005 – 62.69%
**2005/2006 – 63.03%**
2006/2007 – (to be determined)

**Spring to Fall Retention – Five Year Comparison**

2001 – 47%
2002 – 44%
2003 – 48%
2004 – 47%
2005 – 56%
2006 – (to be determined)

**Graduation Rates**

2003-04: 312
2004-05: 401
2005-06: 485
2006-07: 478
Existing and Advising and Counseling Retention and Graduation Initiatives

1) Academic Advising Mission Statement
2) Increase Student and Faculty/Staff Awareness of the Drop-In Advising Center
3) Coordinate Mathematics Refresher Workshops
4) Measure Student Satisfaction with the Drop-In Advising Center
5) Graduation Status Letter to Students with 45+ Credits
6) Provide Online Access to Career Planning and Placement Information
7) Maintain and Develop Strong Transfer and Articulation Programs and Contacts
8) Maintain Consistency in Online and Hard Copy College Catalog
9) Advising Staff Meet with Faculty/Program Coordinators/Departments
10) Academic Advising ‘Tip of the Week’
11) Academic Advising Handbook
12) Inform Students of Their Assigned Advisor
14) Advising Newsletter – ‘Compass’
15) Navigation Guide
16) Develop and implement an ‘e-advising’ option.

The following ongoing Advising and Counseling Retention and Graduation Initiative are presented in the following format:

* Objective
* Method
* Timeline
* Outcome on Retention
* Recommendation

1) Academic Advising Mission Statement
   - Objective: Define what advising is and what is expected from advisors.
   - Method: Develop and distribute an Academic Advising Mission Statement. The Mission statement was distributed on the front cover of each Advisor’s Academic Advising handbook and is reviewed at all trainings.
   - Timeline: Fall, 2005 and annual review.
   - Outcome on Retention: for the first time, all advisors became familiar with a specific definition of what an advisor does through the Mission Statement. The Mission Statement outlines the importance of advising “as much more than course selection. Students receive support on how to meet the many challenges of college life.” (Appendix A)
   - Recommendation: Maintain visibility and awareness of the Academic Advising Mission Statement.
2) Increase Student and Faculty/Staff Awareness of the Drop-In Advising Center

- **Objective:** Expand student opportunity to meet with an academic advisor at their convenience.
- **Method:** Publicize and promote the resources available in the Drop-In Advising Center. Coordinate an “Advising Kick-off” campaign each semester informing campus of where and when advising is available in addition to their assigned advisor.
- **Timeline:** Fall, 2004 and Ongoing.
- **Outcome on Retention:** Visits to the Drop-In Center are recorded and tracked.
  
  2005 – 11,097
  
  2006 – 11,305

These figures do not include telephone calls or ‘quick’ answers. Students are becoming increasingly aware that the Advising Center has the resources, availability and staff to address their academic concerns.

- **Recommendation:** Continue the Advising Kick-Off campaign and continually evaluate and adjust to new methods of informing students of this service.

3) Coordinate Math Refresher Workshops

**Objective:** The workshops were primarily designed to help students better prepare for their math placement test and earn a score that accurately reflects their math skill level.

**Method:** In conjunction with the math department and faculty, three-hour workshops were developed along with study materials, to help students review and refresh their arithmetic and algebra skills. Workshops are offered to all incoming students at no charge. Currently, we offer thirteen workshops between April – August for new students entering in September and eight workshops between Nov. – Jan. for students entering in January. Approximately, 700 – 800 students register for a workshop each year with an additional 1000 or more utilizing the student study sheets to review on their own.

**Timeline:** Fall 2004 – present

**Outcomes:**

1. **81%** of all students who re-tested after attending a workshop raised their math placement by one or more levels.

2. Only **8%** of the students that took the test prior to attending a workshop tested into MAT 040 or college math. However, **46%** of the students who attended a workshop first and then tested, placed into MAT040 or college level math.

3. **72%** of the students that took the assessment test for the first time prior to attending a math workshop tested into one of the two lowest levels of developmental math (MAT 010 or MAT 020). However, only **25%** of the students placed into one of these lower levels after attending a workshop.
An additional outcome was that just the “availability” of the workshops seemed to lessen the frustration students felt about taking the test and their test results, compared to the anxiety and frustration that students displayed in the past about the math assessment test process. In addition, the workshops helped increase the overall awareness about the impact test scores would have on their math placement level, which also helped diffuse the frustration. This was true even for those students who opted not to attend a workshop because they received this information on the flyer that was distributed with their acceptance letter.

**Recommendation:** Continue to seek funding to offer workshops for all incoming students.

Note: The Advising Center is now scheduling students for a similar workshop in English.

4) Measure Student Satisfaction with the Drop-In Advising Center
   - **Objective:** The most recent Noel-Levitz Surveys indicate that student satisfaction with advising had a significant statistical increase from the prior surveys.

   **Day Students**
   - **Year** | **Statistical Score**
   - 1998    | 4.81
   - 2001    | 4.80 (-.01)
   - 2003    | 4.96 (+.16)
   - 2006    | 5.19 (+.23)

   **Evening Students**
   - **Year** | **Statistical Score**
   - 2004    | 5.03
   - 2005    | 5.19 (+.16)

   **National Average:** 5.15  **Cape Cod Community College Average:** 5.19 (+.04)

   - **Method:** In addition to the Noel-Levitz Survey, the Drop-In Advising Center requested that students complete a post card with four questions about the service they received and deposit it in a collection box outside of the Drop-In Center.

   - **Timeline:** Spring, 2005 Pre-Registration and Periodically

   - **Outcome on Retention:** 355 students responded to the survey. 97% reported that the Drop-In Advisor was helpful or very helpful and 93% reported that their overall satisfaction with the Advising Center was Very Good to Excellent. With good advising identified as a key element in retention efforts, students reported being satisfied with the Drop-In Advising Center.

   - **Recommendation:** Continue to periodically survey Drop-In Center visits.
5) Graduation Status Letter to Students with 45-Plus Credits
   • Objective: Inform students who are approaching graduation of their remaining program requirements.
   • Method: From a report of all students with 45 or more credits, a graduation audit is conducted. The results of this audit are forwarded to the student prior to pre-registration. The letter also outlines the benefits of completing their degree/certificate. Student list of those who receive this letter are compared to the list of those who complete their degree requirements. (Appendix C)
   • Timeline: October and March – Ongoing
   • Outcome on Retention: Students are made aware of their eligibility to graduate and/or the specific requirements remaining. Student response to this initiative has been positive. The letter provides the student with information on what is needed to graduate and why graduating is beneficial.
   • Recommendation: Continue practice and compare letters sent to actual graduates.

6) Provide Online Access to Career Planning and Placement Information
   • Objective: With only one professional assigned to this important area, design, activate and maintain a comprehensive online resource for students to access career and placement information.
   • Method: Examine and select dependable resources to include in the online site and learn how to develop, design and maintain an online site.
   • Timeline: Fall, 2004 – Ongoing
   • Outcome on Retention: The online site provides students with easy access to current jobs, information on careers and their projected employability, career interest exercises, resume writing recommendations and a wealth of other valuable information and links. Students now have continual and current access to information on careers, career exploration, job search techniques, resume writing and other helpful resources to further expand their career choice.
   • Recommendation: Continue to refine and maintain the online site.

7) Maintain and Develop Strong Transfer and Articulation Programs and Contacts
   • Objective: With transfer a primary option of community college students, there is a critical need to be continuously aware of the latest transfer requirements.
   • Method: Participate actively in the CONNECT group to improve transfer opportunities with Bridgewater State College, University of Massachusetts/Dartmouth, Bristol Community College and Massasoit Community College. Forward letters to students in Elementary Education and Education to learn more transfer and becoming a licensed teacher. Hosted a Nursing Fair to discuss options to students competing for acceptance into a nursing program. Participate and promote the Joint Admissions and Massachusetts Compact transfer programs.
   • Timeline: – Ongoing
• **Outcome on Retention:** Students who seek advising on transferring are aware of which courses are transferable to their institution of choice.

• **Recommendation:** Actively participate in all appropriate transfer programs and maintain adequate resources to assist students interested in the transfer option.

8) **Maintain Consistency in Online and Hard Copy College Catalog**

- **Objective:** Online changes to the College Catalog will not match the hard copy of the catalog, creating discrepancies for students and advisors.

- **Method:** Recommend to OPS Committee of the need to develop a system that would keep both catalogs in synch and to insert new program requirements and/or courses at specific and uniform times to minimize misinformation.

- **Timeline:** Fall, 2005 and ongoing

- **Outcome on Retention:** The OPS Committee endorsed this request and forwarded it to the AUG Committee. Consistency in courses, programs and degree requirements greatly assist students in their awareness of exactly what is required.

- **Recommendation:** That the OPS Committee meet the requests of this recommendation as soon as possible.

9) **Advising Staff Meet with Faculty/Program Coordinators/Departments**

- **Objective:** The need to continually train and update faculty advisors on advising techniques and the need for the advising staff to continually receive updates on curriculum and program updates.

- **Method:** The Advising staff extends ongoing invitations to all faculty/program coordinators.

- **Timeline:** Fall, 2005 – Ongoing

- **Outcome on Retention:** Criminal Justice, Early Childhood Education and the Fine and performing Arts Department accepted the invitation. Faculty learned more about advising. Advisors learned more about those academic areas, requirements and the type of student who will succeed.

- **Recommendation:** Continue extending this open invitation.

10) **Academic Advising ‘Tip of the Week’**

- **Objective:** Provide reminders and suggestions to academic advisors throughout the semester.

- **Method:** Plan and email a message to college faculty and staff with pertinent messages about academic advising.

- **Timeline:** Fall, 2004 – Ongoing

- **Outcome on Retention:** Advisors throughout the College have an ongoing message regarding important academic advising issues. Current information, reminders and suggestions to improve advising are all tools.

- **Recommendation:** Continue distributing the ‘Academic Advising ‘Tip of the Week’.
11) Academic Advising Handbook
- **Objective:** Develop a user-friendly Advisor Handbook that can be easily referenced and updated.
- **Method:** Advisors identified the areas of importance to an advisor including a technical reference and designed on a format that was easy to read and easy to insert updates.
- **Timeline:** Fall, 2005 – Ongoing
- **Outcome on Retention:** Faculty and other professional advisors commented positively on this new format. This new tool is a valuable asset to advisors when meeting with their advisees.
- **Recommendation:** Continue refining format and adjust as necessary. Make arrangements to have the Handbook on the Advising Webpage.

12) Inform Students of Their Assigned Advisor
- **Objective:** During the confusion of classes beginning and orientation activities, informing the student of the importance of an academic advisor and who the student has been assigned is not very effective.
- **Method:** A letter is sent at the beginning of the semester informing the student who they have been assigned to and their office location. The letter also outlines what an advisor can assist the student with. (Appendix B)
- **Timeline:** Fall, 2004 – Ongoing
- **Outcome on Retention:** Students receive a letter that is specific to the importance of academic advising and who their assigned advisor is. Increased awareness of the student of this resource contributes to a positive collegiate experience.
- **Recommendation:** Continue practice as described above.

13) Early Intervention: Inform Students on Academic Review and Academic Probation of Support Services Available
- **Objective:** Students placed on academic review and academic probation need intervention and information on how to best improve their academic standing.
- **Method:** Letters are sent to each student on academic review or probation. This letter strongly suggests that the student meet with their academic advisor and to take advantage of the variety of support services available. A flyer of those services is enclosed with the letter. (Appendix D)
- **Timeline:** Spring, 2005 – Ongoing
- **Outcome on Retention:** Students are reminded of the support services available that may assist them in improving their grades.
- **Recommendation:** Continue practice and work to strengthen the need for students to meet with an academic advisor prior to registering for the subsequent semester.
14) Advising Newsletter – ‘Compass’
   • **Objective:** Explore methods to inform students on the importance and availability of academic advising.
   • **Method:** Design and publish an Advising Newsletter and mail it directly to students. The Newsletter (The Compass) would have important dates, feature a student, include articles about the campus and other important contact information.
   • **Timeline:** Fall, 2005 – Ongoing
   • **Outcome on Retention:** Students will receive this Newsletter on a regular basis making it likely they will find important information on how to manage their academic responsibilities.
   • **Recommendation:** Continue publishing and mailing the Compass Advising Newsletter.

15) Navigation Guide
   • **Objective:** Prepare an easy to follow inclusive guide for students upon their enrollment on courses. Some students require more documentation than others. Have copies made in additional languages (currently also in Portuguese).
   • **Method:** Prepare a ‘Navigation Guide’ for each category of student to specifically guide them through the enrollment process.
   • **Timeline:** Fall, 2006 and Ongoing
   • **Outcome on Retention:** Providing this guide will decrease frustration for students during the enrollment process and it will contribute to timely registration and schedule choice.
   • **Recommendation:** Evaluate the reaction and usefulness of the Navigation Guide, adjust as necessary and continue.

Either Recommended or To Be Recommended (In no particular order)

1) Clarification on how ELL Placement scores compare with ENL Placement scores for Prerequisites. Identify ways to strengthen ELL advising.
2) Assign newly hired Faculty to Advising Center with release time during their first semester of employment.
3) The College adopt a policy that *each* course has within its description a sentence that describes what, if any, program or graduation that course meets.
4) Upgrade the ‘Course Search’ capabilities from the current limited Campus Web software to include ‘time of day’ and more user-friendly ‘day of week’ searches.
5) Recommend that the College discontinues certificate programs if scheduled courses are not permitted to run due to low enrollment – especially those that are run just once per year (serious retention issue).
6) College implements a more cohesive effort on educating and evaluating faculty advising as part of assigned workload.
7) Provide for a full time Administrative Assistant in the Drop-In Center to improve on consistency of information distribution.
8) Hire the second full time Advisor (now four years overdue).
9) Finalize decision on developing a Cooperative Education Work Experience program to further enhance student interest in their academic area.
10) Re-assign Student Employment Office staff to serve as ‘Drop-In Placement’ counselors and provide office space for such a service.
11) Purchase software to post student jobs on website and enable student access with their password.
12) Invest with other CONNECT colleges to enable easy access to course transferability.
13) Explore the recommendation of requiring all students to meet with an advisor prior to being allowed to register.
Academic Advising at Cape Cod Community College is just one of the many ways in which students engage with faculty and staff on an individual basis. Advisors and Advisees work together to craft a unique, individual academic plan based on each student’s strengths, weaknesses and goals.

Cape Cod Community College views the advising relationship as an ongoing conversation that transcends more than course selection and attempts to assist students as they explore the breadth of the curriculum available, the challenges of college life, and the preparation for life after college. This relationship also includes educating the student to take responsibility for learning how to set their academic, career and personal goals as well as the strategies for achieving them.

To be successful in meeting the goals of this Mission Statement, faculty and staff agree to be proactive in all respects of academic advising, utilize the technological resources available and stay current with College policies and curriculum.

Advisors shall not direct students into programs or urge any student to enroll in a particular career, vocational, or technical education program or measure a student’s prospects for any career or program based on the student’s age, race, creed, color, religion, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, veteran status, national origin or disability.

RKN 6/1/2007
Appendix B

Advising Center
January, 2007

Dear [ ]:

We are pleased to provide you with an academic advisor to assist you while attending Cape Cod Community College. In most cases, your advisor will be from the area of study you are currently interested in. Your academic advisor could be a member of our full time faculty, from our trained professional staff or the Advising Center. Academic advisors are a valuable resource for students and they should be consulted whenever one or more of the following is needed:

- forming academic goals and career objectives
- establishing an overall plan for a program of study
- understanding and meeting degree requirements, requirements for specific academic programs, distribution requirements and general education requirements
- understanding academic regulations and procedures
- maintaining progress toward completion of the degree
- identifying supportive campus services
- responding to academic difficulties

YOUR ADVISOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION [ ].

You should meet with your advisor when you are in need of one or more of the areas mentioned above. It is strongly recommended that as a minimum, you should meet with your advisor when you are ready to select your courses for the upcoming semester (preregistration). Faculty advisors will have their available hours posted on their office door. If you have been assigned to the Advising Center, you may drop-in anytime to meet with an advisor. The Advising Center is open Monday-Friday from 8:30-4:30 or by appointment, Monday-Thursday from 5:00-8:00.

If your assigned faculty advisor is unavailable, you are always welcome to come to the Advising Center located on the second floor of the Grossman Commons Building (C203). The Advising Center's telephone number is 508-362-2131 #4318.

This is your education and we encourage you to take full responsibility in ‘managing’ your academic experience. Please also review the important information enclosed that outlines the various Academic Standing categories at the College.

Rick Nastri, Ed.D. Director of Advising and Counseling
Appendix C

Dear;  February, 2007

The Advising and Counseling Office recently conducted a review of those students who have completed or appear to be getting close to completing their degree. It appears upon an initial review that you are very close to graduating and need the following course(s) to complete your degree.

- Successfully complete courses currently enrolled in
- English 102

If you have transferred to another college and have taken a course that meets these requirement(s), consider having that course transferred back to Cape Cod Community College. (You will not lose any credit at your current institution if you do so). I have also enclosed a "Declaration of Intent to Graduate Form" which I encourage you to complete when you have met the requirement(s) outlined above and return it to my attention and I will forward it to the appropriate Office.

I want to make you aware of the many advantages of completing your Associates Degree even if you plan to transfer to another college/university. These include the following:

- Studies show that students who complete their Associates Degree and transfer are academically better prepared to complete their Bachelor's degree.
- The Joint Admissions Program available to community college students guarantees admission to Massachusetts's public colleges and universities provided they graduate from an approved academic program with a minimum grade point average of 2.5 (Sometimes to very competitive majors). Students interested in this opportunity should make an appointment to see Mary Olenick in the Advising Office.
- All A.A. degrees at Cape Cod Community College guarantee a minimum of 6 credits in transfer through the Massachusetts Transfer Compact.
- Financial benefit. Community Colleges offers college credit for the lowest cost by far. You can easily save thousands of dollars in educational costs by completing your first two years at Cape Cod Community College.

Please accept my congratulations on completing your Associate's Degree. Please disregard this letter if you have already applied to graduate or have graduated. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please call the Advising Office at 508-362-2131 #4318.

Sincerely,

Rick Nastri, Ed.D
January, 2007

Dear Student;

It has brought to our attention that you have been placed on Academic Probation for the Spring, 2007 semester. Please refer to the College catalog to understand your options as a student on academic probation. The purpose of this letter is to outline several resources the College has in place that may assist you this coming semester.

First, you are encouraged to either meet with your academic Advisor or stop by the Advising Center. By having an Advisor review your academic history and current situation, a variety of options and recommendations will be explored.

Second, please review the variety of Support Services specifically implemented by the College to academically assist our students. Whether it is utilizing the Math Lab, Writing Center or meeting with a tutor, these services have a proven track record in strengthening our student’s academic skills. These services are also free! A flyer outlining these services is available in the Tutoring Center or the Advising Center.

We value your choice of Cape Cod Community College and remain committed to doing whatever we can to make your stay here positive and rewarding. Please take advantage of these resources as soon as possible.

The Advising Center is located in the Upper Commons. Hours are Monday-Thursday 8:30-4:30 and no appointments are necessary. Evening hours are also available Monday-Thursday from 5:00-8:00. Appointments for evenings are necessary and can be made by calling 508-362-2131 #4318.

Sincerely,

Rick Nastri, Ed.D.
Director of Advising and Counseling