



HIGHLIGHTS

Published by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement

MetLife Foundation Best Practices in Student Retention

MetLife Foundation Honors Parkland College

"Creativity and innovation are highly supported at Parkland. If an initiative doesn't work as well as we hoped, we try a different path." Sharon Kristovich, Director of Institutional Research, Evaluation, and Planning

Parkland College, in east-central Illinois, is one of four colleges honored as a 2005-2006 *MetLife Foundation Best-Practice College* for its exemplary efforts in helping students stay in school to achieve their educational goals. Other 2005-2006 award-winning colleges are Gainesville State College (GA), St. Philip's College (TX), and Sinclair Community College (OH).

A Focus on Student Retention

Parkland College, located in the twin cities of Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, enrolls approximately 10,600 credit-seeking students, with 55% attending part-time. The college's district includes parts of 12 largely rural counties.

Parkland's board, administrators, and faculty realized that as many as three-fourths of the college's students were not prepared for college-level work and required remediation. Forty-five percent of first-time students needed two or more developmental courses. Frustrated by their lack of satisfactory progress, many were dropping out within their first two semesters. The college was losing more than a third of its degree-seeking freshmen students from one year to the next. Parkland's leaders also recognized that a disproportionate number of under-prepared students and those who failed to make satisfactory progress were minority students. "We all said, 'This is not acceptable,'" says Sharon Kristovich, Director of Institutional Research, Evaluation, and Planning. "We rolled up our sleeves and started working on it."

Model Practices and their Results

Through a review of research and best practices, as well as discussions with faculty, staff, administrators, and students,

Parkland leaders decided that a focus on increasing students' preparedness for college-level courses would yield the best results in helping students progress and graduate more quickly.

The college set measurable objectives for each initiative and put them into practice. Objectives are reviewed semi-annually, using both student-level and program-level assessments.

Academic Development Center (ADC)

To ensure that coordinated and comprehensive services would be available to under-prepared students, Parkland created the Academic Development Center. The Center administers a number of services and works collaboratively with the college's academic and student services units. Funding for the ADC initially came from existing college resources. Parkland now draws on Title III funds and other revenue sources and is systematically institutionalizing the practices that are proving successful. Services available through the Center include the following:

Student Development Advocates

Two full-time advocates monitor student progress in developmental classes and quickly connect students to needed services.

Results: In the first year of the program, student persistence increased 10%. By the second year, more than three-fourths of those receiving services in the fall returned in the spring semester, compared to 61% of those declining services. Students receiving services earned nearly 20% more credits in 2004-05 than those who did not.

Academic Development Specialist

Parkland instituted additional academic support for students in developmental courses who have either a documented disability or a history of learning difficulties with reading, writing, or mathematics.

Results: Three-fourths of those students who were served in the fall semester returned for the spring term, compared to just over 60% of those who declined services. Students receiving services earned nearly 38% more credits in 2004-05 than those who did not.

Facilitated Study Groups (FSGs)

Responding to research findings that "time-on-task" would likely benefit developmental students, Parkland formalized facilitated study groups. Led by full-time mathematics

faculty, the study groups target “difficult courses” rather than “difficult students.” Group activities include academic diagnosis, study skills, professional tutoring, supplemental instruction, academic follow-up, and, when appropriate, computer-assisted instruction.

Results: The persistence rate for students in a study group has jumped 25%, with almost three-fourths of those participating completing their developmental course.

Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL)

Recognizing that faculty development is critical to increasing student success, Parkland sought to increase the number of faculty with expertise in developmental education. Building upon the college’s existing Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Parkland has offered more than 30 workshops that have been attended by at least half of Parkland’s faculty and administrators.

Results: Almost two-thirds of those attending the fall 2004 CETL workshops said they came away with a better understanding of the concepts covered in the workshops, applied the information to their classes, or transferred the information to students.

Jump Start English

Working in partnership, the Academic Development Center and English department added an additional course hour to the traditional composition class. Jump Start English Composition makes it possible for students to bypass developmental English. English Department faculty teach the classes. So far, six sections have been offered.

Results: Approximately three-fourths of students have earned a C or better. In one Jump Start section, all the students completed the course. To date, more than half the Jump Start students have successfully taken the second-level composition course.

Third Attempt

Part of the college’s Academic Services division, this process identifies students who are repeating a class for the third time because of unacceptable grades. Counselors and advisors partner with department chairs to guide students to various services and reinforce the value of these services through a signed contract with each student.

Results: In the fall 2004 semester, 20% more of those students participating earned As or Bs and successfully completed the class.

Next Steps

Parkland is building on promising retention initiatives and adding new targeted strategies. The college is currently conducting and examining research on the effects of late enrollment on academic success.

Parkland is also increasing its efforts to help college-bound high school students prepare for college-level courses. The college is offering online versions of the college placement

tests to high school juniors. The intention is that students and parents, when better informed about students’ levels of college readiness, will choose to use the senior year of high school to make up deficiencies and develop the skills needed to enroll in college-level courses. Area high schools are responding enthusiastically to Parkland’s outreach. More than 300 students were tested in spring 2005 semester.

Lessons Learned

The key to making retention initiatives work is a college-wide commitment,” says Kristovich. “Working in cooperation across [college] units, we’re providing targeted, consistent resources for students.” The college offers the following observations:

- Parkland’s most successful retention initiatives have been built on careful research and planning.
- Individualized attention has had the most impact on student retention, but has the greatest cost.
- Patience is a must! Retention initiatives often take several years to show results.
- Each success is important because one more individual has benefited.

For More Information

For more information about Parkland College, visit the college’s Web site at <http://www.parkland.edu>. For specific information on student retention efforts at Parkland, contact Sharon Kristovich, Director, Office of Institutional Research, Evaluation and Planning at skristovich@parkland.edu.

SPOTLIGHT ON CCSSE CONSORTIA

- **Campus Compact**—seven colleges in five states.
- **Achieving the Dream**—11 colleges in five states.
- **The Hispanic Serving Institutions/Hispanic Association of Colleges and Schools (HSI/HACU)**—16 colleges in five states.
- **Texas Small Colleges**—23 colleges in Texas.
- **2006 State-based Consortia** include Connecticut, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, New Mexico, Missouri, Tennessee, and Texas.

CCSSE 2007 Consortia Now Forming for Achieving the Dream, Excelencia in Education’s LSS Colleges, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Northeast Minnesota, North Dakota, North Carolina, MDRC’s SSPIRE Initiative Colleges, SUNY Community Colleges, Texas Small Colleges, Tribal Colleges, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

For more information about forming or participating in a CCSSE Consortium, visit the CCSSE Web site at www.ccsse.org.