



HIGHLIGHTS

Published by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement

MetLife Foundation

Best Practices in Student Retention

MetLife Foundation Honors Maui Community College

This special edition of *CCSSE Highlights* features the work of Maui Community College (MCC), a 2002-2003 MetLife Foundation Best-Practice College. The issue provides an overview of what prompted MCC's focus on student retention, describes key strategies implemented and shares lessons learned. In addition, illustrating MCC's emphasis on student-faculty interaction, one MCC teacher shares how she helped one student meet his educational goal.

Defining the Issue: What Prompted the Focus on Student Retention?

Maui Community College is one of 10 campuses in the University of Hawai'i (UH) system. Serving 2,699 credit students in 2001-2002, MCC is the only UH campus that regularly serves the population of more than one island, namely Maui, Moloka'i and Lana'i.

Over the past decade, the college community recognized the dramatic changes affecting higher education and the increased need to assess outcomes. New accountability-driven standards, new criteria for accreditation, and regulations of federally supported educational programs fueled the college's determination to implement several key retention strategies.

Facing the Challenge: Two Model Practices for Student Success

Two initiatives of particular interest are (1) the college's reorganization of the instructional unit – a change from discipline-based divisions to four interdisciplinary units and (2) MCC's Student Enrollment Case Management System.

Interdisciplinary Unit

In Fall 2000, after nearly two years of review and discussion, the instructional area of the college was reorganized from discipline-based divisions (i.e., Language Arts) to four interdisciplinary units. The units are Sustainable Arts and Technologies, Professional Technology, Professional

Community, and Foundations. While vocational-technical and business programs remained fairly intact within a specific unit, liberal arts instructors are assigned throughout the four units.

The purpose of the interdisciplinary units is to provide faculty from different disciplines the opportunity to come together, sharing ideas, concerns, and solutions, as well as to ensure the close connection between occupational programs and academic core courses such as English, math, science, humanities and social sciences. Academic support staff, counselors, and continuing education faculty were assigned as liaisons to each unit while retaining their current structure.

Like any other new system, there were and are challenges. For example, the lines of communication had to be reinvented to take into consideration the different relationships. In addition, resources had to be reallocated to address personnel and supply needs. Because budgets are tight, there is continuing concern about sufficient funding based on needs. The Academic Senate will be conducting an in-depth review of the reorganization later this year.

Student Enrollment Case Management System

In conjunction with the instructional reorganization, MCC Student Services began implementation of a Student Enrollment Case Management System in Fall 2000. The system was conceived and developed by a team that included the Dean of Instruction, Dean of Student Services, representatives from the counseling department and a staff member from the Office of the Chancellor of Community Colleges. The group provided opportunities for other faculty and staff to review progress and provide feedback. The goal of the case management system is to see the "whole" student and address the student services as well as instructional needs of the student.

The case management system teams faculty, counselors, staff, and administrators to focus on practices that are key to student success, including career/educational planning; goal setting; identification and removal of barriers; monitoring of student progress; career planning and development activities; support for transitions to employment and/or four-year programs; and tracking beyond completion or leaving MCC. In this way, the student is provided "front- to back-end" support.

The strength of the student enrollment case management system lies in (1) teaming faculty, counselor, and staff; (2) using an early-alert system to identify and address barriers; (3) coordinating resources for more efficiency; (4) focusing

on student outcomes through data collection; and (5) faculty and counselors gaining a fuller awareness of students' needs and concerns.

The system is currently in place for occupational programs, but the intent of the college is to institutionalize the system by including students majoring in liberal arts.

Lessons Learned

According to MCC's President, flo wiger, the most important lessons learned are these: (1) "Always place the best interest of the student as the top goal. It is easy to get distracted by

other goals such as what is in the best interest of the college, the faculty, and the staff. (2) The concept of interdisciplinary faculty, counselor, and staff teaming is a 'must' as we try to ensure the success of our students. Teaming at all levels (administration, faculty, and staff) has been encouraged, practiced, and valued."

For More Information

For more information about MCC, visit the college's web site at www.mauicc.hawaii.edu. For specific information on the student retention efforts at MCC, contact Alvin Tagomori, Dean of Students, at atag@hawaii.edu.

Student-Faculty Interaction: One Instructor's Story

As part of the *MetLife Foundation Initiative on Student Success*, award-winning colleges are selected through a process that takes into account the colleges' performance on the *retention index* of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The retention index is an additive index that combines the college's scores in three key areas of student engagement: Active Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, and Support for Learners. All three of these categories are important to student success; however, because students have multiple demands on their time and spend limited time on campus, the role of student and faculty interaction is critical. Provided below is an example of how one MCC faculty member is promoting the success of her students.

From the first day of our Journalism class, David was a class favorite. In his mid-thirties, he had returned to college to finish the degree he had begun eighteen years earlier. "I screwed up the first time, and I brought a lot of pain to my family. But I'm not going to do that again. This is my chance for a new life," he told us when he introduced himself.

His rugged good looks and ready smile endeared him to the females in the class, and his candid stories of alcohol addiction and time spent in prison made him a favorite of the males. All of us wanted him to succeed.

My Journalism students practiced the skills they learned in the class by putting out the school newspaper, a monthly publication of 16-20 pages. The first issue was always the most difficult for students in this beginning class. They needed constant reassurance that they were up to the challenge.

David had a natural talent for writing, and he clearly enjoyed helping other students hone their skills. In large part because of him, the first issue

for that class was one of the best my Journalism classes had ever produced.

Then David, who had never missed a day of class, disappeared. I checked with his other teachers, but no one had seen or heard from him. I called his cell phone number, but it had been disconnected. For over two weeks, David's seat remained empty.

Then I received a barely legible, penciled note from David. He was locked up in the state prison on Oahu. One line told it all: "I was sitting on the beach feeling so good about my successes in school that I decided to have just one beer to celebrate." The one beer had led to many more. He had started a fight, trashed a bar, and had his parole revoked. He asked what he needed to do to withdraw from the class.

I was not willing to give up on David. I wrote back, reassuring him that he could finish the Journalism class and write for the newspaper, even if he was in prison. I got permission from prison officials to send him books, paper, pencils, assignments, and newspaper deadlines. The classmates David had once helped now wrote encouraging letters to him, praising his work and keeping him up to date on class activities.

David did complete the class and the stories that he wrote for the remaining issues of the school newspaper changed more than one reader's life, judging from the calls and letters that I received. David wrote from his heart about his feelings as he was driven, in handcuffs, past the college on the way to prison; he wrote about the harsh realities of life behind bars; and he wrote about how much it meant to him to have all of us encouraging and supporting him. "You never gave up," he said, "and that made all the difference."

When David was released from prison, he returned to college.

Patricia Adams, Assistant Professor and Sustainable Arts and Technologies Unit Chair wrote this piece. She has been teaching English and Journalism at MCC for almost 9 years.