

Virginia Western Community College

Internal Focus Group Meeting

VWCC Natural Science Center

Tuesday, April 3, 2007

3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Participants:

Maggie Boyes
Lacey Carey
Brooke Ferguson
Mia Fittz
Nancy Francisco
Liz Griffin
Ellen Holtman
Heidi McClintic
Martha Richardson
Patty Willhite

Others Attending:

Moderator – Katherine F. Strickland
Recorder – Erik W. Williams

Did Not Attend:

William Alexander
Margaret Andrews
Dave Hanson
Amy Maiolo

Question 1

From your perspective, how does Virginia Western invite or restrict access to higher education?

Response

- Open enrollment policy; ability to benefit from policy is a positive; offer classes to those who do not get in to improve their skills to be able to get in
- Having students take a compass test when not having experience in that field can be restrictive; not good for those who don't test well
- Those students who are passed through high school and should not be are challenged here
- Offer student more preparation for college
- People who are not college ready – we should provide something for them, i.e., specific programs
- Open access to those who want vocational education
- Need to offer effective auto tech program – offered previously
- Place emphasis on vocational education if student has no desire for traditional degree
- Not enough information passed along to students about transfer programs
- Not all students are ready for a 4-year school
- Facilities not accessible on weekends; weekend students feel like second class citizens
- VWCC does prepare students well for transfer; best teachers
- Facilities/classroom space are a problem
- Class offerings are a concern
- More frequency of course offerings/terms offered
- Need to help students when classes are cancelled, find other options

Question 2

How do the experiences and characteristics of successful and unsuccessful students differ, beginning with their initial contact with Virginia Western?

Response

- College dropping classes before registration is over, cancels classes too soon; particularly affects developmental students who may have limited options
- Successful students have a goal, others are here for wrong reason
- External factors like childcare, car, job – can affect success

- Childcare for students and employees; if students can't afford to pay; federal grant available; look at other colleges (WCC & DCC); makes money and helps retention; provides lab space for childcare curriculum
- More advising, most don't know who is advisor!!
- Why no freshman orientation that must be taken their first semester at VWCC; make it a one day requirement; actual orientation class, other opportunities such as new student workshops
- Require to take orientation first semester; counseling does push in first semester
- Student ambassadors are good idea; campus tours; have guides on first day
- Reach out more to seniors; elder scholars series
- Embrace lifelong learning
- More seniors enrolled in classes; free tuition; reaching people in 40s and 50s as well
- Specific orientation for non-traditional students

Question 3

How do our college's resources, policies, and strategies support and/or hinder students in meeting their learning goals?

Response

- Anderson Hall condition a negative – labs are in bad shape
- Movement of LPN program back to campus; moved for budget issues
- Money for advanced technology; where is money for teacher professional development; too much emphasis on technology, not on bettering teaching
- How do we address students who are struggling
- Too much of a push to put everything online, i.e., schedule
- Student difficulty with technology and some limited access to computers
- People who are making decisions on these issues are not the ones working with the students, i.e., schedule
- What about those who register over the phone; no paper schedule to get code now!
- Students coming to learn computers at college – without paper schedule cannot register easily
- State application online can be an issue
- Some do not have access to computers
- Diverse community is strength, too much emphasis on technology before beginning class
- Limited access to internet for rural areas in our service region
- Financial aid process is complicated
- Unresponsive to questions – shuffled around from person to person
- Financial aid workshops are helpful
- Problems with showing tax forms
- Part-time financial aid can catch students off guard, if dropping classes below full-time – they do not understand the impact of going part-time
- More help for ESL – offerings
- Meet needs for Hispanic students; international students
- Peak registration time is about an hour and a half; shuffle between offices for placement testing and advising
- First contact is so important
- No paper schedule can increase wait time for all students

Question 4

Is there anything else that you would like to share with the College that might help us in completing our strategic plan?

Response

- Communication –no central point of information