

Virginia Western Community College

Internal Focus Group Meeting

VWCC Natural Science Center

Wednesday, April 4, 2007

3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Participants:

Gary Adkins  
Amy Anguiano  
Lori Baker  
Kathy Boylan  
Rhonda Cassell  
Leah Coffman  
Bob Crawford  
Ruth Hendrick  
Dave Hanson  
Nadine Ingram-Carson  
Faith Janney  
Jenifer Kurtz  
Elizabeth Lewis  
Lynn Painter  
Mary Perry  
Dan Semones  
Carol Sliver  
Bill Work

Others Attending:

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

**Question 1**

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

Response

- Low costs
- Open access
- Convenient scheduling; adult learners may feel differently; those that work full-time need more varied times, respect for time, and more flexible classes
- 2 + 2 programs
- Distance learning
- Time frame to register and complete program
- Some confusion to reach correct person
- Impression is that students need to be enrolled in degree program; need more varied information
- Promote career planning
- VWCC system does good job reaching out to adult students, but could do better
- Late night classes can be a problem or more hybrid classes, more meetings during the week to shorten length
- Hybrid courses are a mystery to people; should be better explained that they are offered at off times during the day – also offers faculty more options
- Some hybrids work, some don't
- Information about academic advising is fragmented; misinformation
- More proactive advising is good
- Better email communication for the employees and students
- Make sure students use/check email
- Use a daily bulletin set up in key areas of the college as way to communicate

- More TV's with important college information
- Support services are limited to day hours, difficult for evening/weekend students – hard to get information; night students are frustrated with lack of services – deserve the same priority as day students
- Difficulty with registering/misinformation
- Customer service; feel customer service is lacking

### **Question 2**

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

#### **Response**

- Registering late can be unsuccessful
- If students don't have book they can be unsuccessful, successful students make effort to get material

Things that affect success:

- Student commitment to class
- Student motivation for attending
- Student engagement outside classroom/conflicting priorities
- Students who are successful are motivated and know what they need to do to succeed
- Student support network outside the classroom, first generation students
- Students come ready and committed, but not involved
- Successful students do what they are asked, complete assignments
- Some do not understand what attending college entails
- Students have preconceived agenda and do not want to take prerequisite or developmental classes

### **Question 3**

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

#### **Response**

- PeopleSoft hinders student experience
- PeopleSoft creates more work for student and employee
- Financial aid for distance users
- Books are needed when class starts
- Students apply late for financial aid – money takes time to come in
- Communication – people don't know what is going on
- Bigger inventory of textbooks in Library for students; departments/faculty can send books to Library; desk copies are not always same as student copy; College can buy some textbooks and have available in the Resource Library
- No computer lab on South Campus
- No easy access to computer lab
- Some students have no computer at home
- Internet restrictions for students at home
- No real problem with parking
- Student perception of parking is often different than what the availability is

- Handicapped accessibility on campus is concern, hard to navigate
- No wheelchair to REACH
- Not adequate signage on campus
- No college-wide orientation day; some students take the course their last semester!
- Classroom numbers are confusing, esp., in Anderson
- Workforce development students have no resources
- Limited access to financial aid information
- Dirt cheap tuition at Western
- Credit at bookstore is good for students
- High school counselors are missing the mark
- Some students don't have skills needed to navigate system
- Employee communication is lacking, myths still exist
- Presentations by each department to in-service/division meetings/staff meetings
- Avenues exist to exchange information
- Communication is key
- PeopleSoft can increase financial aid response time
- College website lacking in content
- Timing of in-service bad for student support service employees

**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**

- Plan top-down way to increase communication