

Virginia Western Community College

Internal Focus Group Meeting

VWCC President's Conference Room

Thursday, April 5, 2007

8:30 AM – 9:30 AM

Participants:

B Bagby  
Amy Balzer  
Sarah Burns  
Arletha Butler  
Amy Fenster  
Mike Greer  
Dave Harrison  
Gloria Lindsay  
Maggie McDaniel  
Sandy Shelton

Others Attending:

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

Did Not Attend:

Anna Balog-Szabo  
Becky Chauncey  
Dwayne D'Ardenne

**Question 1**

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

Response

- Billboards – especially on Rt. 220
- Information on dual enrollment at high schools
- Stepped up publicity last couple of years, but where are TV ads? See ads from Dabney and NRCC
- Look at social networking sites for promotion
- Articulation agreements invite access to VWCC; will become more important as GPA and SAT make it harder to get in
- Do good job in promoting College, but not specific programs
- No career coach at Franklin County High School
- Student testimonials are good promotion tool – need more
- Promote fact we are affordable
- Perception of College is changing for the better
- Availability of classes are a concern for students
- Distance learning perception of not getting same quality as in-class instruction
- Some students under estimate the difficulty of education at VWCC
- Quality of instruction at VWCC is better or as good as any school
- No compass testing at Rocky Mount; Patrick Henry does and provides counselor for early registration
- Better parking for students and student lounge/common area
- NVCC – Woodbridge student area as an example
- Create more inviting areas for students to congregate
- No student activity space
- Hot Topic sessions are not able to schedule ahead of time due to lack of space on campus
- Space taken away from Student Center
- No faculty/staff lounges

### **Question 2**

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

#### **Response**

- Advising right at the start is important
- Too many self-advising students
- Dual enrollment students not sure advising exists
- Non-degree students fall through cracks
- Not enough staff to provide adequate advising to our students
- Orientation is important
- Counseling sessions not as in-depth as it should be
- Better advising experience at National College for one student – increased their motivation
- Difference between selling VWCC or just providing a public service
- Counseling registers students and does not really ask what they want to take
- Student Services staff has decreased, while student body has increased
- Perception that registering is difficult and time consuming
- Application process too difficult for some
- Tend to look at our students as academic – not lifelong learning
- Lifelong learning sessions during off-peak times

### **Question 3**

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

#### **Response**

- Extend office hours for those student who are not here during day and on the weekends
- More access to Student Services during off-regular hours, but need staff to do it
- Application Saturday for peak registration
- Must invest in staff to work for those students who are here on weekends and nights
- Resources must be available for night/weekend students
- Teamwork atmosphere here is impressive to students – is a positive
- Must be adaptive to students needs; more customer service oriented; conform to their needs, not ours; must go to them and the community
- Take more classes to the community
- Reach out to the untapped population
- Send out local surveys to see their needs
- Tap Smith Mountain Lake population
- Big mistake getting rid of paper schedule; enrollment will drop; big concern about those students with no computers; web-based schedule must be perfected before getting rid of paper version; do more plain schedules
- Awful financial process; need to do better explaining to students; ongoing problem with it; process is too complicated; inform students of regulations; be more proactive
- Rising tuition is a big concern for some, i.e., single parents and those who work
- Get information out to apply for financial aid early – go to them with the information
- Financial aid office is overwhelmed, needs more staff

- Help students plan early on
- Returning students/non-traditional – hard to get information to them
- Not enough classrooms
- Well kept facilities and grounds
- Need better planned facilities/some larger classrooms
- More people = more space = more money
- Handicapped access is improving; Webber construction is a nightmare for handicapped 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**

- More diversity in the classroom needed; full-time faculty; also staff
- High school student misconceptions about what we offer, i.e., nursing
- Better information on what they can do at VWCC
- Show them career/technical/vocational opportunities at VWCC