

Virginia Western Community College

Internal Focus Group Meeting

VWCC Natural Science Center

Tuesday, April 3, 2007

12 Noon – 1:00 PM

Participants:

Julia Andrews  
Brenda Ashcraft  
Linda Davis  
Gary Dent  
Carole Graham  
Brenda Greenway  
Marilyn Herbert-Ashton  
Ann Kakouras  
Tony Maiolo  
Tammy Meador  
Mona Moore  
Jim Sargent  
Linda Stuckey  
Natasha Taylor  
Marla Whiteside

Others Attending:

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

Did Not Attend:

Jeff Gillette  
Felicia White

**Question 1**

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

Response

- New career coaches help
- Encourage students in junior high to plan their career track better
- Continue to add to articulation agreements
- Need to advertise our articulation agreements to community – especially to students
- Very competitive at 4-year institutions
- Honors Institute is working with students to know more about articulation and applying
- Publicizing the correct information about articulation requirements
- Need to make information about transfer programs more available
- Need to publicize the affordability of VWCC and then transfer
- Target parents
- High school counselors need to be educated about VWCC
- Stereotype about community college still exists
- Website's first page should market; needs to be more dynamic – be easy
- Need to do a better job of letting students know about financial aid opportunities
- CD's to guidance counselors to give to high school students to promote VWCC programs
- Faculty members need to list requirements and importance of GPA at beginning of semester – good to do at student orientation as well
- Not well known how well our students do after they leave here
- Students going to college nights helpful in understanding the requirements
- Technology in classroom great - we surpass 4-year institutions

What do you think are the perceptions of students (current and prospective) about access to the college and their experiences in attending Virginia Western?

Response

- Students may not feel it is prestigious, but they understand they have access
- Offering on-campus childcare would be helpful
- No childcare is a deterrent to young mothers

**Question 2**

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

Response

- How invested the faculty is in the student makes a huge difference
- Large classes with half high school students are not as successful
- Students come here thinking “it is not really college” – they don’t take it seriously
- Hard to work and go to school; they often drop out and then they owe the college
- Some come just to get aid
- Some don’t have the personal skills to be successful in college
- Need to help students choose classes wisely so they can succeed; need advice BEFORE they apply
- Surveys are done after a student leaves, but hard to find those that drop out to do the survey
- Pilot advising students throughout the semester; try to make interventions to retain them
- Students from high school have sometimes been allowed to pass without fulfilling high school requirements
- SOLs really a problem
- High school students don’t read and want faculty to guide them
- Students more likely to succeed when they have a report with faculty or advisor
- Immaturity
- Students should hear from faculty
- A lot of students are older; get frustrated with applying online (don’t know computers); majority in business older
- PeopleSoft has been a challenge because we are losing customer service
- We have a wide service group which is hard to service (high school, mothers, older)
- Many do not know Blackboard
- Should require computer proficiency; basic computer literacy taught; orientation could include a module on computer literacy
- Not enough lab assistants to help
- We need to put together a great orientation program for curricular students that would include STV and if they scored well, they could move on
- Orientation would reach more students
- Finances and accounting information
- Night classes are more motivated
- Look at orientation of new faculty
- Telephone access for our public (general #) needed; 4-year colleges use work study students
- Lots of information but students don’t read
- If students can learn how to survive the first semester, they will do well

**Question 3**

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

**Response**

- Computer lab great and people there are terrific
- Need better and more academic advising – academic division AND student support
- Should be blocked from registration before every semester until get advising
- Student orientation should be first thing; show them time management and study skills they think they know; give them more career guidance
- Learning Tech Center open later (until 9:00)
- Parking okay for faculty, but students think it is a problem; one of the few colleges that does not charge

**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**

- Have more representatives with IB program
- VA 21 – have to qualify – just passed; need to promote in community; could change college dynamics
- Liked focus group set-up for input
- We are attracting more students from other service regions