Instructional and Student Services Committee Meeting
March 26, 2010


Georgeana Stratton participated by phone.

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Walters, committee chair.

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of the February 19, 2010 meeting were approved as presented.

Presentation on Developmental Math and English:

Dr. Dever stated that, over the last several years, Developmental Education has been a major topic in higher education and a major focus for various foundations. Due to the open admission policy at community colleges, many students who are unable to demonstrate college readiness in the areas of reading, writing, and math are placed in developmental courses. In the past, many of these students were older students returning to college and most were successful in completing these courses. For some time, however, the number of recent high school graduates placing in developmental education courses has continued to grow and is currently approximately 50%. The completion rates for developmental education for this population are not strong.

In order for the VCCS to reach its strategic plan for increasing the number of credentials completed in the next six years by 50%, more students will have to enter the community college prepared for college-level work and more students will have to successfully complete their developmental education coursework in a timely manner. Dr. Dever reported on the work of the VCCS Developmental Education Task Force, which he recently chaired, that was charged with reviewing the developmental education practices throughout the VCCS and making recommendations as to how current processes and structures could be improved to increase the rates of student success. He noted the three main goals that guided the work of the Task Force:

- Reducing the overall need for developmental education in the Commonwealth. He noted that NOVA’s College Readiness initiative plans to work closely with high schools on this. One area being considered is the assessment of high school students to identify areas requiring remediation before they graduate. Certification by the high school that a student has completed the required remediation in accord with jointly developed standards would then be accepted by NOVA and the student could register for college-level courses. Research would of course be done to determine whether the process is successful.
- Redesigning developmental education in a way that reduces the time to complete developmental reading, writing, and mathematics requirements for most VCCS students to one academic year. Dr. Dever noted that a comprehensive support system to include
teaching faculty, counselors, and support services would be needed to offer the support needed to accomplish this. Academic advising would be critical.

- Increasing the number of developmental education students graduating or transferring in four years from 1 in 4 students (25%) to 1 in 3 students (33%).

As recognized by the Developmental Education Task Force report, many areas must be restructured and many issues addressed if developmental education is to effectively carry out its critical role:

- Redesign English, Mathematics, and Reading developmental education (Recommendation 1)
- Collaborate with K-12 partners to increase college readiness (Recommendation 2)
- Address the cognitive, affective, and behavioral needs of developmental students (Recommendation 3)
- Reform placement procedures (Recommendation 4)
- Emphasize accountability through standardized reporting (Recommendation 5)
- Provide targeted professional development for developmental education faculty (Recommendation 6)
- Build an administrative infrastructure to improve accountability and communication (Recommendation 7)
- Comprehensively review and revise policies to promote developmental education success (Recommendation 8)

Jane Serbousek and Ruthe Brown are the NOVA representatives on the VCCS Math Redesign Team currently looking at both what is required for placement in a college-level math course and what students need to succeed. A similar group will be established to review developmental reading and writing.

Dr. Dever noted that as the VCCS proceeds with implementing the recommendations of the Developmental Education Task Force, one focus is on building an associated administrative infrastructure to improve accountability and communication. Specifically, each college is asked to “identify an institutional officer with the responsibilities and appropriate authority for coordinating the college’s developmental program and representing the college in system-wide meetings and projects related to developmental education.”

Considerations for the appointment of a Coordinator of Developmental Education should include the following:

- Ability to work cooperatively and closely with major groups and projects already focused on developmental education to include: (1) the English and Mathematics faculty at the five comprehensive campuses; (2) the Achieving the Dream efforts to help developmental students be more successful; and (3) the College Readiness initiative, which is working with our regional school systems to ensure that more recent high school graduates come to NOVA fully ready to undertake college-level work.
- Students not yet ready for college-level work need a broad range of instructional and support services in order to succeed. Units that deliver instruction and services, such as
testing and placement, student services, tutoring and other forms of learning assistance, and financial aid, must be aligned in support of a common mission.

- Achieving these outcomes will require great attention to data, using them to understand the current baseline, to set targets for improved student performance, and then to regularly monitor the results. The culture of evidence must be an integral part of reforming developmental education at NOVA.

- This is a critical area for the college as developmental education constitutes 10 percent of the FTES generated at NOVA.

NOVA’s Coordinator of Developmental Education must be a person who can make a significant contribution to addressing all of these areas. He or she must be capable of thinking deeply about the interconnectedness of various policies, procedures, and services and then communicating and coordinating to see that all are aligned for common purpose. She or he must have a record as a respected faculty member who knows firsthand what it means to successfully teach community college students. He or she must be ready to interface with external groups, to include major foundations and the U.S. Department of Education, which will be likely sources of funding for innovative strategies and improved results. In short, she or he must be a leader who can help advance the strategic goals of NOVA and Virginia’s Community Colleges.

This position will be a restricted appointment and is expected to be in place by mid-May, to be effective for the 2010-2011 academic year.

NOVA’s focus in these efforts is to ensure that students placed in developmental studies do not fall by the wayside but are full participants in the student success outcomes that NOVA has set as part of its Strategic Vision 2015: Gateway to the American Dream:

- Developmental Course Completion – increase by 20% the percentage of students who successfully complete their developmental course requirements.
- Retention - increase the retention rate of fall to fall first-time full-time degree-credit students from 62% to 70%
- Graduation - increase from 2,500 to 4,500 graduates annually
- Transfer - increase from 1,200 to 2,000 the number of graduates transferring to a four-year college or university

Committee members noted the following:

- Students are not motivated to complete developmental courses as they often do not see the value of the courses or how it will help them reach their goals. It was agreed that this results, at least in part, from the fact that students don’t receive grades for these courses. Even though a grade in a developmental course would not be included in the student’s GPA, it might provide an incentive for completion of the course. Dr. Dever noted that this topic is being considered by the Math Redesign Team.

- College policies that are in place, such as blocks on registration, need to be enforced.

- It is critical that the high schools buy-in to any changes made in structuring a developmental education program.

- Academic advising is critical for developmental students.
• Providing faculty with information as to how students did in prerequisite courses would be helpful. It was noted that this is done by some ESL faculty by adding messages to a student’s file.
• It is very expensive for students to have to take developmental courses before they can take the courses needed to reach their goals.

Proposed Council for General Education. Discussion deferred.

Old Business:

There was no old business.

New Business:

Change in Repeat Grade for GPA:

Dr. Dever discussed the proposed change under consideration by the VCCS that would include all repeat grades in the calculation of the cumulative GPA instead of just the last grade received. It has been determined that this change cannot be accomplished at this time without creating problems for calculating Curricular GPA, which would retain the current procedure of using only the last grade for any repeated course. As a result, the proposal has been tabled by the VCCS Academic and Student Affairs Council.

Based on the concern expressed about the matter by Student Services staff members, Dr. Dever has requested that, should the technical issues in multiple calculation methods be resolved, the proposal receive a thorough review by all VCCS colleges before moving forward for approval at higher levels.

Financial Aid:

Dr. Harper advised that the recently signed bill converting all financial aid to direct lending will not directly affect NOVA, as the college changed to direct lending several years ago.

She noted that the increase in the Pell Grant awards will be very advantageous to our students and will be effective Fall 2010 and that the recently revised and simplified FAFSA is expected to facilitate the financial aid application process.

Next Meetings:

The next meeting of the Instruction and Student Services Committee will be Friday, April 16, 10:30 a.m., in the Large Board Room at Brault.