Loudoun Campus ATD Update

The Achieving the Dream (ATD) team from the Loudoun campus organized a series of activities last fall. Some of these activities started last summer and are still ongoing; others were initiated last semester, and some are slated for implementation in the very near future. The following are highlights of some of the activities.

Increasing Awareness of ATD Campus-Based Activities

The campus team has hosted events such as Town Hall Meetings and “Lunch and Learn” forums to raise the awareness of campus-based ATD activities for faculty, staff, and students. These events have generated a great deal of interest from participants who have in turn made useful suggestions for strategies to promote student success. The campus team wishes to use Campus Council meetings and the Blackboard website for the dissemination of information on its activities.

The campus team also plans to launch an ATD Kickoff. This event is designed to update participants on some of the achievements of ATD at the Loudoun campus and to encourage a greater level of involvement from the campus community. Some have suggested discipline-specific meetings during which participants will be asked to propose ways to improve retention and promote student success.

New Student Orientation (NSO)

Loudoun campus held its New Student Orientation (NSO) last summer and in January 2009. The results of a survey conducted during the orientation indicate that the prospective students were very satisfied with the event. The Office of Student Services intends to build on the success of the last NSO when it organizes future events.

NSO Focus Groups

The Office of Student Services uses a College Student Inventory survey questionnaire to collect information on various aspects of the first semester educational experiences of students who participated in NSO. This is a monitoring and evaluation mechanism designed to investigate areas that need improvement. The ultimate objective of NSO and the follow-up Focus Group is to improve student retention.

College Readiness Summit – English and ESL

On Saturday, September 13, 2008, thirty-three English and ESL instructors from NOVA, Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS), and Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) met to discuss college readiness. The summit began with a brief general session followed by two breakout sessions. At each breakout session, the attendees chose to discuss one of five topics: placement tests, methods of instruction, joint professional development, intrusive advising, and the disconnect between high school and college. The breakout discussions and follow-up general session generated some excellent next steps in our collaboration.
Loudoun Campus ATD Update (cont'd)

Learning Communities Early Alert Pilot
The Learning Communities Early Alert Pilot project works with Math 3 & SDV 100 instructors. Instructors enter information online when a student experiences or demonstrates characteristics detrimental to success (dropping grades, missed classes, etc.). Information thus enables staff to direct the student to the appropriate resources: counseling, tutoring, financial aid, etc. A number of issues raised by the campus team are likely to be addressed before the final implementation of the project. In addition to the Early Alert Pilot, a Learning Community pilot program has been launched with Seneca Middle School.

Compass Prep Program
The Compass Prep Program is a 10-week non-credit Continuing Education (CE) course designed to address an individual student’s areas of weakness in English while promoting college success skills. The program is a collaboration between several Loudoun Campus departments (e.g. Academic Affairs, Student Services, Testing Center, and Workforce Continuing Education) and the Loudoun Literacy Council. A pilot (cap of 10 students) is being implemented for spring 2009. Designated members of the campus ATD team will meet with members of the Loudoun Literacy Council who will provide ten tutors for one-on-one tutoring sessions for students reading or writing below a third grade level. The program also includes a series of weekly group lecture/discussions on topics such as time management, study skills, etc. Any student successfully completing the program will be permitted to re-take the Compass placement tests in reading and writing.

Medical Education Campus ATD Update

Student Success Open Forum
On November 13, 2008, the Medical Education campus (MEC) held a “Student Success Open Forum.” This was an open forum meeting to discuss MEC Achieving the Dream (ATD) initiatives and solicit feedback from the campus community on student success issues. MEC ATD Chair, Jacqueline Gibbons asked all participants to use an “appreciative inquiry” process to frame their feedback and discussion points. Discussion points for this meeting included: student involvement in supporting peer persistence; solicitation of student input on barriers to success; and identification and solution-oriented approach to academic courses that pose a challenge to student persistence.

The Open Forum generated considerable feedback and suggestions from students, faculty, and staff. Participants noted that students desire more faculty interaction, ways to develop skills to master critical thinking from program entry to graduation, smaller class sizes, ways to give feedback about learning experiences, and tutoring sessions that accommodate students’ schedules. Input on the ATD website included ideas for survey tools online, areas for students to blog about their NOVA experiences, and more information about ATD. For large classrooms, students suggested ideas for renting “clickers” from NOVA or having the option to buy refurbished ones. Also, exploring education technology and infusing diverse learning styles into large lectures were discussed.

Participants also noted some limitations facing the Medical Education campus: lack of space and funding for smaller classes; no central meeting area for students to interact with faculty (e.g. cafeteria, lounge, etc.) which causes students to feel isolated from professors; and the need for a retention counselor on the Medical Education campus. Active learning is more challenging due to the larger class size in Nursing. The MEC ATD/Recruitment Team plans to continue these open forums to foster greater participation across the campus.