



Beyond Retention: A Comprehensive Approach to the First College Year

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Undergraduate Education***

***Annual Meeting of the Higher Learning
Commission***

April 11, 2010

Why Move Beyond Retention?

- Revive the conversation
- Engage the faculty
- Provide antidote to “retention fatigue”
- Move from a program approach
- Improve the efficiency of operation



What Campuses Need

- A focus on all beginning students— first year and transfer
- Aspirational standards
- Assessment process
- Comprehensive action plan
- Implementation of the plan



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- Institutional process
 - Is based on aspirational standards for the first year and transfer experience
 - Uses task-force-based assessment
 - Produces a plan for educational improvement

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Participants

- 167 colleges and universities of all sizes and types
 - 111 four-year institutions
 - 56 two-year institutions
- 77 HLC institutions
 - 19 AQIP
 - 58 PEAQ



The Intellectual Framework



Philosophy

- *The problem:* Approaches to the new student experience that have no underlying philosophical base
- *Why this Dimension is important:* The experience of new students should be crafted with a sense of purpose.
- *Performance Indicators:*
 - Whether the campus has a philosophy/rationale
 - Whether it has an influence on policy/practice
 - Whether it is disseminated

Organization

- *The problem:* No one in charge; inefficient and confusing “silos”
- *Why this Dimension is important:* Organization is essential to the realization of purpose.
- *Performance Indicators:*
 - Existing organizational structure(s); evaluation
 - Level of funding
 - Whether structure provides an integrated approach
 - Role of structure in faculty/staff development

Learning

- *The problem:* Inadequate attention to learning
- *Why this Dimension is important:* Learning is the primary purpose of going to college.
- *Performance Indicators*
 - The existence of learning outcomes
 - Use of effective pedagogies in high-enrollment courses
 - Measures of out-of-class learning
 - Appropriate course placement

Transitions

- *The problem:* Uneven attention to elements of successful transition
- *Why this Dimension is important:* The success of the initial transition predicts future collegiate success.
- *Performance Indicators:*
 - The quality of your communication to students
 - The quality of communication to support networks
 - Helping students establish connections
 - Academic advising

Faculty/ Campus Culture

- *The problem:* Need for more faculty/staff involvement with new students
- *Why this Dimension is important:* Without involvement of faculty and staff, initiatives for new students are difficult to launch and sustain.
- *Performance Indicators:*
 - Campuswide focus on new students
 - Expectations at the point of faculty and staff hire
 - Responsibility for student retention

All Students

- *The problem:* Many initiatives reach only certain students; others do not reach populations with special needs.
- *Why this Dimension is important:* All new students have developmental needs that should be addressed.
- *Performance Indicators:*
 - What you know about the needs of particular students
 - What you do to meet those needs
 - How well you meet the needs of *all* students

Diversity

- *The problem:* Institutions vary in the degree to which they successfully address diversity issues.
- *Why this Dimension is important:* Education about human difference is an important component of the beginning college experience.
- *Performance Indicators:*
 - Students exposure to diverse ideas
 - Students exposure to diverse people
 - Whether the institution conveys “standards” for behavior in a civil an open environment

Roles & Purposes

- *The problem:* Students' narrow view of the purpose of higher education
- *Why this Dimension is important:* The beginning college experience is the time for exploration of roles and purposes.
- *Performance Indicators:*
 - How well you communicate the institution's notion of purpose
 - Whether you provide students the opportunity to explore their motivation for higher education
 - How well you communicate the institution's rationale for its requirements – courses, skills, competencies

Improvement

- *The problem:* Too few initiatives are subjected to rigorous assessment. Institutional isolation – lack of exposure to others
- *Why this Dimension is important:* Improvement is vital to sustainability and effectiveness.
- *Performance Indicators:*
 - The practice of assessment
 - The use of assessment for improvement
 - Other strategies for improvement

Task Force Assessment

The Engine of the Process...

Faculty

Student Affairs

**Academic
Affairs**

**Assessment
Professionals**

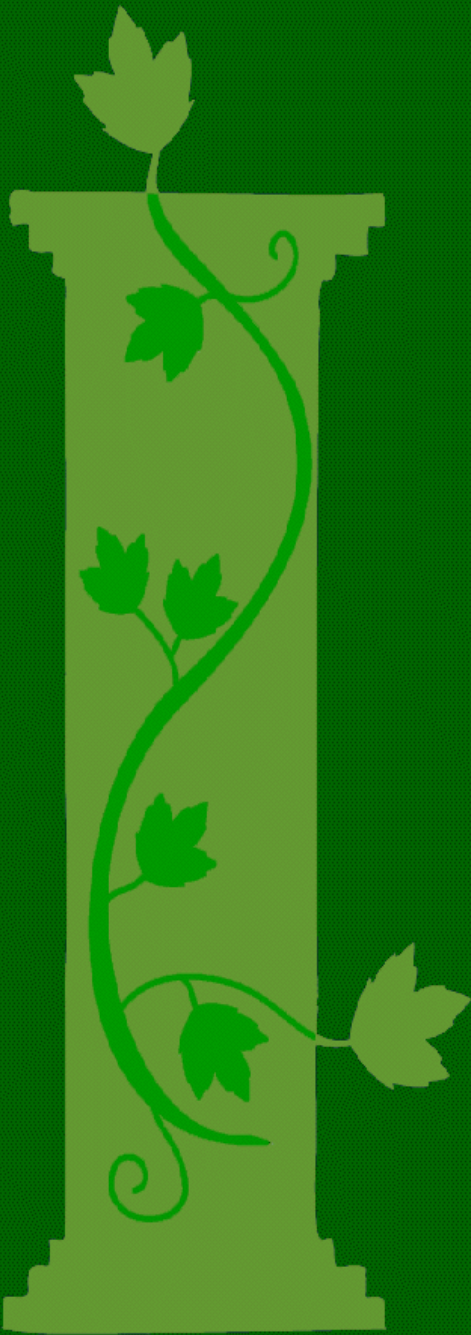
**Others who
interact with
new students**



Students

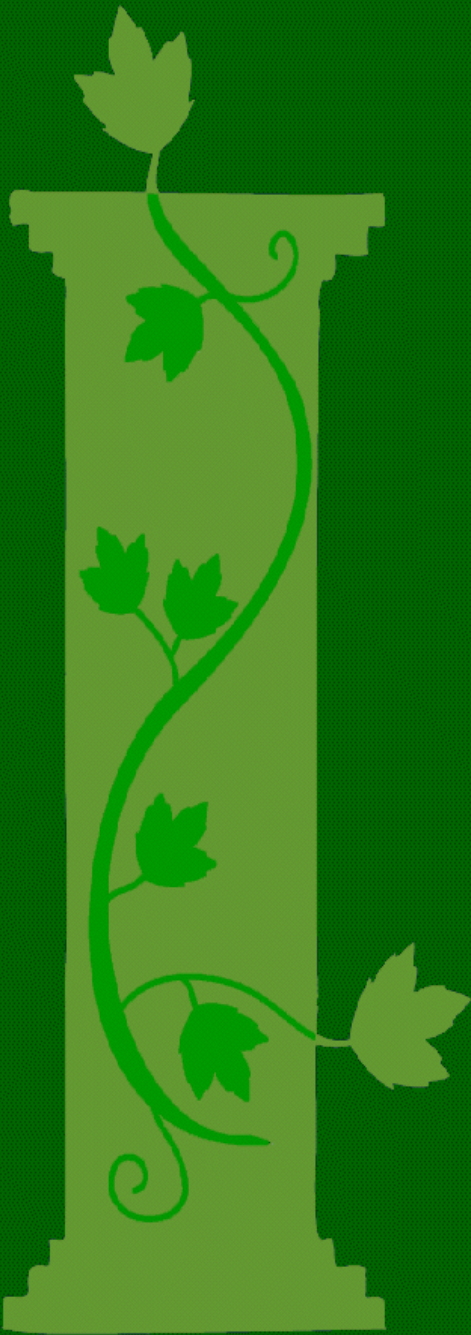
The Process: Step 1

- Current Practices Inventory
 - Beginning audit of programs, policies, and previous assessments:
 - To educate the task force and ultimately the college community
 - To gather essential information for use in the evaluation process



The Process: Step 2

- Evaluation of institutional performance on performance indicators linked to each Dimension
 - Evaluation conducted by campus task force over 9 to 12 months
 - Evaluation aided by survey data from student and faculty/staff surveys



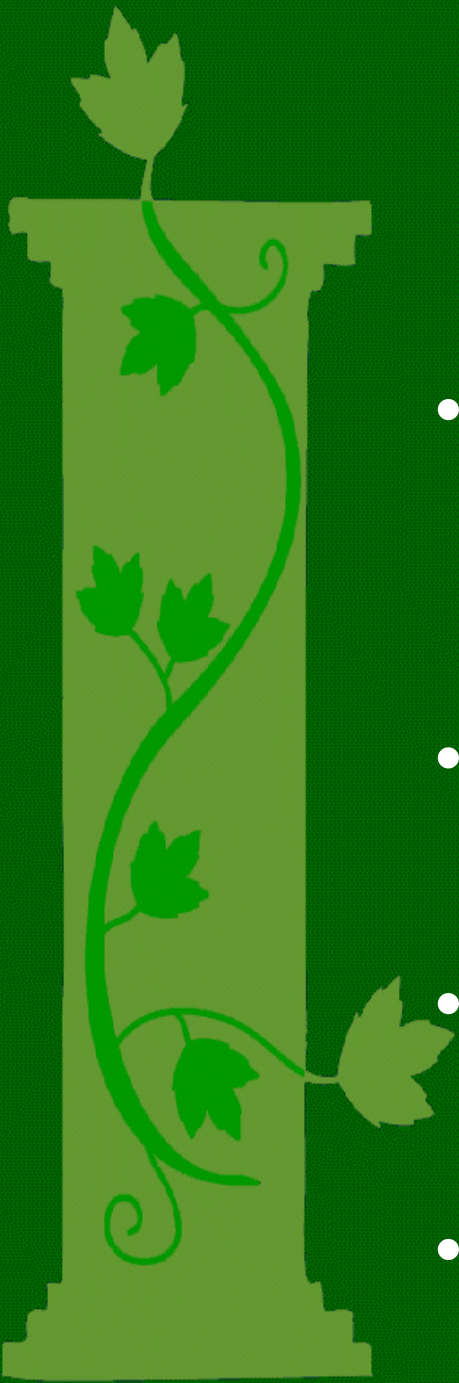


The Process: Step 3

- Development of Action Plan for Campus Improvement
 - Includes
 - What campus is doing well and doesn't want to change
 - Areas for change based on self study

Concluding Comments

- Expansion of the conversation on retention
- Institution-wide focus
- Potential use in reaccreditation
- Outcomes





Contact Information

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