

DEGREE COMPLETION
BOARD RULE 400.0200.00
STRATEGIES EMPLOYED TO IMPROVE GRADUATION RATES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING: SEPTEMBER 24, 2009

Graduation rates are an indicator of student success. Belmont Technical College faculty, staff, and administrators recognize the importance of retaining students through completion of their degree and certificate programs. As stated in Board of Trustees' *Ends Policies* (Section IV, 400.0200.00, *Degree Completion*, 2007), "The college is committed to student success and, to that end, will foster the development of a learning community characterized by student, faculty, and employee engagement in learning, effective teaching and learning practices, and student support systems that attract students to BTC and enable them to remain at the college through achievement of their educational goals."

This report presents strategies implemented by BTC faculty, staff, and administrators to support and to encourage degree and certificate completion by students who have chosen BTC as their entry to attainment of associate degrees, transfer degrees, and certificates in higher education. Initiatives discussed in this report are predominately those that have been developed and implemented or revised and updated since September 2008.

Yes, You Can!

Adult learners are the target population for *Yes, You Can!* This four-topic series of classes has been developed to offer tuition-free college-readiness classes. Classes meet on Saturdays on Main Campus and in the evenings at North Center. Students enrolled in the classes receive instruction in four topics. Students begin with sessions in basic computers skills, where they learn to save files, create documents in Microsoft Word, and download images and documents from the Internet. College success strategies are discussed in the first four weeks and include time management tips, note taking, test taking and study skills. Basic operational math skills and techniques for writing follow computer skills and college success classes.

Thirty-one adults attended the program during winter 2009, and of these students, four enrolled in degree programs following their participation in *Yes, You Can!* There are currently 17 students enrolled for fall classes.

Hilda Burrows Door-of Opportunity Grant

The budget for the Hilda Burrows Door-of-Opportunity Grant has been more than quadrupled to offer assistance to a greater number of laid-off workers. The grant originally had a budget of \$15,000 and was used to pay only for tuition after other forms of financial aid were exhausted. After a generous appropriation by the Board of Trustees, the budget is now \$65,000 and the grant can be used to pay for not only tuition, but also for books and fees after other financial aid resources are applied.

As a result of recent layoffs and plant closings throughout the Ohio Valley, more residents are enrolling at Belmont Technical College with the hope of receiving new skills to help them obtain employment. This additional appropriation could not have come at a better time, especially in light of the fact that even local unemployment offices have seen state funding reductions and layoffs. The appropriation will assist students in

obtaining a degree or certificate that will make them more viable candidates and enhance their chance of finding a job in the local community.

ABLE Collaboration

Prior to July, 2008, Belmont County and Harrison County ABLE classes were conducted in one-stop centers, churches, career centers, and other community facilities. At the end of July in that same year, Belmont Technical College and Mid-East Career and Technology Center, the agency which holds the ABLE competitive grant for eight surrounding counties to include Belmont, Harrison, and Monroe counties, entered into a partnership and collaborated to provide an evening ABLE class at BTC. The class continued successfully for one year, and in June of 2009, Mid-East and BTC developed an MOU to formalize the partnership and extend ABLE classes to BTC's North Center. In addition, through a grant from the Board of Regents, Mid-East and BTC collaboratively offered a successful, math-specific summer ABLE class for that was directly linked to the stackable certificate initiative. For the 2009-2010 fiscal year, ABLE classes will continue at BTC's main campus, extend to BTC's North Center, and a new ABLE/Stackable program will begin at BTC's Monroe County location.

SSC Triage Program

Belmont Technical College's Student Success Center has traditionally offered only individualized and drop-in math and writing tutoring for students who require academic assistance. At the beginning of the 2009 calendar year, the Student Success Center staff, who realized a more individualized approach to student assistance was needed, engaged in research and data collection. From those activities, a new system of student academic assistance, which included a triage component and a continuum of services, emerged. The program was successfully launched on a small scale spring, 2009, and it will be implemented fully beginning fall, 2009.

At the heart of the program is an individualized approach to students' request for academic assistance. Previously, students were able to request only tutoring via a "Tutoring Request" form; students now complete a "Request for Assistance" form, meet directly with a Student Success Center staff member, and identify with the staff member the appropriate level and kind of intervention(s) best meet the needs of the student. Academic assistance in the Student Success Center now ranges from handouts, group workshops, individual workshops and support in areas such as time management, study skills, note taking, test taking, study groups, to group tutoring, drop-in tutoring, and individual tutoring. Throughout the academic year, the Student Success Center staff will continue to assess the triage program and expand academic supports and interventions for students.

PSY100: Personal and Academic Development

PSY100, "Personal and Academic Development," affords students the opportunity to increase their academic skills and learning/study skills so they can move at a faster pace to college-level courses and their certificate/degree program. In this course, students will engage in remediation of two or more skill areas (English, math, or reading) as determined by their placement test scores, through the use of "A+dvancer," a web-based diagnostic-prescriptive program. In addition, students will address individual

learning/study skill development through a Learning and Study Skills Inventory (LASSI) and in-class instructional activities.

Updates on strategies

Case Management Advising

Belmont Technical College purchased software for Case Management Advising (CMA) that was developed by Sinclair Community College through funding from a U.S. Department of Education Title III Strengthening Institutions grant and the Sinclair Community College Foundation. CMA uses software and programming to facilitate development Student Success Plans for at-risk students, to systematically monitor academic progress, and to document intervention strategies that promote student success and degree completion. While a number of obstacles remain to reaching the full potential of the Case management advising process, implementation began in 2009.

Students were identified who met two pre-determined criteria for being *at-risk*. Criteria One: Students were First-time, Full-time, degree seeking students. Criteria Two: Students who met Criteria One and who also tested into two or more developmental courses were included in the pilot project for winter quarter 2009.

Initially, 33 students were identified as meeting the criteria as being *at-risk*. Attempts were made to contact the at-risk cohort of students and invite them to participate in creating a Student Success Plan. Contact was made with 23 of the 33 students. Sixteen were willing to schedule an initial visit with the intake counselor; five students declined, and two provided new information which revealed that they did not meet the at-risk criteria. Of the 16 students who agreed to participate, seven did not arrive for their appointments (3 rescheduled), four decided not to participate, and 5 students signed consent agreements. Students were assigned an Academic Advisor for the next step in developing a Student Success Plan. Of the five participants, records show that all were registered for spring quarter, three are pursuing the RN program, one is pursuing a degree in Industrial Electronics and the other student is enrolled in the Tooling and Machining program.

One barrier to full implementation of CMA has been difficulty with importing data from the student information system into CMA software. Fully functional CMA software was essential for advisors to be able to give each student an individualized Student Success Plan when they finished the academic advising appointment. Although this particular initiative is no longer receiving grant funding, the academic advisors expect to reach full-implementation of CMA during this academic year.

New Student Group Registration was designed to provide a formal group orientation to BTC. During the spring and summer of 2009, 307 new students participated in group registration sessions. Administrators and faculty members welcomed students to the college, and students received instruction on financial aid, on-line resources. Students had an opportunity to meet face-to-face with an advisor and to complete their first registration for classes.

Right Start Orientation is a one day event which is designed to bond students to the college by discussing college coursework, faculty expectations, college policies, and services available to BTC students. Efforts are made to conduct this orientation

immediately prior to the first day of the quarter. On June 19, 2009, sixty-three students attended Right Start; one hundred and eighty-six students are scheduled to attend the Right Start Session September 17 and 18, 2009. Results of Right Start evaluations from the past academic year revealed that 95% of the students “feel more confident about starting college as a result of participating in the Right Start Orientation.”

The Student Success and Learning Course, PSY 104, is a student success course which covers topics such as time management, study skills, goal setting and learning styles. For fall quarter, 2008/09, 211 students were registered for 12 sections of PSY 104.

The Trustee’s Scholarship Event was conducted on September 2, 2009. One-hundred and eighty six students attended with approximately 245 parents and/or guardians. One goal of the event is to focus attention on the benefits of being awarded a Trustee’s Scholarship. In addition, the gathering provides students with an opportunity to hear presentations from faculty members who instruct in the students’ chosen majors. Parents attend this event as well as entering students and are instructed on what they can do to foster their student’s success. In addition, parents have an opportunity to meet with staff members and to ask questions.

Supplemental Instruction continues to be offered at BTC. This program places peer tutors in classes. The peer tutors are students who have been successful in the courses to which they are assigned as peer tutors. The role of a peer tutor role is to assist students during scheduled class sessions. During the fall, winter and spring of 2008-09, a total of 19 courses were staffed with supplemental instruction.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Belmont’s college-wide strategic plan focuses on maximizing access, affordability, economic leadership and efficiency for the college’s three-county service district. Eight strategic planning groups were formed with cross-functional representation on these work teams. The groups have created unit-level action plans to address Finance, Student Support, Academic Excellence, Facilities, Marketing, Enrollment, Technology and Organizational Culture issues. Each work group has created unit-level plans with action statements, measurement plans, and tactics for achievement. As strategic plans are merged and implemented, Belmont Technical College will extend its influence to attract even more new and returning students and to promote greater retention of continuing students. Ultimately, the goal is to increase the attainment of academic success in higher education for students in Belmont, Harrison, and Monroe counties.