

DEGREE COMPLETION
BOARD RULE 400.0200.00
STUDENT SUCCESS PLANS; RATE OF GOAL ATTAINMENT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING: APRIL 22, 2010

“Belmont Technical College is a learning organization that embraces a culture of continuous knowledge acquisition, integrity, openness, caring and respect for all. Access, affordability and quality are operational values that inspire the college community to be its best. The college continuously transforms itself to respond to changing community, regional, and state needs.” This statement guides employees in how to help students achieve their education goals and experience success in higher education. Academic programs and student support services throughout the college are geared toward helping students realize their educational goals.

Belmont adopted a Student Success Plan that includes characteristics recommended by the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR). According to statements on OBR’s website, characteristics of Student Success Plans in all Ohio institutions include the following characteristics:

- “Define learning outcomes and assess student achievement of those outcomes in General Education.
- Define learning outcomes and assess student achievement of those outcomes in undergraduate majors.
- Identify and measure the impact of special features of the undergraduate learning experience that occur in institution-wide programs (for example, first-year experience programs, residential learning communities, undergraduate research, study abroad, internships and co-ops, service learning).”

OBR points out that “These components reflect a larger purpose of higher education as a whole, which is attainment of student goals in professional and personal endeavors.”¹

The college adopted the Case Management Advising (CMA) system in order to help students achieve their goals and to enhance support services offered to students. In 2009, the CMA system was implemented with a pilot project using a subset of the student population. The students included in the initial implementation identified in the application and enrollment processes that they were in some way *at-risk* for not achieving their educational goals. The design of CMA incorporates the use of software to develop a Student Success Plan for each at-risk student and to systematically monitor academic progress and document intervention strategies which promote student success and degree completion. Monitoring the progress of the first group of students participating in CMA allowed the college to have a first look at implementation of the system and to find solutions to “wrinkles” in the process of moving at-risk students through their educational plans toward completion.

This report provides a summary and analysis of progress toward achieving success by those first students participating in the CMA system. Reports which can be generated from the software provide opportunity for analysis of the effectiveness of Case Management Advising when compared to at-risk students who choose not to participate. While a number of obstacles are still being addressed to reach the full potential of the Case Management process, implementation was initiated in winter quarter 2009. This report is an analysis of the pilot project prior to implementation of the fuller potential of CMA.

Case Management Advising Process

¹ Ohio Board of Regents retrieved March 21, 2010 from: <http://regents.ohio.gov/StudentSuccess/accountability.html>

Criteria for determining which students are most *at-risk* include: first time college students, those who enrolled for 12 or more credit hours (full time), students who are placed through testing into two or more areas of developmental classes, students who work full time, and students for whom English is a second language. Advisors in Student Services apply these criteria to entering students and identify students for Case Management Advising.

The Case Management Advising process begins when participating students meet one-on-one with an academic advisor. During initial meetings, students identify the areas of greatest challenge to their success. Advisors discuss challenges suggested by students and ask questions to identify problem areas. An early first session allows for dropping a class within the 'drop period' should the need arise. Action plans are developed that the student will work on before the second session.

The second meeting is usually scheduled for mid-term. In this session, the student and advisor review the previous action plan, review grades, and discuss any issues that may be interfering with the student's success. Action plans are revised during the mid-term meeting if that is determined to be necessary. The last session takes place at the end of the quarter to review completion of the student's action plan for the quarter. Another meeting is scheduled for the beginning of the student's second quarter. Together, the student and advisor evaluate grades, student development, and how the student handled personal responsibility. The student can continue in the program or be transitioned out of the Student Success Plan (SSP) program.

Student goals in CMA are set in the areas of GPA, retention, and use of campus resources. Reports from the student information system are generated at the end of each quarter to identify students with a GPA of 2.0 or higher. These students who have earned a GPA of 2.0 or higher are considered to have attained the first success goal. Students with a GPA lower than 2.0 are encouraged to stay in the program the following quarter. Students are also checked to see if they are enrolled for the next quarter. If students from the first quarter have not re-enrolled for the following quarter, students are contacted, encouraged to enroll, and asked what can be done to help them. The Case Management software is programmed to create a report listing services outside the college to which students can be referred for assistance the college cannot provide.

Data

For the pilot study, advisors identified 31 students as at-risk for achieving their educational goals. In the two weeks before the beginning of winter quarter, students were contacted and invited to participate in the pilot project for Case Management Advising. Seven students signed a consent form and agreed to participate. The programs of study these students pursued were: nursing, industrial trades, child development, and information technology. Following these students for a period of four quarters, four remained at the college after a year, two enrolled, but dropped out after one quarter, and one earned a certificate at the end of four quarters. The average GPAs for the four participating students who continue to enroll at the college range from a high of 3.67 to a low of 1.76.²

Analysis

Advantages of the CMA program include positive verbal feedback from students participating in the program and action plans for success created by the students. In their feedback on the program, students indicated they felt more connected to resources, had a greater understanding of the demands of college, and were able to interpret academic advising. Students co-

² Record level data for participating students are not included in the report because so doing would make the students identifiable and would violate their rights to privacy.

created action plans with advisors for how to achieve success using the Student Success Plan (SSP) software.

Challenges include the increased amount of time required from advisors to implement CMA. Advisors found the degree of technical skills required to use the SSP software to be a challenge. The additional time required for seeing students in CMA involves appointments lasting up to an hour and also time required to locate resources that students need. Academic advisors also found that it was difficult to switch from *academic* advising to *case management* advising, because the latter requires more in-depth academic and supportive counseling, and possibly referrals to agencies outside of the college for services not provided at Belmont.

Conclusions/Recommendations

Two major hindrances to successfully conducting case management are advisor time management and CMA software training issues. Increased enrollment over the past year has amplified time management issues. However, new structures are being put in place to assist advisors. A new registration process which includes students scheduling appointments with advisors has been implemented. A new student orientation program is being organized which will lead to increased access to online registration for new students. In addition, greater faculty involvement in advising second year students is planned. It is estimated that these new strategies will result in 375 new student registrations being processed by the first week of July, which is much earlier than in past quarterly registrations. It is also estimated that 290 returning students will be able to register online during the student success course, PSY104. The early registrations and the increase in online registration beginning with fall quarter 2010 will yield significantly more time for advisors in Case Management Advising.

Professional development for advisors is needed to strengthen supportive and academic counseling skills. A number of advisors stated that in conducting CMA sessions with students, they were not yet comfortable with the higher level supportive counseling skills needed for case management. In order to address advisors' concerns and to increase the level of their academic and supportive counseling skills, a consultant from Sinclair Community College will provide advisor training. Informational sessions, role playing, documentation, and hands-on demonstrations will be part of the training process.

Advisor training sessions also will be conducted to promote increased familiarization with the Student Success Plan software. It is the goal of CMA for advisors to become more confident as their skill levels increase, resulting in more effective implementation of CMA by Sept 2010. Beginning Fall Quarter of this year, each advisor should have an active case load of 20 SSP students

The new First Year Experience (FYE) Program is aimed at helping students become successful in achieving their academic and personal goals. Through monitoring student GPA and re-enrollment status, the FYE program will add a pathway for student referrals to the CMA program. Implementation of the new Student Success Center intake model will be another source for CMA referrals. Increased student and advisor engagement with CMA should lead to greater student success overall.

Targets for improvement address the needs of students and the time constraints advisors encounter.

1. Increase the number of students and advisors who will participate in the next cohort for CMA.
2. Increase retention in the CMA program so that more students attain their educational goals.
3. All advisors will be able to use the CMA software with ease.